

The Cathie Marsh Centre for Census and Survey Research

Helping in Context: A Multilevel, Multivariate Analysis of the European Social Survey

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Abstract

Help and helping are part of the set of human values and are at the core of debates about civic engagement and active citizenship. In a general sense, some underlying notion of help underpins all civic participation. It is therefore substantively important to understand the relationships between help measures and civic engagement measures at the individual, area and country levels. We examine the importance an individual attaches to helping other people, whether they actually help with or attend activities in their local area and their perceptions of the extent to which people living locally are willing to help each other, as well as other well established indicators of civic engagement in a multivariate multilevel model, based on data from the European Social Survey (ESS). Such an approach allows us to disentangle country, region and individual level differences in various help and civic engagement indicators.

The importance people attach to helping others and the extent to which they help in practice both vary considerably across European countries at both the country and the individual level. Overall, people are more likely to see helping other people as important than actually help in practice in terms of helping organise activities in their local area. However, such helping in practice is more strongly associated, than helping as a value, with other civic engagement activities such as contacting a politician and signing a petition. Women are more likely than men to see helping other people as important, though women are less likely than men to state that they help in practice in terms of helping organise or attend local events. The findings have important implications for policy makers in relation to identifying and overcoming the barriers to creating a more civic society.

Keywords: Help; Civic Engagement; Multilevel; Multivariate response; European Social Survey.

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The importance people attach to helping others and the extent to which they help in practice both vary considerably across European countries at both the country and the individual level. Overall, people are more likely to see helping other people as important than actually help in practice in terms of helping organise activities in their local area. However, such helping in practice is more strongly associated, than helping as a value, with other civic engagement activities such as contacting a politician and signing a petition. Women are more likely than men to see helping other people as important, though women are less likely than men to state that they help in practice in terms of helping organise or attend local events. The findings have important implications for policy makers in relation to identifying and overcoming the barriers to creating a more civic society.

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1. Introduction

Helping underpins civic participation. As such the extent to which people see helping other people as important and help with activities in their local area should be at the core of debates about civic engagement and active citizenship. Help and helping covers a range of activities including organising an event, emotional support given to a family member, the spontaneous assistance a bystander may give to someone who asks for directions or is in danger, or someone who raises money for a charity or political party. We look here at two aspects of helping, firstly whether people see it as important to help other people and care for their well being (helping as a value) and secondly whether they have helped organise or have attended a local event in the last year (help – local activities). We also consider a third aspect of help: the extent to which people perceive other people living locally to them are willing to help one another. We focus on the relationship between a person's values and stated actions, and how these relate to more established measures of civic engagement. As few previous studies of civic engagement consider measures of helping, despite carrying out detailed, sometimes multilevel, studies of more established measures of civic engagement such as voter turnout (Fieldhouse et al, 2007), we focus here on responses that measure some aspect of help, as well as considering several more established measures of civic

engagement; the multivariate multilevel model is used to unravel variations and relationships in indicators of help and civic engagement at the individual, region and European country levels. Thus, given our focus, we can summarise our research as a study of 'help in context'. We can measure help in context in three inter-related ways, via the 'helping as a value' and 'help: local activities' questions in the European Social Survey (ESS): (i) in the context of personal characteristics such as age and gender; (ii) in the context of geography such as the country or region in which the individual lives, including the extent to which individuals feel people in their local area help, or would be willing to help, each other; (iii) in the context of other civic engagement activities such as contacting a politician, signing a petition and voting.

In our analysis we make comparisons across European countries at the individual, region and country level. Cross-national analysis provides a basis for in-depth examination of values and behaviour where the impact of structural similarities, differences and compositional and contextual factors can be examined. Further we consider the differences in the help and other civic engagement indicators across European countries with respect to age, gender and the extent to which an individual perceives that others in their local area help one another.

In summary, our hypotheses are as follows: (i) the importance of helping is valued across different societies and populations; (ii) the extent to which people value help and helping in practice are closely linked with more established civic engagement activities such as signing a petition or contacting a politician; (iii) people who see helping other people as important do not necessarily help in practice in terms of organising or attending local activities; (iv) the extent to which a people perceive people living locally help one another is likely to be an important factor in understanding their attitudes towards helping.

2. Context

2.1 The Value of Help and Helping

The value of help is a belief that can motivate action as well as being something that is dependent on a person's individual characteristics and circumstances. Thus it is worth reviewing the correlates of the various ways a person may value help or help others in practice. From a psychology perspective Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) developed an influential model of what is termed 'reasoned action'. This model highlights the importance of understanding the influences on intention to act in a certain way i.e. the individual's views of the activity and its outcomes. At the same time it is also important to take account of rational choice based approaches to behaviour and how, for example, people may be inclined to help others as it is in their own short and/or long-term interest. Dovidio *et al.* (2006) argue that there appears to be a natural predisposition to empathize with and help others but that this is affected by learned experiences and the specific context. Research by Zahn-Waxler *et al.* (1996) has highlighted the development of concern for others amongst young children. Helping is an interpersonal act though it may not necessarily have desirable social outcomes for all (e.g. criminal gangs). Helping others is an obligation and a responsibility but it is not a value that is held or acted upon similarly held by all people. See Schwartz and Bilsky (1990) and Inglehart *et al.* (2004).

Previous research has identified a number of factors associated with the likelihood of someone helping in particular circumstances. Batson (1998) points to the differences between situational and disposition factors (i.e. the immediate context and the individual person's orientation). For example, the likelihood of helping a stranger in an emergency has been found to depend on: self concern of harm, the appearance of the person in need, similarity of the person in need with the potential helper, location, number of bystanders, perceived risk of helping, self confidence, emotional

need, mood, and the person's generalised view of reciprocity (i.e. has the person been helped in the past and so feels they are indebted in a general way to society).

The learning aspect of helping is seen as important. Experimental research with young men in the 1960s found that the extent to which young, working class men gave help was associated with the help they had received in the past (Berkowitz 1968). At the same time people who are middle class have, it has been argued, a stronger internalised set of ideals prescribing that they help people in need without the expectation of help in return (Berkowitz 1968). This may relate to the fact that these people have been helped in the past. Such claims and hypotheses are clearly controversial. A person's likelihood of helping is the result of a complex set of factors. Amato's (1990) research suggests that people are most likely to help friends and family members and that characteristics of individuals are more closely associated with planned helping. It is notable that in research by Batson (1998) intelligence and religion were not found to be strong predictors of whether a person would help a stranger. See Darley and Latané (1968) and also Berkowitz (1972) for an overview of different experimental research in the area of helping.

Research by Dovidio et al. (2006) developed a typology of what is termed pro-social behaviour that distinguishes: helping, altruism and cooperation. Helping is an action, which benefits another person; altruism is very similar but with no expectation of benefit or return for the person providing the help; cooperation is where there is an expectation of mutual benefit from the joint effort. Trivers (1971) has described what he sees as reciprocal altruism - this is where a person is altruistic because the individual is likely to later be the recipient of similar altruistic acts.

Whilst there may be a norm of having a concern for the welfare of others there is also the prevailing view that humans follow a universal egoism such that people do what is in their own interests. Helping can fulfil both underlying norms of self-interest and helping others. A person may help under the expectation that they will in a direct or indirect way receive the help back. As such, their actions, even if spontaneous are instrumental i.e. they are in a person's short or long-term self-interest. There may also be some cases where people anticipate they themselves may need help at some point and this may be driving their behaviour with respect to help. As such helping others takes the form of a cost benefit decision. However, such analyses presume that people only help as a result of an individual analysis, where as it could be that people just help as a consequence of a sense of empathy. See Berkowitz (1968) and Gouldner (1960) for an overview of this.

Batson (1998) highlights how the motivations to help can also be down to self interest not only in terms of anticipating some future need for help but also directly in terms of people feeling better about themselves and perhaps rewarding themselves for helping another person in need. This may lead to an increase in their own sense of well-being. Conversely, not helping someone may also be associated with feelings of guilt, inadequacy or isolation from the local community.

2.2 The Links Between Helping and Civic Engagement

Help is an important aspect of the debate about civic engagement and active citizenship. Volunteering is an example of helping in practice but in addition it is also linked to civic engagement as the activities can include those that are conventionally seen as civic engagement, for example, joining a group and helping with the governance of an organisation.

A range of European Union policies have increasingly focused on engaging citizens in civil society. Moreover, volunteering is increasingly being seen as a way to tackle deprivation and poverty globally. For example, through the United Nations Volunteer

programme. In the UK the public is increasingly being encouraged to be civically engaged and the opportunities for participation and volunteering have increased (Newman 2005). Formal training and qualifications in active citizenship are now part of the UK education system.

Across European countries Morales and Guerts (2007) have shown there are considerable variations in voluntary activity. Their analysis suggests that associational involvement (membership, participation in activities, voluntary work or making a donation) varies from almost all the population in Norway having some kind of associational involvement to 28% of the population in Russia. Badescu and Neller (2007) have shown that across European countries middle aged men with high qualification levels and income are the most likely to be involved in voluntary associations. Dekker *et al.* (2007) show that voluntary work is subject to the influence of broader social changes including ageing, changes in household forms and time use. Those people well integrated in social networks are also more likely to be active in voluntary associations.

Dekker *et al.*'s (2007) research in the Netherlands using survey and time use diaries has shown that overall rates of participation in voluntary work are likely to remain static in the future. However, in the Netherlands young peoples rates of volunteering are in decline. In the UK the evidence on volunteering is debated. In 2000 the Office for National Statistics figures revealed that the number of hours volunteered per annum fell dramatically from more than 2.3bn hours in 1995 to less than 1.6bn hours in 2000. Evidence from the 2007 Citizenship Survey conducted by the Department for Local Government and Communities and the National Council of Voluntary Activities suggests has shown that around 73 per cent of all adults had volunteered (formally or informally) at least once in the last 12 months, with 48 per cent having volunteered at least once a month. Women were more likely to volunteer regularly than men, with 53 per cent of women volunteering at least once a month compared to 42 per cent of men. Research by John (2009) using the 2005 Citizenship Survey has identified an increase in civic engagement amongst a more diverse population. However, overall evidence from the 2008 Citizenship Survey suggests that volunteering rates were about the same as in 2001 (NfP Synergy 2008). For further discussion of values across Europe see Ashford and Timms (1992); Arts and Halman (2004); Bartowski and Jasinska-Kania (2004) and Beugelsdijk and van Schaik (2005). Morales (2009) has highlighted the importance of contextual factors such as political structures, the culture of openness and freedom and incentives for involvement alongside individual factors in explaining differences in political and civic activism across different European countries. As Morales concludes people with the similar social and cognitive attributes are not equally likely to be politically active in all western countries because of contextual differences. See also Franklin (1996) and Franklin *et al.* (1996).

There is a presumption that helping such as in the form of volunteering is associated with other forms of more formal civic participation such as voting. The evidence is mixed. By being a volunteer a person is likely to be a member of a group. However, help and helping in the form of participation in certain types of volunteering may be associated with disenchantment with formal politics and therefore a decline in civic engagement.

Research across European countries by Badescu and Neller (2007) found that higher levels of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works tends to be associated with higher levels of involvement in voluntary associations. Whilst Dekker and van den Broek (1996) found a positive association between volunteering and political participation across European countries. In the USA, Putnam (1993; 2000) suggests that volunteers are more interested in politics and less cynical about politicians when compared to non-volunteers. Putnam's (2000) research into declining levels of civic engagement in the USA also points to increasing rates of volunteering. The increase

is almost entirely amongst those aged 60 and over. Putnam also postulates that there may be a new generation of volunteers with young Americans in the 1990s showing a commitment to volunteering “without parallel among their immediate predecessors” (2000:133).

Tracing back to 1985, evidence from the European Values Study found that people in Britain who were involved in voluntary activity were more likely to have an active interest in politics but no more likely than non volunteers to take part in protests, demonstrations and boycotts (Abrams et al 1985). Recent research by Dalton (2008) has also highlighted that alongside the decline in citizen duty in the USA (such as formal participation in politics i.e. voting and belonging to a political party) there has been an increase in engaged citizens (more informal independent participation i.e. being active in voluntary groups or a community project, direct campaigning, buying products for political reasons). This perhaps reflects a shift in political engagement and also the increased options available for those wishing to take action about an issue of concern. For further discussion see Zukin *et al.* (2006).

It is also important to consider at this point how the links between values, intention and behaviour can be weak, as research in relation to pro-environmental action by Whitmarsh (2009). Research by Berkowitz (1972) also concludes that the helpfulness norm is only a weak determinant of help giving of most people in many situations. Moreover, research has also found that people do not always accurately report their actions such as, for example, whether they voted. More people tend to say they voted than actually did. This can be a result of not correctly remembering but also as a result of the social expectation that people should vote. We consider these important theoretical debates in the interpretation of our findings.

In this article we use a very general measure of helping in practice so that we can limit the impact of other factors that may be associated with people giving a specific form of help. Here we are primarily concerned with people’s general approach to help and helping others.

3. Methodology

3.1 Data and Definitions

The European Social Survey (ESS) collects data on the attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of Europe’s diverse populations. The 2006 wave includes data from 23 European countries. In terms of sampling the requirement is for random (probability) samples with comparable estimates based on full coverage of the eligible residential populations aged 15+. The minimum required sample size is 1,500 or 800 in countries with populations less than 2 million. The response rate varies between countries but the target response rate is 70% (ESS 2006).

We used seven indicators of help, helping and civic engagement measures and a measure of the extent to which the respondent perceives people living local to them to be helpful as summarised in Table 1 below:

Whilst it is clear that helping out with activities in one’s local area (Help – local activities) is only one aspect of helping we argue that it is low cost in terms of time and commitment and so is a good general indicator.

Table 1. Definitions and Measures

| Variable | ESS Questions and Recoding |
|--|--|
| 1. Help as a value | <i>How much like you is this person? "It is very important to help the people around you and care for others' well being" Very much like me/Like me/Somewhat like me/A little like me/Not like me/Not like me at all.</i> <i>Recoded: those who see helping the people around them as "Very much like them" and "Like them" are coded as having the Value of help.</i> |
| 2. Help in practice – (Local activities) | <i>In the past 12 months, how often did you help with or attend activities organised in your local area? At least once a week/ At least once a month/At least once every three months/At least once every six months/Less often/Never/Don't Know.</i> <i>Recoded: those who help or attend activities "At least once every six months" or more often are coded as a Helper in practice – local activities</i> |
| 3. Contacted a politician | <i>During the past 12 months have you contacted a politician, government or local government official? Yes/No/Don't Know</i> |
| 4. Signed Petition | <i>During the past 12 months have you signed a petition? Yes/No/Don't Know</i> |
| 5. Demonstration | <i>During the last 12 months have you taken part in lawful public demonstration? Yes/No/Don't Know</i> |
| 6. Voted | <i>Did you vote in the in the last national election? Yes/No/Not eligible to vote</i> |
| 7. Voluntary work | <i>In the past 12 months, how often did you get involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations? At least once a week/At least once a month/At least once every three months/At least once every six months/Less often/Never/ Don't Know</i> |
| Help - local context | <i>Please tell me the extent you feel people in your local area/neighbourhood help one another? (0-6) Not at all - A great deal.</i> |

The extent to which the respondent perceives people living locally to them to be helpful (Help - local context) was also examined. This variable is on an ordinal 7-point scale, and was thus modelled as six indicator variables, leaving as a reference category the least amount of perceived local help. This local context variable is interesting as it is clearly closely related to the measure of helping in practice.

3.2 Modeling Strategy

We began by using single level logistic regression models (Allison 1999), taking each of the seven outcomes as separate recoded dichotomous variables (as described above), and relating this to country - using dummy variables with the UK as the reference category, age, gender and the perceived local context of help. Age (in years) and gender (female = 1). This relatively straightforward approach allows the significance of country differences in the outcomes from those of the UK to be easily assessed, before and after controlling for age, gender, and the perception of local help (Help – local context). All single-level analyses were weighted to take account of the population size of the different countries and also in relation to the country specific sampling strategies (ESS 2006). We restricted our analyses to people eligible to vote, which generally means people of 18+.

Multilevel Approach

In order to get a feel for the overall extent of between country variation in each of the outcome variables, we also fitted multilevel models (Goldstein 2003; Rasbash *et. al* 2005; Snijders and Bosker 1999). This set of models was used to investigate the inter-relationships (correlations) between the outcomes at the three different levels: individuals, regions and countries; the ESS data are available at these three different nested levels. The full numerical results are given in the Appendix.

Below we specify a bivariate logistic multilevel model with individual, region and country levels (levels 1,2 and 3 respectively, which are nested). Such a model can be used to assess the inter-relationship of any pair of the seven outcomes. To fit such a model, we organise the data as follows: for each person (indexed by i) in each region (indexed by j) in each country (indexed by k), there are seven rows in the dataset, corresponding to the seven outcome variables considered. Thus, to examine the association between any pair of these variables in the multilevel model below, the rows corresponding to the two outcome variables for each individual are used in the analysis. Thus, \mathbf{y}_{ijk} is a $n \times 2$ matrix containing the two outcome measures for each of the n individuals in the sample. \mathbf{p}_{ijk} is a $n \times 2$ matrix of predicted probabilities for the two outcomes given the explanatory variables, that is, $\mathbf{p}_{ijk} = \text{pr}(\mathbf{y}_{ijk} = 1 \mid \mathbf{X}_{ijk})$. \mathbf{e}_{ijk} is an error term: the difference between the predicted probability of each outcome and the actual value.

Bivariate Multilevel Logistic Regression Model

$$\mathbf{y}_{ijk} = \mathbf{p}_{ijk} + \mathbf{e}_{ijk}$$

$$\text{logit}(\mathbf{p}_{ijk}) = \beta_1 Z_{1ij} + \beta_2 Z_{2ij} + v_{1k} + u_{1kj} + v_{2k} + u_{2kj}$$

$$z_{1ijk} = \begin{cases} 1 & \text{if first help/civic engagement outcome} \\ 0 & \text{if second help/civic engagement outcome} \end{cases}$$

$$z_{2ijk} = \begin{cases} 0 & \text{if first help/civic engagement outcome} \\ 1 & \text{if second help/civic engagement outcome} \end{cases}$$

$$\text{var}(v_{1k}) = \sigma_{v1}^2, \text{var}(v_{2k}) = \sigma_{v2}^2, \text{cov}(v_{1k}, v_{2k}) = \sigma_{v12}$$

$$\text{var}(u_{1kj}) = \sigma_{u1}^2, \text{var}(u_{2kj}) = \sigma_{u2}^2, \text{cov}(u_{1kj}, u_{2kj}) = \sigma_{u12}$$

v_{1k} is the country level error term for the first help/civic engagement outcome and u_{1k} is the region level error term for the first help/civic engagement term. These can be similarly defined for the second outcome. All error terms have expected values of zero and variances and covariances as shown above. All error terms are assumed to be uncorrelated between levels. \mathbf{p}_{ijk} is a matrix of 2 probabilities for any pair of civic engagement outcomes. e.g. p_{1ijk} for help in practice and p_{2ijk} contact a politician. z_{1ijk} and z_{2ijk} are dummy variables to indicate outcome 1 (e.g. help in practice) or outcome 2 (e.g. contact a politician). σ_{v1}^2 , σ_{v2}^2 , σ_{v12} are respectively: the country level variance of the first outcome, the country level variance of the second outcome and the country level covariance between the first and second outcomes, from which we can calculate the country-level correlation (using the appropriate estimates from the model).

Because these are logistic regression models, there are no individual level random variance and covariance effect terms: the individual variances and covariances are obtained from functions of p_{1ijk} and p_{2ijk} .

We restricted our analysis to null models as we are only interested in the inter-relationships between the response variables at the different levels in the multilevel analysis. We are aware that other factors may be at work here in relation to each individual outcome including for example: economic status, health, governance infrastructure, electoral system and marginality (see, for example, Franklin 2004; Fieldhouse, Tranmer and Russell 2007 and Morales 2009). Much of the psychological research on help and helping has also been through controlled experiments rather than self-report answers to surveys. However, our focus in this paper is to develop our understanding of the associations between help and well established measures of civic engagement in the context of the area and country in which people live.

4. Results

4.1 Exploratory Analysis

On average, nearly two thirds of people state that they feel helping others is important (- the value of help). There are however considerable differences between countries.

Figure 1. People Stating Helping Other People Is Important – (Value Helpers).

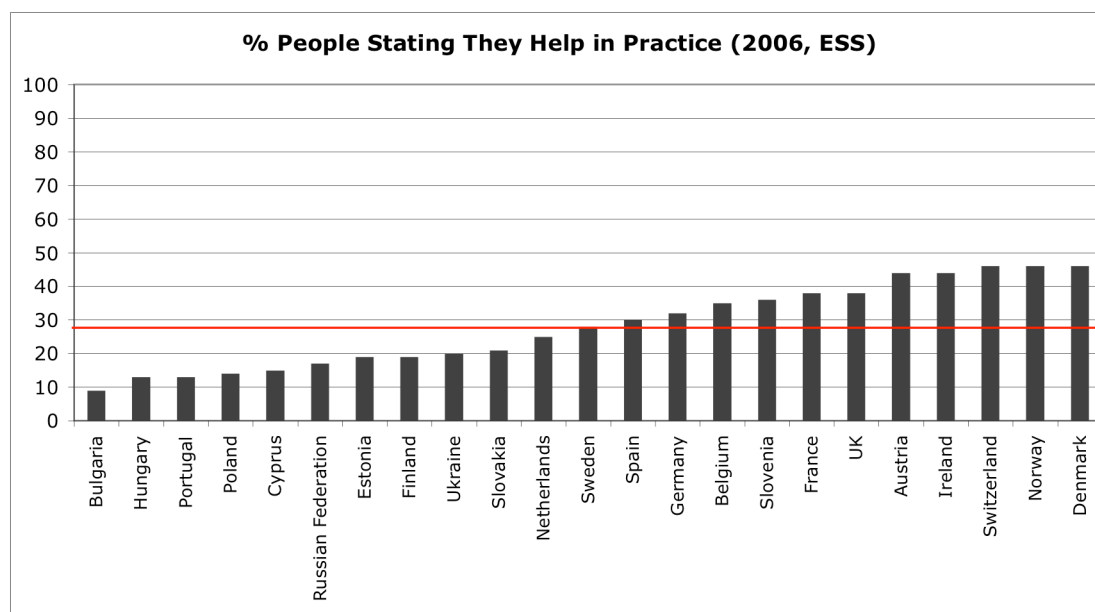


ESS 2006. All respondents. N. 43,000. Includes respondents who answered - "It is very important to help the people around you and care for others' well being" was 'Very much like me' or 'Like me'. It excludes those who responded 'Somewhat like me' or 'A little like me'.

In relation to the value of help there appears to be some clustering by liberal democratic tradition and social welfare regime type which other research on political participation has also highlighted. However, the countries having the highest rates of the value of help are quite mixed including Cyprus, Spain, Switzerland and Slovenia. It is notable that Slovenia is considered to be one of the most democratic of the former Communist states (Freedom House Index 2009). The differences clearly prompt further research questions in relation to the interplay between values and country context.

In relation to helping in practice (- in terms of helping organise or attend a local activity) the overall rates are much lower as shown below. Just over a quarter of people state that they help others in practice.

Figure 2. People Stating That They Help In Practice - (Local activities).



ESS 2006. All respondents. N. 43,000. Includes respondents who answered – “In the past 12 months, how often did you help with or attend activities organised in your local area?”. Those who help or attend activities ‘At least once every six months’ or more often are coded as a helper in practice local activities.

The country level differences are again striking. At both ends of the scale there appears to be clustering by democratic tradition and welfare regime type with certain Scandinavian countries contrasted with certain post-Communist Eastern European countries and Southern-European welfare countries. Though such country level generalisations can lead to oversimplifications (see Kautto 1999; Kolberg 1992; Esping-Andersen 1990 and Powell and Barrientos 2004).

It is also notable that countries with the highest proportions of people that value help are not necessarily the countries with the highest percentages of people who help in practice (local activities). Cyprus is a particular example here. There is clearly a difference between the importance given to helping others and actually helping in practice (local activities). It is also notable that Cyprus has one of the lowest rates of people expecting helping in return if they help someone (Purdam and Tranmer 2009). These differences could relate to how the measure of help in practice is understood, distinctions between public and private participation and the role of formal bodies in organising local events. In terms of context in Cyprus the state clearly has a distinctive role in managing participation and this may be the case in relation to the particular measure of helping practice we are considering here (Theocharous 2009). For example, Cyprus has compulsory military service for all male citizens. The difference in the value of help and helping in practice in Bulgaria is also notable. Again contextual issues are likely to be at work here. Switzerland is a country where relatively speaking the population is amongst the most likely to see helping other people as important and actually help in practice according to the measure used here.

The measure of helping others in practice is also likely to be an overestimate as it reports those who state that they “Help with or attend activities organised in local area”. As such it is a generous measure as it is wide in scope and arguably low cost in terms of time and commitment. Though clearly it may not capture those who are too busy to help with or attend activities in their local area because they are committed to other helping activities.

Supporting our argument that the extent to which people state 'helping others is important' has the qualities of a human value is that this shows the least between-country variation. Table 2 below provides a summary of the between country variances and the three highest/lowest rates of each outcome.

Table 2. Country level variances for the seven outcomes

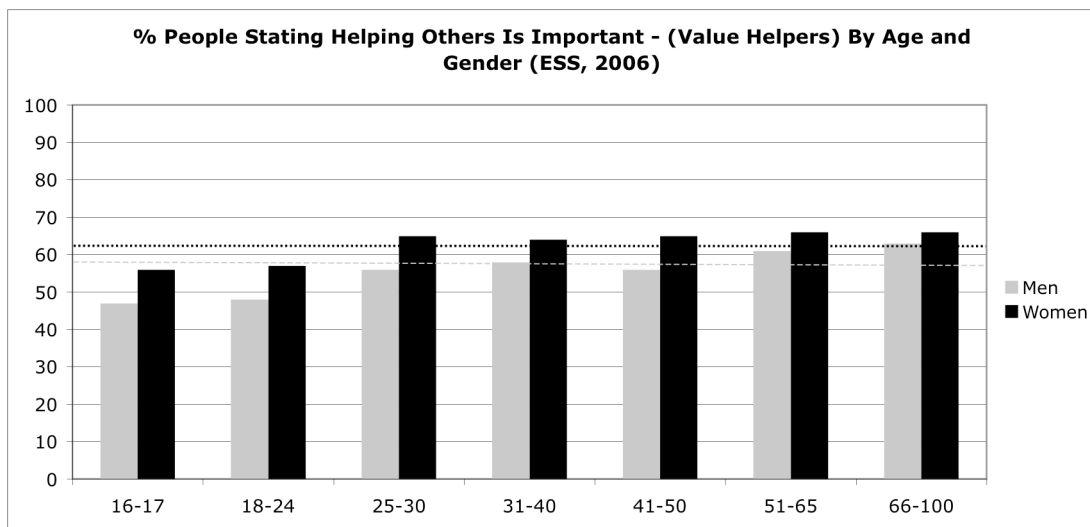
| Variable | Country level variance and countries with highest and lowest rates |
|-------------------------------------|---|
| Value of help | .196 (.058) Highest %: Cyprus, Spain, Slovenia Switzerland; Lowest %: Ukraine, Russian Federation, Estonia |
| Help in practice – local activities | .430 (.128) Highest %: Denmark, Norway, Switzerland; Lowest %: Bulgaria, Hungary, Portugal |
| Contact a politician | .241 (.072) Highest %: Ireland, Norway, Austria; Lowest %: Bulgaria, Poland, Ukraine |
| Sign a petition | .905 (.268) Highest %: Sweden, UK, Norway; Lowest %: Portugal, Ukraine, Hungary |
| Take part in a demonstration | .420 (.138) Highest %: Spain, France, Norway; Lowest %: Poland, Finland, Bulgaria |
| Voted | .393 (.117) Highest %: Belgium, Denmark, Cyprus; Lowest %: Estonia, Switzerland, Russian Federation |
| Voluntarism | .726 (.214) Highest %: Norway, Switzerland, Netherlands; Lowest %: Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary |

This analysis highlights the higher rates of helping and civic engagement outcomes across certain Scandinavian countries and lower rates across certain Eastern European countries.

Research by Bartowski and Jasinska-Kania (2004) has also highlighted the positive association between levels of voluntary association membership and activity with indicators of human development and also (though to a lesser degree) indicators of economic freedom and civil liberties across European countries. With respect to Eastern European countries, Bartowski and Jasinska-Kania (2004) highlight that there are few significant predictors of voluntary activity and that the development of democracy and a capitalist economy in the short term can serve to reduce community activities. It is notable however that research in the UK (Mohan et al 2006) which examined individual and contextual factors associated with volunteering amongst people who they define as committed volunteers found only limited contextual effects once individual characteristics were controlled for. Most of the variation in volunteering in terms of geography was found to be at the individual level and due to the socio-economic compositional effects of different populations in different areas.

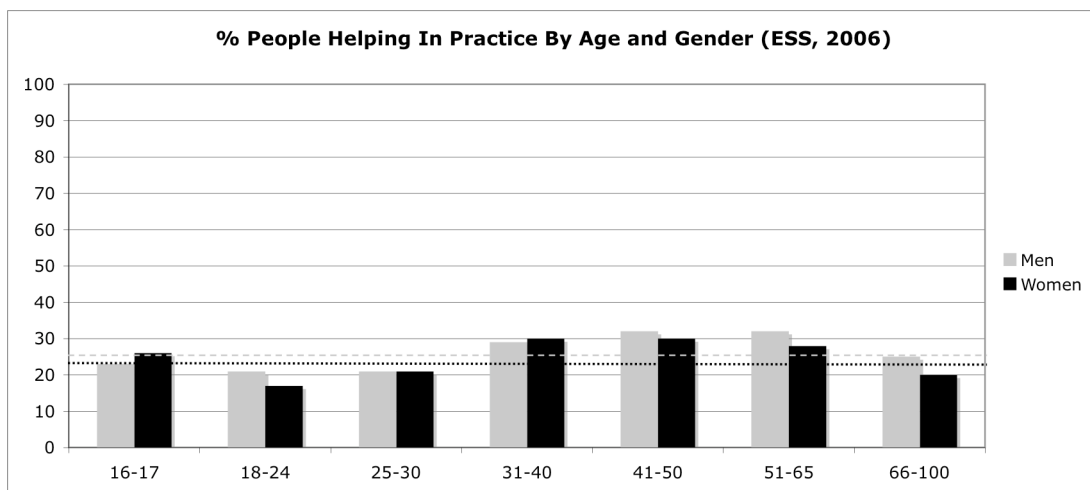
In relation to the extent to which people think helping others is important and whether they help in relation to local activities there are some differences between men and women and by age. We see that women across all age groups are more likely than men to value help. Conversely in relation to helping in practice (local activities) we see that overall women are less likely to help than men.

Figure 3. Helping Others Is Important (Value Helpers) by Age and Gender



ESS 2006. All respondents. N. 43,000. Question as above in Figure 1.

Figure 4. Helping Others in Practice – (local activities) by Age and Gender



ESS 2006. All respondents. N. 43,000. Question as above in Figure 2.

In general older men and women aged 25+ are more likely to state that helping others is important. Older men and women are not the most likely to state that they help in practice (local activities). This may be a consequence of the barriers that older people face in implementing their values. For example, they may not have the opportunities, the resources or be in good enough health to help in practice in terms of helping organising or attending local activities. As such the ageing population in many Western countries is a crucial issue in relation to the future patterns of help and helping.

Evidence in the UK from the National Survey of Volunteering and Charitable Giving (NSVCG) (Cabinet Office 2007) has shown that a lack of time and work commitments were key factors for people not volunteering or stopping volunteering. Lack of knowledge of opportunities, feeling of not having the right skills being put off by bureaucracy, concerns about risk and liability and fitting in with the people already involved were also barriers. It is notable that just over half the respondents (54%) in the NSVCG who were not regular volunteers stated that they would like to spend

more time volunteering and this was considerably higher amongst younger people aged 25-34 (74%).

In relation to civic engagement across Europe data from the ESS suggests that: 12% of people had contacted a politician in the last year; 20% had signed a petition; 7% had taken part in a demonstration; 22% had been involved in voluntary work and 75% of people had voted in the last election.

In terms of the local context of help across Europe just under half of people (48%) stated people in their local area help each other. Only 9% of people however stated that people in their local area help each other a 'great deal'. The proportion of people stating that helping others is important has been stable over recent times across Europe. In 2002 63% of people stated that helping others is important, in 2004 this was 65% and 61% in 2006¹.

4.2 Modelling Results

We began by producing single level logistic regression models for each of the outcomes including countries as fixed effects with the UK as the reference category. We use the UK as an example country in order to produce a picture of the relative standing of the other countries represented in the ESS.

Here we restrict the results to 5% (or less) significant differences in the coefficients. The tables shown here use + or – to indicate, respectively significant positive or negative differences.

Table 3. compares the differences in help as a value, helping in practice and the civic engagement outcomes across European countries compared to the UK and also controlling for age and gender.

¹ All these responses are self-reported which of course can lead to measurement error. For example, it has been shown that ESS respondents over report whether they voted or not (Fieldhouse, Tranmer and Russell 2007).

Table 3. Significant differences in the outcomes compared to the UK – country and age/sex in model

| COUNTRY (compared to UK) | Help value | Help in practice – local activities | Contact | Sign | Demo | Vote | Volunteer |
|--------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Belgium | | | | - | + | + | - |
| Bulgaria | - | - | - | - | - | | - |
| Switzerland | | + | - | - | + | - | + |
| Cyprus | + | - | | - | | + | - |
| Germany | - | - | - | - | + | + | + |
| Denmark | | + | | | + | + | |
| Estonia | - | - | | - | | - | - |
| Spain | + | - | - | - | + | + | - |
| Finland | - | - | | - | - | + | |
| France | - | | - | - | + | + | |
| Austria | - | + | + | - | | + | + |
| Hungary | - | - | - | - | | + | - |
| Ireland | | + | + | - | | | + |
| Netherlands | - | - | - | - | - | + | + |
| Norway | - | + | + | | + | + | + |
| Poland | - | - | - | - | - | - | - |
| Portugal | - | - | - | - | | + | - |
| Russ Fed | - | - | - | - | | - | - |
| Sweden | - | - | | | | + | - |
| Slovenia | | | | - | | | |
| Slovakia | - | - | - | - | | | - |
| Ukraine | - | - | - | - | + | + | - |
| Sex (0 male; 1 female) | + | - | - | + | - | - | |
| Age (years) | + | | + | - | - | + | |

NOTE: The full numerical results are given in the Appendix.

The findings support the descriptive analysis above. Certain countries tend to have significantly higher or lower levels of the different outcomes than the UK. In relation to the value of help we found that almost all countries were significantly different from the UK – some with higher and some with lower probabilities of having the value of help. Only Belgium, Switzerland, Denmark, Ireland and Slovenia were not significantly different from the UK. A similar story emerges for help in practice where only France, Belgium and Slovenia were not significantly different from the UK. These findings suggests that there are important country level context issues to consider when looking at help and helping across Europe. Such issues may relate to opportunities to help others and the role of the state provision in this process.

In relation to age and gender our analysis suggests there is a weak positive linear relationship between age and the value of help and a strong relationship with gender (0.339 (s.e. = 0.019)). In relation to helping in practice (local activities) there is a slight negative relationship with age (which may signify a person's ability to help) and a negative relationship with gender (-0.04) perhaps indicating that women may face additional barriers to helping. It is notable that Badescu and Neller (2007) have found that being married and/or having children have a dual effect on voluntary association such that whilst it is associated with higher levels of integration it also results in people having less time for voluntary association. This is similarly the case for people who have a full time job.

Measurement and response issues may also be a factor here particularly in relation to gender. Perceptions of gender roles may lead to women responding to the questions on help and helping along social desirability lines where women have been traditionally seen as carers. Though conversely it could be that women under report and men over report the extent to which they actually help in practice in terms of the way it is measured here. Interestingly research in the UK by Williams (2003) suggests that more affluent people are more likely to recall and report participation in voluntary groups whilst the neighbourliness and mutual support in lower income areas were not always captured in many surveys. For further discussion of helping and social class see Purdam and Tranmer (2009).

Table 4 below shows the fixed effects coefficients from the multilevel model for the local context of help, for the value of help and help in practice (local activities).

Table 4. Local Context of Help

| Local Context of Help | Help value | Help in practice – local activities | Contact | Sign | Demo | Vote | Volunteer |
|--------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|---------|------|------|------|-----------|
| Help 1. Very little | - | | | | | | + |
| Help 2. | - | + | | | | + | + |
| Help 3. | | + | | | | + | + |
| Help 4. | | + | | + | | + | + |
| Help 5. | + | + | + | + | | + | + |
| Help 6. A great deal/very much | + | + | | + | | + | + |

NOTE: Includes respondents who answered the question - *“Please tell me the extent you feel people in your local area/neighbourhood help one another?”* Coded as (0-6) ‘Not at all’ – ‘A great deal’. The full numerical results are given in the appendix.

We find a generally positive relationship with the value of help and local context of help (local refers to local neighbourhood). This suggests that as people perceive more help around them they are also more likely to state that helping others is important, although from this analysis we cannot establish the causality.

A monotonic relationship is evident between the respondent’s perceptions of local help (the culture of local help) and helping in practice (local activities). As such, we can suggest that as people perceive more help around them they are also more likely to help in practice (or indeed the converse). Amato’s (1993) research highlights the importance of social networks on helping behaviour and the importance of the local context of help. Our analysis may be tapping into this dynamic of help and helping which has important implications for our understanding of helping as an aspect of community life and the reciprocal dynamics of helping. There are only a limited number of local neighbourhoods where respondents feel people help a great deal. We have identified a possible ceiling to helping. Even people who help out a lot have a limit to what they can do.

In relation to civic engagement, as a person’s perception of the extent people in their local area help one another increases so does, on the whole, their likelihood of voting, contacting a politician, signing a petition and being involved in voluntary activity. However, the picture is more varied in relation to taking part in a demonstration.

Tables 5 and 6 show the country, region and individual level correlations between the help and civic engagement outcomes, calculated as explained in the methodology section. The correlations marked with a * are statistically significant at the 5% level

(or less), based on Wald tests of the underlying covariance. We note that some strong correlations were not significant when some weaker correlations were significant; this is because the significance test is based on the covariance not the correlation. Small covariances and variances that are not statistically significant can still result in apparently large correlations, which may seem important at first glance.

Table 5. Correlations of civic engagement measures with Help as a Value

| HELP AS A VALUE | Level 1 Individual | Level 2 Region | Level 3 Country |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Help in practice – local activities | .064 * | -.084 * | .363 |
| Contact politician | .041* | .122 | .387 |
| Sign petition | .040 * | -.447 | .344 |
| Go on demo | .022 * | -.268 * | .276 |
| Vote | .040 * | -.248 * | .349 |
| Volunteer | .083 * | -.163 | .359 |

Table 6. Correlations of civic engagement measures with Help in Practice (Local activities)

| HELP IN PRACTICE – local activities | Level 1 Individual | Level 2 Region | Level 3 Country |
|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Help as a value | .064 * | -.084 * | .363 |
| Contact politician | .159 * | .440 * | .779 * |
| Sign petition | .142 * | .219 * | .847 * |
| Go on demo | .087 * | .216 | .637 * |
| Vote | .104 * | .251 * | .310 |
| Volunteer | .376 * | .728 * | .860 * |

At the country level there is evidence of relatively high levels of correlation between help as a value and help in practice (local activities) and the other measures of civic engagement. The associations of the other civic engagement outcomes with the value of help are weaker than they are with helping in practice. It seems that the value of help at the country level is detached from what people may do in their everyday lives. This may be something about the nature of the value itself and/or related to the barriers and opportunities that people encounter to helping in practice in terms of helping organise or attend local activities and to becoming more civically engaged.

Though the correlations are smaller at the individual level than at the country level, we can again see relatively strong associations between help in practice, volunteering and other civic engagement outcomes. Again the correlations are weaker with the value of help than with helping in practice. Perhaps not surprisingly help in practice is strongly related to voluntarism at the individual level (cor = .376). More generally we note that again all correlations are positive. These correlations are in general small, mainly because these variables are binary at the individual level.

People who see helping others as important and who help in practice are also likely to be involved in voluntary activity. This is perhaps not that surprising at first glance but other civic engagement activities and in particular voting and going on a demonstration are less associated with helping in practice. This links with the debates raised above and the work of Badescu and Neller (2007) who found that higher levels of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works tend to be associated with higher levels of involvement in voluntary associations.

At the regional level the results are more varied. The negative associations between the value of helping and signing a petition, going on a demonstration and voting may

suggest that at a region level the context in relation to particular cultural or political traditions and governance infrastructures can exert a general influence. The strong positive associations of helping in practice with volunteering and contacting a politician suggests that there may be some area affects perhaps relating to the role of individual representatives and the opportunities for participation more widely. Further regional level case study research would be required to examine these differences in more detail.

Tables 7 to 9 highlight the associations between the other civic engagement outcomes. It is important to consider how other types of civic engagement are associated at different levels. These inter-relationships are often ignored, or the information is lost when the variables are combined into single indices.

Tables 7-9. Correlations between the civic engagement and voluntarism outcomes at the individual, region and country levels

| Country | Contact | Sign | Demo | Vote |
|-----------|---------|--------|--------|------|
| Sign | .734 * | | | |
| Demo | .383 * | .534 * | | |
| Vote | .566 * | .397 * | .359 | |
| Volunteer | .824 * | .792 * | .506 * | .407 |

| Regional | Contact | Sign | Demo | Vote |
|-----------|---------|--------|-------|--------|
| Sign | .510 * | | | |
| Demo | .368 * | .789 * | | |
| Vote | -.117 | .156 | -.055 | |
| Volunteer | .026 * | .196 | .016 | .299 * |

| Individual | Contact | Sign | Demo | Vote |
|------------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| Sign | .201 * | | | |
| Demo | .147 * | .258 * | | |
| Vote | .095 * | .092 * | .046 * | |
| Volunteer | .124 * | .148 * | .104 * | .097 * |

At the country level there are strong associations between signing a petition and contacting a politician. This perhaps reflects a certain type of political culture and types of civic engagement activities. The country level associations between civic engagement outcomes with taking part in a demonstration are weaker. Moreover, as other research has shown, voting appears to be an action linked to a range of additional contextual factors such as incumbency, campaigning and marginality especially at the individual level.

The region level correlations are again generally more mixed and show no clear pattern of association though there is a strong association between signing a petition and taking part in a demonstration. The variances and the co-variance components they are calculated from are very small. This indicates that there is very little variation between regions compared with countries and individuals.

5. Conclusions and Policy Implications

The value of help and helping in practice as measured in this research are important to consider in the development of our understanding of civic society. The relatively high levels of people seeing helping others as important (the value of help) is a potential building block for renewing civil society and civic engagement across Europe.

The value of help is more widely held compared to actually helping in practice (in terms of helping organise or attending a local activity). This is important in terms of developing our theoretical model of behaviour and our understanding of the interplay between values and actual behaviour.

The country level differences in the value of help are striking and require further investigation. The differences in the value of help are not as great as the country level differences in helping in practice (at least in the way it has been measured in this study). This suggests that the way people see the importance of helping others has the quality of a human value which can transcend other contextual factors. However, helping as a value is not as strongly associated with civic engagement outcomes and volunteering as helping in practice. It seems that the value of help at the country level is detached from what people may do in their everyday lives. This may be something to do with the nature of the value itself and/or related to the barriers and opportunities that people encounter to helping in practice and to becoming more civically engaged.

People who help in practice in terms of helping organise or attend a local activity are also likely to be involved in voluntary activities. Whereas the other civic engagement activities such as voting and going on a demonstration are less associated with the value of help and helping in practice. This raises important issues in relation to democracy. Badescu and Neller (2007) who found that higher levels of dissatisfaction with the way democracy works tends to be associated with higher levels of involvement in voluntary associations. Whilst we do not want to overstate this, it maybe that people who are involved in helping and voluntary activity have an increased disengagement from formal political activities. As such, government policy initiatives aimed at increasing civic engagement that are linked to volunteering may also be mobilising counteractive forces.

Women are more likely than men to see helping others as important. However, on the whole women are less likely than men to help in practice as measured here. This perhaps indicates that women are involved in other types of helping activities but not helping with or attending activities in their local area. It may also be that women face additional barriers to translating their values into practice, for example due to family caring responsibilities, lack of time, lack of resources, lack of opportunities to be involved and detachment from certain social networks. Measurement issues may also be a factor here whereby women, as a consequence of perceptions of gender roles, respond to the questions on help and helping along social desirability lines where women have been traditionally seen as carers. It could also be that women under report and men over report the extent to which they actually help in practice.

In general older people are more likely to state that helping others is important though they are not the most likely to state that they help other people in practice. Again this maybe a consequence of older people facing additional barriers in relation to implementing their values. It is also notable that research by Purdam and Tranmer (2009) has shown that the expectation of help in return is substantially higher amongst younger people when compared to older people. This is not necessarily entirely negative but perhaps heralds the development of a culture of conditional help and helping.

The country differences across Europe in the value of help and helping in practice are important findings. In certain countries, such as Switzerland, the levels of help as a value and helping in practice are both relatively high, whilst in other countries such as Cyprus and Bulgaria the levels of helping in practice are lower than would be expected considering the proportion of people stating that helping others was important.

The local context of help is an important factor when considering the likelihood of someone helping in practice and so particularly relevant to the specific measure of helping we have examined in this study. Moreover, as people perceive more help around them they are also more likely to say that helping others is important. This supports arguments concerning the importance of context, networks and social relationships in explaining both why and how people translate their values into their everyday lives. In relation to civic engagement, as a person's perception of the extent to which people in their local area help one another increases so does, on the whole, their likelihood of voting, contacting a politician, signing a petition and being involved in voluntary activity.

The value of help and helping in practice are important aspects of civic engagement. The evidence from our analysis, whilst posing further questions, highlights that the value of help held by many people is not always translated into helping in practice or other civic engagement activities. Whilst engendering the value of help remains important there are clearly also opportunities for policy innovations to assist people overcome any barriers they may face in translating their values into action and therefore to the creation of a more help orientated, civic society.

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