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Running head: Australian students' volunteering intentions

What predicts Australian university students' intentions to volunteer their time for  
community service?

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### Abstract

University students represent one target population with great potential to serve as volunteers. The primary focus on describing the characteristics of students who choose to volunteer, however, has resulted in limited understanding of the psychosocial factors impacting on students' decisions to volunteer. To bridge this gap, we used an extension of a well-known theoretical framework, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB), to predict students' intentions to volunteer for community service. Using content and thematic analysis we explored also students' motivations and constraints for volunteering. Students ( $N = 235$ ;  $M$  age = 22.09 years) self-reported their attitude, normative influences, control perceptions, moral obligation, past behaviour, demographic characteristics and intentions for volunteering via questionnaire. Regression analyses showed the extended TPB explained 67% of the variance in students' volunteering intentions. In qualitative analyses, themes primarily represented the factors contributing to low efficacy for volunteering (e.g., time constraints). Control perceptions and perceived moral obligations related to volunteering represent important future targets to encourage student volunteering for organisations providing critical services for those most in need.

**Keywords:** volunteering, theory of planned behaviour, moral norm, university students

Volunteering forms an integral part of the social and economic fabric of Australia with approximately 713 million hours volunteered per annum (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2007). It is estimated that 34% of the adult population in Australia actively engage in some form of voluntary work, with the highest participation in volunteering from Australians who are female, highly educated, and aged 35 to 44 years (ABS, 2007). Common reasons for volunteering include both the social benefit of helping others or the community as well as the personal benefits of increased satisfaction, gaining new skills, and forming new networks (Auld, 2004; ABS, 2007; Esmond, 2000; Greenslade & White, 2002; Holdsworth, 2010; Smith, Holmes, Cnaan, Handy, & Brudney, 2010; Warburton, Terry, Rosenman, & Shapiro, 2001). Given the important role of volunteerism in our society (e.g., a source of free labour to continue essential services, community engagement, increased social consciousness, Gage & Thapa, 2012; Griffith, 2010), there is a critical need for continued recruitment and retention of volunteers. One strategy to increase the number of volunteers is to identify and target populations who have the greatest potential for volunteering. One such target population is college/university students (Gage & Thapa, 2012).

### **College/University Students and Volunteering**

In addition to the positive links demonstrated between level of education and volunteering (Wilson 2000), there is an increased possibility of some form of civic engagement among students due to service learning programs which encourage students to volunteer for community service (Edwards, Mooney, & Heald, 2001; Garver, Divine, & Spralls, 2009; Wilson, 2000). There are a range of estimates for student volunteering in America where most student volunteering research is conducted (Smith et al., 2010). While not directly comparable to Australian studies, this research shows that a significant proportion of students give of their time. These estimates include up to 90% of students having volunteered at some point throughout college (Carlo, Okun, Knight, & de Guzman,

2005), approximately 80% of college freshman having volunteered in the past year (Sax, 2004), approximately half of beginning college students performing community service (Griffith, 2010), and a 30.2% volunteering rate for college students in America (Corporation for National and Community Service, 2006). For university students in Australia, the rate of volunteering has been reported at approximately 40% (ABS, 2007; Auld, 2004; Esmond, 2000; McCabe, White, & Obst, 2007); a rate that is above the national average volunteering rate (34%), and higher than the rate of volunteering for those aged 18 to 24 years who were not students (20%) (ABS, 2007).

Students' motivations for volunteering may include helping others and the satisfaction derived from helping (Auld, 2004; Serow, 1991), and learning or developing new skills or making new contacts for the purposes of career development (Auld, 2004; Gage & Thapa, 2012; Holdsworth, 2010; Smith et al., 2010). Reasons for not volunteering in student-based studies include time constraints (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Simha, Topuzova, & Albert, 2011), the need to find paid employment and work or study commitments (Auld 2004; Evans & Saxton 2005; Gage & Thapa, 2012; Simha et al., 2011), as well as being unaware of the volunteering opportunities available and how to get involved (Auld, 2004; Gage & Thapa, 2012). Reviews of young adult volunteering consistently suggest that more research is needed regarding the motivations of younger volunteers and how to engage them in volunteering (e.g., Gaskin, 2004; Hill, Russell, & Brewis, 2009; Wilson, 2000). More recently Francis (2011) and Gage and Thapa (2012) have stated that young adult volunteers in the university context are an under-researched population. Further, much of this research has more often considered the characteristics of students who choose to volunteer rather than non-volunteers (Smith et al., 2010) or associated motivations and constraints for volunteering (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Gage & Thapa, 2012), particularly in Australia (Holdsworth 2010; McCabe et al., 2007). It is acknowledged that Clary and colleagues' Volunteer Functions Inventory

(VFI; Clary & Snyder, 1999; Clary, Snyder & Ridge, 1992; Clary et al., 1998) has been widely applied to understand the motivations and the beneficial functions for the individual that volunteering serves, including in an Australian context (e.g., Esmond & Dunlop, 2004; Greenslade & White, 2005; McCabe et al., 2007). However, a recent study by Francis (2011) suggests that these volunteering functions may not be as applicable to the current generation of university students. Specifically, Francis found that the factor structure of the VFI was unstable and explained only 11% of volunteering in a sample of university students compared to the findings from the Clary et al. (1998) study. Applying the VFI to a non-volunteer university student sample, McCabe et al. (2007) found similarly lower reliabilities for several functions. Furthermore, the focus of the VFI is on motivations for volunteering rather than constraints preventing it, the latter of which are important in understanding why students currently do not engage in volunteering. For this reason, in the current study, we have adopted a qualitative approach with the use of two open-ended questions to explore student motivations and constraints for volunteering rather than an established measure such as the VFI.

In addition, despite the importance of volunteerism in our society, and potentially in the younger population, little Australian research has focused on identifying motivations for volunteering (Esmond & Dunlop, 2004) or specifically on identifying the predictors of the volunteering behaviour of college/university students (Cruce & Moore, 2007; McCabe et al., 2007; Simha et al., 2011). As such, in this study, in addition to the qualitative approach to understand motivations and constraints for volunteering, we use a quantitative approach to consider the predictors of the decision to volunteer for community service in a sample of Australian university students. To identify the predictors of volunteering, we propose the use of a well-validated decision-making model, the theory of planned behaviour (TPB; Ajzen, 1991).

### **Theory of Planned Behaviour**

A key assumption of the TPB is that people evaluate the information available to them in a rational and systematic way when making decisions to perform behaviour (Ajzen, 1991). Volunteering can be conceptualised as a planned behaviour because the individual weighs up the personal costs and benefits associated with volunteering prior to making the decision to volunteer (Penner, 2004). Within the TPB, an individual's intentions are proposed as the central determinant of his or her behaviour. Intentions are determined by an individual's attitude (positive or negative evaluation of behaviour), subjective norm (perceived approval/disapproval from important others for behaviour), and perceived behavioural control (PBC) (perceived ease or difficulty of performing behaviour; also proposed to predict behaviour directly). In the volunteering context intention has been demonstrated as having a strong, positive relationship with behaviour (Chacon, Vecina, & Davila, 2007; Harrison, 1995). To date three studies have used the TPB to predict volunteering explaining 75% (Greenslade & White, 2005) and 55% (Warburton & Terry, 2000) of the variance in older Australian adults' intentions, and 66% of the variance in US students intentions to volunteer for a campus-based program (Okun & Sloane, 2002). In each study attitude, subjective norm, and PBC were significant predictors of intention. Furthermore, Greenslade and White (2005) compared the VFI and TPB in predicting volunteering behaviour and found the TPB to explain a significantly higher percentage of the variance (57%) compared to the VFI (26%).

### **Moral norm**

In addition, to attitudes, norms, and control factors, the social consequences and associated altruistic motives of volunteering (Harrison, 1995; Warburton & Terry 2000), suggest that an individual's belief in his or her personal moral obligation (i.e. moral norm) to volunteer may impact on decision-making (Lee, Piliavin, & Call, 1999). Moral norm is conceptually distinct from subjective norm and reflects an individual's feelings of personal

responsibility/duty to perform a behaviour of interest (e.g., Manstead, 2000). As an addition to the TPB, moral norm has been used to predict successfully decisions to perform other voluntary behaviours such as charitable giving (Smith & McSweeney, 2007), blood donation (Armitage & Conner, 2001), and organ donation (Hyde & White, 2009a). For volunteering specifically, in their study of older volunteers, Warburton and Terry (2000) found that including moral norm in the TPB explained an additional 11% of variance in volunteering intentions. Similarly, Harrison (1995) found that in an inexperienced sample of volunteers at a homeless shelter, attitude, subjective norm, PBC, and moral norm predicted intention, with intention predicting subsequent volunteering behaviour. There is also evidence to suggest that individuals who form intentions based on moral values may be more likely to act on these intentions to perform morally-based behaviours (Godin, Conner, & Sheeran, 2005).

### **The Current Study**

In the current study, we use an extended TPB incorporating moral norm to identify the predictors of intentions to volunteer time for community service in a sample of university students from Australia. While our focus on intentions is not ideal, intentions have a strong relationship with volunteering behaviour (Chacon et al., 2007) and in prosocial contexts more broadly (Ferguson, 1996; Schlumpf et al., 2008). It was hypothesised that students who had more positive attitudes, perceived more normative pressure or support, had greater confidence in their ability to volunteer, and perceived a moral obligation to volunteer would be more likely to intend to volunteer for community service in the future. In recognition of prior research which has examined the potential influences of past volunteering behaviour and demographic characteristics such as age, sex, ethnicity, marital status and religious values on volunteering decisions (Cruce & Moore, 2007; Gillespie & King, 1985), we controlled for these variables in regression analyses. In addition, to avoid potential limitations of using a validated scale to impose preconceived motivations on understanding student



volunteering (e.g., Francis, 2011), using content and thematic analysis we explored students' motivations and constraints for volunteering, as well as the organisations that students have volunteered for in the past. Understanding students' reasons for volunteering, and constraints preventing volunteering will offer greater insight in the interpretation of the quantitative findings obtained.

## Method

### Participants and Procedure

Participants ( $N = 235$ ) were 44 male and 190 female (1 did not state sex, age  $M = 22.09$  years;  $SD = 7.13$  years), mostly Caucasian (90%), and unmarried (78%), students undertaking a psychology degree recruited from an Australian university in Victoria. Participants were invited via an undergraduate psychology research experience program to complete a questionnaire in online or paper format if they were eligible volunteers. Eligibility to volunteer was defined as being medically (being in good health) and legally (not convicted of a serious crime) able to volunteer for community service. Students completed a questionnaire containing items assessing the extended TPB measures, past volunteering behaviour, and demographic characteristics. Prior to conducting the study, ethical approval was obtained from the University Human Research Ethics Committee. All participants were informed of the anonymous and voluntary nature of their participation and that they were free to withdraw from the study without penalty should they choose to do so.

Sixty (26%, 1 did not specify) students had done some volunteer work in a community organisation/service in the past year. These students listed the organisations they had volunteered for and the reasons why they had chosen to volunteer. Students reported volunteering primarily for organisations (e.g., Salvation Army, Lifeline, Cancer Council,  $n = 23$ ) who provided community support for individual physical (e.g., soup vans/hostels) and mental well-being (e.g., telephone counseling/crisis lines), aged care facilities, recreational

and outdoor organisations (e.g., horse riding for people with disabilities, local netball club, Guides), religious/spiritual organisations (e.g., local church, Sacred Heart mission), and community fundraising (e.g., door knock appeals for Red Cross, Starlight foundation).

### Measures

All TPB measures (based broadly on Armitage & Conner, 2001) were assessed on 7-point response scales (scored 0 to 6) and coded so that higher values reflected higher levels on the variable under examination unless otherwise specified. All scales were reliable with Cronbach alphas above .70. Scale means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's alphas are presented in Table 1.

**TPB.** Four items assessed the strength of *intention* to volunteer for community service in the future. These items were: "I intend to volunteer for community service in the future?", 0 *unlikely* to 6 *likely*; "I expect I will volunteer for community service in the future", 0 *definitely will not* to 6 *definitely will*; "I want to volunteer for community service in the future", 0 *definitely do not* to 6 *definitely do*; "How likely is it that you will volunteer for community service in the future?", 0 *unlikely* to 6 *likely*. Six, 7-point semantic differential format items served as a measure of *attitude* (My volunteering for community service in the future would be: *bad-good*, *harmful-beneficial*, *unpleasant-pleasant*, *negative-positive*, *unenjoyable-enjoyable*, *useless-useful*). Three items comprised the *subjective norm* measure. These items were: "People who are important to me would want me to volunteer for community service in the future": 0 *unlikely* to 6 *likely*; "People who are important to me think I 0 *should volunteer* to 6 *should not volunteer* for community service in the future" (reverse scored); and "People who are important to me would 0 *disapprove of me volunteering* to 6 *approve of me volunteering* for community service in the future". Six items measured the construct of *PBC*. These items were: "How confident are you that you will be able to volunteer for community service in the future?" 0 *not very confident* to 6 *very*

*confident*; “How much personal control do you feel you have over volunteering for community service in the future?” 0 *no control* to 6 *complete control*; “I believe I have the ability to volunteer for community service in the future” 0 *definitely do not* to 6 *definitely do*; “To what extent do you see yourself as being capable of volunteering for community service in the future?” 0 *very incapable of volunteering* to 6 *very capable of volunteering*; “If it were up to me, I am confident I would be able to volunteer for community service in the future?” 0 *strongly disagree* to 6 *strongly agree*; “Whether or not I volunteer for community service is entirely up to me” 0 *strongly disagree* to 6 *strongly agree*.

***Moral norm.*** Moral norm was measured using three items. These items were: “It would go against my principles if I did not volunteer for community service in the future”, 0 *strongly disagree* to 6 *strongly agree*; I would feel guilty if I did not volunteer for community service in the future, 0 *strongly disagree* to 6 *strongly agree*; It would be morally wrong for me not to volunteer for community service, 0 *strongly disagree* to 6 *strongly agree*.

***Past behaviour.*** Participants indicated if they had volunteered for community service in the past (Have you done some volunteer work for a community [i.e. community service] organisation in the past year?) using a 1 *yes*/ 0 *no* response format.

***Demographic characteristics.*** Participants reported their: age in years, sex (coded as 1 *male* and 2 *female*), ethnicity (coded as 1 *Caucasian* and 2 *non Caucasian*), marital status (coded as 1 *not married* and 2 *married*), and the extent that religion plays an important part in their life (scored 0 *not at all important* to 6 *extremely important*), for analyses.

***Volunteering motivations and constraints.*** To enable better understanding of student motivations for volunteering for community service, students reported in two free-response questions where they had volunteered in the past and why (“Please indicate what volunteer organisations you worked with and why?”) as well as their reasons for not volunteering currently (“If you are not volunteering in your community, what are your reasons for this?”).

## Data Analysis Strategy

The bivariate correlations between predictor and dependent variables, and means and standard deviations, were considered initially. Given that some respondents had volunteered in the past year (i.e. *volunteers*,  $n = 60$ ), while the majority had not (i.e. *non-volunteers*,  $n = 174$ ), we conducted independent-groups t-tests with Bonferroni adjustments to test whether there were differences in mean responses to the extended TPB variables for volunteers and non-volunteers. To identify the predictors of intentions to volunteer time for community service in the future, we then conducted a hierarchical multiple regression controlling for past behaviour, age, sex, ethnicity, marital status, and religious importance in step one, followed by entry of attitude, subjective norm, and PBC in step two, and moral norm in step three. We conducted an additional regression analysis to determine whether the predictors of volunteering intention may differ for only those respondents who had not previously volunteered (we did not conduct a separate regression analysis for those who had volunteered as results may be unreliable given the small number of respondents). We used content/thematic analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Joffe & Yardley, 2004) to understand the reasons why students have volunteered in the past and why they are not volunteering currently. Responses to the two open-ended questions were initially coded independently by the first author and an external coder not involved with the project. Following this, any variations in coding were discussed and resolved so that each author's coding assignments corresponded. Initially we identified common responses using content analysis and then grouped these responses according to underlying themes. For example, "to gain experience", "for me and my studies", "want to be a Psychologist, thought it would benefit my experience", and "to see if I was interested in pursuing employment in that field" were identified by participants as reasons for volunteering in the past year. These responses were grouped to form the theme 'develop skills for employment/study'.

## Results

### Quantitative Analyses

The TPB predictors of attitude, subjective norm, and PBC were significantly and positively correlated with intention to volunteer for community service in the future, with attitude and PBC as the strongest correlates (Table 1). Inspection of the correlation matrix revealed significant and positive correlations between moral norm and the TPB variables of attitude, subjective norm, and PBC. Independent groups t-tests showed significant differences in mean responses to extended TPB constructs for participants who had and had not volunteered in the past year with volunteers having higher means in attitude, subjective norm, PBC, moral norm, and intention for volunteering (Table 2). Given these differences and the small number of volunteers which precluded separate regression analyses for each group, we controlled for past volunteering behaviour in subsequent analysis.

(Tables 1 and 2)

#### *Prediction of Intention to Volunteer Time for Community Service in the Future.*

The linear combination of past behaviour and the demographic characteristics explained 24% ( $R^2 = .24$ ) of variance in volunteering intentions in step one,  $F(6, 222) = 11.51, p < .001$ . Including attitude, subjective norm, and PBC in step two explained a further 36% ( $R^2 = .60, \Delta R^2 = .36$ ) of variance in intention,  $\Delta F(3, 219) = 66.05, p < .001$ . Including moral norm in step three significantly improved prediction of volunteering intentions, explaining a further 7% ( $R^2 = .67, \Delta R^2 = .07$ ) of variance,  $\Delta F(1, 218) = 43.97, p < .001$ . Once all variables were entered into the equation, the significant predictors of intention to volunteer for community service in the future in order of magnitude were PBC, moral norm, attitude, past behaviour, subjective norm, and marital status. The remaining demographic characteristics were not significant predictors of volunteering intention at the final step. Overall, the predictors explained 67% of variance in intention to volunteer in the future (Table 3).

An additional regression analysis was conducted with non-volunteers only to explore whether predictors of intention differed for this group. Entry of predictors occurred in the same order as that described above. Once all variables were entered into the equation, the significant predictors of intention were identical to the whole sample with the exception that subjective norm only approached significance ( $p = .07$ ) and explained 62% of the variance in intention to volunteer.

(Table 3)

### **Content/Thematic Analyses**

A total of 234 students provided responses to the open-ended questions. Specifically, 60 students who had volunteered provided responses to motivations for volunteering in the past year and 174 students who had not volunteered provided responses to constraints for volunteering in the past year. Each participant was able to provide more than one response; however, if a participant mentioned the same response multiple times it was counted once.

***Students' Motivations for Volunteering in the Past.*** Content/thematic analysis of the responses regarding the reasons why students had volunteered in the past year ( $n = 60$  provided 92 responses) resulted in nine themes derived from the data. Students most often cited their choice to volunteer as stemming from a desire to help others who they perceived to be less fortunate than themselves, to make others feel better by spending time with them (e.g., 'the elderly who are lonely'), and to give back to or benefit either their own or another community. These responses exemplified the first theme of *wanting to help others/support the community* (29% of responses). For example "I have volunteered with a homeless shelter providing meals. I felt that I should help those less off than myself". For some students, the decision to volunteer was based on choosing volunteering opportunities that had personal significance for them such as helping out at the school their children attend or that they attended themselves, volunteering for an organisation because a friend or family member

asked them to, or volunteering for a specific organisation that had provided services to them/their loved ones in the past or may do so in the future (e.g., volunteering for an organisation that assisted family members who have depression). These reasons were captured in the second theme of *personal relevance* (18% of responses). For example “My brother had brain surgery – our way [volunteering for the hospital] of repayment”.

The third theme, *convenience* (14% of responses), was exemplified by students choosing volunteering activities that involve minimal time investment (e.g., participating in door-knock appeals), choosing a volunteering opportunity at an organisation or in relation to an activity or program that the individual is already involved with (e.g., sporting association, church, school placement, work place), and choosing to volunteer for an organisation that is situated locally (e.g., ‘local nursing home’, ‘somewhere close to home’). For example “I like to help people hands-on and I have been a member [of the organization] for about 12 years. I feel the community benefits”. Other students reported that, rather than convenience, their reason for volunteering was choosing an activity that was inherently enjoyable, that allowed them to spend time with a specific population they liked to work with (e.g., children), and offered the possibility to volunteer with friends, representing the fourth theme of *enjoyment* (11% of responses). For example “I have volunteered in the past with trading partners – selling handcrafts and passing profit onto disadvantaged people around the world, mainly women, which I found interesting, important and even fun”.

Several students chose to volunteer for an organisation that offered the opportunity to gain skills or experience needed for study or future employment (e.g., Lifeline telephone counseling), representing the fifth theme of *develop skills for employment/study* (9% of responses). For example “Most of my family has had depression, I want to be a psychologist and I thought it would benefit my experience”. Other reasons for volunteering that resulted in positive outcomes included meeting new people, having a new or different experience, and

raising awareness of the conditions in which other people live, all of which are exemplars of the sixth theme, *having new experiences or raising awareness* (6.5% of responses). For example “I volunteer to meet new people, for enjoyment, and to have a new experience”. The seventh theme, *moral, ethical, or religious reasons* (6.5% of responses), encompasses students' choices to volunteer on the basis of a perceived personal moral or ethical obligation (e.g., ‘feel guilty saying no’) or as part of their spiritual/religious beliefs (e.g., ‘calling from God to help others’). For example “They called and asked if I would [volunteer] and I would feel bad if I refused”. The two remaining themes, *personal growth/challenge* (theme 8; 3% of responses) and *belief in organisational values/work* (theme 9; 3% of responses), represented some students' desire to undertake an opportunity that they believed they would find challenging or self-fulfilling, and their decision to volunteer was based on their belief that the chosen organisation offered important services (e.g., ‘they do important work’), respectively. For example, “I feel they do a wonderful service for people in need of guidance and in the area of suicide prevention”.

***Students' Constraints Preventing Volunteering.*** Students who had not volunteered in the past year ( $n = 174$  provided 237 responses) reported the reasons why they had chosen not to volunteer. The content and thematic analysis of responses resulted in six themes being identified in the data. The most common reason reported by students preventing them from volunteering was having no time to undertake volunteering, represented by the first theme of *time constraints* (68% of responses). Exemplars of time constraints included having separate or simultaneous work and study commitments which left little time for other activities, having other priorities or obligations such as needing to prioritise carer or family responsibilities, needing to have a social life or see friends, and feeling overwhelmed with current commitments. For example “Between university and my job I am left with little time to be able to volunteer for community service”. The second theme identified, *lack of*



*motivation/interest for volunteering* (13% of responses), represented students' feelings that they were too lazy or could not be bothered to volunteer. Other students made the deliberate choice to not volunteer their time because they did not want to or felt that there were no opportunities/issues of interest or importance that would motivate them to volunteer. Some students perceived that their local community was fairly affluent and believed there was no need to volunteer. For example "I really can't be bothered" and "Because I have a lot of work to do, I'm broke, and I consider my community to be fairly well off".

The third theme, *lack of awareness/knowledge about volunteering* (7% of responses), was exemplified by students having a deficit in knowledge about how to identify and find suitable organisations to volunteer for, how to approach these organisations to arrange volunteering, and a lack of understanding about what the volunteering process involves. Other students had not considered or thought about volunteering previously. For example "I would not know where to start or where would be a good place for me and the community to volunteer". Several responses from students related to the impracticalities of volunteering and formed the fourth theme of *inconvenience* (5% of responses). Some students saw volunteering as a hassle or impractical and others had difficulty accessing volunteering opportunities due to limited access to transport. Some students also had the perception that there were more convenient ways of giving back to the community such as donating money. For example "too many other commitments, I do my part by donating money".

The fifth theme relates to the *emotional cost of volunteering* (4% of responses). Some students anticipated that they would feel distressed or depressed working with others who are less fortunate than themselves. Other participants had previously worked or were currently working in related areas (e.g., community services, psychologist) and felt emotionally drained from their experiences. These students believed they needed to focus on their own well-being rather than others' needs. For example "My job benefits the community. I get paid

for this work but the job is taxing to my physical and mental state". The sixth and final theme identified, *financial considerations* (3% of responses), represented students' concerns that they needed to be paid for work given their financial situation (e.g., 'being broke'), and that working for money was a more important priority for them than working for no money. For example "I prefer having a paying job and feel I couldn't fit community work in with my other commitments".

### **Discussion**

In conducting this study we aimed to address a gap in the literature by increasing understanding of the predictors of college/university student intentions to volunteer for community service as well as the motivations and constraints for volunteering in this population. Consistent with previous volunteering research (Greenslade & White, 2005; Harrison, 1995; Warburton & Terry, 2000), we used an extended TPB incorporating moral norm (while controlling for past behaviour and demographic characteristics) to predict students' volunteering intentions. The extended TPB explained 67% of variance in students' intentions to volunteer their time for community service in the future; an amount that is consistent with previous research using the TPB and its extensions to predict volunteering more broadly (Warburton & Terry, 2000) and students' volunteering, specifically (Okun & Sloane, 2002). Also consistent with previous research (Harrison, 1995), attitude, subjective norm, PBC, and moral norm were significant predictors of intention. Past behaviour, and marital status significantly predicted intentions also. Together, the results of the study provide strong support for the hypothesised relationships between the extended TPB predictors and intentions to volunteer time. Students who evaluated volunteering favorably, believed other people important to them supported volunteering, volunteering was within their capacity and skills, had a moral imperative to volunteer, had volunteered in the past, and were married, held stronger intentions to volunteer for community service in the future.

To further understanding of students' volunteering behaviour we used content/thematic analysis to identify themes related to volunteering motives and constraints in the target population. Motives were consistent with previous research such as wanting to help others (Auld, 2004; Serow, 1991), developing skills for employment (Gage & Thapa, 2012; Holdsworth, 2010), and religious or moral values (Gillespie & King, 1985). Several of these motives could also be matched to the functions identified in validated measures such as the VFI. For instance, the themes *wanting to help others/support the community, having new experiences/raising awareness, personal growth/challenge, develop skills for employment/study, enjoyment, and moral/ethical/religious reasons*, correspond to the six VFI functions of *values, understanding, enhancement, career, social, and protective*, respectively (Clary & Sage, 1999). While this consistency with prior literature was evident, other motives less commonly cited in the literature such as personal relevance, convenience, and belief in organizational values/work were identified also. Potentially, these additional motives may have been identified because participants interpreted the open-ended question ("Please indicate what volunteer organizations you worked with and why?") as asking about their reasons for volunteering for a specific organization, rather than volunteering more generally. Similarly, a range of constraints for volunteering were identified including lack of time (Gage & Thapa, 2012), lack of awareness or knowledge about volunteering (Auld, 2004), and financial considerations such as the need to find paid employment (Simha et al., 2011). These constraints are consistent with previous research. Other constraints identified including lack of motivation or interest for volunteering and the emotional cost of volunteering have received less research attention.

### **Recommendations based on key findings to improve student volunteering**

Together the quantitative and qualitative findings offer several key areas for future intervention. First, the findings highlight the importance of perceptions of control over or

efficacy for volunteering. Specifically, in a predictive capacity, PBC had the largest beta weight relative to the other predictors, suggesting that students' belief in their capacity to volunteer strongly informs their intentions to volunteer. Furthermore, all of the constraints for volunteering related to efficacy (or lack thereof). Many students believed they lacked the necessary resources required to volunteer, particularly time, financial support, and awareness of volunteering opportunities. In this sample, there was the perception that volunteering requires a significant time investment and long-term commitment. Students should be encouraged to consider volunteering opportunities that are more episodic or contained in nature. For example, a volunteering activity such as collecting money in a door-knock appeal involves a quantified time investment, set tasks that the individual is fully aware of prior to participation, and the opportunity to perform the behaviour at a time convenient for the person volunteering. At the same time, this type of activity provides significant benefits for the charity/organisation the individual may be volunteering for. Qualitative research may also be useful to understand what students think about volunteering and, given some students' lack of motivation, how they could be encouraged to reconceptualise their ideas about volunteering. Continuing to incorporate both formal and informal work integrated learning opportunities within degree programs, particularly those that match students with not-for-profit or philanthropic organisations (i.e. service learning; e.g., Smith, Brooks, Lichtenberg, McIlveen, Torjul, & Tyler, 2009) will not only ensure volunteering in universities becomes more of a normative practice (see Francis, 2011) but also may assist to increase student's opportunity, time, and motivation to volunteer as well as promoting social consciousness.

In addition to perceptions of control, attitude and subjective norm were determinants of volunteering intentions, suggesting that more positive attitudes and perceptions of approval from important others are likely to encourage volunteering intentions. Students reported having too many demands on their time including work, study, and family commitments and

believed that volunteering would be an additional cost to them (e.g., financially). To overcome the perception that volunteering is a 'cost', students could be encouraged to develop more positive attitudes by considering how volunteering could fit into their lives (e.g., by volunteering with their friends or through university), choosing volunteering opportunities that are meaningful and of personal relevance, and that allow time to be spent with family and friends. Choosing volunteering opportunities that involve family may be particularly important for those students who are married because, in the current study, married students were more likely to volunteer.

As the predictor with the second largest beta weight, relative to the other predictors, moral norm was another strong determinant of intention, suggesting that students who perceived a moral obligation to volunteer were the most likely to intend to do so. Feelings of guilt/obligation to volunteer were also evident as a theme in the qualitative responses. Together these results suggest that moral norm can be represented in a number of ways as a personal belief in helping others, as not being able to refuse volunteering opportunities, as an obligation to 'repay' an organisation for benefits and services received personally or for loved ones, and as part of a religious obligation to help others. Future interventions designed to increase volunteering in the student cohort may wish to emphasise the disparity between a persons' moral or religious values of helping others and their lack of intention (and ultimately action) to volunteer. Alternatively, asking people to consider the qualities of the type of person who volunteers (e.g., a person who has strong ethical or moral values) and whether these same qualities could be used to describe themselves may be an effective way to encourage volunteering (Hyde & White, 2009b).

### **Limitations and Conclusion**

Despite the strengths of this study such as the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to understand volunteering and offer greater insight into the organisations students

volunteer for, and the motivations and constraints for volunteering in the student cohort, these findings should be interpreted in light of limitations. These limitations include the larger numbers of female (who may be more likely to volunteer than males, with variations in this pattern across countries [e.g. Einolf, 2010; Wilson, 2000] and even suburbs [e.g. Wilson & Spoehr, 2009]) and Caucasian, educated, psychology students who given their higher levels of education and chosen future profession may be more predisposed to volunteering. Reliance on self-report and the focus on an Australian-only student cohort may also limit the generalisability of the findings beyond this population. Furthermore, we included volunteers and non-volunteers in the same sample (while controlling for past volunteering behaviour); however, there was some indication that it may be important in future research to examine volunteer and non-volunteer motivations separately given the likelihood that, similar to other voluntary behaviours, the factors important for initiation and maintenance of student's volunteering behaviour may vary (e.g., Masser, White, Hyde, & Terry, 2008).

The main limitation of this study, however, is the absence of a prospective measure of volunteering behaviour. Although not a measure of behaviour, previous research shows intentions as the most consistent predictor of volunteering behaviour (Greenslade & White, 2005; Harrison, 1995; Warburton & Terry, 2000) and intentions can serve as a proxy measure of behaviour when actual behaviour is not measured (Chacon et al., 2007; Schlumpf et al., 2008). In this study we adopted a more general definition of behaviour (i.e., volunteering in the future), but it is important to define the behaviour of interest in terms of target, action, context, and time (Ajzen, 1991). Defining a specified time-frame for volunteering behaviour may further enhance accuracy and reliability of participant responding. Future research on volunteering decision-making in the student cohort should recruit a more representative sample of students, including a higher proportion of male and non-Caucasian participants as

well as students from different disciplines, and, importantly, provide a test of the volunteering intention-behaviour relationship.

Overall, this study provides strong support for an extended TPB model incorporating moral norms to predict students' volunteering intention and reduces the gap in understanding of the psychosocial motivations and constraints underlying students' volunteering decisions. Specifically, the results of this study highlight the relative importance of control/efficacy and moral norm as future targets for intervention. Continued exploration of student decision-making about volunteering and the ways in which they can be encouraged to strengthen their motivation for volunteering is essential to ensure the continuation of the vital services that volunteers provide to charitable and not-for-profit organisations so that they may assist and support those in need.

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Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, Cronbach's Alphas, and Bivariate Correlations among Predictor and Dependent Variables for Volunteering*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Intention	3.60	1.47	(.96)										
2. Attitude	4.36	1.12	.64***	(.93)									
3. Subjective norm	3.74	1.07	.60***	.58***	(.78)								
4. PBC	4.47	1.02	.65***	.56***	.55***	(.85)							
5. Moral norm	2.36	1.50	.49***	.32***	.39***	.18**	(.84)						
6. Past behaviour <sup>a</sup>	-	-	.40***	.32***	.29***	.28***	.17***	-					
7. Age	22.09	7.13	.06	.07	-.10	-.01	-.10	.05	-				
8. Sex <sup>a</sup>	-	-	.19**	.16*	.07	.08	.17*	-	-.03	-			
9. Ethnicity <sup>a</sup>	-	-	.03	-.01	.09	-.05	.05	-	-.08	-	-		
10. Marital status <sup>a</sup>	-	-	.19**	.08	.04	.13	-.02	-	.32***	-	-	-	
11. Religious importance	1.79	1.94	.15*	.21**	.19**	.05	.27***	.13*	-.05	.01	.22**	-.05	-

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

*Note.* <sup>a</sup> = single item dichotomous measure. PBC = Perceived behavioural control. All items scored on 7 point scales with higher scores reflecting higher endorsement of each item. Cronbach's alpha (where appropriate) are presented in brackets.



Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and T-tests for Extended TPB Measures as a Function of Volunteering Experience in the Past Year (Volunteers vs. Non-volunteers)*

Measure	Volunteer ( <i>n</i> = 60)	Non-volunteer ( <i>n</i> = 174)	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
	<i>M</i> (SD)	<i>M</i> (SD)		
Intention	4.61 (1.13)	3.25 (1.42)	6.70	< .001
Attitude	4.96 (1.00)	4.16 (1.08)	5.07	< .001
Subjective norm	4.27 (1.04)	3.56 (1.02)	4.64	< .001
PBC	4.95 (0.79)	4.30 (1.03)	4.45	< .001
Moral norm	2.80 (1.63)	2.21 (1.44)	2.66	.008

*Note.* Extended TPB items are measured on 7-point scales scored from 0 to 6. PBC = Perceived

Behavioural Control

Table 3

*Hierarchical Regression Analyses Predicting Intention to Volunteer*

Step		$R^2$	$\Delta R^2$	$B$	$SE$	$\beta$
1.	Past behaviour	.24	.24***	1.33	.20	.39***
	Age			-.00	.01	-.02
	Sex			.63	.22	.17**
	Ethnicity			-.14	.30	-.03
	Marital status			.62	.23	.17**
	Religious importance			.09	.05	.12
2.	Past behaviour	.60	.36***	.56	.16	.17***
	Age			.01	.01	.03
	Sex			.34	.17	.09*
	Ethnicity			.02	.22	.00
	Marital status			.37	.17	.10*
	Religious importance			.02	.03	.02
	Attitude			.34	.08	.26***
	Subjective norm			.30	.08	.22***
	PBC			.45	.08	.31***
3.	Past behaviour	.67	.07***	.49	.14	.14**
	Age			.01	.01	.05
	Sex			.19	.15	.05
	Ethnicity			.08	.20	.02
	Marital status			.37	.15	.10*

Religious importance	-.02	.03	-.03
Attitude	.29	.07	.22***
Subjective norm	.17	.08	.13*
PBC	.49	.08	.34***
Moral norm	.29	.04	.30***

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

*Note.* PBC = Perceived behavioural control.