

# The Role of Work Status on European Older Volunteers' Motivation

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## Abstract

The article aims to identify differences in motivation between working and nonworking older volunteers, in order to contribute to knowledge on the relationship between work status and volunteering in later life. The study also contributes a cross-European view, given that most literature emanates from the United States. It was conducted utilizing a database of 955 working and nonworking older volunteers in three European countries: the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. Results showed that work status has a significant impact on the motivation to volunteer, suggesting that voluntary organizations need to consider responding to different motivations between older volunteers still in paid employment and those who are retired. Specifically, those in paid work may be more driven by the desire to improve their career or knowledge, whereas older retired volunteers and those employed part time may consider volunteering as a response to challenges associated with retirement and later life or an unsatisfactory working situation.

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Attention has often focused on older people as a large potential resource or pool of volunteers (Freedman, 2002; Kaskie, Imhof, Cavanaugh, & Culp, 2008). Research on productivity in later life demonstrates that older adults frequently participate in a wide range of activities that have considerable social and economic value, including volunteering (Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, & Sherraden, 2001). Volunteering for this group is seen as a pathway to healthy and productive aging (Morrow-Howell et al., 2001; Warburton, 2012). This view is supported by a strong body of evidence highlighting the social and health benefits associated with volunteering in later life (Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Lum & Lightfoot, 2005). These studies show that older volunteers are more likely to have better physical and psychological health, live longer, and report higher life satisfaction than nonvolunteers (Warburton, 2006). Volunteering also actively increases older adults' activity patterns (Morrow-Howell, Hong, McCrary, & Blinne, 2012). Thus, maximizing the productive engagement of older people is seen as a dual strategy, as it both strengthens the economy and communities and improves the health of older adults (Morrow-Howell, 2007).

Within this context, volunteer motivation, or why people offer their time, has proved to be an issue of significant research interest over a number of decades. This is not just a theoretical question, but one that has significant implications for organizations, governments, and society. Understanding why people volunteer is important for organizations to maintain volunteer satisfaction with their roles and to help both recruit and retain them within the organization (Garner & Garner, 2011; Jamison, 2003).

Within the context of population aging and concerns about large number of older people, recent studies have focused on the motivation of older people to volunteer (e.g., Morrow-Howell, 2007; Ziemek, 2006). This literature has contributed significantly to knowledge about the need to contribute in later life.

However, much of this literature has focused on volunteering as a retirement activity, and far fewer studies have focused on the impact that differences in work status in later life have on volunteer motivation (Mutchler, Burr, & Caro, 2003). As noted by Kaskie, Imhof, Cavanaugh, and Culp (2008), there is a need for more research in this area, particularly in the contemporary socioeconomic environment. To fill this gap in knowledge, the main aim of the present study is to explore the relationship between work

status (volunteers still working and those no longer in the paid labor market) and the reasons to volunteer in later life.

## **Volunteer Motivation**

A continuum spanning altruistic and egoistic motives includes a range of motives from helping others/giving back to the community to other more self-oriented reasons such as utilize skills or increasing social contacts (Hwang, Grabb, & Curtis, 2005; Principi, Chiatti, Lamura, & Frerichs, 2012). In order to consider the motivation to volunteer in its multidimensional nature and in response to the absence of standardized measures of volunteer motivation, Clary and colleagues in the mid-1990s designed the Volunteer Function Inventory (VFI; Clary et al., 1998). Since then, this tool has been utilized in a range of contexts to explore why people, including older people, give their time as volunteers (e.g., Okun & Shultz, 2003; Yoshioka, Brown, & Ashcraft, 2007).

The VFI is an instrument designed to measure six motivational functions: values (related to altruistic beliefs); understanding (learning new skills and exercising knowledge and abilities); social (both conforming to normative influences of important others and the opportunity to have relationships with others); career (career-related benefits); protective (to protect the ego from negative problems); and enhancement (desire for personal growth and development).

Empirical studies of older populations using the VFI show that career motives are lower for older volunteers than among younger ones (Clary & Snyder, 1999; Okun, Barr, & Herzog, 1998) and that the social motive gains in importance among older people. Previous studies show that both the values and the understanding motives are important throughout the whole life course, although one study (see Davila & Diaz-Morales, 2009) showed that the values motivation increases with age, and understanding motive declines in importance with age.

Given its support across the literature, this article utilizes the VFI to assess the motivations of older volunteers and to explore for differences among those who are still working and those who are retired.

## **The Importance of the Comparative Perspective**

A second aim of this article is to provide comparative European evidence, to meet the need for large, systematic studies on volunteering in older age emanating from Europe to contribute to the global evidence base.

There is a large body of literature on volunteering by older people emanating from the United States. This is due to a number of factors, including its strong volunteer tradition, the large proportion of seniors as volunteers, a history of programs supporting older volunteers, and the availability of large, longitudinal surveys on which to base research. Hence, there is a strong U.S. evidence base on topics such as the motivations of older volunteers (Clary, Snyder, & Stukas, 1996; Hwang et al., 2005; Okun et al., 1998); their productive potential (Morrow-Howell et al., 2001); and the impact on their health status in later life (Greenfield & Marks, 2004; Herzog, Ofstedal, & Wheeler, 2002). In view of the longer working lives of many older people, changes in baby boomers' commitment to paid work, as well as financial insecurity impacting on retirement, there are also some American studies looking at the changing work or retirement nexus and its impact on volunteer decisions (Kaskie et al., 2008; Mutchler et al., 2003).

Despite this large body of literature emanating from the United States, there is far less research reported from other contexts. Warburton (e.g., Warburton, 2012; Warburton, Terry, Rosenman, & Shapiro, 2001) has undertaken research in the Australian context, and there is an emerging literature coming from Asia (e.g., Schwingel, Niti, Tang, & Ng, 2009). There is also a literature coming from Europe through work conducted by authors such as Erlinghagen (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010; Erlinghagen & Hank, 2006) and Haski-Leventhal (2009), often using the SHARE data set.

However, this literature is fairly limited, despite the fact that evidence from cross-national studies shows that there are significant differences by nations. The social origins theory put forward by Salamon and Anheier (1998) suggests that cultural and political contexts (as for example the social welfare spending) shape the nonprofit sector, and in turn the amount and type of volunteering. In particular, there are quite different scenarios depending on country of origin (e.g., Warburton & Jeppsson Grassman, 2009), which all suggests that context is important, and Europe offers some interesting insights into volunteering by older people.

The article draws on a specifically designed large cross-European database of older volunteers in order to explore the relationship between volunteering and work status in later life. The three countries involved in the study represent three different welfare regimes according to Esping-Andersen (1990, 1996): The Netherlands, which is a country moving toward the social-democratic regime (Hilken & Schippers, 2010) where the scope of voluntary action is more like that of Scandinavia than other European countries (Suanet, Broese van Groenou, & Braam, 2009); as well as Germany (conservative regime), and Italy (Mediterranean regime). In Table 1, the

**Table 1.** Country Characteristics.

Country	Volunteer sector			Labor market <sup>a</sup>				
	Care/welfare regime <sup>b</sup>	Volunteering Scale <sup>c</sup> (2008)	Nonprofit regime	Empl. rate (2010)	Empl. rate older workers (2010)	Part time (2011)	Average exit age (2009)	Unempl. rate (2011)
Netherlands	High social expenditure: State responsibility for social and health services	High (33% of the population)	Social-democratic: Volunteering is mainly self-expressive	77%	54%	49% of total employed	64 years	4%
Germany	High social expenditure: services covered through insurance	Medium (19% of the population)	Continental: The volunteer action cooperate with the state under the concept of subsidiarity	75%	58%	27% of total employed	62 years	6%
Italy	High social expenditure mostly through monetary transfers: care provided mainly by the family	Low (9% of the population)	Mediterranean: Volunteering is mainly service oriented to substitute weak public services	61%	37%	15% of total employed	60 years	8%

Source: <sup>a</sup>EUROSTAT (2012). <sup>b</sup>Simonazzi (2009). <sup>c</sup>ESS (2008); ISTAT (2008).

main country characteristics regarding both the volunteer sector and the labor market are presented.

This article moves beyond the perspective offered by social origins theory in some important considerations (Salamon & Anheier, 1998). Hence, for example, relative to the scale of the third sector in each country, we rely on voluntary action instead of paid employment within the sector of each country. The rationale for this is based on the assumption that the third sector utilizes volunteers more than paid employees. Thus, as highlighted in Table 1, there are quite different scenarios in each of the three countries or welfare regimes. The Netherlands has a high level of volunteering (33% of the overall population), Germany is medium (at 19%), and Italy is relatively low (at only 9% of the population). Overall, these differences present quite a different image across the three countries, which is likely to impact on these findings.

In this perspective (a possibility considered by Salamon and Anheier), even when there is a high level of expenditure on service provision, there may also be a high level of volunteering. This is because volunteers are not only involved in service provision but also in other sectors, including the cultural–recreational sector. Indeed, in the Netherlands, where volunteering is more widespread among the population, most volunteers are involved in the latter sector, consistent with other social-democratic regimes (Warburton & Jeppsson Grassman, 2009).

Table 1 also highlights differences across the three countries in relation to the labor market characteristics. Again, consistent with the welfare regime types, the Netherlands has a high employment rate, more part-time opportunities, less unemployment, and a higher average exit age, with lower employment levels in Germany, and still lower in Italy. These data suggest that a more developed labor market is likely to pair with a more developed third sector (as noted in Warburton & Jeppsson Grassman, 2009).

## **The Impact of Work Status on Volunteering by Older People**

The main aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between work status and motivation to volunteer in later life, which as noted earlier, has not been well considered in existing literature. However, it should be acknowledged that there is a reasonably large body of literature which has examined the relationship between work status and volunteering per se. This literature, for example, includes studies where work status has been explored as one of a range of variables associated with volunteering in later life, although generally such studies have yielded unclear results (Mutchler et al., 2003). Within

this literature, there are competing arguments relating to whether older people still in paid work or those outside paid work are more likely to volunteer, drawing on different theoretical explanations. These competing arguments will now be discussed, beginning with a discussion relating to whether those outside paid work are more likely to volunteer.

### *Retirees are More Likely to Volunteer*

Older people have been recognized as a potential untapped resource as volunteers because traditionally they are seen as the group with time to spare. As Caro and Bass (1997) note, people volunteer in the years following retirement as they tend to be in relatively good health and have few competing obligations. Using data from the first two waves of the Americans' Changing Lives survey, Mutchler, Burr, and Caro (2003) found that those who did not work or who worked part time or who stopped paid work between waves were significantly more involved in volunteering than were full-time workers. This suggests that retirees and part-time workers are more likely to volunteer than full-time workers.

The early rationale for this scenario is based on the assumption of greater *time availability* (Einolf, 2009), with the need to fill in time often given as a reason to volunteer (e.g., Clary et al., 1996) and being too busy often cited as a reason *not* to volunteer (Warburton et al., 2001). According to this view, people who are retired have more time on their hands, and other roles crowd-out their capacity to volunteer earlier in life.

More recent support for the time availability thesis has come from a study by Lee and Brudney (2009), who use a cost-benefit analysis to explore the decision to volunteer. Their findings show support for the time availability thesis, findings consistent with *role overload theory* which predicts a negative relationship between paid hours worked and volunteering (Markham & Bonjean, 1996). This approach is also supported by findings from a study which showed that women who were involved in paid work as well as undertaking caring activities were less likely to engage in volunteering (Taniguchi, 2006). This suggests that multiple roles can have a *crowding-out effect* on volunteering (Burr, Choi, Mutchler, & Caro, 2005).

Most studies show a fairly complex relationship between volunteering and time use (e.g., Warburton & Crosier, 2001). Most U.S. studies show that retired people do not necessarily volunteer in greater numbers than those still in the workforce but that retirees give more time as volunteers (e.g., Morrow-Howell, 2007). These findings lend some support to the time availability or crowding out thesis. According to this approach, retirees have more time than

workers, and volunteering provides a *role substitution* advantage for retirees (Mutchler et al., 2003). A common rationale for this is that volunteering provides older people with a role identity, and helps them maintain their social embeddedness at a time in life when they may be experiencing social and personal loss (e.g., Greenfield & Marks, 2004). Volunteering is said to fill the gap by offering retirees a positive and meaningful way to spend their time (Freedman, 2002; Morrow-Howell et al., 2001). As a result, Mutchler et al. (2003) report empirical support for activity substitution hypothesis particularly through 1980–1990s (e.g., Caro & Bass, 1997). In a more recent study, Kaskie and colleagues (2008) also found some support for volunteering as a role substitution in that engaged older volunteers more often reported that they had been forced, rather than chosen, to leave the workforce. These are interesting findings, particularly in relation to retirement in Asian countries with a mandatory retirement age, such as Japan (Warburton & Jeppsson Grassman, 2009).

The time availability or crowding out thesis has led to some recent research attention on the changing labor market, specifically around the work–retirement nexus (e.g., Morrow-Howell, 2007). One change is the trend toward part-time work in later life, a variable often associated with volunteering, and providing some support for the crowding out hypothesis associated with full-time work (Mutchler et al., 2003; Principi et al., 2012; Taniguchi, 2006). However, other recent work highlights the impact of those forced to delay retirement due to financial concerns that inhibits their capacity to volunteer (McBride, 2006). Thus, Einolf (2009), for example, suggests that time availability can increase the likelihood of volunteering, but at the same time, withdrawal from the workforce removes the individual from their social contacts through which they become involved in volunteering. These two factors, he suggests, may cancel each other out. This highlights the complexity of the contemporary scene.

### *Retirees Are Less Likely to Volunteer*

There is a body of evidence that suggests that volunteers are more likely to be in paid work than retired (e.g., Erlinghagen, 2010). Smith (2004) in exploring midlife workers' expectations of volunteering, as part of retirement lifestyle, says there is no historical evidence that the rate of volunteering has increased among the retired segment of the American population. Recent evidence from both the United States (Morrow-Howell, 2007) and Europe (Haski-Leventhal, 2009) suggests that retirees are less likely to volunteer than working counterparts. Instead, all these suggest that the logic of the time use thesis



is now in decline. Instead, authors are talking of the positive effect of still being in workplaces, retaining social connections and having the option of being involved through social responsibility programs (Gonyea & Googins, 2006). This approach supports a *complementarity thesis* whereby paid work is actually a catalyst for volunteering.

Some cross-national studies have also shown strong relationships between volunteering and paid work in later life, providing support for this thesis. Warburton and Jeppsson Grassman's (2009) study of productive activities across different welfare regimes using Esping-Andersen's model as a framework shows a strong relationship between volunteering and late life employment within each welfare regime type. Thus, for example, social-democratic regimes such as Sweden as well as marketized countries such as the United Kingdom and Australia show both high rates of volunteering and high rates of late life employment. Countries from the conservative (Germany) and Southern European (Italy) regime types show both low levels of volunteering and low levels of paid employment. These findings run counter to the notion that retirees are more likely to volunteer and instead suggest that volunteering and paid work run in parallel.

Erlinghagen and Hank (2006) argue that this is associated with differences in older populations by age, education, health, and involvement in other social activities—suggesting another explanation for why retirees may be less likely to volunteer. This explanation relates to *sociostructural resources theory*, which highlights the importance of the demographics associated with volunteering. According to this approach, it is the extra resources available to those from higher socioeconomic status, including education, skills and income, as well as health, which act to facilitate volunteering (Principi et al., 2012; Wilson & Musick, 1997). Socioeconomic resources theory proposes that workers are more resourced in terms of work contacts, education, and income, and are thus more likely to volunteer.

The resources theory is well supported in the literature (e.g., Kaskie et al., 2008; Mutchler et al., 2003). One U.S. study of women comparisons between volunteers and nonvolunteers showed no differences by work status but showed that those with lower incomes and poorer self-assessed health were less likely to volunteer overall (Bowen, Andersen, & Urban, 2000). All these findings challenge the notion that volunteering is simply about having time (Warburton & Crosier, 2001).

Smith (2004) proposes that these findings also relate to *continuity theory*, which suggests that volunteering does not merely substitute for paid employment in later life. Instead, social characteristics, such as education and income that show continuity through the life course, have a greater influence

on volunteering than retiring from paid work. Those who have volunteered prior to retirement continue volunteering after they retire (Erlinghagen, 2010).

In the light of this competing evidence on the relationship between the work status and the decision to volunteer, and particularly in an era of global financial crisis and resultant retirement uncertainty, it becomes even more important to provide organizations and policy makers with strategic information relating to the recruitment and retention of older volunteers. The aim of this study, rather than to solve this theoretical dilemma, is to make a contribution on which these strategic decisions can be made. This will be achieved by focusing instead on understanding differences in the motivational structure of older volunteers, both still working and retired, and within three different social welfare contexts.

## Method

Adopting a cluster-sampling method using voluntary organizations as sampling units, an exploratory study on working and nonworking older volunteers (aged 50 years or more) was conducted between November 2009 and January 2010 in three European countries: Italy, Germany, and the Netherlands ( $N = 955$ ). Voluntary organizations were identified through suggestions from national experts in the field, and information was gathered through a self-administered questionnaire.

### Study Variables

Older volunteers were asked to refer to their work status through the question: "Are you currently employed?" (0 = no; 1 = yes, *part-time*; 2 = yes, *full-time*). The following sociodemographic variables were included in the study: age, gender, marital status, self-reported economic status, and self-rated health. Educational attainment was classified according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 97)<sup>1</sup> grouping levels 0 to 2 in "low education"; 3–4 in "intermediate"; and 5–6 in "high education". Self-reported economic status was measured on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*low*) to 4 (*high*), and grouped in medium-low (1–2) and medium-high (3–4). Self-assessed health status was measured on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*very poor*) to 5 (*very good*), and was grouped in poor or very poor (1–2), neither poor nor good (3), and good/very good (4–5). These variables were extensively employed in previous comparative surveys (Lamura et al., 2008).

Since previous volunteering experiences have been found to play an important role on the decision to volunteer in older age (Mutchler et al., 2003; Warburton et al., 2001), a further variable was included: "How long have you been a volunteer in your life (number of years)?"

To assess working and nonworking older volunteers' motivation to volunteer, the VFI instrument was adopted (Clary et al., 1998). On the VFI, respondents indicated the importance of 30 items on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from *not important* (1) to *very important* (5). Where already validated versions of the VFI were not available in national languages, translation and back-translation was performed.

### *Sample Description*

The sample is described in Table 2. There were differences between country samples according to work status, with, in each of them, about one older volunteer in four nonemployed (retired, unemployed). Among volunteers still working, Table 2 shows a smaller proportion of Italians undertaking part-time work.

At a descriptive level, to check possible country differences according to the volunteers' age, older volunteers were grouped in three clusters. The youngest volunteers were the Italian ones, whereas the German scored the lower share of younger ones. In all countries but especially in Germany, older volunteers were mainly female. With regard to marital status, in all countries older volunteers were mainly married with Germany showing the higher share of divorced or single older volunteers. Other country differences related to economic status (with Dutch volunteers the richest and the Italians the less rich) and health conditions (with Dutch older volunteers the healthiest).

### *Statistical Analysis*

In descriptive analyses, Pearson chi-square tests and *t*-tests were used to test potential differences. The VFI's reliability was controlled for using a factor analysis with oblique rotation that confirmed six factors. Table 3 shows that after having dropped from the analysis items with factor loadings below .40 as well as ambiguous ones (Omoto & Snyder, 1995), the final items were 26, grouped as follows: career (5 items); social (5 items); understanding (5 items); protective (4 items); enhancement (4 items); and values (3 items). Across countries and factors, 21 of the 24 reliability tests produced  $\alpha > .70$ , thus the scales are considered as reliable (Hustinx et al., 2010).<sup>2</sup>

**Table 2.** Sample Description (% Within Countries).

	Netherlands (N = 468)	Germany (N = 208)	Italy (N = 279)	p
Age group				
50–64	44.9	37.0	49.8	*
65–74	37.8	46.1	39.8	
75+	17.3	16.8	10.4	
Gender				
Female	56.0	72.4	53.8	***
Educational level <sup>a</sup>				
Low	7.9	24.0	35.4	***
Intermediate	37.8	39.2	43.7	
High	54.3	36.8	20.9	
Marital status				
Married/cohabiting	73.8	64.2	68.6	*
Widowed	11.0	15.5	17.0	
Divorced/single	15.3	20.3	14.4	
Self-reported economic status				
Medium-low	5.2	22.7	60.2	***
Medium-high	94.8	77.3	39.8	
Self-rated health				
Poor/very poor	4.5	4.8	5.8	***
Neither poor nor good	11.6	24.3	23.4	
Good/very good	83.9	70.9	70.9	
Work status				
Nonemployed	73.2	75.1	74.8	**
Employed part time	18.0	17.1	9.9	
Employed full time	8.8	7.8	15.3	
Years of volunteering in the past <sup>b</sup>	17.7	16.0	15.9	

<sup>a</sup>Low, ISCED 0-2; Intermediate, ISCED 3-4; High, ISCED 5-6.

<sup>b</sup>Mean.

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

The Spearman coefficient was calculated to analyze the correlation between different VFI factors. The six factors resulted positively and significantly correlated with each other (*p* < .001, with a range of *r* from .12 between career and value to .61 between protection and enhancement). To measure potential differences between the average scores of the motivation functions and key variables, Kruskal–Wallis equality-of-populations rank test was used.

In order to control for potential bias and confounding effects, multiple regression analyses were employed using motivational functions as dependent variables. Since the work status may present endogeneity problems with the

**Table 3.** Volunteer Sample Factor Pattern Matrix (Principal-Axis Factor Analysis, Oblique Rotation) for VFI Items.

VFI Scale and items	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Career</b>						
Volunteering can help me to get my foot in the door at a place where I would like to work	.67					
I can make new contacts that might help my business or career	.76					
Volunteering allows me to explore different career options	.75					
Volunteering will help me to succeed in my chosen profession	.78					
Volunteering experience will look good on my résumé	.62					
<b>Social</b>						
My friends volunteer.		.58				
People I'm close to want me to volunteer		.69				
People I know share an interest in community service		.69				
Others with whom I am close place a high value on community service		.78				
Volunteering is an important activity to the people I know best		.74				
<b>Understanding</b>						
I can learn more about the cause for which I am working			.60			
Volunteering allows me to gain a new perspective on things			.74			
Volunteering lets me learn things through direct, hands on experience			.75			
I can learn how to deal with a variety of people			.67			
I can explore my own strengths			.53			
<b>Protective</b>						
No matter how bad I've been feeling, volunteering helps me to forget about it				.61		
By volunteering I feel less lonely				.72		

(continued)

**Table 3.** (continued)

VFI Scale and items	Factor					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
Volunteering helps me work through my own personal problems				.71		
Volunteering is a good escape from my own troubles				.77		
Enhancement						
Volunteering makes me feel important					.64	
Volunteering increases my self-esteem					.69	
Volunteering makes me feel needed					.67	
Volunteering makes me feel better about myself					.67	
Values						
I am concerned about those less fortunate than myself						.71
I feel compassion toward people in need						.77
I feel it is important to help others						.72

Total variance explained: 59.7%.

risk of not establishing a unique causal relationship with the motivation to volunteer, to obtain correct estimates we employed a two-stage model (2SLS) instead of a simple linear regression model (OLS). As exogenous instrumental variables affecting the work status, we included age (since younger people work more), educational level (since more educated people work more), and gender (since men work more; EUROSTAT, 2011). The following variables were employed as continuous: self-reported economic status, perceived health, and years of volunteering. As regards the variable “country,” it was employed as a control variable with a fixed effect. To test for possible clustering effects possibly caused by surveying subjects within organizations across different countries, we used a multilevel mixed-effects regression (results not shown), but the likelihood ratio test versus linear regression accepted the null hypothesis, confirming that the hypothesis of clustering effects was not significant.

Coefficients and *t*-test *p* values for each variable are presented. The validity and overall reliability of the model was assessed by means of the

diagnostic  $F$  test of joint '0' tests and of the  $R^2$ . To avoid heteroscedasticity problems, the error terms have been corrected through the White procedure.

## Results

Bivariate analyses show that the motivational pattern was the same for both working and nonworking volunteers, ranking from the highest scores in altruistic motivations to the lowest ones in career-related motivations (Table 4). Nevertheless, there are meaningful differences in the latter motivational function, since working older volunteers, and especially those working part time, scored a higher value of career-related motivations than nonworking ones. No differences according to work status were found in the other functions.

On the other hand, differences between countries were found in all six functions. In particular, Dutch older volunteers seem to be less driven by altruistic beliefs (i.e., values), German older volunteers more willing to exercise knowledge and abilities (i.e., understanding), and Italian ones more driven by the desire to have social relationships (i.e., social), to protect themselves from negative feelings (i.e., protective), and to increase their self-esteem (i.e., enhancement). With regard to the desire to improve the work situation through volunteering (i.e., career), German and Dutch older volunteers appear as to be more likely to experience this kind of motivation.

In order to answer the main research question of this study, which is does work status play a role in older people's volunteer motivation, and to go beyond the results obtained through bivariate analyses, we regressed work status on the six motivational functions, controlling for the influence of the sociodemographic variables, on the duration of previous (past) volunteer work and on the country (Table 5). The regressions show that three motivational functions were meaningfully predicted by work status: the desire to improve the work situation (career) and the desire to learn new skills and exercise knowledge (understanding), that appeared more likely to be experienced by older volunteers who work, in the latter case only by those working part time. Furthermore, the desire to protect the ego from negative feelings also appeared to be influenced by work status, with this desire, relative to retired volunteers, lower for full-time workers and higher for part-time ones.

Another main explanatory variable is country of origin responding to the second aim of the study which was to provide comparative European evidence on this topic to add to the largely American evidence. These findings suggest differences by country. Considering the Netherlands as reference, Italian and German older volunteers appear more driven by altruistic values

**Table 4.** Volunteer Motivation Scales by Work Status and Country (Means).

	Values			Understanding			Enhancement			Social			Protective			Career		
	Mean	SD	p	Mean	SD	p	Mean	SD	p	Mean	SD	p	Mean	SD	p	Mean	SD	p
Work status																		
Nonemployed	3.73	.78		3.19	.87		2.95	.94		2.56	.88		2.47	.97		1.60	.75	***
Employed part time	3.74	.75		3.34	.74		3.03	.88		2.43	.83		2.26	.89		1.82	.79	
Employed full time	3.86	.74		3.32	.90	***	3.04	.97	***	2.61	.88	***	2.33	.95	***	1.76	.75	***
Country																		
Netherlands	3.52	.67		3.07	.80		2.87	.84		2.51	.83		2.23	.83		1.68	.74	
Germany	4.00	.78		3.51	.88		2.87	.86		2.26	.85		2.35	.95		1.73	.73	
Italy	3.94	.81		3.26	.87		3.24	1.07		2.81	.91		2.80	1.07		1.56	.81	

\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.



**Table 5.** Instrumental Variables (2SLS) Regression Predicting Motivations.

	Values	Understanding	Enhancement	Social	Protection	Career
Marital status (ref. = Married/cohab.)						
Widowed	.01	.03	.24*	.04	.56***	.08
Divorced/single	-.21**	.11	-.01	-.08	.32**	.19*
Self-reported economic status	.04	.04	-.07	.08	-.06	.12
Perceived health	-.01	-.03	-.10	-.06	-.16*	-.07
Work status (ref. = Nonemployed)						
Employed part time	.45	1.30***	.65	-.61	.95*	.85*
Employed full time	-.34	-.09	.10	.25	-.14***	.58*
Years of volunteering	0.1	.01	.01	.01**	.01	-.01
Country (ref. = Netherlands)						
Germany	.50***	.45***	-.06	-.20*	.01	.02
Italy	.50***	.39***	.37***	.29**	.65***	-.03
R <sup>2</sup>	0.03	0.02	0.04	0.03	0.08	0.02

\**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01. \*\*\**p* < .001.

and by the desire to learn new things; and the Italian ones, additionally, by both positive and negative ego-related motivations (i.e., enhancement and protection). The desire to both conform to normative influences of important others and the opportunity to have relationships with others (i.e., social) are more likely to be experienced by Italian older volunteers and less by German ones.

Other variables affecting motivational functions included marital status (married volunteers are less driven by the desire to protect them from negative feelings and to increase self-esteem, and also by career-related motivations; on the other hand, they experience more altruistic reasons to give time), years of past volunteering (for the social motivational function), and health (for “protection”).

## **Discussion and Implications**

This study sought to address two key aims in order to contribute to knowledge around volunteering by older people in the contemporary context. The first aim was to explore the relationship between work status and motivation to volunteer. The second aim of the article was to provide some comparative European evidence on the topic, to contribute to the large body of American research. Thus, the specific intention of the study was to draw on a large European database of older volunteers to undertake analyses to address the key research question, does work status play a role in older people’s volunteer motivation?

The logic for the article was that the literature is fairly split on the topic of whether older people are more or less likely to volunteer when they are retired from the paid workforce. Some emerging evidence suggests that time availability and the crowding out thesis are less critical in the current context. Instead, there are arguments that those in paid work are more likely to volunteer due to both the complementarity thesis, which suggests that being in the workforce acts as a catalyst for volunteering; as well as the sociostructural resources theory, which highlights the fact that volunteers (like paid workers) are more likely to be highly resourced in terms of education, income, health, and other factors. In the light of this conflicting evidence base, with its corresponding theoretical explanations, this study was designed to contribute important practical information to voluntary organizations and policy makers to help them develop more nuanced recruitment and retention strategies. In particular, this study explored different motivations to volunteer among (part-time and full-time) working and nonworking older people. It is argued that this research is particularly appropriate in the current context of global

financial crises and uncertainty around late life work and retirement, which has the potential to impact on older people's volunteer motivation and decision making.

Findings from regression analyses in the article suggest that work status impacts on older volunteers' motivational structure. After controlling for other variables, the attachment to paid work seems to bring along a greater desire to learn new things (in the case of part-time workers) and to obtain work-related benefits through volunteering. Further, full-time work seems to be linked to a reduced desire to protect the ego from negative feelings, compared with retirement and in particular to part-time work. Volunteer motivations linked to work in the labor market (career) and to the desire to acquire and exercise knowledge (understanding) are known as "knowledge seeking" motivations (Fung, Carstensen, & Lang, 2001) and generally associated with younger generations more attached to the labor market (Okun & Shultz, 2003). Hence, it is not perhaps surprising that these motivational factors were also important for older people attached to the labor market, given their need to preserve or increase (for those working part time) their attachment to work through volunteering. The suggested relationship between part-time work and the desire to protect themselves from negative feelings may suggest that these kinds of motivations may be experienced by older workers who see their part-time condition as a source of personal problems, perhaps a forced situation more than a real free choice, and are looking to volunteering as an alternative. On the other hand, volunteers more attached to work may be less motivated to protect the ego from negative feelings since "protection" in this sense may be already ensured by their full involvement in paid work.

Results of the study also suggest interesting country-related insights. For example, apart from career-related motivations, all motivations are likely to be experienced more by Italian older volunteers rather than by Dutch ones, with altruistic beliefs and desire of increase knowledge being more important also in Germany. These results indicate that there are significant differences in different contexts, and in this case, different countries, as proposed by social origins theory promoted by Salamon and Anheier (1998), and by welfare state regime differences (Warburton & Jeppsson Grassman, 2009). Results of this study suggest that if the role of the state is weak, the individual motivation to volunteer may be stronger, perhaps since in the latter contexts people may feel more an internal impetus to be used: to contribute "in building" the society in place of the state, and to deal with personal challenges by relying on their own resources.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that higher levels of motivation in a given country may not be an indicator of more participation. According to the

present study, Italian older volunteers are much more motivated than Dutch ones, whereas volunteering in older age is particularly more widespread in the Netherlands, than in Germany and in particular in Italy. This may explain that in a given country, in terms of participation and in accordance with the socioeconomic resources theory, the welfare regime's characteristics may be much more important than motivations per se. These findings suggest the need for more cross-national studies on volunteering by older people to explore and explain the relationship between motivation and participation.

There are important implications here for organizations seeking to recruit older volunteers in the contemporary era. As we noted earlier, understanding motivation is crucial for ensuring volunteers are satisfied with their volunteer roles, and thus to retain them within the organization (Garner & Garner, 2011; Jamison, 2003). Organizations need to recognize that older volunteers, whether in paid work or not, are attracted by a broad range of potential motivations. It is important not to assume that, for example, career motives are not important, and that older volunteers are only motivated by values and social motives. In the contemporary context, work is taking on new meaning in later life. Older people are increasingly seeking flexible work options, which incorporate a mix of paid work and volunteering, a mix that is often supported by corporates in the marketplace. Paid work can be an important conduit to volunteering (Gonyea & Googins, 2006; Morrow-Howell, 2007), and a range of motives may be associated with these workforce changes. In terms of the findings reported here, organizations need to be aware that older people in paid work may be more attracted in volunteering through emphasizing that it can be a useful way to improve their career and their knowledge. On the other hand, organizations should take into account that older retired people and in part older people working only part time may have different motivations, for example they may be more likely to see volunteering as a way to protect themselves against the challenges of retirement and later life, or an unsatisfactory working situation. This may particularly be the case for individuals who have little choice in when to retire, or, as in a number of Asian countries such as Japan and Korea, are subject to mandatory retirement (Cho & Kim, 2005). Raising mandatory retirement age or giving more individual choice in retirement decisions could have as an effect that an increasing number of older people will get the opportunity to fulfill their ambitions in a paid job and do not have to mainly take refuge in voluntary work. However, this is only one of the potential effects of changes in mandatory retirement ages. The relationship between choice in retirement timing and older people's volunteer motivation hence merits further investigation.

Overall, this article has drawn on analyses from a tri-nation European database specifically designed to investigate volunteering by older people. The key strengths of the study are the specificity of the database and its design for the purpose, its large sample size, and capacity for comparison across three different European countries, the Netherlands, Germany, and Italy. While these are critical strengths, there are also some important limitations in this study that require noting. In particular, these data are cross sectional, and the sample is not representative, as it drew on older volunteers within selected groups of organizations. As with most prior studies based on the VFI to study volunteer motivations, findings cannot be generalized. This highlights the need for further contemporary studies to test and confirm these findings across other contexts.

The focus on work status is also limited in the present study, as the data set did not employ any distinction within the category of nonworking volunteers. While it is to be expected that retirees represent the large majority of the nonworking sample in this age group, there are also some unemployed or not recently employed individuals. Despite these limitations, the article adds knowledge on the relationship between older people's work status and volunteering, by linking this topic to the individual reasons for volunteering. Moreover, it provides insights in a comparative perspective, in a general framework of a scarcity of comparative studies on volunteers' motivations independently by their age (e.g., Hwang et al., 2005; Ziemek, 2006), and especially of those employing the VFI on older volunteers.

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## Notes

1. ISCED: 0: Preprimary education, 1: Primary education or first stage of basic education, 2: Lower secondary or second stage of basic education, 3: (Upper) secondary education, 4: Postsecondary nontertiary education, 5: First stage of tertiary education, 6: Second stage of tertiary education.
2. Reliability tests for the whole sample: understanding, .78; social, .79; career, .80; protection, .80; enhancement, .78; and value, .65. Total  $\alpha$  across the 26 items: .90. For the Netherlands: understanding, .81; social, .81; career, .86; protection, .80; enhancement, .82; and value, .60. For Italy: understanding, .72; social, .74; career, .81; protection, .79; enhancement, .82; and value, .61. For Germany: understanding, .81; social, .78; career, .77; protection, .80; enhancement, .74; and value, .72. Three alphas are too low (below .70). Nevertheless, using  $\alpha$  equal to or higher than .60 but less than .70 is acceptable for exploratory research (Hair, Anderson, Tatham, & Black, 1998; Hustinx et al., 2010).

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