

Research questions bridging volunteering and leisure

Geoff Nichols, Sheffield University
Management School

G.nichols@sheffield.ac.uk

- **How do changes in society affect volunteering and leisure?**
 - **A more individualist society**
 - **Changes in social inequality**
 - **Changes in social values – a marketization**
 - **A changed relationship between the public and voluntary sectors**
- **How is managing volunteers different**
- **What is, or might be the role of leisure and volunteering in future society?**

A more individualist society – reflected in sport and volunteering

- a declining proportion of adults participating in sport in sport clubs and gyms –increasing participation is in running and cycling
- The rise of micro-volunteering.
- How do organisations respond if they want to encourage participation in either?
- Go with the flow? Or encourage longer and stronger commitment?

Changes in social inequality

- More unequal societies have lower levels of sports participation and volunteering. The Nordic countries are high on both. [analysis by Veal]
- What's the connection?
 - Is it the opportunity cost of time?
 - Or the amount of public services / market intervention?
- How does this change if societies become more unequal?

What's the link?

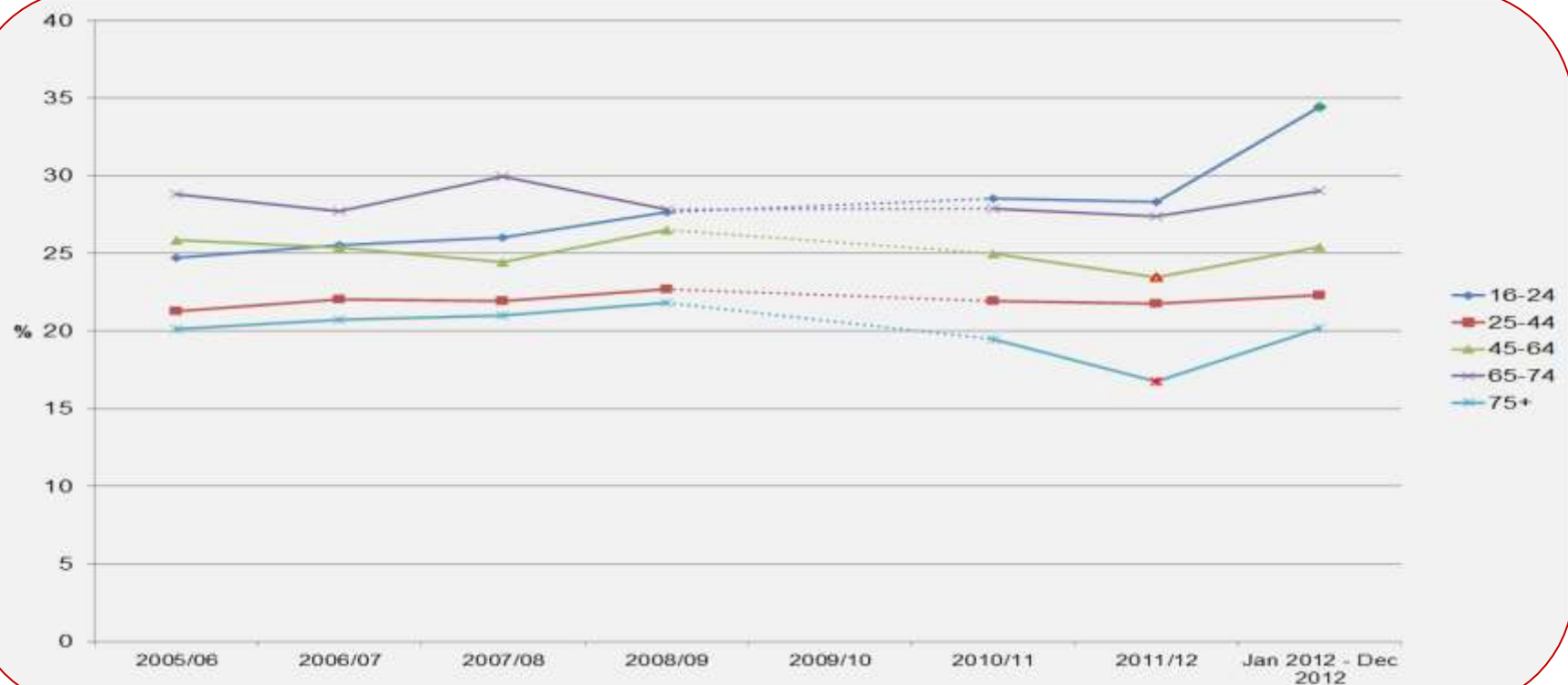
- Time is a more valuable commodity in a more competitive society?
- More equal societies have more public services – so more leisure facilities
- Volunteering is more strongly related to GDP
- More inequality = less trust
- How is the relationship changing over time?
- Participation is linked to social class

Is a marketization of social values changing the social construction of volunteering and leisure?

- Sandel's (2012) assertion that social relations become market relations
- Does a balance of altruism and self-interest in volunteering change by generation?
- Do we need to understand the volunteering experiences of generations differently?

Differences in volunteering rates by age

Percentage of adults volunteering at least once in last 12 months
by age group, England *Source: Taking Part - in DCMS (2013) p.29*



Changed values

- Are values actually changing – so the social construction of volunteering is moving away from defined by altruism towards a market exchange without a wage?
- How do volunteering organisations react?
- Is the social construction of leisure similarly moving to an experience to be bought, sold and consumed – rather than intrinsically valuable?

A changed relationship between the public and voluntary sectors

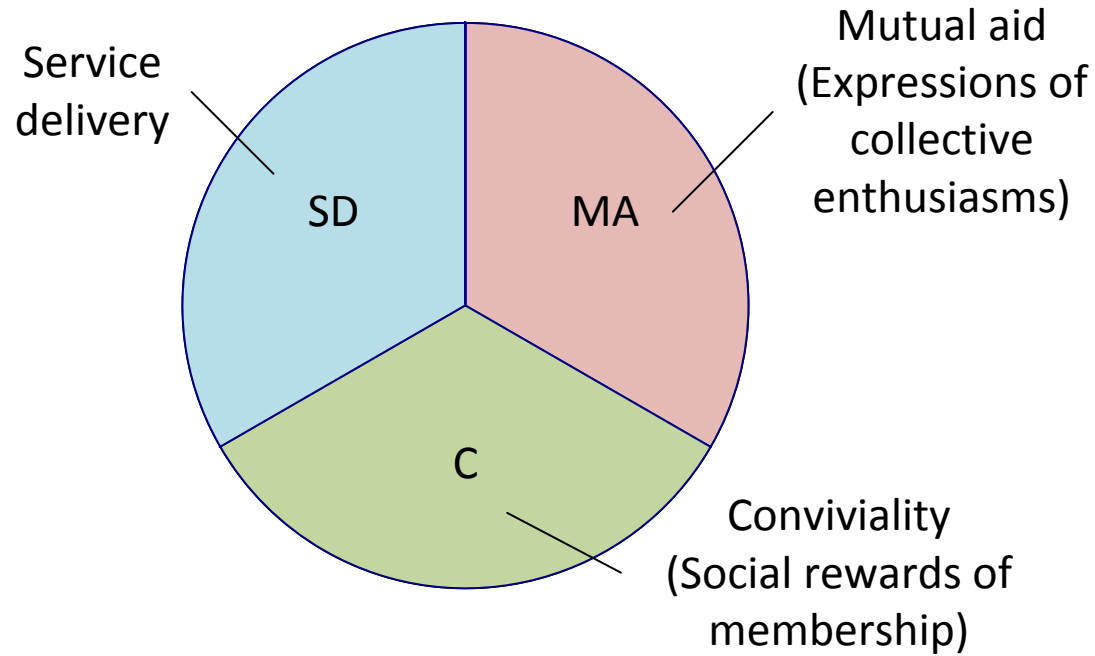
- Is a balance between voluntary sector independence and state support with conditions changing?
- Can the voluntary sector expand to balance cuts in public expenditure?
 - Implications?

Is managing volunteers different to managing employees?

- A different balance of the functions of:-
 - Service delivery (as private sector)
 - Mutual aid
 - Convivialityso different management is required.



The
University
Of
Sheffield.



What is the role of leisure and volunteering in a 'better' society?

- What is a better society?
- How do we get there?
 - Keynes vision – why didn't we get there?
- What can LSA, VSSN and VAHS add to the debate?

Discussion

- How do these research questions link volunteering and leisure?
- Are they the right ones?
- How can they be developed?