

Helping Values and Civic Engagement

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Abstract

In this article we examine the importance people attach to helping other people, the extent to which they help in practice and their perceptions of how much people living locally help each other. We also consider the extent to which the value of help is associated with other civic engagement activities such as, for example, volunteering, signing a petition and contacting a politician.

Our findings suggest that the importance people attach to helping others and the extent to which they help in practice (in terms of helping with or attending activities in their local area) varies considerably across Europe. People are more likely to see helping other people as important than actually help in practice. However, helping in practice is more strongly associated than helping as a value, with other civic engagement activities. It seems that the value of help is detached from what people may do in their everyday lives. Both the value of help and helping in practice are associated with the extent to which people in their local area are perceived to help each other. Our findings have important implications for our understanding of civic society and the contribution citizens can make within the contexts in which they live.

Keywords: help, civic engagement; volunteering; democracy; Europe multilevel modeling.

Introduction

Helping has many connotations but it can be defined as a contribution to the achievement of something and is often associated with caring. In the context of civic engagement helping might include: organising a community event, supporting a particular campaign or voluntary group or assisting a neighbour. Of course the role of being a helper can take many forms and some helpers are in fact organisers who recruit and organise other people to help. But in a general sense such organisers are helpers to. It is this very general notion of helping, viewed as a form of civic engagement that we are interested in here.

Helping when attached to positive, socially desirable outcomes is vital to the functioning of civil society. It is part of the infrastructure of community, both in terms of how relationships develop and how they are maintained. Helping is the embodiment of civic society and an underlying notion of helping could be considered to underpin civic participation. It is notable, for example, that Plagnol and Huppert (2010) have identified that informal volunteering (providing help to those outside a person's family, work or a voluntary group) is positively associated with formal volunteering (helping in a charity group). Helping is arguably part of the set of human values. Qualitative research by Roberts and Devine (2004) into informal voluntary activity (such as a person helping care for a relative or neighbour) has found that people often understand their voluntary work in terms of helping out and as just part of their everyday activity. Whilst Lie et al. (2009) in their qualitative research on volunteering amongst older people have highlighted how volunteering is seen as an expression of citizenship.

Helping in the form of voluntary activity is increasingly being seen as an aspect of citizenship, renewing democracy and also delivering services. Governments are increasingly focussing on the voluntary sector and the role of voluntary activity of citizens as a key aspect of the restructuring of the welfare state (Milligan and Conradson 2007; Macmillan and Townsend 2007). In many countries, including the UK, the responsibilities of citizens has become part of the national school curriculum

though the teaching has taken different forms (Callan 1997). A range of European Union policies have increasingly focused on engaging citizens in civil society. Ilcan (2009) has pointed to the mobilization of responsible citizenship and it is important to consider the wider context of citizenship in the liberal democratic state and the balance between rights, responsibilities and obligations. See Etzioni (1995), Foucault (1991), Janoski (1998) and Marinetto (2003) for discussion.

However, a number of measures point to a decline in citizen involvement in many advanced democracies (Putnam 2000) For example, in the UK Curtice et al. (2010) argue that the British electorate can no longer be relied upon to vote simply out of duty or habit. In relation to volunteering in the UK evidence from the Citizenship Survey (CLG 2011) has shown that levels of volunteering at least once a year have declined by 10 percent since 2001 - from 74 per cent to 64 percent. The notion of a long-term decline is debated (Norris 2002 and Stolle and Hooghe 2005). For example, Inglehart (1997) and Dalton (2008) amongst others have pointed to the new types of civic engagement activities people are involving themselves in. Hall (1999) concluded that in the UK, contrary to Putnam's findings in the USA, aggregate levels of civic engagement have been maintained in the UK. Research by John (2009) suggests that new forms of involvement are serving to engage previously uninvolved groups.

Across many European countries Morales and Guerts (2007) and Morales (2009) have shown there are considerable variations in voluntary activity. Associational involvement and voluntary work varies from almost all the population in Norway having some kind of associational involvement to 28 per cent of the population in Russia. Badescu and Neller (2007) have shown that across European countries middle aged men with higher qualification levels and income are the most likely to be involved 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 and young peoples rates of volunteering are in decline.

In this paper we consider general measures of helping and specifically the importance people attach to helping and caring for the well being of others and the extent to which they report helping in practice (help with or attending local activities). The key research questions are: how does the importance people attach to helping other people vary by: age, gender, income, country, type of area and the local context of help (the extent to which a person thinks other people living locally help each other)? Do people who see helping others as important help in practice? Are those people who see helping people as important more likely to be involved in civic engagement activities?

Methodology

Our analysis focuses on the European Social Survey (ESS). The ESS collects a range of data on attitudes and reported behaviour patterns. The 2006 wave includes data on 23 European countries. Multivariate multilevel modeling techniques are used to unravel variations and relationships in the indicators of help and civic engagement at the individual, region and country levels.

Background

The Value of Help and Helping Behaviour

The relationship between individual values and behaviour is complex. 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. The link between values, intention and behaviour can be weak, as research in relation to pro-environmental action by Whitmarsh (2009) has shown. Research by Berkowitz (1972) concludes that the helpfulness norm is only a weak determinant of help giving of most people in many situations.

Evidence suggests 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 (Dovidio et al. 2006). Research has also highlighted the development of concern for others amongst young children (Zahn-Waxler et al. 1996, Schwartz and Bilsky 1990 and Inglehart et al. 2004). 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. Experimental research 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 (Berkovitz 1968). Young people have been shown to be more likely to volunteer if their parents volunteer (Rosenthal et al. 1998). Batson (1998) highlights how the motivations to help can also be down to self-interest as people feel better about themselves after helping.

In terms of volunteering, research has shown that a range of factors are associated with such activity including: being male, older people, those with higher qualifications, those who are married and have children, those people who live with someone who volunteers and those who attend religious services regularly being more likely to volunteer (Musick et al. 2000 and Wilson 2000). Though the associations can vary by type of volunteer activity. The opportunities for volunteering are also important consider. For example, those with children are more likely to be asked to volunteer as they are likely to part of social networks where other people are already volunteers (Brady et al. 1999).

Levine et al. (2008) in their comparative experimental study of different measures of helping in three American cities, described in terms of prosocial behaviour, highlight the importance of community norms in helping. They found that population size and density showed significant negative correlations with measures of helping and that on certain measures men were more likely to help than women. 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. Levine et al. (2008) have also identified a decline in helping in the last 15 years.

It is clear a person's likelihood of helping is the result of a complex set of factors. In this article we consider help and helping in three inter-related ways (i) in the context of personal characteristics such as age, gender and educational attainment; (ii) in the context of geography such as the country or region in which the individual lives, including the extent to which individuals feel other people in their local area help one another; (iii) in the context of other civic engagement activities such as contacting a politician, signing a petition and voting. We use a general, low resource cost measure of helping in practice so that we can limit the impact of other factors that may be associated with people providing help in highly specific circumstances.

Methodology

Data and Variable Definitions

We use data from the European Social Survey (ESS) which is a survey of people's attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns across Europe. The 2006 wave includes data from 23 European countries. The requirement is for random probability samples of the eligible residential populations. The required sample size is 1,500 or 800 in countries with populations less than 2 million. The target response rate is 70 per cent.

We have considered seven indicators of help, helping and civic engagement measures and a measure of the extent to which the respondent perceives people living locally help one another.

Table 1. Definitions

Variable	ESS Questions and coding
Help as a value – (It is important to help the people around you and care for others well being)	<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>
Help in practice – (help with or attend 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>
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>
Signed petition	<i>During the past 12 months have you signed a petition? Yes/No/Don’t Know</i>
Took part in a demonstration	<i>During the last 12 months have you taken part in lawful public demonstration? Yes/No/Don’t Know</i>
Voted	<i>Did you vote in the in the last national election? Yes/No/Not eligible to vote</i>
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>

Modelling

We began by using single level logistic regression models taking each of the seven outcomes as separate recoded dichotomous variables and relating this to country with the UK as the reference category and included: age gender, educational attainment and the perceived local context of help. 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. We restricted our analyses to people eligible to vote, which generally means people of 18+.

In order to examine the overall extent of between country variation in each of the outcome variables, we fitted bivariate logistic multilevel models (Goldstein 2003). This set of models was used to investigate the inter-relationships between the outcomes at the three different levels: individuals, regions and countries. For each person (indexed by i) in each region (indexed by j) in each country (indexed by k), there are seven outcome variables considered. \mathbf{y}_{ijk} is a $n \times 2$ matrix containing any two of the seven 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.

Bivariate Multilevel Logistic Regression Model

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

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

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

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

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

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

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 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.

Measurement Limitations

Firstly, in terms of measuring helping in practice it is clear that “*Helping out with or attending activities organized in your local area*” is only one aspect of helping. 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. However, it is a low resource cost form of helping in terms of time and commitment. As such, whilst it does carry some ambiguity, we feel it is a good, general indicator. Local activities might include a community gathering or fundraising event but we believe the measure provide some valuable insights into helping behaviour in a general sense.

Secondly, the social desirability of giving a certain response may also be a factor as respondents may state that they see helping others as important or state that they help in practice because they feel that is the acceptable answer. We consider these important limitations in the interpretation of our findings¹.

Thirdly, whilst in the single level models we control for age, gender and educational attainment levels, we restricted part of our multi-level analysis to null models as we are interested in the inter-relationships between the response variables at the different levels. 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. However, our primary focus is to develop our understanding of the associations between helping and well established measures of civic engagement in the context of the area and country in which people live. In relation to measuring values cross nationally and some of the limitations see Schwartz (1994) and Davidov et al. (2008).

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).

Findings

Cross-Country Comparisons

Nearly two thirds (61 per cent) of people across the countries in the ESS state that they feel helping other people is important (the value of help). There are however considerable differences between countries.

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

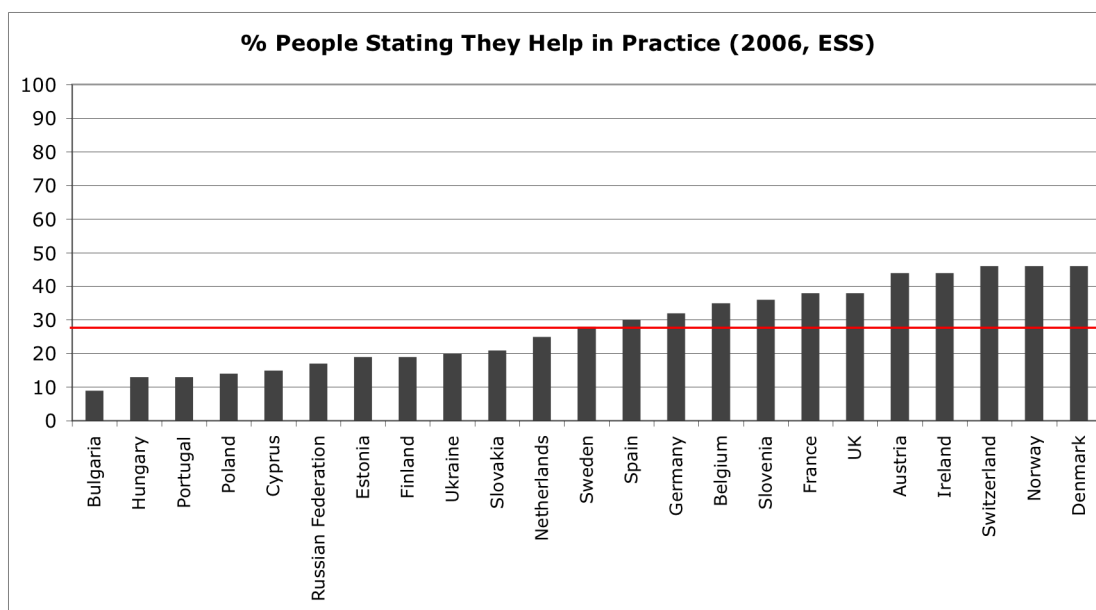


ESS 2006. All respondents. N. 43,000. Includes respondents who answered - "It is very important to help the people around you and care for others' well being" was 'Very much like me' or 'Like me'. It excludes those who responded 'Somewhat like me' or 'A little like me'.

There appears to be some clustering by liberal democratic tradition and social welfare regime type which other research has also highlighted. However, the countries having the highest rates of the value of help are quite mixed including 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 2010).

In relation to helping in practice (helping with or attending a local activity) the overall rates are much lower as shown below. Just over a quarter (27 per cent) of people state that they help others in practice. The gap between reported attitudes and reported behaviour are substantial.

Figure 2. People Who State That They Help With Or Attend Activities Organised In Their Local Area - (Help In Practice).



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 post Communist Eastern European countries and Southern-European countries.

It is also notable that countries with the highest proportions of people stating that helping others is important are not necessarily the countries with the highest percentages of people who help in practice (helping with or attending local activities). Cyprus is a particular example here. The 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. Cyprus also 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 though there is still a substantial gap between helping values and reported behaviour.

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. Moreover, the proportion of people stating that helping others is important has been stable over recent times across Europe. In 2002 63 per cent of people in the ESS stated that helping others is important and in 2004 this was 65 per cent.

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

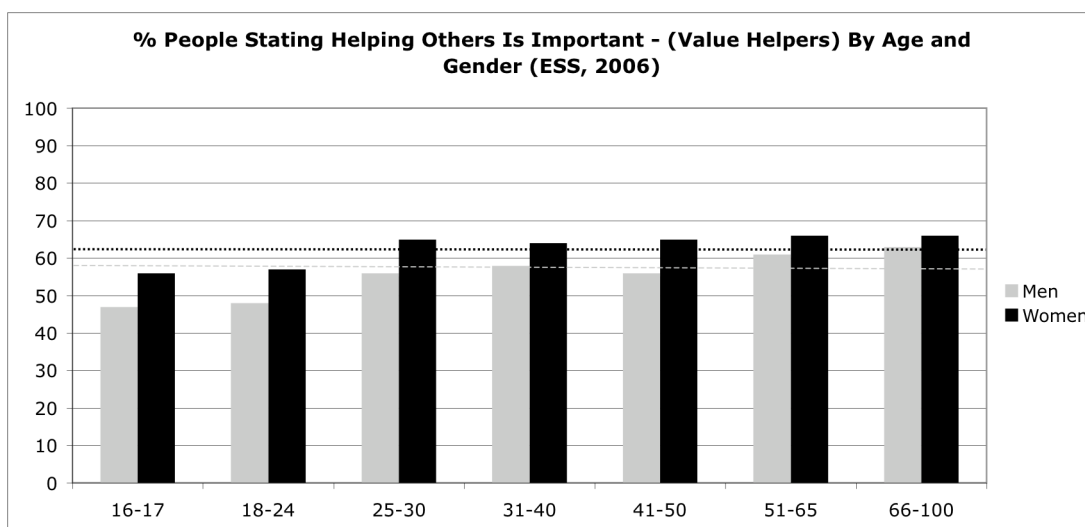
Variable	Country level variance (and standard error), and the countries with highest and lowest rates for each outcome
Value of help - (important to help the people around you and care for others well being)	.196 (.058) Highest %: Cyprus, Spain, Slovenia Switzerland; Lowest %: Ukraine, Russian Federation, Estonia
Help in practice – (helping with or attending 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.

Comparing Differences by Age and Gender

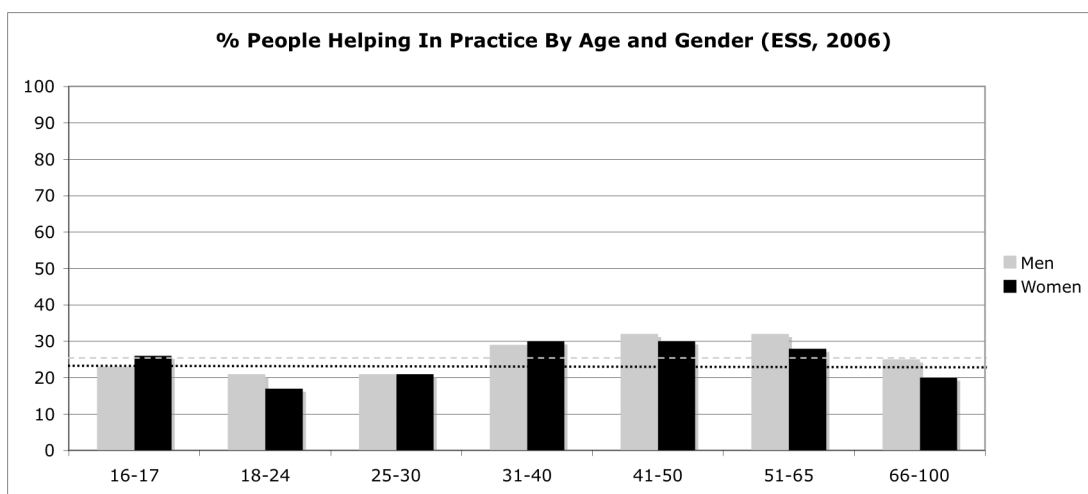
In relation to the extent to which people think helping others is important and whether they help in relation to organising or attending local activities there are some differences between men and women and by age. Women across all age groups are more likely than men to state that helping other people is important (64 per cent compared to 57 per cent).

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 with or attending local activities (Helping in Practice) by Age and Gender



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

Conversely in relation to helping in practice as measured here we see that overall women are less likely to help than men (26 per cent compared to 28 per cent). Though statistically significant, the difference is small. 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 (help with or attend 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 the local context of help across countries in the ESS, just under half of all respondents (48 per cent) stated that people in their local area help each other to some extent; 9 per cent of people stated that people in their local area helped each other a 'great deal'. Overall there are only a limited number of local neighbourhoods where respondents feel people help a great deal.

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 control for key demographics. 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. The UK is a valuable case study country it has relatively high levels of people stating that helping other people is important and also relatively high levels of helping people in practice. We restrict the results to 5 per cent (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, gender and educational attainment.

Table 3. Helping and Civic Engagement Outcomes Compared To The UK

COUNTRY (compared to UK)	Help value (important to help the people around you and care for others well being)	Help in practice (help with or attending local activities).	Contact a politician	Sign a petition	Take part in a demonstration	Vote	Volunteer
Belgium		-		-	+	+	-
Bulgaria	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Switzerland			-	-	+	-	+
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)	+		+	-	-	+	
Education (0 lower secondary; 1 upper secondary or higher)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+

NOTE: The full numerical results are available from the authors. Cyprus has been excluded from the models because of limited case numbers.

The findings support the descriptive analysis. Older people, women compared to men and those with higher education qualifications are more likely to state that it is important to help other people. In relation to helping in practice (help with or attending 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 perhaps indicating that women may face additional barriers to helping in practice. Women are also less likely than men to volunteer as measured here though this result is not statistically significant. There is a positive relationship between education level and helping in practice. In relation to the other measures of civic engagement those with higher levels of education are more likely to contact a politician. Men are more likely than women to contact a politician, take part in a demonstration and vote. Older people are more likely to vote and contact a politician compared to younger people. Older people are less likely to take part in a demonstration or sign a petition.

Comparing across different countries in the ESS we found considerable differences in the aggregate levels of helping and civic engagement activities. In relation to the

value of help we found that almost all countries were significantly less likely to see helping other people as important compared to the UK. Only Spain was significantly higher than the UK. Considerable differences were also apparent in relation to help in practice. Only in Austria was the likelihood of helping in practice significantly higher than the UK. In relation to the other civic engagement activities there was also considerable country level variation compared to the UK. Of particular note is the significantly higher likelihood of voting in many countries compared to the UK except for a number of post Communist Eastern European countries and the lower likelihood of signing a petition across all countries compared to the UK.

These findings suggest that there are important country level contextual issues to consider when looking at the value of help and helping in practice and the other measures of civic engagement activities across Europe.

The Local Context of Help

We now look specifically at one aspect of context – the extent to which people feel other people around them help one another. Table 4 below summarises the results of modelling each of the seven outcome measures after controlling for age, gender and educational attainment. The reference category is - people think other people in their local area do not help one another at all.

Table 4. Local Context of Help

Local Context of Help (the extent you feel people in your local area/neighbourhood help one another)	Help value (important to help the people around you and care for others well being)	Help in practice (help with or attending local activities).	Contact politician	Sign petition	Take part in demonstration	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’.

We find a generally positive relationship with the value of help and the local context of help. This suggests that as people perceive more help around them they are also more likely to state that helping others is important and to help in practice, although from this analysis we cannot establish the causality. In relation to the other civic engagement activities, 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 and signing a petition.

We now consider the region and individual level correlations between the help and civic engagement outcomes, calculated as explained in the methodology section. In tables 5 and 6 the correlations marked with a * are statistically significant at the 5 per cent level (based on Wald tests of the underlying covariance).

Table 5. Correlations Of Civic Engagement Measures With Help As A Value

HELP AS A VALUE (Important to help the people around you and care for others well being)	Level 1 Individual	Level 2 Region	Level 3 Country
Help in practice – (Help with or attend local activities)	.064 *	-.084 *	.363
Contact politician	.041*	.122	.387
Sign petition	.040 *	-.447	.344
Taking part in a demonstration	.022 *	-.268 *	.276
Vote	.040 *	-.248 *	.349
Volunteer	.083 *	-.163	.359

Table 6. Correlations Of Civic Engagement Measures With Help In Practice (Helping With Or Attending Local Activities).

HELP IN PRACTICE (Helping with or attending 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 *
Taking part in a demonstration	.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 (helping with or attending 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.

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. The correlations are weaker with the value of help than with helping in practice. Perhaps not surprisingly help in practice is strongly related to voluntary activities at the individual level. 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 taking part in a demonstration are less associated with helping in practice.

At the regional level the results are more varied. The negative associations between the value of helping and signing a petition, taking part in 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 effects perhaps relating to the role of individual representatives and the opportunities for participation more widely.

Finally, 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. Table 7 highlights the associations between the other civic engagement outcomes.

Tables 7. Correlations Between The Civic Engagement and Voluntarism Outcomes At The Individual and Country Levels

Country	Contact a politician	Sign petition	Take part in a demonstration	Vote
Sign petition	.734 *			
Take part in a demonstration	.383 *	.534 *		
Vote	.566 *	.397 *	.359	
Volunteer	.824 *	.792 *	.506 *	.407

Regional	Contact a politician	Sign petition	Take part in a demonstration	Vote
Sign petition	.510 *			
Take part in a demonstration	.368 *	.789 *		
Vote	-.117	.156	-.055	
Volunteer	.026 *	.196	.016	.299 *

Individual	Contact a politician	Sign petition	Take part in a demonstration	Vote
Sign petition	.201 *			
Take part in a demonstration	.147 *	.258 *		
Vote	.095 *	.092 *	.046 *	
Volunteer	.124 *	.148 *	.104 *	.097 *

In terms of civic engagement at the country level there are strong associations between signing a petition and contacting a politician and volunteering. This perhaps reflects a certain type of political culture and types of civic engagement activities. At the individual level there is a positive association between signing a petition and contacting a politician and between signing a petition and taking part in a demonstration. As other research has shown, at an individual level voting is an action linked to a range of additional contextual factors such as incumbency, campaigning and marginality.

5. Discussion and Policy Implications

The value of help underpins civic participation activities both conceptually and also in practice. However, the associations are not as direct as might be expected. Overall, people are much more likely to see helping others as important than actually help in practice even in terms of the general and low resource cost measure used here – (helping organising or attending local activities).

Our analysis suggests that the way people see the importance of helping others has the quality of a human value that can transcend contextual factors, though there are still considerable between country variations. However, it seems that the importance people give to helping others is detached from what many people do in their everyday lives, even after taking account of the generalised, low resource cost measure of helping in practice used here. Help as a human value is a belief that can motivate action but helping in practice can be dependent on a person's individual characteristics and circumstances. Moreover, arguably we have identified a limit to the amount of helping, even people who help out a lot have a limit to what they can do. It is notable that overall few people live in areas where they feel other people help each other a great deal.

Our analysis suggests that women across all age groups are more likely than men to state that helping other people and caring for their well being is important. As other research has shown, women have higher levels of altruism than men (Wilson and Musick 1997). Women are however less likely to state that they help in practice as

measured here (though the difference is small). In general older men and women aged 25 years and older are more likely to state that helping others is important, though the association is weak. Those with higher education attainment levels are more likely to state that helping other people is important and to actually help in practice compared to those with lower levels of education. It is notable that Anheier and Salamon (2000) found evidence of higher rates of volunteering across Europe amongst those people in higher socio-economic occupations.

The gap between the value of helping and helping in practice is likely to be, in part, a consequence of the barriers certain people face and the lack of opportunities for implementing their values and becoming more civically engaged. For example, older people may not have the opportunities, the resources, or be in good enough health to help in practice. As such, the ageing population in many Western countries is a crucial issue in relation to the future patterns of help and helping. Women are perhaps 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 caring responsibilities and a lack of time, resources and opportunities. Survey evidence in the UK has shown that a lack of time and work commitments were key factors for people not volunteering or stopping volunteering (Cabinet Office 2007). It is also notable that research in the UK by Arber et al. (2002) has shown that whilst older men more often chat to neighbours, older women are more likely to give and receive help. This may reflect the different time spent in and around the home. The social network aspects of helping have also been found to be strong. Research by Amato (1993) reveals that people are most likely to help friends and family members and that the individual characteristics of individuals are more closely associated with planned helping. See also Wilson and Musick (1998) and Tong et al. (2011).

Survey measurement issues may be a factor here in relation to how the notion of helping is perceived. Women and men, as a consequence of perceptions of gender roles, may be responding to the questions on helping along social desirability lines. Hopefully the general helping in practice measure we have used has minimised this. But the gender differences are still striking. It could also be that both women and men misreport the extent to which they value help and actually help in practice, though this would require further research. In relation to social class and education level it is important to note that research in the UK by Williams (2003) suggests that affluent people are more likely to recall and report participation in voluntary groups but the neighbourliness and mutual support in lower income areas are not always captured in many surveys. Moreover we are not capturing different types of helping and examining differences in terms of the extent of helping. It would be important to consider this but our focus has been on the general orientation people have towards the importance of help and helping in practice.

Across the countries in the ESS our findings suggest that the importance people attach to helping others and the extent to which they help in practice varies considerably. The low levels of the value of help and helping in practice in many post Communist Eastern European countries are particularly striking. Country and context specific differences such as in the infrastructures for civic engagement and the public and cultural perceptions of the role of social welfare are clearly important. Cross national research by Parboteeah et al. (2004) has highlighted how formal volunteering levels tend to be higher in countries where there is greater liberal democracy and where wealth and education levels are higher. Morales (2009) concludes that people with the similar social and cognitive attributes are not equally likely to be politically active in all western countries because of contextual differences. Huppert et al. (2009) and Plagnol and Huppert's (2010) research on volunteering and wellbeing have highlighted the low levels of volunteering in many Eastern European countries. The recent history of the state structures are thought to be an important factor in explaining this including compulsory volunteering and its impact on social norms and values, a lack of voluntary sector infrastructure and the

impact of economic transition. Kuti (2004) suggests that the shared history of military rule and authoritarianism (including the enforcement of volunteering) did not engender the development of the infrastructure of civic society. Bartowski and Jasinska-Kania (2004) have 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. They also suggest that the development of democracy and a capitalist economy in the short term can serve to reduce community activities. Meier and Stutzer (2008) point to a substantial drop in volunteering following reunification with West Germany due to the collapse in the state infrastructure of volunteering in the East. For a discussion of the impact of compulsory volunteering in the USA see Janoski et al. (1998). Such contextual issues are likely to explain the variations we identified at the regional level. As we explained, the negative associations between the value of helping and other types of civic engagement suggests that particular cultural or political traditions and governance infrastructures are a factor. Moreover, the strong positive associations of helping in practice with volunteering and contacting a politician suggests that there may be some area effects perhaps relating to the role of individual representatives and the opportunities for civic participation within an area.

Plagnol and Huppert (2010) have also examined the impact of psychological factors, levels of social integration and cultural resources on the likelihood of volunteering. Whilst associations were identified with people with a positive outlook on life, those with a more active social life and those with hedonistic values and achievement values were more likely to volunteer, such characteristics did not fully explain the differences in volunteering rates across Europe. Anheier and Salamon's (2000) critique of single factor theories of the non-profit sector (which by definition involves voluntary participation) including: market failure and government failure, supply side issues, levels of trust and size of welfare state, points to the social origins of the voluntary sector. Such an approach is clearly important here in trying to fully explain the cross-national differences in helping and reciprocity. The social origins approach highlights the combined importance of the social, political, and cultural as well as economic structures both across and within countries.

It is clear our research supports the social origins approach. It would require further research to examine the interplay between civic tradition, welfare infrastructure and the role played by the state in the relation to the way in which citizens perceive and act on their responsibilities during their lives. For further discussion in this area see Steinberg and Young (1998), Coffé and Lippe (2009), Wallace and Pichler (2009), Kautto (1999), Kolberg (1992), Esping-Andersen (1990) and Powell and Barrientos (2004).

In relation to helping and other types of civic engagement activities, those people who help in practice in terms of helping with or attending a local activity are also likely to be involved in other voluntary activities. Whereas the other types of civic engagement such as voting and taking part in a demonstration are less associated with the value of help and helping in practice. This raises important issues in relation to democracy and the ways in which citizens may take a critical stance towards certain forms of 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. However, Dekker and van den Broek (1996) found a positive association between volunteering and political participation across European countries. Almond and Verba (1963) and Putnam (2000) suggest that volunteers are more interested in politics and less cynical about politicians when compared to people who do not volunteer. Though 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 young volunteers. Recent research by Dalton

(2008) has highlighted that alongside the decline in citizen duty in the USA there has been an increase in informal independent participation i.e. being active in a community project and buying products for political reasons. For further discussion see Arts and Halman (2004), Stolle et al. (2005) and Zukin et al. (2006).

Highlighting the importance of context, helping in practice, as measured here, is associated with the extent to which people feel that other people in their local neighbourhood help each other. Moreover, as people perceive help around them they are also more likely to say that helping others is important. In relation to other civic engagement activities 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. As such, where people live is clearly important in relation to their helping values and civic engagement activities beyond their local area.

As we have explained, we are conscious of the limitations of the helping measure used in the analysis. In fact our findings on the importance people give to helping others and helping in practice may in fact be an over estimate due to the social desirability of certain responses and the generous and low resource cost measure of helping we have used. In addition, whilst we cannot prove the direction of causality in relation to the value of help, helping in practice and civic engagement activities our contention is that the value of help is an important focus for understanding the development of civic society.

Across Europe the relatively high levels of people seeing helping others as important is a potential building block for renewing civil society. Engendering the value of help remains important for the creation of a civic society but there is also scope for policy innovation to assist people overcome the barriers they may face in translating their values into action rather than just generally encouraging people to become more involved in civic activities.

References

See attached file.

*Note: The full modelling results are available from the authors.