

# Volunteerism & Social Capital : Observations from a Preliminary Study

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# Volunteerism

- Central element in communities
- Deliver services across diverse range of areas
- Potent, dynamic and unifying force for society
- Indispensable resource for third sector organisations
- Help satisfy social and community needs
- Contribute to building social capital and improving quality of life

# Methods

- Hong Kong region-wide survey
- Random sampling
- Household survey
- Targeting 15 – 79 year old participants
- Analysis based upon 702 respondents
- Aim to explore links between volunteerism and social capital

# Results

- One quarter of respondents participated in voluntary work
- The majority were aged between 15 and 24 years
- The next majority were aged between 30 and 44 years

# Results

- Over half contributing between 1 and 6 hours of voluntary work in the past month
- More than 70% of volunteers were female
- Commonest ways of becoming involved in voluntary work through an organisation or through a school
- Those involved in volunteerism through an organisation were most likely to be aged between 35 and 59 years.

# Motivation to Volunteer

1. Obligation to help others
2. To feel better about oneself
3. Enjoy helping others
4. One should do something about issues important to oneself
5. Get to know people similar to oneself
6. Meet new people and make new friends
7. Consider myself to be a loving and caring person

# Age & Volunteerism

- Age predictive of social trust :

the older the respondent, the higher their levels of social trust.

- Age group most likely to volunteer  
15-24

- Age negatively predictive of joining voluntary services:

the older the respondent, the less likely they were to join voluntary services compared with their younger counterparts.

# Age & Volunteerism

Exceptions :

- those aged between 25-29 were less likely to volunteer than those aged 30-59 years.
- those aged 30-34 were less likely to volunteer than those aged 35-49.

# Gender & Volunteerism

- Females more likely to volunteer than males
- Female respondents had higher levels of mutual help and society-based values than their male counterparts
- Females more likely to volunteer as a result of their values, desire for personal growth, and their desire to enhance their self-esteem

# Income & Volunteerism

- Family income was negatively predictive of social capital :

The higher the family income, the lower the levels of mutual help, feelings of social inclusion, sense of belonging and social cohesion.

- Family income predictive of volunteering

The higher the family income, the higher the levels of volunteering.

# Social Class & Volunteerism

- Working class individuals were less likely to have joined volunteer services.
- Working class individuals most likely to volunteer because of community concern
- Middle class individuals significantly less likely to volunteer ( $-.166^{***}$ )??

# Volunteerism & Social Capital

# Volunteer Motivation Scale

(Omoto & Snyder, 1995)

Volunteering due to 4 sub-scales

- Values
- Personal growth
- Community concern
- Esteem enhancement

All 4 sub-scales have 5 items & alpha  $> .83$

# Social Capital Scale: 8 scales

alpha  $>.74$

- Trust (.565)
- Mutual help
- Favour for community organisation (.671)
- Society-based values
- Self-based values
- Social inclusion
- Sense of belonging
- Social cohesion

# Volunteerism & Social Capital

## Volunteering for esteem enhancement :

- Trust (NS)
- Mutual help (NS)
- Favour for community organisation (NS)
- Self-based values (NS)
- Society-based values (NS)
- Social inclusion (NS)
- Sense of belonging (NS)
- Social cohesion (NS)

# Volunteerism & Social Capital

## Volunteering for personal growth

was reflected in respondents' mild levels of :

- sense of belonging (.266\*)
- mutual help (.283\*)

# Volunteerism & Social Capital

Volunteering for community concern  
was reflected in respondents' strong  
levels of :

- society-based values (.483\*\*\*)
- social inclusion (3.78\*\*)
- mutual help (3.57 \*\*)
- social cohesion (.321\*\*)

# Volunteerism & Social Capital

## Volunteering due to values

was reflected in respondents' very strong levels of :

- sense of belonging (.416\*\*)
- society-based values (.538\*\*\*)

# Volunteerism & Social Capital: Overall Result

## Social Capital: 8 scales

- Trust
- Mutual help
- Favour for community org.
- Society-based values
- Self-based values
- Social inclusion
- Sense of belonging
- Social cohesion

## Volunteering-combined

- NS
- NS
- .151\*\*
- .10\*
- .137\*\*
- NS
- NS
- NS

# Volunteerism & Social Capital: Overall Result

## Social Capital: 8 subscales

- Trust
- Mutual help
- Favour for community org.
- Society-based values
- Self-based values
- Social inclusion
- Sense of belonging
- Social cohesion

## Joined Vol. Service

- NS
- NS
- .085\*
- .114\*\*
- NS
- NS
- NS
- NS

# Volunteerism & Social Capital

Volunteering was predictive of favour for community organisations :

- Volunteers were more likely to favour community organisations than non-volunteers
- Being involved in volunteer services was predictive of respondents favouring community organisations

# Conclusions

Volunteering was predictive of social capital in terms of :

1. society-based values
2. favour for community organisations
3. self-based values.

# Conclusions

## Society-focused values:

- I care for the less fortunate
- I am interested in societal affairs
- I believe that mutual help is important.

# Conclusions

## Favour for community organisations:

- participating in community orgs. could increase personal social status
- involvement in community orgs. could help in my career-terms
- community organisations impact on the government.

# Conclusions

## Self-focused values:

- participating in community orgs.  
could increase personal social status
- involvement in community orgs.  
could help in my career-terms

# Conclusions

While HK volunteers' selfless ideals demonstrate care for community through their acts of volunteerism, much of the reasoning behind decisions to volunteer is also linked to self-focused values and a desire for personal development. So while the community is benefiting from volunteers, volunteers are also benefiting from their involvement in community service in terms of personal development in one form or another.