

If not for profit,  
for what and how?

S O C I A L  
E N T E R P R I S E

# Individual and group perceptions of nonprofit organizations' performance: An exploratory multilevel quantitative approach

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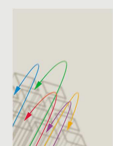
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## INTRODUCTION

Since all nonprofit organizations (NPOs) do not have the same goals, values and means, we analyze their performance as a construct reflecting the fit perceived by their members between quality of management actions and the organizational mission. This constructivist approach does not directly deal with actual performance but rather with subjective cognition of the latter. This interpretation of the activities of NPOs by their members actually takes place within frameworks rooted in the vision that defines the mission of the organization, often taking into account multidimensional performance (Valéau, 2011; Willems et al, 2013) including, for instance, economic, social and political performance (EMES, 2011). This evaluation process combines perception and sensemaking (Piaget, 1971). As far as this research is concerned, we consider three aspects of perceived performance: "perceived effectiveness", "intention to stay" and "sharing the same values"? Drawing from social psychology, we consider that such interpretative process develops at individual as well as group levels.

Our first series of hypotheses consider that individuals' perceptions of performance are influenced by their commitment. The latter will influence their interpretation of the values and goals of their NPO, and, within this framework, it will also introduce a positive or, eventually, negative bias in the evaluation of its actions and results. Commitment, as studied in this research, combines two different aspects, we talk about "*attitudinal commitment*" and "*behavioral commitment*". We study attitudinal commitment, referring to Allen and Meyer's four dimensions model: affective commitment refers to attachment and identification of the individual, normative commitment evokes a sense of moral obligation, high investment<sup>1</sup> accounts for advantages related to staying in the organization, low alternatives relates to a situation where the individual feels stuck. We analyze types of "behavioral commitment" as forms of participation in the functioning of the organization, first, at an official and formal strategic level in terms of participative governance (Hoarau & Laville, 2008 ; Cornforth, 2004) , and second, at a more informal and practical level, in terms of teamwork behaviors (Rousseau, et al, 2006a & 2006b). Attitudinal and behavioral commitments, both, create a sense of responsibility for the performance of the organization.

Our second series of hypotheses is based on the assumption that, considering the collective and communitarian nature of NPOs (Valéau, 2011), the above variables will also develop at a group level. This group level of perception relates to social processes and the emergence of cultural phenomena over and beyond individual differences, as described by sociology. Group level perceptions, attitudes and behaviors are relevant when one considers that the former social reality is more than the aggregate of the individual data (ex. Durkheim, 1895). From a statistical perspective, group level variance relates to the variance between groups (group mean) compared to the variance within groups and represents a significant part of the global variance, in addition to the within group variance (group standard deviation). With this in mind, we examine the two following questions. Is there an additional effect of group commitments on perceived performance? Do members deviating positively / negatively from their group mean score higher / lower on perceived performance

We start with a review of the literature on NPO performance, attitudinal and behavioral commitment and social representations. We then present our method and results from our 2-level data sample including 207 respondents nested in 51 NPOs. The group nature of NPOs and the challenges related to their study are discussed

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<sup>1</sup> Allen and Meyer (1991) use the expression « high sacrifice », we use high investment to make it more understandable

# 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

First, we review the issue of the performance of NPOs. Second, we make a first series of hypotheses about the effects of individual attitudinal and behavioral commitment on the latter. Third, we introduce a group level analysis of the relationships between the above variables.

## 1.1. A multi-criteria approach to perceived performance

Performance is one of the most important and complex issues when studying the management of nonprofit organizations. Willem et al (2013) revisited the literature on this issue identifying 8 trade-offs researchers have to deal with when trying to measure NPOs effectiveness. The first one refers to multidimensional framework. According to Willems et al (2013), the latter helps to assess the differential impact of various factors on the different dimensions. One of the most commonly used multi-criteria approaches to NPOs is the one defined by the EMES (European Research Network). Defourny and Nyssen (2011, p5) define NPOs as *“organizations providing goods or services directly related to their explicit aim to benefit the community. They rely on a collective dynamics involving various types of stakeholders in their governing bodies, they place a high value on their autonomy and they bear economic risks linked to their activity”*. This definition involves multiple economical, social and political criteria of performance.

From an economic point of view, NPOs are organizations producing goods and, more often, services supplying demands ignored by the private profit sector and public services (Salamon and Anheir, 1997). With this in mind, the economic view of NPOs is concerned with the added values of this production. Management Sciences try to assess the level of efficiency of these organizations i.e. ratios confronting the output produced with the means invested. *“Nonprofit effectiveness focuses more on a balanced input/output relation of processes and strategies implemented by the nonprofit organization to reach defined organizational and/or societal goals”* (Willems, 2013, p. 2).

Sociologists identify NPOs as agents of change: most of them may be more or less directly and more or less explicitly working for a “better world” (Cooperrider and Passmore, 1991). Different NPOs may target different changes: some are trying to change people’s mentality; others want to alter their behaviour. Literature therefore has tried to capture the essence of NPOs in terms of “philanthropy” (eg. Sulek, 2010), “democracy” (Rothschild & Stephenson, 2009), “civil society” (Muukkonen, 2009) and “civicness” (Dekker & Evers, 2009). We encompass the above approaches in terms of “value based rationality” (Weber). Members sharing the same values will provide their NPO with its force and direction.

The political approach takes into account the way NPOs are organized in terms of collective action. From grassroots spontaneous beginnings to more professional forms of development (Rothschild & Stephenson, 2009, Valéau, 2011), political performance deals with the ability of the organization to keep being the result of a large and diverse set of stake holders. Freeman (1984) identifies stake holders as any groups or individuals potentially affected by the action of the organization. Political performance relates to the mobilization of the latter within the organization and to their intention to stay as a member of the organization.

Yet, all NPOs do not have the same goals, values and means and thus, they do not equally value each of these dimensions. Therefore, we analyze their performance as a construct reflecting the fit perceived by their members between quality of management actions and the achievement of the organizational mission. Individuals and groups interpretations of the goals and values of their NPO constitute a “framework of thought” (Watlawick, 1975), a “mental figure” (Piager, 1921) underlying their judgment about the output of their NPO in terms of performance. We adopt a constructivist cognitive approach considering “perceived performance” in terms of “perceived effectiveness”, feelings of “sharing the same values” and “members’ intention to stay”.

## 1.2. Members commitment effect on perceived performance

Nevertheless, perceived performance is not just a systematic application of a cognitive scheme based on the rational interpretation of goals and values. Psychology has, in many ways, demonstrated that individuals' judgement can easily be affected by feelings and emotions. Such reactions have, for instance, been conceptualized in terms of commitment, referring to the attitudes through which individuals address their relationship with their organization (Allen & Meyer, 1991) but also to the level of their behavioural investment in its functioning (Rousseau et al. 2006a).

### *Organizational attitudinal commitment and its effect on perceived performance*

Commitment is a concept aimed at describing the relationship between an individual and their work environment. To integrate all its possible forms, commitment can be very simply defined as the contrary of indifference: commitment measures the intensity of the individual's relationship to work, whatever its content may be. Commitment refers to the individual's representation and attitude to his or her relationship to work combining perceptions, meanings and evaluation. Following this perspective, different bases of commitment have been conceptualized (Etzioni, 1961; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986; Morrow, 1993). The typology the most often referred to is the one outlined by Allen and Meyer (1997) including affective, normative, high investment and low alternative dimensions.

Affective commitment is based on emotional attachment, identification and involvement with an organization. Employees with a high level of affective commitment stay in the organization because they want to. This definition from Allen and Meyer accords with the one from Mowday, Porter and Steers (1979): an identification based on the sharing of organizational goals and values. Different interpretations of these phenomena have been given: some talk about conscious subscription, others about deeper internalizations through deeper socialization.

Normative commitment is based on a feeling of duty and moral obligation. Employees with a high level of normative commitment feel they ought to stay in the organization. This expression used by Allen et Meyer (1991) refers to some kind of moral duty similar to the one described by Kelman (1959) and Kanter (1968). Wiener (1982) assimilates this base of commitment to the sum of normative pressures internalized by the individual. Another approach considers a form of reciprocation (Gouldner, 1960), when individuals perceive the organization is doing the right thing.

High investment commitment is the first dimension forming Allen & Meyer's continuous commitment (1991). It refers to the attention given to costs involved in an eventual resignation. This base of commitment has been conceptualized as an exchange relationship based on different interests (ex. Etzioni, 1961 ; Herbiniak & Alutto, 1972). It has also been defined in terms of escalating investments (Becker, 1960 Allen et Meyer, 1991).

Low alternative is the second aspect of continuous commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1991). A debate is still going on about whether or not this subscale should be treated separately (McGee et Ford, 1987). Low alternative refers to a form of resignation based on the low equivalent alternatives available. The individual feels "trapped" in his or her organization (Staw, 1976 ; Kanter, 1968). Low alternative can be seen as a form of alienative commitment (Etzioni, 1961, Penley and Gould, 1988): a negative commitment leading individuals to carry on with a given relationship because they feel they don't have the choice.

Meyer et al.'s (2002) meta-analysis reported that affective and normative commitment are positively related to intention to stay, to self-reported performance and to organizational citizenship behavior, the latter including a civism dimension which can be defined as voluntary action to support the organization including defending its image. Therefore, we make the assumption that affective and

normative commitment will lead to a positive evaluation of the performance of organizations. On the other hand, individuals committed on an investment base will be more concerned with their own interests which will result in a neutral effect on their perception of performance. Low alternative will feed a more critical position as a result of the frustration associated to this form of commitment and, therefore, will have a negative effect on perceived performance.

- *Hypothesis 1a. Affective commitment positively relates to perceived performance*
- *Hypothesis 1b. Normative commitment positively relates to perceived performance*
- *Hypothesis 1c High investment does not relate to perceived performance.*
- *Hypothesis 1d. Low alternative negatively relates to perceived performance.*

## ***The effect of behavioral commitment on perceived performance***

Our second series of hypotheses relates to behavioral commitment i.e. individual's perception of their participation in the activity and decision making of their NPO. Since Festinger (1957), it is known that behaviors have an effect on attitudes: when behaving in a new way, the latter are adjusted in order to reduce "cognitive dissonance". From a managerial point of view, Argyris (1964) showed that autonomy and responsabilization can lead to deeper forms of identification. Kiesler (1971) as well as Beauvois and Joule (1986) describe an escalation process that can be initiated thanks to costless but repetitive public behaviors. We address behavioral commitment through participative governance (Hoarau & Laville, 2008) and teamwork behaviors (Rousseau et al., 2006).

NPOs often favour "an image of organization that is, at its core, collectivist and egalitarian." (Rothschild & Stephenson, 2009: 801). Participative governance, as opposed to centralized leadership, can be seen as a continuation of this principle when NPOs develop and professionalise. According to Laville & Hoarau (2008) participative governance is a potential specificity of NPOs with, in particular, the principle of associating internal stake holders such non-board volunteers and paid workers to strategic decision making. Cornforth (2004) observed that this democratic governance stresses that board members are lay representatives, there to serve the constituency(s) or stakeholders they represent" ; " Central to this view is the idea of a lay or non-professional board, where anyone can put himself or herself forward for election as a board member." (p.14). Such formalization makes participative governance more perceptible. Hoarau et Laville (2008) define governance as a series of mechanism aiming to align the way the organization is functioning with the project. Drawing on behavioral commitment theory (Kiesler, 1971), we make the assumption that participating to the decision making leads to a more positive evaluation of this alignment.

Teamwork behavioral commitment is a less established concept. Rousseau et al. (2006) defined it as integrating different theories, as "a conceptual structure of team members' overt actions that facilitate collective task accomplishment, taking into account the functional perspective, the higher level categories are the regulation of team performance and the management of team maintenance." Rousseau et al., (2006) refer to different activities such as the preparation of task accomplishment (team mission analysis, goal specification, and planning), task-collaborative behaviors (coordination, cooperation, and information exchange), work assessment behaviors (performance monitoring and systems monitoring), and team adjustment behaviors (backing-up behaviors, intrateam coaching, collaborative problem solving, and team practice innovation). Rousseau et al's (2006) definition emphasizes the participation of members into a dynamic cooperative process. We reinterpret it as a form of behavioral commitment binding the individual to organizational output. Once again, we make the assumption that such commitment will lead to a more positive evaluation of the latter.

- *Hypothesis 2a. Participative and formal governance are positively related to perceived performance, whereas centralized leadership is not.*
- *Hypothesis 2b. Teamwork behavioral commitment is positively related to perceived performance.*

### 1.3. A group approach to commitment, perceived performance and their relationship

Our first two series of hypotheses were rooted in a psychological approach to perceived performance. Therefore, they do not take into account the collective and social dimension of the perceived performance. Our third set of hypotheses is rooted in a sociological and social psychological approach to social representation. Our first assumption is that most of the above variables have a group dimension ; our second is that these group level variables have a specific effect, over and beyond individual commitment, on perceived performance.

Social representations are part of a sociological and social psychology approach to perceptions attitudes and behaviors. This concept is the heart of Durkheim's work (1897). Social representations are part of culture, the latter being defined as a set of beliefs, values, norms, attitudes and behaviors shared by the members of a given group or community. Culture and its contents result from a complex process that cannot be totally controlled by individuals, they are at least partly emergent. According to Durkheim (1897), social fact can be explained by other social facts. Cultural group perceptions influence individual perceptions in the form of norms. Kelman (1959) evokes three types of influence: compliance, identification and internalization, the latter corresponding to different levels of achievement of the socialization process (Pasquier & Valéau, 2011). From a management perspective, we can refer to the concept of organizational culture, but also to collective entrepreneurship occurring when a given vision becomes paradigmatic among members ( Boncler et al. 2006)

Applying the concept of social representation to our problematic, we make the assumption that most of our variables operate at a group level. We consider that our three dimensions of perceived performance are concerned with the latter. Perceived efficiency and sharing the same values concern the common vision of NPO achievement. Intention to quit could be seen as a more individual output, yet it can also reflect the state of the social bonds within the group. As far as attitudinal commitment is concerned, affective and normative commitment are both directly related to socialization and will naturally have a group dimension. On the other hand, calculative and low alternative would, a priori, be related to a more personal strategy and feelings. Governance as institutionalized functioning should also be the object of a group perception, so as should teamwork behavior, as a perception of the functioning of the group.

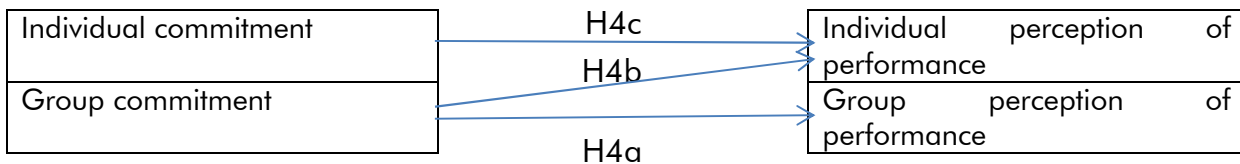
- *Hypothesis 3a. There is group dimension to perceived performance*
- *Hypothesis 3b. There is a group dimension to affective and normative commitment*
- *Hypothesis 3c. There is no group dimension for high investment and low alternative commitment*
- *Hypothesis 3d. There is a group dimension to governance and teamwork behavior.*

Group dimensions of our variables must be taken into account in the relationship between commitment and perceived performance. Do group dimensions of attitudinal and behavioral commitment relate to group dimensions of perceived performance? Do group dimensions of attitudinal and behavioral commitment relate to individual perceptions of performance? On the other hand, When people deviate positively / negatively from the group commitment, do they also score differently on "perceived effectiveness", "intention to stay" and "having the same values"?

*Hypothesis 4a. Group attitudes and perceptions toward the organization positively relate to group perceptions of performance*

*Hypothesis 4b. Group attitudes and perceptions toward the organization positively relate to individual perceptions of performance*

*Hypothesis 4c. Individual attitudes and perceptions toward the organization positively relate to individual perceptions of performance over and beyond group perceptions*



## 2. METHOD

A stratified sampling was set. First, 140 organizations were contacted, out of which 51 decided to participate in our study. Second, within each organization, a questionnaire was sent out to several members of each organization. On average 4,05 people answered per organization, resulting in a total sample of 207 respondents, including 99 volunteers and 108 paid-workers.

We measured organizational commitment using Allen and Meyer 18 items questionnaires including affective commitment (6 items, eg. *"I am proud to belong to this organization"*), normative commitment (6 items, eg. *"It would not be morally right for me to leave this organization now"*), high investment (3 items, eg. *"For me personally, the costs of leaving this organization would be far greater than the benefits"*) and low alternative (3 items, eg. *"I feel that I have too few options to consider leaving this organization"*). Governance forms were measured with 8 items created for this study: participative commitment (2 items, eg. *"In practice, volunteers have the last word"* & *"In practice, employees have the last word"*) formal governance (4 items, eg. *"In practice, the general assembly has the last word"*), centralized leadership (2 items, eg. *"In reality, the president has the last word"*). Teamwork behavior measure used Rousseau, Aubé & Savoie (2006b) 12 items scale (eg. *"We help others in order to achieve our work"*). In order to measure perceived performance, we used 3 different scales: perceived efficiency (1 item : *"Our organization is efficient"*); sharing the same values (1 item, eg *"All the others members and I share the same values"*) and intention to remain a member (3 items, eg. *"I will still be in this organization within two years"*). Alphas of cronbach were satisfying for all the above variables.

## 3. RESULTS

Our results are reported in tables 1, 2 and 3. Table 1 reports group variance for dependent and independent variables. Table 2 presents multiple regression lines including attitudinal and behavioral commitment scales in order to explain perceived performance. Table 3 focuses on the part played by teamwork behavior, as this latest has the most important effect on the three dependent variables studied. We aimed to measure how this effect was distributed between individual and group variances of dependent variables.



### 3.1. Group variances

<b>Dependent Variables</b>		
Perceived Effectiveness	29,40%	**
Intention to stay	23,90%	**
Sharing the same values	23,46%	**
<b>Independent Variables</b>		
Affective Commitment	19,72%	*
Alternative Commitment	11,19%	
Investment Commitment	6,71%	
Normative Commitment	18,68%	*
Teamwork commitment	26,68%	**
Participatory Governance	8,75%	
Formal Governance	30,17%	**
Centralized Leader Governance	10,98%	
*p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01		

**Table 1. Group variance percentage**

Table 1 reports the percentage of group variance for dependent and independent variables. These results provide support for hypotheses 3d: there is a significant group variance for all three dependent variables ( $p < .01$ ). The most important group variance is for perceived effectiveness with nearly 30%, intention to stay and sharing the same values both have 23% of the group variance. The level of group variance for the independent variables appears to be more contrasted with teamwork commitment and formal governance showing a strong group effect (26% & 30%), affective and normative commitment having an average level (18% & 19%). Supporting hypothesis 3b, high sacrifice and low alternative commitment show no significant group variance. Contrary to hypotheses 2c, participative governance and centralized leadership present a non-significant low level of group variance.

### 3.2. Multilevel analysis

In view of these results, we conducted a first multilevel analysis, integrating group variances of independent variables, when significant, as distinct variables. Table 2 displays a stepwise approach. Model 1 gives the regression based on a first set of variables: four types of commitment on the three dependent variables ; Model 2 gives the regression adding a second set of variables: teamwork commitment and governance variables on the dependent variables. As can be seen, this second multilevel regression line provides a significant explanation for perceived effectiveness and for intention to stay but fails to explain sharing the same values.

	Model 1	s.e.	Sig.	Model 2	s.e.	Sig.
<b>Fixed Part</b>						
Intercept - Perceived effectiveness	<b>6,523</b>	<b>1,096</b>	<b>***</b>	<b>6,532</b>	<b>2,374</b>	<b>**</b>
Intercept - Intention to stay	-0,042	0,736		<b>2,711</b>	<b>1,351</b>	<b>*</b>
Intercept - Having same values	1,065	0,762		3,107	1,591	
Alternative commitment - Perceived effectiveness	<b>-0,288</b>	<b>0,065</b>	<b>***</b>	-0,111	0,064	
Alternative commitment - Intention to stay	<b>-0,139</b>	<b>0,045</b>	<b>**</b>	-0,052	0,043	
Alternative commitment - Having same values	-0,057	0,045		0,020	0,046	
Investment commitment - Perceived effectiveness	0,082	0,072		0,048	0,068	
Investment commitment - Intention to stay	0,083	0,049		0,076	0,046	
Investment commitment - Having same values	-0,062	0,050		-0,067	0,050	
Org. Affective commitment - Perceived effectiveness	0,034	0,241		-0,086	0,349	
Org. Affective commitment - Intention to stay	0,000	0,162		-0,345	0,199	
Org. Affective commitment - Having same values	-0,101	0,168		-0,316	0,235	
Org. Normative commit - Perceived effectiveness	-0,191	0,125		-0,217	0,147	
Org. Normative commit - Intention to stay	0,029	0,084		-0,069	0,084	
Org. Normative commit - Having same values	-0,100	0,086		-0,154	0,099	
Ind. dif. Affective commit - Perceived effectiveness	-0,266	0,138		-0,190	0,125	
Ind. dif. Affective commitment - Intention to stay	-0,172	0,096		-0,127	0,089	
Ind. dif. Affective commit - Having same values	-0,075	0,097		-0,045	0,094	
Ind. dif Normative commit - Perceived effectiveness	-0,114	0,073		<b>-0,171</b>	<b>0,067</b>	<b>*</b>
Ind. dif Normative commitment - Intention to stay	<b>0,109</b>	<b>0,050</b>	<b>*</b>	0,075	0,047	
Ind. dif Normative commit - Having same values	<b>0,113</b>	<b>0,051</b>	<b>*</b>	0,081	0,049	
Participatory governance - Perceived effectiveness				0,038	0,068	
Participatory governance - Intention to stay				0,003	0,048	
Participatory governance - Having same values				-0,055	0,049	
Centr. Leader governance - Perceived effectiveness				0,052	0,059	
Centr. Leader governance - Intention to stay				0,060	0,041	
Centr. Leader governance - Having same values				-0,017	0,044	
Org. Teamwork commit - Perceived effectiveness				-0,059	0,207	
Org. Teamwork commitment - Intention to stay				-0,219	0,118	
Org. Teamwork commitment - Having same values				-0,165	0,139	
Org. Formal governance - Perceived effectiveness				0,022	0,129	
Org. Formal governance - Intention to stay				-0,101	0,073	
Org. Formal governance - Having same values				-0,016	0,086	

Ind. dif. Teamwork commit - Perceived effectiveness				0,501	0,085	***
Ind. dif. Teamwork commitment - Intention to stay				0,328	0,059	***
Ind. dif. Teamwork commit - Having same values				0,166	0,063	**
Ind. dif. Formal governance / Perceived effective.				-0,021	0,066	
Ind. dif. Formal governance / Intention to stay				-0,055	0,049	
Ind. dif. Formal governance / Having same values				0,075	0,049	
<b>Random part</b>						
<b>Level: Organization</b>						
Variance of Perceived effectiveness	0,473	0,179	**	0,745	0,218	***
Cov. of Intention to stay and Perceived effectiveness	0,169	0,092		0,285	0,098	**
Variance of Intention to stay	0,198	0,080	*	0,185	0,071	**
Cov. Perceived effectiveness & having same values	0,099	0,088		0,239	0,107	*
Cov. Intention to stay and Having same values	0,068	0,059		0,100	0,060	
Variance of Having same values	0,208	0,083	*	0,295	0,097	**
<b>Level: Respondent</b>						
Variance of Perceived effectiveness	1,470	0,173	***	1,137	0,138	***
Cov. of Intention to stay and Perceived effectiveness	0,290	0,088	**	0,068	0,070	
Variance of Intention to stay	0,688	0,082	***	0,563	0,069	***
Cov. Perceived effectiveness & having same values	0,019	0,086		-0,109	0,073	
Cov. of Intention to stay and Having same values	0,034	0,060		-0,062	0,052	
Variance of Having same values	0,699	0,084	***	0,612	0,075	***
-2*loglikelihood	1629,990			1500,873		
Change in '-2*loglikelihood' from Model 0	-163,686			-292,803		
Degrees of freedom	18			36		
Model improvement (sig.)	p < .001			p < .001		
Units: Organizations	49			49		
Units: Respondents	193			185		
Units: Respondent indicators	566			545		

**Table 2. Multilevel regression with all independent variables**

Model 1 first introduces attitudinal commitment dimensions in the regression line. Results confirm hypothesis 1b: normative commitment relates positively to sharing the same value and to intention to stay. In line with hypothesis 1d, low alternative commitment has a negative significant effect on perceived effectiveness and on intention to stay, but no effect on sharing the same values. Hypotheses 1a and 1c were not confirmed as affective commitment and high investment have no effect on any dimension of perceived performance. Model 2 then adds to the regression line the behavioral commitment dimensions. As a result, the effects previously identified in model 1 become non-significant, the latter being fully mediated by the strong significant impact of teamwork behavioral commitment on all three dependent variables. Model 2 also shows the absence of effect of all governance dimensions and an unexpected negative effect of normative commitment on perceived effectiveness.

### 3.3. Individual and group variance of the dependent variables explained by teamwork behavior

The last part of our multilevel analysis consisted in an examination of the remaining variance of each aspect of each dependent variable after running the new regression exclusively based on teamwork commitment (table 3), table 2 having shown that the latter had the strongest effect of all on the three dependent variables. Table 4 allows us to compare the individual and group variances to model 0 i.e. before the regression, with the remaining variance after running model 1 including the group dimension of teamwork commitment only, model 2 including the individual dimension only and model 3 including both dimensions.

<b>Fixed Part</b>	Model 0	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Intercept - Perceived effectiveness	5.484***	5.828***	5.488***	5.779***
Intercept - Intention to stay	0.008	0.996	0.002	0.916
Intercept - Having same values	0.008	0.177	0.012	0.149
Org. mean Teamwork commitment - Perceived effectiveness		-0.065		-0.055
Org. mean Teamwork commitment - Intention to stay		-0.181*		-0.168
Org. mean Teamwork commitment - Having same values		-0.031		-0.026
Ind. dif. from org. mean Teamwork commitment - Perceived effectiveness			0.559***	0.561***
Ind. dif. from org. mean Teamwork commitment - Intention to stay			0.347***	0.345***
Ind. dif. from org. mean Teamwork commitment - sharing the same values			0.219***	0.216***
<b>Model Fit</b>				
-2*loglikelihood	1793.68	1758.268	1700.53	1667.334
Change in '-2*loglikelihood' from Model 0		35.408	93.146	126.342
Degrees of freedom		3	3	6
Model improvement (sig.)		p < 0.001	p < 0.001	p < 0.001

\*p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

**Table 3. Fixed part of multilevel-multivariate analysis and model fit statistics**

<b>Random Part</b>	Model 0	Model 1	Variance explained <sup>§</sup>	Model 2	Variance explained <sup>§</sup>	Model 3	Variance explained <sup>§</sup>
<b>Level: Organization</b>							
Variance of Perceived effectiveness	0.698**	0.7**	0.000	0.824***	0.000	0.833***	0.000
Covariance of Intention to stay and Perceived effectiveness	0.258*	0.233*	0.097	0.335**	0.000	0.315**	0.000
Variance of Intention to stay	0.234**	0.186*	0.205	0.287**	0.000	0.245**	0.000
Covariance of Perceived effectiveness and Sharing the same values	0.229*	0.223*	0.026	0.28**	0.000	0.275*	0.000
Covariance of Intention to stay and sharing the same values	0.092	0.077		0.13*		0.117	
Variance of Having same values	0.236**	0.241**	0.000	0.254**	0.000	0.259**	0.000
<b>Level: Respondent</b>							
Variance of Perceived effectiveness	1.676***	1.69***	0.000	1.204***	0.282	1.206***	0.280
Covariance of Intention to stay and Perceived effectiveness	0.338***	0.344***	0.000	0.047	(0.861) <sup>€</sup>	0.047	(0.861) <sup>€</sup>
Variance of Intention to stay	0.768***	0.785***	0.000	0.587***	0.236	0.599***	0.220
Covariance of Perceived effectiveness and Sharing the same values	0.061	0.075		-0.122		-0.11	
Covariance of Intention to stay and sharing the same values	0.087	0.091		-0.05		-0.047	
Variance of sharing the same values	0.755***	0.752***	0.004	0.683***	0.095	0.681***	0.098

\* p < 0.05; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.001

<sup>§</sup> Variance explained from Model 0, expressed as pseudo R<sup>2</sup> values

<sup>€</sup> Full covariance between intention to stay and perceived effectiveness is explained when respectively comparing model 2 and 3 with model 0.

**Table 4. Random part of multilevel-multivariate analysis**

In line with hypothesis 4a : model 1 based on group dimensions of teamwork commitment explains 20% of the group variance of "intention to stay", yet after introducing the individual variable with models 2 and 3, this explanation tends to disappear. Contrary to hypothesis 4b, there is no effect of group dimensions on individual variance of perceived performance. In line with hypothesis 4c, model 3, including individual and group dimensions, accounts for a significant part of individual variance:

28% for perceived efficiency, 22% for intention to stay and 10% for shared values); while the commitment dimensions explain about 20% for the group variance for the intention to stay.

## 4. DISCUSSION

Our study is one among the few that have measured individual and group levels of commitment and perceived performance and included them in a multilevel analysis. Our result shows that individual normative and low alternative dimensions of attitudinal commitment have an effect on perceived performance, yet the latter is fully mediated by teamwork behavioral commitment. The group variance explains 20% of the group level of intention to stay, yet this effect is also mediated by the effect occurring at the individual level. As a result, explaining the group level of perceived performance remains an only partially achieved challenge.

The normative dimension of attitudinal commitment has an effect on sharing the same values and intention to stay which corresponds to social and political aspects of the development of nonprofit organizations. Normative commitment can be interpreted as the form of commitment that could reflect grassroots activists' attitudes with a values based approach to the development of their NPO. Perceived performance therefore concerns whether or not the NPO is doing the right thing, in particular if it is still a collective movement based social and democratic values. The effects of normative commitment are mediated by teamwork behaviors, when negative effect of normative commitment on perceived effectiveness emerges. The latter can also be interpreted as the perception of the old normative guard toward the professionalization of development: Rothchild and Stephenson (2009) indicate that they often "*reject outright the image of hierarchy and bureaucracy that is so central to the modernist project.*" (p801). In their mind, perceived efficiency relates to an approach to the management of NPOs to which they don't subscribe. Future or qualitative research could study the mix effect of the professionalization process on group perceived performance.

Lack of alternatives usually has a small or even no effect on intention to stay (Meyer et al, 2002). In our case, we noted a significant negative effect. This result can be interpreted as a specificity of NPOs, in which intention to stay has a deeper meaning in terms of membership. Once again, this reaction may be the remains of the initial grassroots stages through which most NPOs go (Valéau, 2011), with individuals "*voluntarily*" joining them to work for a common social goal to which they deeply subscribe. Even when NPOs develop, volunteers and paid workers often keep a sense of what they're doing: helping people is never a neutral activity. Therefore, when feeling stuck because of lack of alternatives (Penley & Gould, 1988) i.e. when individuals are not "*voluntary*" members, they may lose faith in the project or even develop a more negative feeling leading to intention to quit and to a negative evaluation of the overall action as measured by perceived effectiveness. This is coherent with behavioral commitment theory: they may not feel concerned with or responsible for the output of their NPO. Indeed, this effect is mediated by behavioral commitment.

The main salient result of our regression is the strength of the effect of teamwork behavioral commitment, the latter taking over all the other variables, fully mediating all their effects. We expected this effect but it appears to be even stronger than predicted. This collective behavioral dynamic could be at the heart of NPOs. Teamwork behavioral commitment, as defined and measured by Rousseau et al (2006a; 2006b), deals with smooth functioning based interpersonal bounds rather than ideological integration. Two of the most representative items may be "*we try to understand the others' points of view*" and "*We respect the others' points of view even when we don't agree*". This variable provides an interesting perspective showing that NPOs members don't need to agree on everything to work together. Literature of the past few years has shown the possible tensions between different approaches to the management of NPOs' when developing (eg. Reid & Karambaya, 2009 ; Valéau, 2011). Teamwork behavioral commitment stands as a possible answer. This takes over beyond individual commitment and perception of official governance. Teamwork commitment deals with a realistic and soft approach to the collective functioning of NPOs based on collaborative collective action rather than commitment to ideologies.

Another new contribution of this research is that we succeeded in measuring the existence of a group perception, above and beyond individual perceptions, yet showing that group perception is not equally distributed among variables. The nature of the collective variance can be discussed. One may think that this inter-subjectivity is a better reflection of the objective results. In our opinion, this is still a common sensemaking of the shared experience of collaborative work, as shown by the central part played by teamwork behavioral commitment. Yet, the main limit of this research is the absence of the effect of group commitment on group perception of performance. We can consider, at least three possible explanations: methodological issues related to the size of our sample, epistemological issues related to individual self-reported data, most of all ontological issues related to the complexity and hardly observable nature of social dynamic. The most obvious reason why we could not succeed in measuring the group effect is the sample size : we have succeeded in showing the existence a group level for most of our variables, yet showing the relationship between these constructs requires a bigger sample. Future research will need a minimum of at least 200. The main epistemological issue is that we have only dealt indirectly with group perception as we have only interviewed individuals and, as a result we are dealing with the effect of the group on the individual. Future research should explore other methods, such as group interviews, to measure group level phenomena more directly. Ontological issues relate to the nature of group variance: it exists over and beyond individual members of the group but, as Durkheim (1895) experienced it can only be observed through its indirect manifestation.

## CONCLUSION

We are only half way through : we have demonstrated that individual attitudes such as commitment have an effect on perceived performance, but that collective dynamic is from far the best explanation of individual perception. We have also demonstrated that there is a collective perception, yet we have failed to show that the latter relates specifically to group and individual perception. As a result the group dimension of NPOs remains a challenge for future research. Qualitative research could help to understand the dynamic of group perception (eg. Reid & Karambaya, 2009; Pache & Santos, 2010), but we still believe that quantitative measures are possible with bigger samples and fewer variables. A multilevel approach is the only way to simultaneously deal with individual and group levels of perceptions, attitudes and behaviors, and to identify their interaction.

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