

Measuring Volunteerability and The Capacity to Volunteer among Non-volunteers: Implications for Social Policy

Abstract

As volunteering and its benefits gain global recognition, social policy makers can sustain and increase volunteering through social policy, legislation and other types of involvement. A key performance practice is to measure the rate of volunteering based on the percentage of the population that volunteer or the number of hours donated. The focus of this paper, however, is on the capacity to volunteer by non-volunteers as well as by volunteers. The concept and theory of volunteerability (an individual's ability to overcome related obstacles and volunteer, based on their willingness, capability and availability) offers a richer understanding of how people can be assisted to overcome barriers to maximise their volunteer potential and thus increase volunteering. The paper details the definitions and benefits of volunteering and covers examples of related social policy, as well as explaining the concept of volunteerability and how it can be measured using existing and new scales. Based on a mixed methods study in Australia, the paper offers specific measures to examine the concept of volunteerability and reveals important differences between volunteers and non-volunteers. The paper also details major barriers to volunteering and how social policies can be developed to overcome them.

Keywords: volunteerability, volunteering, social policy, measurement, motivation, barriers

Introduction

Since the 1990s, many Western governments and global organisations such as the United Nations have shown increasing interest in volunteering in social welfare and other contexts (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010; Leigh *et al.* 2011). Governments have increasingly used the non-profit sector and their volunteers to help achieve a range of social policy goals through direct service provision (Holmes 2009; Oppenheimer 2008; Plowden 2003). Governments are involved in volunteering, both directly and indirectly, through a variety of actions: from developing legislation to funding marketing campaigns and presenting volunteering awards; appointing ministers responsible for volunteering and having leaders who themselves volunteer; regulating and collaborating with volunteer-involving organisations as well as signing agreements and compacts with a range of stakeholders to facilitate volunteering (see Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010).

Governments measure the rates and hours of volunteering in various ways, including through national bureaux of statistics and annual accounts (Salamon *et al.* 2011). The data are then used to encourage and strengthen volunteering capacity within communities and enhance the building of social capital, defined by Putnam (1995: 664-665) as 'features of social life-networks, norms and trust that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives'. However, this paper suggests that it is more important to measure the potential growth of volunteering by examining non-volunteers and their propensity or capacity to volunteer (Brudney and Meijs 2009), as this

can identify the features that exclude or prevent people from volunteering (Handy and Cnaan 2007).

Based on previous work (Brudney and Meijs 2013; Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010), we define the concept of volunteerability as the individual's ability to overcome related obstacles and volunteer, based on their willingness, capability and availability. Operationalising the concept of volunteerability can assist social policy makers, volunteer-involving organisations and researchers, to acknowledge measures other than a simple 'head count' of volunteer numbers and volunteering hours. Measuring volunteerability can lead to a better understanding of the potential unused 'volunteer energy', which might lead to new ways of encourage and convert non-volunteers to volunteering. This would not only assist to increase volunteer rates and hours but could have broader social ramifications including an impact on social policy (Brudney and Meijs 2013). To achieve this, we have developed measures for the three components of volunteerability: willingness, capability and availability, as well as a new scale to measure the likelihood to volunteer if certain barriers are removed.

Volunteering and social policy

There are various definitions of volunteering, which typically include the following four elements: free will, no monetary reward, helping strangers/beneficiaries, and through an organisation or directly with recipients (Wilson 2012). Scholars (Cnaan *et al.* 1996; Snyder and Omoto 2008) have noted varying 'degrees' of volunteering, resulting in the idea of volunteering as a continuum, ranging from narrow to broader forms (Whittaker *et al.* 2015). At the

narrow end of this continuum, volunteering is conceptualised as entirely voluntary with no coercion or pressure; involving no direct or indirect reward; undertaken through a formal volunteer-involving organisation; and with no previous relationship existing between the volunteer and beneficiary. Broader definitions involve degrees of coercion (for example, mandatory service learning in schools, community service court orders); remuneration below the value of the paid work and services provided; undertaken outside of formal organisations; with volunteers and beneficiaries sharing backgrounds or interests (Whittaker *et al.* 2015).

Many studies distinguish between volunteers and non-volunteers to examine differences between the two groups, including background variables, motivations and benefits (Dury *et al.* 2015; Wilson 2012). Other categorisations include episodic volunteering versus ongoing volunteering (Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003) and formal volunteering conducted in an organisational setting versus informal volunteering, conducted directly with service recipients (Lee and Brudney 2012). Hogg (2016) grouped volunteers into three cohorts: 1) constant volunteers who have volunteered for most or all of their adult life; 2) serial volunteers who have volunteered intermittently and for different organisations; and 3) trigger volunteers who only begin to volunteer in older age.

Volunteering has benefits to the individual volunteer, the volunteer-involving organisation and society at large including governments. On the individual (micro) level, volunteering can improve the life of the volunteer, including levels of physical and psychological wellbeing (Thoits and Hewitt 2001); employability and the likelihood of finding a job (Paine *et al.* 2013); social

connections and networks (Wilson 2012); and the individual's sense of value to society (Lie *et al.* 2009). At the organisation (meso) level, volunteering provides human resources at a subsidised cost, necessary skills and talent and additional sources of philanthropy. It also benefits the service recipients or the clients of these organisations through unique relationships and perceived altruism (see Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2011).

Volunteering benefits societies at large and governments (macro level) as it helps to reduce costs, keeps services affordable and saves tax-payer money (Bovaird *et al.* 2015). Volunteering enhances social capital, social cohesion and social inclusion (Putnam 1995; Uslaner 2001). It is connected with democratic processes and is an integral part of citizenship participation in local governance (Lowndes and Wilson 2001). High levels of volunteering in a society are, therefore, not only important from an economic welfare service provision perspective but also from a community participation and education for the labour market perspective (Van den Bos 2014). Volunteering has also been linked to positive and beneficial citizenship behaviour (Plowden 2003).

In recent years, governments and social policy makers have sought to increase volunteering through a range of initiatives. Neo-liberal politics has emphasised the self-responsibility of citizens and focused on reduced government provision and stimulated market-based strategies (Lub and Uytterlinde 2012). Western neo-liberal governments have increasingly relied on volunteers to deliver essential services, while the state withdraws direct service provision (Carmel and Harlock 2008). Governments have provided funding for voluntary organisations as well as sought compacts or formal relationships with

the voluntary sector (Milbourne and Cushman 2015; Plowden 2003). Some policies promote volunteerism as a virtue while passing legislation that constrains the independence of volunteer organisations (Milbourne and Cushman 2015). In addition, governments use volunteering as a measure to address other social policy issues, such as social inclusion or elderly wellbeing (Jones and Heley 2014). For example, the Dutch Social Support Act or 'Participation Act' (*Wet maatschappelijke ondersteuning*) focuses on promoting active citizenship and the participation of able-bodied citizens and their associations in the development and implementation of local social policy (Lub and Uytterlinde 2012).

Shifts in policies of mutual obligation that focus on the unemployed and other welfare recipients to undertake 'volunteering' in return for their benefits have added a level of complexity (Levy 2014). Classification of volunteers as 'workers' through government legislation such as occupational health and safety, too, has created further tensions (McGregor-Lowndes 2014). The preceding discussion illustrates that volunteering and social policy intersect at a number of different levels, with implications for the volunteer, volunteer-involving organisations, the voluntary sector and society at large.

Evidence suggests that there are non-volunteers who, with the right incentives or volunteer roles, could potentially be attracted to volunteer. Volunteer participation rates vary across different countries and participation can both increase and decrease (Musick and Wilson 2008). As international comparative studies on student volunteering have shown, the kind of activities volunteers undertake also varies between countries (Handy *et al.* 2010), even if

these students are from similar countries such as The Netherlands and Belgium (Hustinx *et al.* 2012). The enormous outpouring of spontaneous volunteering associated with disasters further illustrates the additional capacity of individuals to volunteer in times of crisis. Volunteer participation is therefore not static and there is scope to both increase and decrease current levels of participation. However, it should be noted that not all non-volunteers will be able to volunteer. Some individuals may face such substantial structural barriers such as time constraints, and however willing they will not be able to participate (Sundeen *et al.*, 2007). Others may have such a negative perception of volunteering that they will never participate.

Both researchers and organisations report a substantial turnover among volunteers (Hustinx 2010). Some organisations have reported a decrease in volunteer participation with a negative impact on their ability to deliver essential services (McLennan *et al.*, 2009; Volunteering Australia, 2016), while others have had to adapt their volunteer programs to meet changes in volunteer participation (Oppenheimer *et al.* 2014).

In order to increase levels of volunteering via social policy, however, it is essential to capture the ability (or capacity) of the individual to overcome obstacles and volunteer (i.e. volunteerability), instead of focusing on current volunteering rates alone. To do so, we need to understand the concept of volunteerability, its key components (willingness, capability and availability) and the related barriers.

Volunteerability

Based on the concept of employability (McQuaid and Lindsay 2005), or the ability of the individual to be employed, Meijs and his colleagues developed the concept of volunteerability (Meijs *et al.* 2006), which focuses on the ability of the individual to overcome related obstacles and volunteer. It has three main components: the willingness of a person to volunteer (including motivation); the capability to volunteer (including perceived skills and self-efficacy) and availability (including amount of free time). The volunteerability concept connects potential and actual volunteering and shifts the focus to a scale of volunteerability, which includes current volunteers at one end of the spectrum, non-volunteers at the other end and potential volunteers somewhere in between (Dury *et al.* 2015).

According to Meijs *et al.* (2006), people can volunteer more as their willingness, capability and availability increase but (formal) volunteering only occurs when volunteer-involving organisations offer appropriate and desirable opportunities to the individual (Meijs and Brudney 2007). The concept of volunteerability offers insights into mechanisms to overcome barriers that prevent people from volunteering at the individual, the organisational and societal levels. However, the core difference between employability and volunteerability lies with responsibility: with employability the pressure to adapt (for example, in terms of availability) to get a paid job remains with the individual while with volunteerability, the pressure is on the recruiting organisation to offer attractive volunteer roles (Meijs *et al.* 2006). The responsibility issue offers governments the possibility to create effective social

policies for volunteering as distinct from policies designed for the paid workforce. In addition, most societies tend to assume that a person should make themselves 'fit for work' if they have no other means of supporting themselves, but one cannot argue that individuals are required to make themselves available or fit for volunteering, since this obligation would contradict both the definition and voluntary nature of the activity (Whittaker *et al.* 2015).

In 2010, the concept of volunteerability was extended in relation to the context of third parties (corporates, educational institutes and government), examining their role in enhancing individual volunteerability (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010). Shifting the focus from the micro level alone (the volunteer), the authors looked at meso-level solutions to overcoming barriers to volunteering (such as corporations and educational institutes acting as brokers to facilitate volunteering) and macro-level solutions (government policy). While this emerging literature has offered a theoretical definition of volunteerability and its components and the role of third parties, there have been no empirical studies of volunteerability and its impact on volunteering and social policy. For the first time, based on a study undertaken in Australia in 2015, this paper offers measures of the components of volunteerability, uses these measures to test levels of volunteerability and barriers, and finally, offers social policy solutions for each aspect of volunteerability.

Willingness

Willingness to volunteer is influenced by activism levels (Bales 1996), social norms, individual attitudes and values, psychological motives, and by

perceptions of volunteering as rewarding, meaningful and feasible (Handy *et al.* 2010). Willingness to volunteer is generally measured in terms of motivations to volunteer. Examining the literature on volunteer motivations (for a full review see Wilson 2012), it is evident that individuals begin to volunteer to fulfil particular motives or functions (Clary and Snyder 1999). They demonstrate prosocial motivations (Clary *et al.* 1996), altruistic motivations and instrumental/self serving motivations (Cnaan and Goldberg-Glen 1991).

While the willingness to volunteer is mainly an intrinsic process driven by internal motivations (Ryan and Deci 2000), there are extrinsic processes that can also increase willingness. These include reward and recognition of volunteering (Chinman and Wandersman 1999); demonstration of the impact volunteering has on organisations and society (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2011); using volunteer experiences as signals by employers and educational institutes (Handy *et al.* 2010), and creating a team of volunteers and good relationships (Grant 2007; Haski-Leventhal and Cnaan 2009).

In addition to the motivation to volunteer, it is possible to understand willingness based on positive or negative attitudes and beliefs of volunteering. Attitudes reflect the individual's overall positive or negative evaluation of a target (in this case – volunteering), based on the person's feelings or emotions about it (Morris 1997). Beliefs are an acceptance of cognitive propositions, statements or doctrine (Reber 1995). Negative beliefs about volunteering can influence subsequent participation (Law and Shek 2011) and therefore impact the volunteerability of an individual.

Finally, willingness to volunteer is based on an individual set of values, which can significantly affect both attitudes and behaviour. Values are defined as 'beliefs that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence' (Rokeach 1973: 160). Values serve as a moral compass that directs motivation and, potentially, decisions and actions (Schwartz 1992) and may affect the willingness to volunteer. Schwartz (1992) detailed 10 basic values grouped into self-enhancement values and self-transcendent values (including benevolence and universalism) and the latter were found to be related to volunteering (Hitlin 2003).

Capability

A person may have higher levels of volunteerability if she or he has the skills, competencies and knowledge required for volunteering in a specific role or organisation (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010). 'Capability' includes actual skills, perceived skills, and perceptions of the skills required to volunteer. It should be noted that although volunteering usually requires some skills, competencies and knowledge, these can be developed through training, support and on-the-job learning while volunteering. This could not only raise people's capability to volunteer but also their willingness, as skill development can be a motivation to volunteer and a related benefit (Peterson 2004).

Furthermore, capability is not just about *actual* skills, knowledge and resources. It also concerns the individual's *perception* of these aspects and self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is the extent or strength of one's belief in one's own ability

to complete tasks and reach goals (Ormrod 2006). As Bandura (1993: 118) explained, nothing is more 'pervasive than people's beliefs about their capabilities to exercise control over their own level of functioning'. This central tenet of self-efficacy theory can be applied to volunteering tasks. In addition, self-efficacy can be distinguished between general self-efficacy (when a person generally perceives him/herself as capable) and specific self-efficacy (when a person believes she/he has the required skills to undertake a task). Specific self-efficacy is important in increasing volunteering and preventing volunteer dropout (Eden and Kinnar 1991).

Availability

Research shows that when people are asked why they do not volunteer, a lack of time is usually the first barrier mentioned (Sundeen *et al.* 2007). Paradoxically, the individuals most likely to volunteer are in full-time work, with professional occupations and married with children (ABS 2015). These are the people most likely to have limited free time, yet they are able to accommodate time constraints in order to volunteer, albeit not for as many hours. It is also possible that having a job and children in school increase people's likelihood to find volunteering opportunities and/or to be asked to volunteer (Wilson 2012).

However, just like capability, availability to volunteer is a perception that is related to an individual's view of volunteering. Perceiving volunteering as an activity that can be done episodically (see Hustinx and Lammertyn 2003) or online could lead more people to see themselves as having the time to volunteer. Recent volunteering trends such as online volunteering, corporate volunteering,

family volunteering and volunteer tourism increase the availability to volunteer as they combine volunteering with other life demands (Holmes 2014; Hustinx and Meijs 2011).

Overcoming barriers

Since the concept definition of volunteerability includes overcoming barriers that prevent people from volunteering (Meijs *et al.* 2006), it is important to examine the barriers to volunteering and what can be done to remove them. Sundeen *et al.* (2007) found that lack of time, interest, and ill health are the main barriers to volunteering. An Australian study found that potential barriers included negative perceptions of volunteering activities, fear of getting rejected such as ageism, and concerns about the increasingly regulated organisational environment (Warburton and Smith 2003). In addition, non-volunteers have been found to have fewer resources than volunteers, which could act as a barrier to participation (Dury *et al.* 2015).

However, the main argument of this paper is that it is important to measure volunteering potential. Instead of asking people why they do not volunteer (e.g., Sundeen *et al.* 2007), it is more valuable to ask people if they would be more likely to volunteer if specific barriers were removed. These barriers are classified according to the three components of volunteerability in order to identify ways of overcoming them. It should be noted that while these are hypothetical items, which are difficult to analyse and evaluate relative to actual behaviour, this research offers evidence for policy and managerial practice.

The individual can reflect on the likelihood of volunteering in general and on the most significant barriers that preclude their propensity to volunteer. In turn, we argue, this facilitates increased volunteer participation and leads to substantial benefits at the individual, community and societal level allowing us to suggest suitable social policy pathways to increase volunteerability and address the identified barriers. Figure 1 shows that volunteerability is comprised of willingness, ability and capability to volunteer, and to the left of the figure, the measures we used to test each of these components. Examining Figure 1 can help understand the measures that are offered in this paper and the ways to address volunteerability and volunteering via social policy.

-Insert figure 1 about here-

Methods

Procedure

Using a mixed-method approach, a series of 12 focus groups with current volunteers, past volunteers (volunteered in the past 5 years but not in the past 12 months) and non-volunteers (not volunteered in the past 5 years) were conducted to further explore the three components of volunteerability (willingness, capability and availability). The focus group data were combined with the literature to design a survey instrument to test the concept using a nationally representative sample of volunteers and non-volunteers and the barriers that affect non-volunteers specifically. Past volunteers were not sampled for the survey as there were no available statistics to indicate a

nationally representative population for this group (see Sample and Data Analysis below).

Where possible, replicable scales were employed to assess the volunteerability constructs. The questionnaire was piloted using a panel survey company as a precursor to its full launch with 26 responses received (n= 16 volunteers and n=10 non-volunteers). While some minor revisions were made to the questionnaire (for example, changing the response formats of some questions from simple categorical 'yes' or 'no' items to Likert scales), the pilot confirmed that the question flow, routing and readability were acceptable. The anonymous online survey was administered to the company's panel samples during November-December 2015. 1,007 responses were achieved, 311 from volunteers and 696 from non-volunteers, so that responses from both groups could be compared.

Instrument

Screening questions: A series of filter questions were used to determine whether a respondent was a 'volunteer' or 'non-volunteer' (e.g., Have you given time/volunteered in the last 12 months?, Have you given time/volunteered in the last 5 years?). A core set of questions designed to assess the latent components of willingness, capability and availability was directed to all respondents to ensure comparisons could be made between the volunteers and non-volunteers. All scale items were measured on a 5-point scale, with Betz (1996) noting five to seven response categories are ideal.

Willingness to volunteer: This construct was measured using the following scales:

1. Volunteer Functions Inventory (VFI) (Clary *et al.* 1996), which has been applied widely in the volunteering literature.
2. Attitudes towards volunteering were assessed using items from the Beliefs Against Volunteering scale (Law and Shek 2011) and the Attitudes Influencing Monetary Donations to Charitable Organisations scale (Webb *et al.* 2000).
3. Values were assessed using the Short Schwartz's Value Survey (Lindeman and Verasalo 2005), which was found to have good internal consistency and be highly correlated with the original Schwartz's Value Survey (Schwartz 1992).

Capability to volunteer: This construct was measured using the following scales:

1. Self-efficacy scale (Chen *et al.* 2001).
2. A 12-item scale developed to assess perceptions of the skills required to volunteer.

Availability to volunteer: this was measured by asking participants to assess how many available hours they have per week, as well as asking people if they care for young children and if they are engaged in full or part time paid work.

Barriers: A 49 item scale was developed to assess what is required to overcome barriers to volunteering. While some of these items were phrased and presented in terms of barriers removed, others were phrased as an opportunity or incentive, which could assist in overcoming barriers such as lack of motivation or

time. Non-volunteers only were asked to indicate the likelihood of each of these factors affecting their decision to start volunteering in the next 12 months using the 5-point scale (from 1 'very unlikely' through to 5 'very likely'). The barriers included willingness related (e.g., 'there was free background checks' and 'if there were fewer rules and regulations'); availability related (e.g., 'I had more time', 'I could stop any time I want without consequences') and capability related (e.g., if 'training was provided', 'training was not required') items.

Background questions: Based on demographic determinants of volunteering research (see review by Wilson 2012), respondents were asked for their age, gender, employment status, country of birth, ethnicity, place of residence, home ownership status, occupation, annual income, highest level of education, household status and religious denomination. Table 1 summarises the scales and reliability levels for each, with all but one of the above 0.70 on Cronbach's alpha indicating a reliable set of items (de Vaus 2002). The exception was the Self-enhancement scale with an alpha of 0.678. Given it was close to the threshold and some authors have argued anything below 0.6 is unsatisfactory (Malhotra *et al.* 2006), the scale was retained for further analysis.

-Insert table 1 about here-

Sample and data analysis

The sample was stratified to represent the Australian population. It was stratified by a 70/30 per cent split of non-volunteers and volunteers, based on recent national volunteering statistics (ABS 2015). In addition, the sample was stratified by age (18-35, 35-54 and 55+), gender (50 per cent males; 50 per cent

females) and location (all Australian States and Territories, metropolitan and regional split).

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS version 23. Examining the normality of the scale data to determine the appropriate tests to apply, testing using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov statistic revealed that the items in question each had a significance level less than .05, indicating the assumption of normality was violated. As such, a series of non-parametric tests were conducted to examine differences between the volunteer and non-volunteer cohorts using chi-square tests for relatedness and Mann-Whitney U tests (equivalent to the independent groups t-test), where appropriate.

Results

The study aimed to develop and test measures of the three components of the concept of volunteerability, namely willingness, capability and availability to capture the potential to volunteer. To assess the value of these measures, we examined the differences between each in relation to volunteer status (comparing the responses of volunteers and non volunteers). Table 2 shows the differences between the two groups based on the volunteerability concept.

-Insert table 2 about here-

Willingness was examined by the functional motivation to volunteer. Volunteers scored significantly higher than non-volunteers on all motivations tested with the exception of 'career' in which the responses of both groups were comparable. Similarly, when examining their basic values, volunteers scored significantly higher than non-volunteers on seven of the 10 values including

'benevolence' and 'universalism'. In addition, volunteers scored higher than non-volunteers on positive attitudes towards volunteering and volunteer organisations. Volunteers also scored lower on negative beliefs against volunteering.

Capability, measured using a self-efficacy scale, showed that volunteers had significantly higher levels of self-efficacy compared to non-volunteers. We further examined capability based on a volunteering skill question and found that while 92.9 per cent of volunteers agreed that they had the skills required for volunteering, only 70.1 per cent of non-volunteers agreed with that statement [$\chi^2(1, N = 1007) = 63.47, p < .001$]. Volunteers scored significantly higher than non-volunteers on almost every positive item of the volunteering skills scale. For example, volunteers agreed more than non-volunteers that volunteering skills can be developed, that volunteering can help develop new skills, and that everyone can volunteer. On the other hand, non-volunteers agreed more than volunteers that volunteering requires specific knowledge and a range of skills, they were more afraid than volunteers that a volunteer organisation would not value their skills and/or that they were under-qualified to volunteer.

Finally, availability was examined based on the amount of reported free hours per week. As can be seen in table 2, the chi-square test revealed that volunteer and non-volunteer cohorts were significantly different in terms of the amount of available free time they had in a typical week [$\chi^2(1, N = 1007) = 23.616, p < .001$]. While volunteers reported to have 20.7 free hours per week on average, non-volunteers reported only 14.3 hours. When examining objective indicators of available free time, such as full-time work or having children at

home, the results were not significantly different, although 40.1 per cent of non-volunteers worked full-time compared to only 32.5 per cent of volunteers.

Barriers to volunteering were measured and the mean results are detailed in table 3. Based on the sample of non-volunteers alone, the barriers were divided according to the three components of the volunteerability concept. The strongest willingness barriers were 'I could do specific roles that appeal to me' (m = 3.50); 'I could see the good I was doing' (m = 3.48) and 'it was a well-known organisation/cause' (m= 3.23). The strongest capability barriers were 'I felt safe and secure' (m = 3.44); 'Training was provided' (m = 3.31); and 'I knew more about volunteering opportunities near me' (m = 3.27). Finally, the strongest availability barriers were 'It was close to where I live' (m = 3.57); 'I could stop any time I want without consequences' (m = 3.53); and 'I could do it from home' (m = 3.50).

-Insert table 3 about here-

Discussion

This study suggests that to create social policies that increase volunteering and utilise volunteer energy to its maximum (Brudney and Meijs 2009; 2013), it is not sufficient to know what percentage of the population actually volunteers and for how many hours. Governments in many countries already strive to increase volunteering rates through social policy, legislation and awards (Hustinx and Meijs 2011). Our contribution is therefore not the suggestion that social policy can be used to increase volunteering, but that the concept and measures of

volunteerability can further inform social policy in respect of promoting volunteering participation.

We argue that what is needed is a better understanding and analysis of volunteering propensity (Bales 1996), volunteering capacity, or volunteerability (Meijs *et al.* 2006). This will help policy-makers understand what can be done to assist people in overcoming barriers to volunteer and maximise their volunteering potential (Brudney and Meijs 2013). This paper offers measures to assess the volunteerability of individuals, and with that knowledge, relevant policies and practices can be developed to address a range of underlying mechanisms to increase volunteerability and assist people to volunteer. Countering the barriers that prevent people from volunteering might, in fact, be more effective than merely appealing for individuals to volunteer more often, particularly given recent declines in volunteering rates (ABS 2015). However, it should be acknowledged that some people would not volunteer even if the barriers they report as stopping them from volunteering would be removed. It is suggested that governments and policy-makers can use the measures presented here to conduct similar data collection in order to inform more evidence-based policies to increase volunteerability and volunteering.

The most important finding of this study is that volunteers consistently score higher than non-volunteers on the three components of the volunteerability concept thus supporting the validity of the theory (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010; Meijs *et al.* 2006;). In their willingness to volunteer, we found that in nearly every aspect of motivation, volunteers scored significantly higher than non-volunteers (values, social, understanding and enhancement, see

Clary *et al.* 1996); they had positive attitudes towards volunteering and voluntary organisations (Law and Shek 2011); as well as several values including 'benevolence' and 'universalism' (Hitlin 2003).

Volunteers demonstrated higher levels of (perceived) capability than non-volunteers with higher levels of self-efficacy (Chen *et al.* 2001) and more positive perceptions about their own ability to volunteer (and everyone else's ability to do so as well). We found that volunteers were more available to volunteer, with a higher percentage of free time per week. It should be noted that we only asked participants to report on their perceived available time, and it is also possible that volunteers did not have more actual time available than non-volunteers. However, volunteers did not differ from non-volunteers on objective competitive time measures such as full-time work, part-time work, and having children at home. This suggests that, just like the lack of capability, having limited free time may be more of a perceived barrier than an actual one and may be a proxy for other barriers such as lack of interest. From a social policy perspective, the concept of volunteerability offers valuable understandings of the underlying components affecting volunteer participation and illustrates stark differences between volunteers and non-volunteers. While all three components of volunteerability are important to potentially increase volunteering, it could be argued that since willingness is more pervasive in differentiating between volunteers and non-volunteers than capability and availability, it offers the most leverage for policy development and interventions.

Addressing volunteerability and volunteering through social policy requires an understanding that volunteering and volunteerability need to be

focused on a micro (the individual), meso (volunteer-involving organisations) and macro (government and societal) level (see Meijs *et al.* 2006), rather than isolated efforts directed at one of these levels only. On an individual level, all three components of volunteerability were important to varying degrees: the individual motivations and values; their actual and perceived capabilities; and their actual and perceived availability. Secondly, volunteer-involving organisations that struggle to recruit volunteers need to be supported. Using volunteer management tools such as volunteer recognition and awards to address willingness; training and skill development to address capabilities; and offering flexible volunteering opportunities (time and location or even role-sharing) to address availability will help organisations to identify and improve their volunteer recruitment processes (Cuskelly *et al.* 2006).

Implications for social policy

The implications for social policy are situated at the macro level of society and local community. This paper supports and further extends the Third Party Model (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010), where the concept of volunteerability and its implications for governments and policy makers was first outlined. The authors suggested that when governments promote volunteering on a macro level, when they present more opportunities to combine volunteering with other life demands and create policies to support it, they can enhance people's propensity to volunteer and help individuals and organisations to better contribute to society. Governments can support volunteering by alleviating the administrative burden and red tape currently afflicting volunteer involving organisations. With

the new data presented in this paper on the concept of volunteerability, its measures and related barriers, governments can be better informed on which policy directions to take in order to increase both volunteering and volunteerability. We would like to emphasise that the measures of volunteerability can be used not only to recruit non-volunteers – or potential volunteers - but also to maintain and keep volunteers for the long-term, thus enhancing higher levels of volunteering.

Table 4 summarises the main barriers according to the three components of the volunteerability concept and links them to potential policy solutions. Willingness-related barriers can be addressed by creating a larger variety of volunteering roles (e.g., episodic, online volunteering, family volunteering etc.) through agreements between the government and the voluntary sector, which will broaden the responsibilities of organisations and in turn of volunteers (Plowden 2003). Furthermore, governments can increase the willingness to volunteer and volunteerability in general through recognition and awards (McLennan and Bertoldi 2005) and commemorating volunteering days/weeks and celebrations (Haski-Leventhal *et al.* 2010).

-Insert table 4 about here-

As for capability, a sense of (in)security was found to be a major barrier, which can be addressed through legislation to protect the health and safety of volunteers (Brudney 2004). While in Australia, volunteers are covered by worker health and safety laws (such as the Safe Work Australia 2012 or Work Health and Safety Act, 2011) a recent study found that 15 per cent of volunteers surveyed rated their safety while volunteering at 3 or below on a 5-point scale

(Volunteering Australia 2016), suggesting some work is still required by the Australian Government, and other Western Governments with similar voluntary sectors (Salamon *et al.* 2011) to inform volunteers of their rights and organisations to put these into practice. Other barriers can be addressed through training such as creating training centres for volunteers particularly for more challenging roles, which could comprise the wellbeing of the volunteer and/or the recipient (e.g., Gerber 2013). While many volunteer-involving organisations offer training to their volunteers, particularly for difficult, high-demanding and risky roles, governments can still play a role in facilitating such training through the provision of benchmark training materials and supporting these organisations in doing so, acknowledging the cost implications of volunteer training and recruitment. Linking volunteer training to the award of recognised qualifications may help overcome both capability and willingness barriers, providing a transferable reward, which volunteers can take with them.

In addition, non-volunteers reported that if they knew more about volunteering opportunities around them they would volunteer. This barrier could be addressed by local and national campaigns and the creation of websites referring individuals to local volunteering opportunities. This could be extended through mobile phone applications, which alert potential volunteers about upcoming volunteer opportunities in their neighbourhood. While such websites are offered in many countries around the globe (e.g., do-it.org), such campaigns are often fragmented and raise only limited awareness. For example, our focus group participants had little knowledge about Australia's national website 'Go Volunteer'. Creating segmented advertisements on social media and national

campaigns in the traditional media, for example, could help raise awareness to such websites. Increasing volunteer participation and retaining current volunteers are essential for both governments and volunteer-involving organisations that rely on volunteers to deliver their services. The current paper notes that some organisations have experienced declines in volunteer participation and high levels of volunteer turnover (McLennan *et al.* 2009).

Finally, governments can play a role in addressing availability barriers by continuing to support volunteer state and national centres for volunteering that are geographically spread and can offer people local volunteering opportunities (Melville 2001). This way people need to spend less time travelling and can spend more time volunteering. Most importantly, governments can be involved in changing perceptions of volunteering so people will know that they can volunteer episodically, online, through their workplaces and in other ways that do not represent the time-consuming view of traditional volunteering. Raising awareness to the richness of volunteering opportunities and changing conceptualisations of volunteering could address most of the barriers identified in this research.

This paper suggests that there is scope for social policy development in the area of volunteering, but that it needs not only to be evidence-based but also that the evidence should focus on volunteerability or the potential to volunteer. The paper offers new measures of the concept of volunteerability that can be replicated elsewhere to allow policy makers to identify and address the willingness, capability and availability to volunteer, as well as the barriers that, if removed, could encourage more people to volunteer. Future research in other

national contexts could test the efficacy of these policy interventions and their resultant impact on volunteering participation using the volunteerability framework.

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Tables

Table 1: Summary of scale items and reliability scores

Scale	Sub-dimension	Cronbach's Alpha coefficient		
Willingness	Motivation to volunteer	Enhancement motive	0.850	
		Understanding motive	0.875	
	Beliefs against volunteering	Values motive	0.866	
		Protective motive	0.860	
		Social motive	0.846	
		Career motive	0.911	
		Barriers	0.796	
		Values	0.961	
	Capability	Volunteering skills scale	Transcendence	0.792
			Self-enhancement	0.678
	Self-efficacy	0.707		
		0.933		

Table 2: Volunteerability measures by volunteering

Volunteerability	Measure	Details	Volunteers (n = 311) Mean (median)	Non volunteers (n = 696) Mean (median)		
Willingness	Volunteer Functions Inventory	Protective	2.90 (3.00)	2.86 (3.00)		
		Values***	3.94 (4.00)	3.62 (3.80)		
		Career	2.77 (3.00)	2.76 (3.00)		
	Attitudes towards volunteering and voluntary organisations	Social***	Social***	3.04 (3.00)	2.82 (3.00)	
			Understanding***	3.66 (3.80)	3.40 (3.60)	
			Enhancement***	3.35 (3.40)	3.12 (3.20)	
		Beliefs Against Volunteering scale***	Beliefs Against Volunteering scale***	1.83 (1.67)	2.13 (2.00)	
			Attitudes Towards Helping Others***	3.88 (4.00)	3.64 (3.75)	
			Attitudes Towards Charitable Organisations***	3.68 (3.67)	3.47 (3.67)	
		Values (benevolence)	Benevolence***	Benevolence***	4.14 (4.00)	3.84 (4.00)
				Universalism***	3.86 (4.00)	3.59 (4.00)
				Power	2.64 (3.00)	2.59 (3.00)
			Achievement***	Achievement***	3.54 (4.00)	3.31 (3.00)
				Stimulation***	3.65 (4.00)	3.32 (3.00)
			Self direction***	Self direction***	3.93 (4.00)	3.71 (4.00)
				Tradition***	3.71 (4.00)	3.39 (3.00)
			Conformity***	Conformity***	3.63 (4.00)	3.35 (3.00)
				Security	3.96 (4.00)	3.85 (4.00)
			Hedonism	Hedonism	2.83 (3.00)	2.79 (3.00)
				Self efficacy	Self efficacy scale***	3.80 (3.88)
Capability	Perceived capability to volunteer	I consider myself to have the required skills to volunteer ***	92.9%	70.1%		
		Volunteering skills questionnaire	You can learn a lot from volunteering***	4.13 (4.00)	3.83 (4.00)	
	Volunteering skills questionnaire	Volunteering skills can be developed/learned***	4.10 (4.00)	3.87 (4.00)		
		Volunteering can assist me in gaining new skills***	3.90 (4.00)	3.59 (4.00)		

		Everyone can volunteer***	3.91 (4.00)	3.64 (4.00)
		I have all that is required to be a volunteer***	3.71 (4.00)	3.37 (3.00)
		It is easy to acquire volunteering skills***	3.58 (4.00)	3.39 (3.00)
		Volunteering requires a lot of resources**	2.80 (3.00)	2.98 (3.00)
		Volunteering requires specific knowledge	2.83 (3.00)	2.87 (3.00)
		Volunteering requires a lot of skills	2.63 (3.00)	2.73 (3.00)
		I fear that the volunteer organisation will not value my skills***	2.33 (2.00)	2.62 (3.00)
		I feel overqualified to volunteer**	2.09 (2.00)	2.24 (2.00)
		I feel underqualified to volunteer***	2.17 (2.00)	2.58 (3.00)
Availability	Individual free time	Free hours per week (mean)***	20.7 hours	14.3 hours
	Work demands	Working full time	32.5%	40.1%
		Working part time	15.3%	13.2%
		Not in the labour force	32.1%	31.2%
	Family demands	Couple, children living at home	5.7%	5.3%
		Single, children living at home	25.4%	23.7%

N=1007. *** p<0.01 **p<0.05

Table 3: Barriers by volunteerability components (for non volunteers only)

Volunteerability	Barrier Removed (I would be likely to volunteer if...)	Mean	
Willingness	I could do specific roles that appeal to me	3.50	
	I could see the good I was doing	3.48	
	It was a well-known organisation/cause	3.23	
	All my expenses were reimbursed	3.23	
	It would make me feel really good	3.22	
	Someone asked me directly	3.15	
	It would reduce my taxes/council rates	3.15	
	There was free background checks	3.03	
	If there were fewer rules and regulations	2.93	
	I got paid for it	2.91	
	My friends volunteered	2.90	
	There was more recognition for it from society	2.79	
	There was more recognition for it from the organisation	2.79	
	It would help me get a job	2.72	
	It would reduce my student-loan debt	2.57	
	I could meet a partner while volunteering	2.41	
	It was more fashionable/cool	2.37	
	It would impress people	2.35	
	Capability	I felt safe and secure	3.44
		Training was provided	3.31
I knew more about volunteering opportunities near me		3.27	
It would improve my health		3.25	
Training was not required		3.18	
I could volunteer in my own language		3.16	
My health was better		3.12	
The volunteer organisation would be more accommodating to my needs		3.02	
I could do it with my family		3.01	
I could use/develop my leadership skills		2.97	
Background checks were not required		2.65	
There was an app for it		2.59	
It would get me credit points for study		2.52	
Availability		It was close to where I live	3.57
		I could stop any time I want without consequences	3.53
	I could do it from home	3.50	
	It fit my schedule	3.50	
	I did not have to commit long term	3.45	
	I could it whenever I want	3.44	
	I could do it online	3.43	
	The volunteering role was only for a short, defined period of time	3.38	
	Volunteering was more flexible	3.30	
	If I had set, regular times to volunteer	3.07	
	Transportation was provided	3.05	
	It were combined with another activity	3.05	
	I could do it with my family	3.01	
	It was scheduled for me	3.00	
	I could do it as part of my paid work (through my workplace)	3.00	
I could do it while I travel	2.92		
My carer responsibilities were reduced	2.69		
My kids left home	2.55		
There was childcare while I volunteer	2.45		

N=696.

Table 4: Recommendations for policy based on the main barriers

Volunteerability	Common Barriers	Policy	Examples
Willingness	I could do specific roles that appeal to me	Agreements between governments and voluntary organisations to extend the scope of volunteering roles	Blair's Compact in 1998 in the UK
	I could see the good I was doing	Recognition and awards to volunteers Supporting research on volunteering and capacity building	The President's volunteer service award in the USA or the Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in the UK
	It was a well-known organisation/cause	Recognitions and awards to smaller organisations Commemorating volunteering events Use the hosting of mega events as a lever for a legacy of volunteer participation	International day of volunteering on December 5 th ; National volunteering week in Australia during May; International Year of Volunteering in 2001 Join In Trust (UK) as a legacy initiative of the London 2012 Olympic Games
Capability	I felt safe and secure	Legislation Assuring social inclusion of volunteers	The National and Community Service Trust Act or the Volunteer Protection Act in the US
	Training was provided I knew more about volunteering opportunities near me	Offer training centre for volunteers National and local campaigns to raise awareness to volunteer opportunities National websites in which people can enter their postal code and learn of local volunteering opportunities	Newham Volunteers event volunteer pool in the UK https://www.usa.gov/volunteer
Availability	It was close to where I live	Create local volunteer peak bodies to offer local volunteering opportunities	Australia's State based networks of Volunteer Resource Centres (VRCs)
	I could stop any time I want without consequences I could do it from home	Social marketing campaigns to change perceptions of volunteering Offering online volunteering opportunities	<i>I can do that</i> campaign by the Victorian Government in Australia: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Lhwx-EpvM0 United Nations Volunteers online volunteering website