Patterns of Volunteering Over the Life Cycle

by

L. Kevin Selbee and Paul B. Reed
Statistics Canada

2000

Contents

One in a series of reports from the Nonprofit Sector Knowledge Base Project.

The authors welcome comments and suggestions. They can be reached at:

Telephone: (613) 951-8217
Facsimile: (613) 951-6313
e-mail: **reedpau@statcan.ca**

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Summary

The pattern of volunteer participation over the life cycle is typically described as following a Abell-shaped curve≅: participation rates are low at young ages, increase during midlife and then decline after about age 55. While this was true of Canada in 1987, it is no longer entirely the case. By 1997 a sharp increase in rates of volunteering among people under age 25 had changed the life cycle pattern. Moreover, the age-specific rates of volunteering are significantly affected by the main life cycle states, such as marital status, children in the home and labour force participation.

Among married and post-marriage (separated, divorced and widowed) individuals, the age-specific profile of rates of volunteering do indeed follow the bell-shaped curve. But among single individuals the profile across age groups is quite different; rates are highest among young people, decline through mid life (25 to 44), rise again through ages 45 to 64, and finally decline sharply after age 65.

The presence of children in the home, and their ages, also strongly affect volunteering. At all ages, people with children age 5 and under have the lowest rates of volunteering while those with children age 6 and older have the highest rates. People without children in the home fall between these two groups.

Employment status also affects volunteering. The age-specific rates are very similar for those working full-time and those not in the labour force, and are considerably lower than those who are students or who are working part-time.

There is also an association between rates of volunteering for particular combinations of life cycle states and the level of social participation or social connectivity these groups exhibit. In line with the hypothesis that people who volunteer will also tend to show a high degree of social connectivity in other spheres of life, we repeatedly find that groups with higher rates of volunteering also show higher levels of participation in other spheres of community life such as membership in civic organizations, interaction with family and friends, church attendance, length of residence in the

community, number of organizations volunteered for, and informal helping.

Introduction

Involvement in volunteer activity appears to vary in an ordered fashion as people move through their lives. The pattern of volunteering at different points over the age span generally follows a bell-shaped curve: rates increase from a low in teenage years through early adulthood to a peak in midlife (35 to 54) and then decline after age 65. In addition to age itself, a number of factors that occur at various points over the life cycle are associated with this pattern -- dimensions such as schooling/ work career /retirement, single/married/post-married (marriage dissolved by separation or death of spouse), and with/without children. A life cycle stage is usually a combination of age and one or more traits that are conventionally found at particular points during the full lifespan and occur in a general sequence. Most formal learning as a student is completed by age 25; nearly all marrying occurs after age 20 and before 35; most childbearing occurs between age 18 and 35; nearly all retiring takes place after the mid-fifties. Several other traits that are less age-specific, such as divorcing or seeking paid employment, are also involved in modifying life cycle stages and determining more specific life cycle states. Typically, it is argued that the level of participation in volunteer activity is strongly affected by these life cycle states because the expectations, obligations, roles, values and outlook, and conditions of life associated with these states differ and either inhibit or encourage volunteering (Goss, 1999). The connection between life cycle states and volunteer behaviour is complex; the various life cycle stages or states overlap in many ways and how, in combination, they affect volunteering has not been fully identified.

Our analysis consists of general components: (i) identifying the pattern of involvement in volunteering over the life cycle; (ii) uncovering the key social and economic factors which influence the pattern, and (iii) exploring how to account for (i) and (ii). We begin by examining the rates at which people volunteer during various periods or stages throughout life cycle. In particular, we examine the way combinations of various components of the life cycle affect volunteering. For example, how does a combination of traits such as being 24, married, working and having young

children affect the probability of volunteering differently than being 44, single, working, with no children in the home? We then examine how some of the socio-demographic attributes that are associated with volunteering intersect with life cycle traits and how they affect the typical levels of volunteering associated with life cycle stages. Of particular importance are traits such as gender, religion and education (Caputo, 1997; Wuthnow, 1990; Berger, 1991).

Research has repeatedly shown that a major correlate of volunteering is the degree to which people are involved in their community (Wilson and Musick, 1997; Janoski and Wilson, 1995). Generally speaking, the more varied a person's involvement, the greater the likelihood they will perform volunteer work. The ways in which people are involved with others in all spheres of their social lives, including family, work, and community, we describe as social connectivity. This refers to both the scope and intensity of the ways people interact with other individuals and groups. Almost everyone is active some way in their social world---we repeatedly connect, or interact with family, friends, neighbours, merchants, coworkers, acquaintances, and strangers. These interactions are of varying intensity and duration, but they all represent a connection, no matter how short-lived, with our social world. One way to subdivide conceptually these connections is in terms of the social distance that exists between ourselves and those with whom we interact. Interactions with individuals who are close in social distance we describe as proximate connections. Interactions with individuals and groups that are socially distant we describe as extended connections. The extent of our proximate connections reflects our proximate connectivity, while the extent of our extended connections reflects our extended connectivity. Just as social distance is a continuum rather than a set of discrete categories, the proximate and extended character of relationships is a matter of degree. Some are more accurately described as proximate (those with family members for example) and others as extended (those with colleagues at work).

The importance of the idea of connectivity is that it is a significant determinant of contributory behaviour in general, and of volunteering in particular. As we will show later in our study, the balance between proximate and extended connectivity that exists in any individual=s life is associated with the tendency to volunteer. In short, proximate connectivity entails awareness of, and

attention to, a limited circle of individuals and groups---often defined in terms of kin and closer f individuals. Contributory behaviour in this context tends to take the form of informal helping. Extended connectivity entails awareness of, and attention to, a range of individuals and groups who extend beyond one=s immediate social world. Extended connectivity reflects involvement in parts of the social world beyond an immediate circle of intimates and thus encourages participation as formal volunteers (Janoski et. al., 1998; Wilson and Musick, 1997).

Our construction of the link between connectivity and volunteering does not negate the importance of values, norms, socialization, and meanings as important correlates of contributory behaviour. But for the present these are left as unanalysed but acknowledged components of each individual=s worldview. Suffice it to say at this point that we believe that extended connectivity also fosters a broader, less self-directed worldview than does proximate connectivity. In other research we are currently conducting, we examine directly the role values and meaning play in volunteering (Reed, et. al., forthcoming).

To recapitulate, we suggest that the two types of connectivity describe different sets of individuals and groups (including institutions) with whom an individual is >familiar=---and familiarity, in the sense of exposure, is held to increase the inclination to volunteer. This exposure to others may lead to increased volunteering in a number of ways: the need becomes more apparent, the cause becomes more important, more of the people one knows are volunteers, or perhaps most important, one gets asked to volunteer more often--- there is ample evidence that >being asked= is the main way people become volunteers (Freeman, 1997; Hodgkinson, 1995).

We will examine how some aspects of social connectivity are associated with rates of volunteering and may partially explain some of the life cycle patterns that have not been adequately described in other terms.

The Data

Our analysis uses data from the 1997 National Survey of Giving, Volunteering and Participating (NSGVP) that was conducted as a supplement to Statistics Canada=s November 1997 Labour Force Survey. The NSGVP data file contains detailed information from 18,301 Canadians aged 15 years and older, of whom 31.4 percent reported that they had given time as an unpaid volunteer to a non-profit organization at least once during the preceding 12 months.

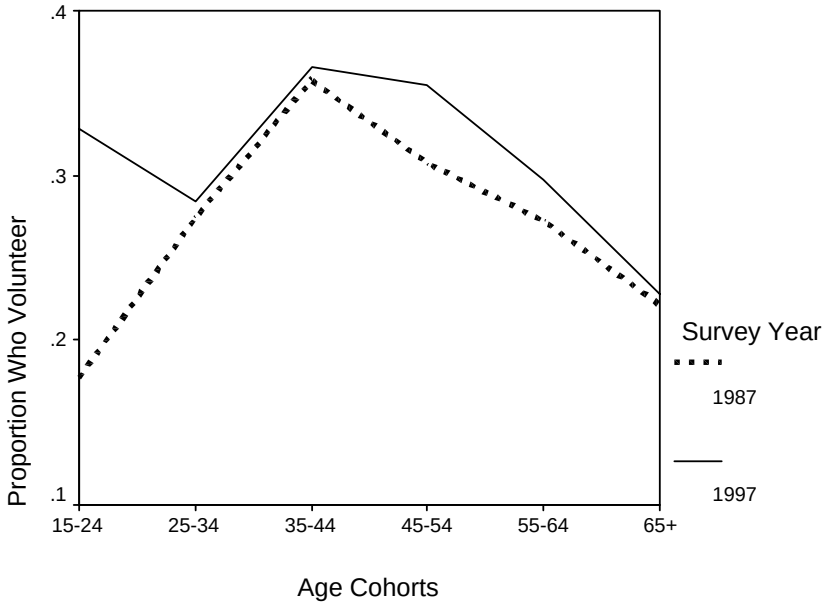
The data are for a single time point, or cross-sectional, while life cycle phenomena are longitudinal, and the problems inherent in using cross-sectional data to examine longitudinal patterns are well known**.** The patterns identified in the cross-section cannot be viewed as patterns that fully typify the trends across the life cycle ---in the cross-section, we are comparing different groups at different stages of the life cycle instead of comparing the same group at different stages in its life cycle. Nonetheless, cross-sectional data can describe the life cycle to the extent that life cycle patterns are stable across time. In other research comparing volunteering in Canada in 1987 and 1997, we found tentative evidence that age effects do exist in Canada---the changes from 1987 to 1997 were consistent with an age effect for 3 of 4 age cohorts (Reed and Selbee, 2000). If age effects dominate the changes over time in the rate at which a given cohort volunteers, then the cross-sectional profile generated by comparing different age cohorts will be very similar to the profile we would obtain from following a single cohort over their lifetimes.

As Figure 1 shows, with the notable exception of people under 25, the rate of volunteering across age groups was remarkably stable in the ten years between 1987 and 1997. Certainly the rates for age groups 25 and older are similar enough to suggest that the cross-sectional profiles are representative of life cycle trends. In any event, we do not intend to infer trends over the life-course from our results; we are merely comparing people and their volunteering behaviour at different stages of the life cycle at one point in time. These we present as *profiles* of volunteering. Profiles are simply the cross-sectional attribute-specific rates of volunteering across age cohorts. Since this is cross-sectional data, there is no evidence that these profiles can be interpreted as longitudinal patterns. Repeated cross-sectional, or ideally, longitudinal, data will be needed to characterize the

life cycle trends more reliably.

Age-Specific Rates of Volunteering

Figure 1. Age-Specific Rates of Volunteering



The age-specific profile of volunteering in Figure 1 matches the pattern that has been found repeatedly in prior research---the bell-shaped curve (cf. Menchik and Weisbrod, 1987; Knoke and Thomson, 1977). However, in one way the data for 1997 in Canada deviate from the standard pattern. For the youngest cohort in 1997, the rate of volunteering is considerably higher than the rate for the youngest cohort in 1987, and relative to other findings about the volunteering of young people (Goss, 1999). This appears to be a recent change in Canada and may have more to do with heightened public awareness and perhaps especially with concerted efforts in schools to encourage volunteering among young people. (This change is discussed in another study; see Reed and Selbee, 2000 and Jones, 2000.) The overall age-specific rates of volunteering are deceptive because they mask some important differences associated with particular characteristics of the life cycle.

Life Cycle Stages and Rates of Volunteering

Age groups alone do not capture the texture of association between volunteering and stages of the life cycle. An age cohort can be made up of individuals who are at different stages of the life cycle. Conversely, each stage of the life cycle may be made up of a number of different states based on three key dimensions. One is marital (or more correctly, civil) status, the second pertains to parenthood, and the third to career status. These are rarely separate in real life but for analytical purposes we will initially examine them separately simply as a way to deal with the intermingling of the three dimensions throughout individuals= lives.

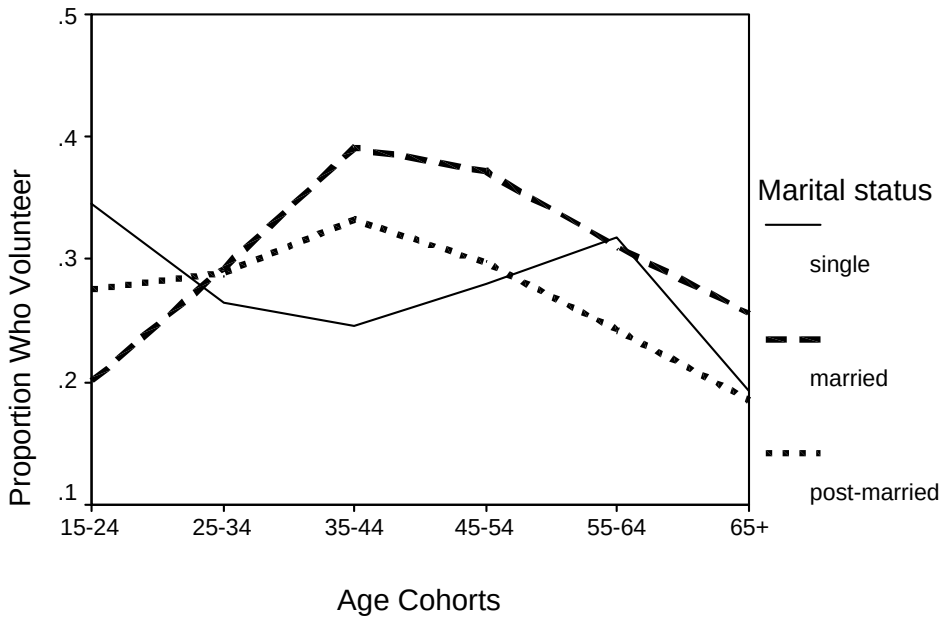
Marriage and Volunteering

The formation and dissolution of partnerships are important parts of the life cycle. In general, married individuals tend to volunteer more than individuals who are single or in post-marriage states of separation, divorce, or widowhood (Caputo, 1997; Janoski and Wilson, 1995). Figure 2 shows the age-specific volunteer rates by marital status.

The profiles in Figure 2 show that the three marital status groups are markedly different. The >bell-shaped= curve of Figure 1 clearly does not apply to all three groups. For singles, the profile across age groups declines from a high of 0.35 among the youngest age cohort to 0.25 among the 35 to 44 year-olds. The rate rises again to 0.32 among the 55 to 64 year-olds and then declines again to a low of 0.19 among persons 65 years and older.

The profile for married individuals is quite different. Beginning at a low level (0.20) for the youngest cohort, the rate rises sharply to 0.39 among those in mid-life (35-44) and thereafter declines, finally reaching 0.26 for those over 65. Among those in post-marriage statuses, the profile is similar to the married pattern, although they begin with a higher rate at the younger ages, do not increase nearly as much, and then parallel the decline to the age of 65 and over.

Figure 2. Rates of Volunteering by Age and Marital Status



When it comes to volunteering, there appears to be something about single individuals that is distinctly different from married and post-married individuals. Singles have substantially higher participation rates at the youngest ages but experience something in midlife (25 to 55) that tends to diminish their participation. This is followed by a brief recovery at ages 45 to 64 and a subsequent decline among those 65 and over. In contrast, for both those who are currently married and those who were married in the past, midlife elevates participation rates. Then, regardless of marital status, the rate of volunteering declines after the age of 65.

To test whether or not the rates of volunteering are in fact statistically different, X^2 tests for association were performed on the marital status groups in pairwise tables within each age group. If the rates were within one or two percentage points of each other, no test was made; differences this small would not be significant even in the full sample. Where rate differences were large, 2x2 tables were created and the X^2 test was applied. Where the X^2 statistic is significant, the two rates are

statistically different at the 5 percent level of significance. For example, by testing for association in the 2x2 table formed by the categories volunteer/non-volunteer and single/married for individuals aged 15 to 24, we can determine whether or not single and married rates are equal within the sample. Table 1 presents the results of tests for differences in rates of volunteering broken down by age and marital status.

Table 1. Rates of Volunteering by Age and Marital Status[1]

	Single	Married	Widowed and Divorced
Age:			
15-24	**0.35**	*0.20*	*0.25*
25-34	*0.26*	*0.29*	*0.29*
35-44	*0.25*	**0.39**	0.33
45-54	*0.28*	**0.37**	*0.30*
55-64	*0.32*	*0.31*	**0.24**
65+	*0.19*	**0.26**	*0.19*

1. Numbers in bold in each row are statistically larger (or smaller) than at least one other row entry.
Numbers in italics in each row are statistically equal.
Rows with three fonts: all three entries are statistically different.

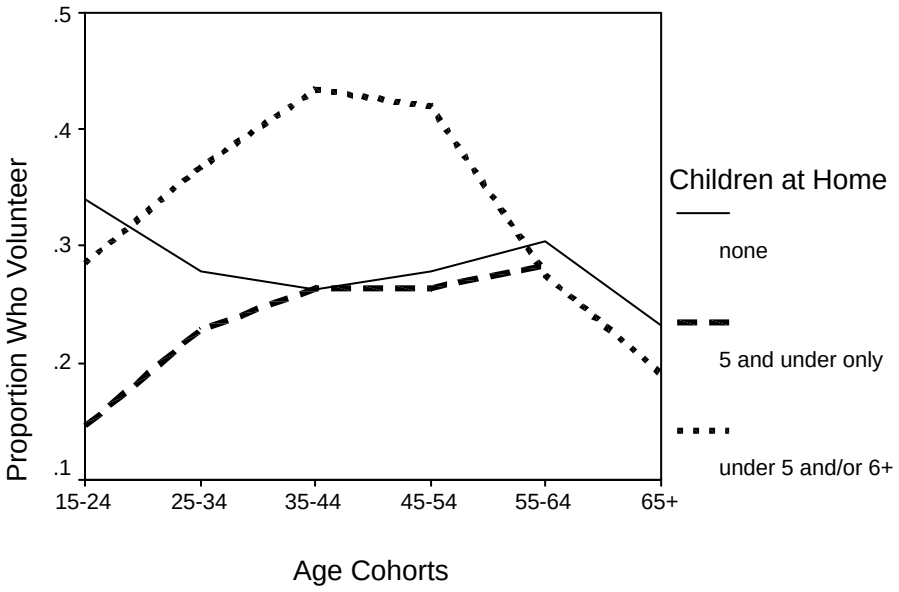
These tests show, first, that the rate for singles is significantly higher than the rate for married and post-married individuals among 15 to 24 year-olds. Second, there are no rate differences for the three groups among 25 to 34 year-olds. Among 35 to 44 year-olds, married are significantly higher than post-married, who in turn are higher than singles. Among 45-54 year-olds, married rates are higher than both single and post-married. Among 55-64 year-olds, married and single are equal while the post-married are considerably lower, and among 65 and older married are higher than both single and post-married.

Overall, Table 1 shows that elevated rates of volunteering are associated with being single for young people and with being married for those over 35. For those 25 to 34, rates of volunteering are equal across all three marital statuses.

The Presence of Children and Volunteering

A second important component of the life cycle is the presence of children in the home. Figure 3 shows the age-specific rates of volunteering by presence and age of children in the home. Research has shown that the presence of children affects volunteering in two opposed ways. The presence of young children (5 and under) reduces the likelihood of volunteering, while the presence of older children (six and over) increased the probability of volunteering (Berger, 1991). The three categories we examine are >no children in the home=, >only children ages five and under=, and lastly >children ages six and over, with or without children under the age of 5=. Figure 3 reveals that these three types of families exhibit very different volunteering rates across age cohorts.

Figure 3. Rates of Volunteering by Age and Children At Home



A clue as to what occurs in each of the marital status categories can be gained by comparing the profiles in Figures 2 and 3. First, the profile for single people across age groups in Figure 2 is identical to the profile for people with no children in Figure 3. Second, the profile for married individuals in Figure 3 is similar to that for individuals with children 6 and over in Figure 2. These

results are to be expected; single (never married) people rarely have children at home, while married individuals are more likely to have children at home. However, the close similarity suggests that differences in rates for each marital status may be related to the presence and ages of children in the home. The literature certainly acknowledges that the presence of children, particularly older children, raises the likelihood of volunteering by their parents. Given the similarity between the profiles for marital status and presence of children, it may be that the differences in rates by marital status are due to differences in the presence of children in the home.

To test this possibility, we re-examined the rates for marital status by age group, controlling for the three categories of children in the home. Table 2 summarizes the tests for association between marital status and volunteering within each >children= group. The patterns of association across the sub-categories strongly suggest that marital status differences in Figure 2 are largely due to differences in the presence of children in the home. Among people with no children, there are marital status differences only among the 15 to 24 year-olds, where singles are higher than married rates, and for those 65 and over, where volunteering rates are higher for married than those for single or post- married. For all other age groups with no children in the home, there are no marital status differences.

The second part of Table 2 shows the association between rates and marital status for those who only have children ages 5 and under at home. The test results are tentative because of small group sizes, but where the tests are reliable there are no marital status differences for any age group. (Note: there are no people 55 and older who have children under the age of five.)

Finally, among people with children six years and older, there are differences across marital statuses in rates of volunteering only for the middle age groups. For those 15 to 35 years old, and 65 years and over, there are no differences by marital status. But for those 35 to 64, the presence of children

Table 2. Rates of Volunteering by Age, Marital Status and Children at Home[1]

		Single	Married	Widowed and Divorced
No Children				
	Age:			
	15-24	**0.35**	*0.23*	-
	25-34	*0.27*	*0.29*	*0.34*
	35-44	*0.25*	*0.26*	*0.33*
	45-54	*0.26*	*0.28*	*0.30*
	55-64	*0.31*	*0.31*	*0.26*
	65+	*0.19*	**0.26**	*0.19*
Children 5 and under				
	Age:			
	15-24	*0.13*	*0.14*	-
	25-34	*0.21*	*0.23*	-
	35-44	-	*0.26*	-
	45-54	-	-	-
	55-64	-	-	-
	65+	-	-	-
Children 6 and older				
	Age:			
	15-24	-	-	-
	25-34	*0.28*	***0.38***	*0.30*
	35-44	*0.22*	**0.45**	*0.34*
	45-54	-	**0.43**	*0.30*
	55-64	-	**0.30**	*0.16*
	65+	-	*0.22*	*0.15*

1. Numbers in bold in each row are statistically larger (or smaller) than at least one other row entry.
Numbers in italics in each row are statistically equal.
Rows with three fonts: all three entries are statistically different.
Proportions based on less than 50 cases are suppressed (-).

six years and over produces differences in rates. For those aged 35 to 44, the rate for married individuals is higher than the rate for singles, and for those aged 45 to 54 and 55 to 64, the married rate is higher than the post-married rate. For these last two groups, those in the single (never married) category are too few to be tested. However, since very few single (never married) individuals in these age groups would have raised a child on their own, the substantive equivalent in

this comparison is actually the post-married groups.

These profiles prompt several questions. First, why do single persons aged 15 to 24 with no children volunteer more often than couples at this age, while for those over age 65 it is married people with no children who volunteer more than those who are single or post-married? Second, why do married people with children over the age of six years in the household volunteer more than those who are not married in the same age group? In the following pages, we examine these profile differences in greater detail.

Young People With No Children: Single and Married Profiles

The first question our analysis raises is why, among young people with no children, those who are single volunteer more than those who are married. To answer this question, we introduced a number of factors that are known to affect volunteer rates in general.

We controlled for education (high school or less, some post-secondary, and university or more), labour force status (working full-time, part-time, or not in the labour force), and religion (No Religion, Catholic, Protestant, and Other Religions). Education and labour force status have no effect on the single versus married volunteering rate profiles. However, when we examine the profiles for separate religion groups, part of the single-married difference disappears (Table 3). The pattern of rate differences persists only among Catholics and Protestants. Among those with No Religion and Other Religion, there are no significant differences between single and married individuals in their rates of volunteering.

Two further tests were performed by controlling for gender and whether or not these people were students. Neither altered the single/married relationship. Married individuals consistently had significantly lower rates of volunteering.

What stands out in Table 3 are the distinctly lower rates of young Catholics and Protestants who are

married: Single and Married of No Religion, Catholic single, and Other Religion single all have volunteer rates approximately in the range of 0.30 to 0.35. Single Protestants are distinctly higher than these groups with a rate of 0.51. In comparison, married Catholics and Protestants have markedly lower rates at 0.20 and 0.24, respectively. (Note that there are too few Other Religion married individuals to reliably estimate their rates.)

Table 3. Rates of Volunteering for Individuals Age 15 to 24 with No Children, by Religion and Marital Status[1]

	Single	Married
No Religion	*0.30*	*0.32*
Catholic	**0.31**	0.20
Protestant	**0.51**	0.24
Other Religions	*0.35*	-

1. Numbers in bold in each row are statistically larger (or smaller) than at least one other row entry.
Numbers in italics in each row are statistically equal.
Rows with three fonts: all three entries are statistically different.
Proportions based on less than 50 total cases are suppressed (-).

Thus, among young, 15 to 24 year-old Catholics and Protestants, with no children, there is a clear tendency for married respondents to exhibit significantly lower rates of volunteering than their single counterparts. This appears to be a direct consequence of being married; introducing control factors does not alter the relationship. The fact that both single and married young people in the No Religion and Other Religion groups have rates more akin to single Catholics and Protestants than to Catholic and Protestant couples supports this view. There appears to be something at work that inhibits the tendency for Catholic and Protestant young people to volunteer once they marry.

These married individuals are at an early stage of marriage, and it may be that at this stage of life, their main focus is their own lives rather than the affairs of the community at large. That is, this difference may be associated with differences in the degree to which the two groups are oriented and connected to their communities. Following from our discussion of social connectivity, the differences in rates of volunteering should be associated with differences in the extent to which these

people are involved in the wider community. The six indices of connectivity examined are memberships in community organizations (civic participation), level of social interaction with family and friends (social participation), frequency of church attendance, number of organizations volunteered for, years resident in the community, and the number of different types of informal helping done in the past year.

One obvious form of extended connectivity is membership in various community and civic organizations -- from political organizations to religious groups to service clubs. Our own research has clearly shown that there is a strong connection between organizational membership and volunteering (Reed and Selbee, 1999). Membership increases the probability of volunteering simply because one of the strongest predictors of volunteering is being asked to do so (Freeman, 1997; Goss, 1999) --- something that is much more likely to happen to members of an organization then to non-members. To assess the importance of this type of extended connectivity we use a scale of civic participation that counts the number of different types of civic organizations each respondent belongs to.

Frequency of church attendance (measured as the number of times per year the individual attends religious services) and the number of organizations volunteered for, both indicate extended connectivity in the sense that a person who is involved with multiple organizations will tend to interact with more disparate groups of people. Years resident in the community is a proxy for all the ways a person becomes integrated into a community over time (Janoski and Wilson, 1995).

Social participation (measured as the frequency with which a person interacts with family and friends in various social settings) and the number of types of informal helping behaviour also indicate connectivity, although it is not clear the extent to which it reflects proximate rather than extended relationships. In the data is some information about whom the respondent tended to help informally. This will be used to try to better understand what in fact these people are doing.

At this point we are not using connectivity as an explanation of volunteering, we merely want to see

if differences in connectivity are associated with differences in the level of volunteering across categories of the life cycle. If they are it lends credence to the idea that investigating connectivity might be one way to better understand the inclination to volunteer.

Table 4 shows the average levels of participation for single and married individuals15-24 years of age, with no children, disaggregated by religion. For individuals in the No Religion and Other Religion groups, the table shows almost no difference in participation rates between married and single; in the No Religion group, 4 of 5 indices show no difference and for those in Other Religions, 4 of 6 indices show no difference. In contrast, among Catholics and Protestants, single individuals tend to have higher participation rates than those who are married. The pattern is clear for Protestants; 5 of 6 indices are significantly higher for single as compared to married individuals. For Catholics the pattern is less clear-cut; there are significant differences for only 3 of the 6 indices. However, on one of the non-significant comparisons, church attendance, the direction of the relationship suggests that participation may be higher for single individuals, and on the other two indices, the rates of participation are basically the same.

These patterns seem to reflect different levels of social connectivity for single as compared to young married persons among Catholics and Protestants. The connectivity of single people expresses itself in a turning outward towards the broader community B they are as active (more so for Protestants) in community organizations, they are more active socially with family and friends, they go to church much more often, they volunteer for twice as many organizations, and they have lived longer in their communities (and are thus more likely to be integrated into its communal life). In contrast, young married individuals appear to curtail their involvement with the broader community when they make the transition from being single to being married.

Table 4. Types of Participation: Rates for Individuals Age 15-24 with No Children, by Religion and Marital Status

	Civic Participation	Social Participation	Church Attendance	Number of Organizations Volunteered for	Years in Community	Types of Informal Helping
No Religion						
Single	0.56	8.1	n/a	0.47	7.9	2.9
Married	0.68	8.0	n/a	0.60	6.9	4.6
Difference[1]	ns	n.s	n/a	ns	ns	**
Catholic						
Single	0.51	7.9	9.2	0.47	9.7	2.7
Married	0.53	6.0	6.5	0.28	8.0	3.0
Difference[1]	ns	**	ns	*	**	ns
Protestant						
Single	0.96	8.9	12.1	0.88	10.2	3.5
Married	0.47	5.9	5.2	0.48	5.6	4.9
Difference[1]	**	**	*	ns	**	**
Other Religion						
Single	0.76	8.3	19.2	0.65	6.0	3.2
Married	0.52	5.5	7.7	0.16	3.3	0.7
Difference[1]	ns	**	ns	ns	ns	**

1.The entries in these rows reflect tests for significant difference between the single and married rates. The test results are presented in terms of the following symbols:

* significant at 0.05 level
** significant at 0.01 level
ns: not significant
n/a: not applicable

In Table 4, the only activity where young married Protestants are more active than young singles is in informal helping. But an examination of informal helping shows a distinct family orientation among the young married. When asked whom they helped informally, 66% of married helped family members as compared to 63% for singles; this is a negligible difference, but certainly it lies in the direction that supports the hypothesis of married individuals being more family-oriented. When asked if the people they helped included people who were not relatives, the difference is clearer: 80% of singles said they had helped non-relatives while only 66% of married individuals said the same. Couples were slightly more likely to help relatives and distinctly less likely to help non-relatives. It certainly appears that young, married Catholics and Protestants with no children

experience a period of withdrawal from the broader community in the early years of their marriage.

Seniors with No Children: Married and Single Profiles

Earlier, Table 2 showed that for people who are 65 and older, with no children at home (this constitutes 96% of those 65+), the pattern is the reverse of that for young people; those who are married have higher rates of volunteering than those who are not married (mainly post-marriage individuals).

In analyzing this group, the single/never married are combined with post-married (widowed, divorced and separated) to create a single group of >not married= individuals. When disaggregated by gender, the pattern of higher rates for married individuals holds true for both men and women. When religion is taken into account, the pattern becomes more complex (Table 5). Among both men and women with No Religion, and among Catholic and Protestant women, there are no differences in the married versus not married rates of volunteering. But there are differences for Catholic and Protestant men---married men volunteer more than not married men. Among those of Other Religions, the pattern is reversed: there are no differences among men but there are among women. Further disaggregation of these patterns is not possible because the sub-groups are too small to analyze reliably.

Thus married Catholic and Protestant men age 65 and older volunteer significantly more than single Catholic and Protestant men, while married and single women in each of the four categories of religious affiliation volunteer at the same rate (although overall Protestant women tend to volunteer slightly more than do Catholic women). Both women and men reporting no religious affiliation show no difference between married and single rates of volunteering. Conversely, among those of other religions, marital status matters for the volunteering rates of women but not men.

Earlier we found that social connectivity was associated with rates of volunteering among young

people. Those who have higher rates of volunteering also have higher levels of connectivity. If this

Table 5. Rates of Volunteering for Individuals Age 65 and Older with No Children, by Religion, Gender and Marital Status[1]

	Men		Women	
	Not Married	Married	Not Married	Married
No Religion	*0.13*	*0.14*	*0.13*	*0.22*
Catholic	0.13	**0.25**	*0.17*	*0.17*
Protestant	0.25	**0.41**	*0.25*	*0.31*
Other Religion	-	0.28	0.14	**0.46**

1. Numbers in bold in each row are statistically larger than the other row entry (within Gender).
Numbers in italics in each row are statistically equal.
Proportions based on less than 25 cases are suppressed (-).

association holds for those over 65, then those with higher rates of volunteering, holding gender and religion constant, should show higher levels of connectivity. Conversely, those who show no difference in rates of volunteering should show the same levels of connectivity. In summary, if connectivity is linked to rates of volunteering, then we would expect married Catholic men to show significantly higher levels of connectivity than their single counterparts, The same will be true for Protestant men, and for women of Other Religions. For all other groups, there should be no significant differences in social connectivity.

The pattern of significant and nonsignificant differences in participation in Table 6 largely supports the connectivity hypothesis. Among No Religion males and females, where there are no rate differences in volunteering, most of the indicators of connectivity show the same levels of participation for married and not married individuals. The exceptions are that in the case of men, civic participation is higher for married as compared to single men, and among women social participation and informal helping are marginally higher among married as compared to single women (the differences are not large and would not be statistically significant at the 0.01 level).

Table 6. Types of Participation: Rates for Individuals 65 and Older with No Children, by Religion, Gender and Marital Status

			Civic Participation	Social Participation	Church Attendance	Number of Organizations	Years in Community	Types of Informal Helping
No Religion								
	Men	**Single**	0.25	4.2	n/a	0.20	1.0	1.3
		Married	0.61	5.0	n/a	0.20	10.7	1.3
		Difference[1]	**	ns	n/a	ns	ns	ns
	Women	**Single**	0.28	3.8	n/a	0.21	10.5	1.0
		Married	0.32	4.8	n/a	0.44	10.7	1.5
		Difference[1]	ns	*	n/a	ns	ns	*
Catholic								
	Men	**Single**	0.30	3.7	2.3	0.18	11.2	1.2
		Married	0.81	5.4	2.7	0.45	11.9	1.9
		Difference[1]	**	**	**	*	*	**
	Women	**Single**	0.87	5.2	2.6	0.29	11.2	1.3
		Married	0.68	5.2	2.6	0.32	12.0	1.7
		Difference[1]	ns	ns	ns	ns	**	*
Protestant								
	Men	**Single**	0.68	4.7	1.9	0.40	12.4	1.4
		Married	0.99	5.6	2.3	0.66	11.9	2.1
		Difference[1]	ns	*	**	ns	ns	*
	Women	**Single**	0.84	5.2	2.2	0.45	11.2	1.6
		Married	0.96	5.7	2.3	0.53	11.7	2.4
		Difference[1]	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	**
Other Religion								
	Men	**Single**	1.00	2.3	3.0	0.11	12.4	1.0
		Married	1.00	6.4	2.8	0.36	11.2	1.6
		Difference[1]	ns	**	ns	ns	ns	ns
	Women	**Single**	0.34	4.3	2.3	0.17	9.0	0.6
		Married	0.69	4.8	2.2	0.65	11.5	2.9
		Difference[1]	ns	ns	ns	**	*	**

1. The entries in these rows reflect tests for significant difference between the single and married rates. The test results are presented in terms of the following symbols:

* significant at 0.05 level

** significant at 0.01 level

ns: not significant

n/a: not applicable

For Catholic and Protestant women, volunteering rates among married and single are not significantly different, so we expect there not to be differences in connectivity. On four of the six indices, this is the case. And for both Catholics and Protestants, the significance of the informal helping index is tempered by the fact that in both groups, married women are significantly more likely to be helping relatives and significantly less likely to be helping non-relatives than are single women. So while married women have higher average levels of informal helping, this is

predominantly helping family members rather than non-relatives. So the higher level of connectivity here may be mainly due to more proximate relationships.

For Catholic and Protestant males, there were significant differences in volunteering rates between married and singles. Consistent with the connectivity hypothesis, we would expect the average levels of participation to be higher among married as compared to single males. For Catholic men, this is clearly the case -- on all six indicators, means for married men are significantly higher than those of singles. For Protestant men, the pattern is less clear. On three of six indicators, the participation of married men is significantly higher than that of singles. The other three indices show no significant differences. However, the relative size of the means for the two groups does follow the hypothesized direction (married larger than single). Though not a significant difference, the averages for years of residence in the community is the only comparison that offers any evidence that singles might participate more than the married men. This group of men is the most problematic group in terms of the connectivity hypothesis.

Finally, among males of Other Religions, where no significant differences in volunteering rates exist, we would expect no significant differences in connectivity. This is true for five of six indicators. For women of Other Religions, where we do find significant rate differences, we would expect significant differences in participation. The pattern here is equivocal: three of six indicators show differences in the predicted direction and three do not. However, the number of cases in this group, especially for the married women, is very low (24 people), so the reliability of the estimated effects is questionable.

Overall, the hypothesis of social connectivity being associated with differences in rates of volunteering among respondents over 65 is well supported by the evidence. This relationship is clearest among Catholic males where every indicator of connectivity supports the hypothesis, and is less clear for Protestant men where only half the indices support the proposition. Among the other groups -- men and women with No Religions, Catholic and Protestant women, and those of Other Religions X the data substantially support the association between volunteering and connectivity.

There is another point to make about the link between connectivity and volunteering. Our measures of connectivity have little to do with becoming a volunteer; instead, they measure the breadth of a person's involvement in the community. That this should be related to volunteering is not surprising, but what is surprising is that connectivity should be so consistently associated with two very diverse groups who manifest higher rates of volunteering X young single people who volunteer more than young married people, and married seniors who volunteer more than unmarried seniors.

Married with Children Six Years Old or More

The impact of children on the volunteering behaviour of parents is well documented. Through involvement in school and recreational activities, children bring their parents into volunteering (Goss, 1999). Table 2 shows that among the four cohorts between 25 and 64 years of age with children six and over, those who are married volunteer at rates significantly higher than those who are single or post-married. Because the number of single individuals in these cohorts is very small, and because the rates of volunteering for single and post-marrieds are not statistically different, we combine the single and post-married groups in the analysis. Table 7 shows the volunteering rates for the collapsed marital status categories across age cohorts. In every case, the rate for married individuals is significantly higher than the rate for not married individuals. In the subsequent analysis we also collapse the age groups together.

When classified by religion, we find higher rates for married individuals only among Catholics and Protestants. Among the No Religion and Other Religion groups, rates are virtually identical for married and not-married individuals. Disaggregating by gender and looking only at the Catholics and Protestants shows that higher volunteering rates for married individuals are true of women but not men, for both types of religious affiliation. While Catholic and Protestant men show no differences in rates by marital status, Catholic and Protestant women who are married are significantly more likely to volunteer than are not married women.

Table 7. Rates of Volunteering for Individuals Age 25 to 64 with Children 6 and Older, by Age and Marital Status[1]

	Not Married	Married
Age:		
25-34	0.29	**0.38**
35-44	0.32	**0.45**
45-54	0.32	**0.43**
55-64	0.17	**0.30**

1. Numbers in bold in each row are statistically larger than the other row entry.

What in particular differentiates married and not married women with children? All these women have children six years of age and over, so the single women are in fact single parents. With no one who can share the other demands on their time, such as employment, single parents may have less time and energy to devote to volunteering. We examined this possibility by controlling for employment status (working full-time, working part-time or students, not working). Research has shown that women who work part time tend to volunteer more than those who work full time (Freeman, 1997: Figure 3, pg. 155). If single women are more likely to work full-time, or married women are more likely to work part-time (or to be in school), then it may be that married women have more time to volunteer because they can share the demands of raising children with a partner. However, the figures show that the proportion of women who work part-time and the proportion that work full-time is the same for married and not married women. Labour force participation is not associated with the higher levels of volunteering we see for married women.

We also examined the effects of religiosity, education, and income differences. In no case does the relationship between married and not married women change. It may be that the difference is due not simply to having children over the age of six, but to the actual ages of the children. We examined whether or not this might be the case by examining the relationship separately by the age of the children. Four groups were considered: children under the age of 5, children six to twelve, children 13 to 17, and children 18 and over. For every group the pattern remained unchanged X married women volunteer more than not-married women regardless of the age of their children.

Again, we examine the link between volunteering and connectivity among respondents with children in the home. Table 8 shows the participation rates for our six measures of connectivity. The table includes males and females in all four religious categories disaggregated by marital status because, if the association with connectivity holds, then the pattern for the other groups X where there are no differences between married and not married rates of volunteering X should show no significant differences in connectivity. On the other hand, we would expect married Catholic and Protestant women to have significantly higher participation rates than single women on the basis of the marrieds having higher rates of volunteering.

For No Religion and Other Religion categories, males and females, the pattern holds; there are very few significant differences in rates of participation. Women with No Religion are the least congruent with our expectations; while three of five indices are not different, married women do have higher participation rates on the other two. However, on one of these, informal helping, the married women are more likely than not-married women to have helped relatives (73 percent vs. 65 percent) while they are equally likely to help people who are not relatives. This may indicate that informal helping for these married women more often occurs in the context of proximate relationships.

Among men with No Religion, and both men and women of Other Religions, there are virtually no differences between married and not-married levels of participation. These results are consistent with our hypothesized association between rates of volunteering and connectivity.

This is also true of Protestant men. For five of six indices, there are no differences in participation between the married and not married men. The pattern is less clear for Catholic men, who show significant differences on three of six indices, with married men having higher levels of participation than not-married men. After the fact this is not surprising; in Table 7, the statistical test for

Table 8. Types of Participation: Rates for Individuals Age 25-64 with Children 6 and Older, by Religion, Gender and Marital Status

		Civic Participation	Social Participation	Church Attendance	Number of Organizations	Years in Community	Types of Informal Helping
No Religion							
Men	**Not Married**	0.53	6.3	-	0.36	9.2	2.7
	Married	0.86	6.8	-	0.60	9.4	2.7
	Difference[1]	ns	ns	-	ns	ns	ns
Women	**Not Married**	0.60	6.5	-	0.73	8.1	2.8
	Married	0.86	6.8	-	0.78	8.9	3.4
	Difference[1]	*	ns	-	ns	ns	*
Catholic							
Men	**Not Married**	0.82	5.1	6.8	0.56	8.7	2.3
	Married	1.10	6.6	15.4	0.64	10.2	2.8
	Difference[1]	ns	**	**	ns	*	ns
Women	**Not Married**	0.50	5.9	11.8	0.35	9.9	2.7
	Married	0.85	6.5	15.3	0.68	10.2	3.1
	Difference[1]	**	**	*	**	ns	*
Protestant							
Men	**Not Married**	1.10	6.1	9.1	0.58	10.8	3.3
	Married	1.40	7.7	13.3	1.12	10.2	3.1
	Difference[1]	ns	*	ns	ns	ns	ns
Women	**Not Married**	0.82	6.7	10.0	0.66	9.3	3.5
	Married	1.20	7.6	15.8	1.30	10.3	3.8
	Difference[1]	**	**	**	**	*	ns
Other Religion							
Men	**Not Married**	0.00	5.0	8.2	0.00	13.0	5.3
	Married	0.78	6.8	30.3	0.43	7.6	2.1
	Difference[1]	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	**
Women	**Not Married**	0.57	6.2	24.4	0.46	7.8	3.1
	Married	0.94	5.6	16.8	0.50	8.7	2.0
	Difference[1]	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

1. The entries in these rows reflect tests for significant difference between the single and married rates. The test results are presented in terms of the following symbols:

* significant at 0.05 level

** significant at 0.01 level

ns: not significant

n/a: not applicable

difference in rates of volunteering among married and not-married men was not significant but it wasborderline. The p-value is 0.12 and the rates in Table 7 do show a 10 percentage-point difference in favour of the married men. Apparently here is one group where the volunteering rate differences are of marginal statistical significance and the connectivity indices seem to reflect this; on some there is no difference while on others there is. These men may in fact be a group where the mix of proximate- and extended-relationship connectivity is more balanced than for groups where a difference in rates is clearly associated with a difference in connectivity, or where no difference in

rates is associated with no difference in connectivity.

Finally, for the two groups where there are differences in rates of volunteering, Table 8 clearly shows that married women exhibit a higher degree of extended-relationship connectivity than single women; for both Catholics and Protestants, five of six indices show married women with higher levels of participation than single women.

Again, we find that connectivity is positively associated with higher probability of being a volunteer. Where levels of connectivity tend to be equal, the likelihood of volunteering tends also to be equal.

All Age Cohorts, with Children Under Six

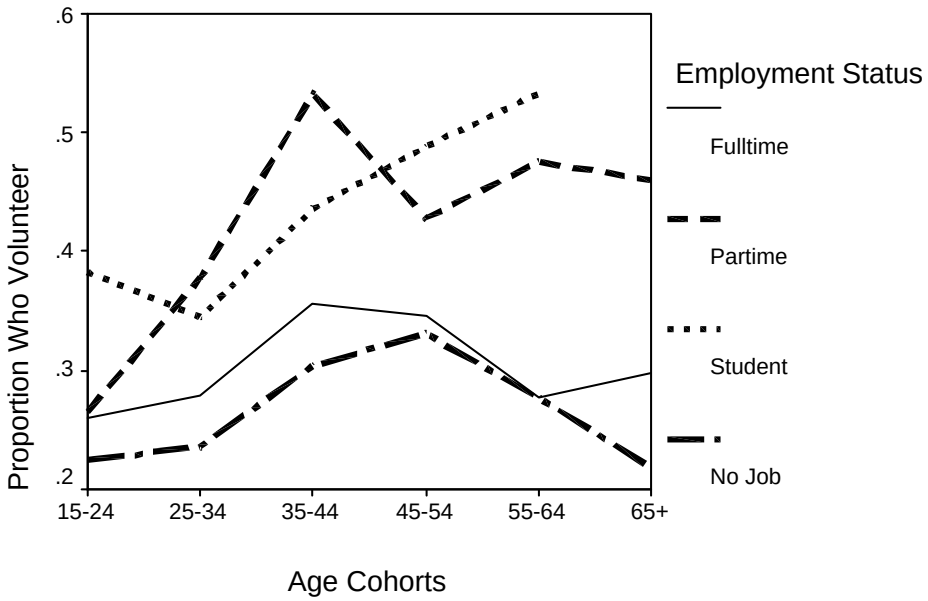
Table 2 shows that marital status does not affect volunteer rates for those with children under the age of five. As noted earlier, almost all respondents in these groups are married, so there are too few people in the not-married category for further analysis. However, by aggregating age cohorts and comparing the volunteer rates for married and not-married individuals, we were able to test for some effects. Whether broken down by gender, religion, education, or employment status, there are no differences between married and not-married rates.

The comparison of participation rates across our indices of connectivity for these groups produces mixed results. Although the counts in the not-married groups are low, the indices are not significantly different for married and not-married men. For women, however, half the indices suggest married women participate more than single women. This implies the link between connectivity and volunteering may not be as strong among these women with very young children as it seems to be among those at other stages of the life cycle.

Volunteering and Employment Status

The third main component of the life cycle centres on the individual=s employment status and stage of career development. The typical progression begins with schooling, at times combined with part-time work, followed by full or part time paid work in the labour force, or unpaid work outside the labour force, and sometime later in life, retirement from the paid labour force. Figure 4 shows the profile of volunteering across age groups for each of these career statuses. (We cannot identify retired as a career status directly; instead, those 65 and older can be expected to lie within this group with few exceptions.)

Figure 4. Rates of Volunteering by Age and Employment Status



The profiles of volunteering rates across age groups are very similar for full-time and no-job statuses except that the proportion of full-time individuals who volunteer is in general slightly higher at each age. We should not make much of the difference between the two groups at age 65 and older; the number of people in the >working full-time= category at this age is quite small (if only six fewer people were volunteers, the rate for full-time would equal that of those with no job). More

importantly, the two profiles appear to follow much the same pattern of increase and decrease moving across the age cohorts. In contrast, the profiles for part-time and student groups are distinctly different from those of full-time and no-job respondents. For the youngest cohort, the rate for students (0.38) is distinctly higher than that for the other three groups whose X rates are fairly similar (0.22 to 0.26). At this age, the differences between the rate for students and the other three groups are both substantively large and significant. Unlike the others, student rates decline in the next age cohort (25 to 35). But thereafter, the student rate is much like that of the part-time group (and for cohorts 34 and older the number of students becomes very small). The balance of our analysis combines the student and part-time groups.

Figure 5. Rates of Volunteering by Age and Employment Status

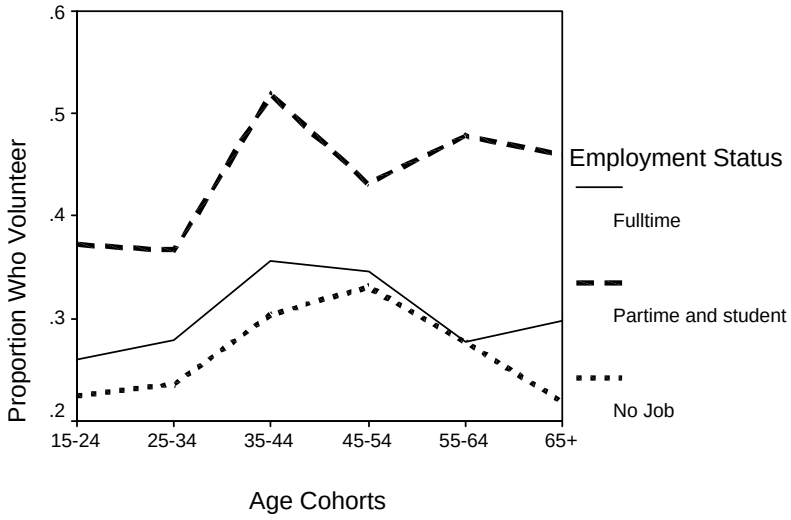


Figure 5 presents rate profiles for the three career statuses across age cohorts. Comparing full-time and no-job statuses show significant differences only for the 25 to 34 and 35 to 44 year cohorts. Rates for the other cohorts are not significantly different. Tests also show that part-time and student rates are significantly higher than both full-time and no-job rates at all ages.

We examined the influence on employment status differences in volunteering rate of two other life

cycle categories X marital status, presence of children, and four additional variables, religion, education, income, and occupation. None of these six factors account for the pattern of employment status variations in rates of volunteering.

Table 9. Types of Participation: Rates by Employment Status

	Civic Participation	Social Participation	Church Attendance	Number of Organizations	Years in Community	Types of Informal Helping
Employment Status						
A Full-time	0.93	6.7	10.2	0.56	8.9	2.9
B No-Job	0.62	5.7	16.6	0.43	10.2	2.2
C Part-time or Student	0.83	7.5	11.2	0.71	8.7	3.1
Difference[1]						
A vs C	**	**	**	**	ns	**
B vs C	**	**	**	**	**	**

1. Results of the tests for difference are represented by:
   * significant at 0.05 level
   ** significant at 0.01 level
   ns: not significant

Following earlier analyses of connectivity and rates of volunteering, we compare the community participation rates of the part-time and student group with those of the full-time group, and then with the no-job group (Table 9). In both comparisons, four of six indices show that the levels of participation are higher for the part-time/student group. This offers qualified support for the association between social connectivity and the likelihood of volunteering.

Conclusions

A number of distinct patterns of volunteering are associated with life cycle characteristics in Canada. For three of the main components of the life cycle, viz. marriage, children, and employment, there are volunteering rate differences associated with differences in life cycle state. Overall, married individuals volunteer more than those who are single, and more than those who are divorced, widowed or separated. When we examine the effect of dependent children in the household, we find that individuals with children under the age of five volunteer the least, those with children ages 6 and older volunteer the most, and those without children fall somewhere in between. The effect of employment status shows that students and individuals who work part-time tend to volunteer more than those who work full-time or those who are not in paid employment.

But these patterns do not necessarily persist when life cycle characteristics are further differentiated by age cohort. In the youngest cohort, for example, single individuals volunteer at a significantly higher rate than do married individuals, and rates for part-time workers are not higher than rates for full-time workers. Thus there are important age-related differences in how life cycle events or statuses affect volunteering. Moreover, the intersection of different states on the three components of the life cycle also qualifies the overall patterns. Patterns of volunteering by marital status differ across age groups and are affected by the presence of children in the home. When we look only at people without children, the differential effect of marital status is restricted to the youngest and oldest cohorts. In the youngest cohort, it is single people who volunteer more than the married, while in the oldest cohort is the married who volunteer more than those who are not married. These patterns can be qualified even more; in the youngest cohort the difference in rates holds true only for Catholics and Protestants (females and males) while in the oldest cohort the pattern holds only for Catholic and Protestant males. For the cohorts ages 25 to 64, marital status has no effect on volunteering if they have no children.

The effect of marital status shifts again when we examine people who have children over the age of six living at home. For these people, the effect of marital status is consistent for all ages 25 to 64: married individuals are more likely to volunteer than those who are not married.

Additional patterns exist, but the important point is that the effects of life cycle events are not clearly interdependent X there appears to be a complex interplay of factors that encourage or inhibit volunteering depending on the combination of life course states.

Nor are patterns across the full life cycle entirely due to differences in basic demographic characteristics such as religion, education, or income. Religion makes a difference for some comparisons X the marital status effects among the youngest and oldest cohorts are differentiated by religion X but it does not have much effect among cohorts in the middle range. Education and income factors do not affect the life cycle patterns in any consistent or pronounced way.

Finally, our attempt to link volunteering and levels of community participation or connectivity suggest that there may be some benefit from a more thorough examination of the link between social connectivity and volunteer behaviour. Our analyses show, fairly consistently, that among often quite different life cycle groups, higher rates of volunteering are positively associated with higher levels of participation of various kinds. Refining the way proximate and extended relationships are measured may well offer a better understanding of the social dynamics that account for variations in rates of volunteering across the life cycle.

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