Schools for Democracy? The Relationship between Nonprofit Volunteering and Direct Public Participation

ABSTRACT

This paper explores the effects of volunteering in nonprofit organizations on direct forms of public participation, such as attending public meetings, signing petitions, and protesting. The paper hypothesizes and tests that through volunteering in nonprofits, individuals may become engaged and democratic citizens, which in turn increases the likelihood of their participation in administrative and political processes. I propose that the extant testing of this relationship suffers from an endogeneity problem, which I counter with the instrumental variable technique. The results of the analyses suggest that individuals' volunteering in nonprofits increases participation in public meetings, but does not affect their likelihood of protesting and petition signing. The findings from the study have implications for how we think about democratic public administration, nonprofit organizations, and public participation.

INTRODUCTION

As Tocqueville (1945, 59) noted long ago, citizens are the "cause and aim of all things" of the government. Thus, achieving public purposes and meeting the needs of citizens should be key goals for public policy and administration (Lynn, Heinrich, and Hill 2000), and public participation plays a key role in meeting those goals (Fung 2006). In recent times, however, observers have noted decreases in public participation in politics, in attendance at public meetings, and in trust in the government (Fountain 2001; Macleod 2005). Scholars assert that these are signs of citizenship and democratic deficits, which refer respectively to the erosion of civic engagement, and the growing gap between citizen opinions and policy/political decisions (Nabatchi 2010; see also Bevir 2006). To enhance democratic values in public administration (Nabatchi 2010), or to achieve a "democratic public administration" (Brugue´ and Gallego 2003) it is critical to addressing these deficits by increasing public participation in political processes.

Nonprofit organizations can play an important part in boosting public participation, particularly given their roles as schools for democracy (Putnam 1995a; 1995b; Tocqueville 1945). These organizations operate diverse community programs, providing individuals with volunteering opportunities. Such opportunities typically require volunteers to interact with others and to be engaged in community service, which can improve civic dispositions and restore social connectedness (Rahn and Transue 1998). In turn, this may enhance public participation in political processes, and ultimately ameliorate the citizenship and democratic deficits. Following this line of reasoning, this paper focuses on individuals' volunteering in nonprofits that allow for engagement in

community service (e.g., social service, religious, youth, and arts and culture organizations), and investigates its effects on political participation that are aimed at influencing public administration and policy (attending public meetings, signing petitions, and protesting). By doing so, it contributes to our understanding of roles of nonprofits in enhancing democracy in public administration and addressing citizenship and democratic deficits, by providing individuals with volunteering opportunities to be involved in public governance.

Beyond advancing our knowledge on topics such as democratic public administration, nonprofit organizations, and public participation, this paper makes both theoretical and methodological contributions. Theoretically, this study empirically examines the long-held notion that nonprofit organizations act as schools for democracy (e.g., Tocqueville 1945; Putnam 1995a, 1995b). In doing so, this study focuses on important forms of political participation that frequently occur in an administrative arena – the venues through which citizens express their opinions to influence policy and administrative outcomes. This differs from most previous research in this area that deals with voting and other political participation that indirectly affect selection of policy-makers (Bevelander and Pendakur 2009). Moreover, although some have investigated the effect of civic skills and/or social connections on public participation (Newton 1997; McClurg 2003), little empirical research examines the direct relationship between volunteering in nonprofits and public participation. In part, this may be attributable to the challenge of dealing with endogeneity in conducting such analyses, which is often an issue in estimating the causes and/or consequences of volunteering and public

participation (Brooks and Lewis 2001, 766; see also Taniguchi and Marshall 2016). Thus, the methodological contribution of the paper is the use of an instrumental variable method to address the endogeneity problem, which produces a more robust set of findings on the effects of volunteering on participation in public meetings, petitions, and protests.

This paper proceeds as follows. First, the paper briefly defines the concept of public participation and distinguishes participation in nonprofits from participation in political processes. The three forms of political participation examined in this paper – attending public meetings, signing petitions, and protesting – are also explained, focusing on how these types of participation are related to public administration. Second, the paper presents theories on nonprofits as schools for democracy, and illustrates how individuals' volunteering in nonprofit organizations may increase their political participation. It then briefly reviews previous studies on this topic and argues that the analysis of this relationship likely suffers from endogeneity. The paper explains the empirical strategy used to account for the endogeneity issue, and describes the data, measures, and models. The results are presented in the following section, and the paper concludes with a discussion of implications.

THEORIES ON PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN NONPROFITS AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Public participation is an extremely broad concept that includes a variety of activities (Adler and Goggin 2005). Accordingly, it can be broadly defined as "an

umbrella term that describes the activities by which people's concerns, needs, interests, and values are incorporated into decisions and actions on public matters and issues" (Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015, 14). These activities may include, but are not limited to, participation in nonprofit organizations and political participation. Although both forms of participation may fall under the umbrella of public participation, they are conceptually distinct.

First, participation in nonprofit organizations is associated with "community service," which can be defined as "voluntary service to one's local community, either by an individual acting independently or as a participant in a group" (Adler and Goggin 2005, 238). This is particularly true given that nonprofit organizations often provide individuals with opportunities to volunteer for charitable and community-benefiting activities. Though participation in nonprofits may take forms other than volunteering, such as donating money, serving on the board, joining as a member, or following through online social media, these other forms do not always take place at the community level and are not necessarily related to community service. Given that the community connection is a key element in nonprofits' contributions to democratic public administration (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000), this paper views "nonprofit volunteering" as a primary indicator of participation in nonprofits.

Second, political participation represents "conventional and unconventional activities specifically undertaken to influence political decision-making in the formal arena" (O'Neill 2006, 5), such as voting, joining political rallies, attending public hearings or meetings, signing petitions, and participating in protests, among others

(Adams 2004; Dalton 2008; Stewart, Cuddy, and Silongan 2013). These activities have "the intent or effect of influencing government action – either *directly* by affecting the making or implementation of public policy or *indirectly* by influencing the selection of people who make those policies" (Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995, 38). Among various political activities of citizens, this paper focuses on direct forms of participation that seek to influence policy making and implementation (i.e., attending public meetings, signing petitions, and protesting), rather than indirect participation that affect the selection of policy-makers and political representatives (i.e., voting and attending campaign rallies).

Despite some differences[1], the three direct forms of political participation (public meetings, signing petitions, and protesting) examined in this study often take place in administrative settings, and thus have potential consequences for public administration and policy. In fact, while scholars have developed different theoretical models of policy processes (Lineberry 1978, 48-61), the three forms of direct political participation explored in this study are strongly associated with the democratic model of policy processes. Specifically, the democratic model emphasizes the role of public policies as mechanisms through which citizens' needs and concerns are addressed (DeLeon and DeLeon 2002; Fung 2015; Jones 1984, 34). This perspective on policymaking is closely related to democratic political theories. For example, in *A Preface to Democratic Theory*, Dahl (1956, 137) writes, "All the active and legitimate groups in the population can make themselves heard at some crucial stages in the process of making decisions" in the democratic political system. Needless to say, public participation is necessary throughout

the stages of policy making and implementation in democratic governance.

Bevir (2006) asserts that democratic practices in public administration and policy involve three main stages: public debate, legislative decision, and implementation. First, the public debate stage involves agenda-setting, that is, the elevation of certain social problems to the agenda of policy makers, often in response to public debate and media attention. At this stage, public participation often occurs through organized civic groups that make efforts to increase the salience of a particular issue by conducting protests or petitions. In addition to joining protests or signing petitions, individuals can also attend public meetings to speak on a public issue early in the policy process, before decisions on how to address the issue are made (Adams 2004). Second, such participatory activities not only have an impact on the emergence of policy proposals at the public debate stage, but also affect the legislative decision as to whether enact or reject them at the next stage. Lastly, the implementation stage is also subject to public participation, as soliciting feedback from the public for implementing policy actions is a legal requirement in many cases (Nabatchi and Amsler 2014). One of the most common ways for public managers to get public input is to hold public meetings or hearings (Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015), where citizens can criticize or support certain government actions (Adams 2004). Attending these meetings enables citizens to be directly involved in administrative decision-making processes. Citizens can also sign a petition or attend protests to affect policy implementation decisions, just as what they can do in other stages of policy processes.

In sum, citizens in a democratic society are provided with various opportunities

to be engaged in policy and administrative processes. Public meetings, petitions, and protests serve as venues for citizens to have a say in these processes. Theory suggests that higher levels of political participation in these venues enable public officials to produce public policies and services that better align with the public will, which in turn help reduce citizenship and democratic deficits (Nabatchi 2010). This paper argues that one way to increase political participation is to encourage nonprofit volunteering at the community level. The following section theoretically illustrates the relationship between nonprofit volunteering and political participation, focusing on the role of nonprofits as schools for democracy.

THE EFFECTS OF NONPROFIT VOLUNTEERING ON PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The Role of Nonprofits: Schools for Democracy

Nonprofit organizations serve a variety of roles in a society, including: (1) delivering services, (2) enabling individuals to express personal values and beliefs, (3) developing social capital and contributing to community building, (4) facilitating citizen engagement, (5) advocating certain political interests, and (6) promoting social entrepreneurship (Frumkin 2005; Moulton and Eckerd 2012; see also Snavely and Desai 2001). These roles closely align with the main impulses in the nonprofit sector: commercialism (selling goods and services for generating income), professionalism (hiring paid professionals rather than relying on volunteers), civic activism (mobilizing and organizing citizens to address social problems), and volunteerism (promoting

individuals' voluntary engagement to achieve common goals). Scholars point out that commercialism and professionalism have been influential forces in nonprofit operations (Maier, Mayer, and Steinbereithner 2016; see also Eikenberry and Kluver 2004; Eikenberry 2009), particularly as nonprofits have endeavored to build reliable revenue sources to survive. In turn, nonprofits have focused heavily on producing tangible outputs and promoting the efficiency of service delivery and program management to meet donor requirements. Doing so has undermined the sector's civic activism and volunteerism forces (Eikenberry and Kluver 2004), as nonprofits have paid less attention to engage volunteers from communities. This is problematic, given nonprofits' important roles in boosting civil society and reinvigorating democratic values in public administration (Eikenberry and Kluver 2004).

Of nonprofits' main roles identified above, community building and citizen engagement are highly relevant from the democratic perspective (Moulton and Eckerd 2012, 663-664). A primary method through which nonprofits serve these roles is *volunteering*, which provides individuals with opportunities to connect with one another, and therefore has a positive impact on community building (Eikenberry 2009; Putnam 1995a; 1995b). Specifically, through nonprofit volunteering, citizens interact with other community members, and establish a sense of solidarity, reciprocity, and mutual trust within the larger community. This encourages them to more often care about others, communicate with others, and cooperate with others to address community problems (Bryce 2006; Frumkin 2005; Putnam 1995a; 1995b). For example, using cases of two environmental nonprofit organizations, Dodge and Ospina (2016) argue that nonprofits

conduct "relational" practices, where individuals develop leadership, learn how to negotiate different interests, and cultivate tolerance for diverse opinions while building relationships with other participants[2]. As Frumkin (2005, 29) puts it, "Nonprofit and voluntary activity, as an antidote to atomistic individualism, brings people out of their isolation and puts them in touch with others who share their concerns and interests." In short, nonprofits serve as a space where people participate in repeated encounters in a community (Anheier 2009, 1086), thereby strengthening individuals' sense of community and citizenship.

Given their contribution to the development of social connectedness, nonprofit organizations are lauded as schools for democracy (Tocqueville 1945; Putnam 1995a). Key theoretical assumptions are that nonprofits not only build a sense of community and trust among individuals, but also motivate them to become more active in processes of political decision-making. In this sense, nonprofit organizations act as mediating institutions between citizens and government (cf. Chen and Lee 2015; LeRoux 2007), thus bringing citizens into public administration and policy. According to the theoretical perspectives in the New Public Service (Denhardt and Denhardt 2000), creating and sustaining community is critical in democratic public administration, and such efforts rely on developing active sets of mediating institutions – an argument that clearly echoes the idea of nonprofits serving as schools for democracy. Based on the two functions of nonprofit organizations outlined here – community building and citizen engagement, the following section articulates why and how nonprofit volunteering is theorized to increase individuals' political participation.

Nonprofit Volunteering and Political Participation: Theoretical Mechanisms

Nonprofits frequently look for volunteers, and people can become involved in these volunteering opportunities in their communities. This is particularly true for public charities (i.e., 501(c)(3) entities) – such as social service, religious, youth, and arts and culture organizations – that frequently recruit volunteers to help with the delivery of their services in communities (Bowman 2009). Volunteering in such programs engenders several individual-level benefits, including the development of the qualities of both democratic citizens and engaged citizens.

First, individuals develop qualities of democratic citizens through their nonprofit volunteering experiences. Specifically, by participating in the provision of services and addressing community problems, individuals become empowered (Cohen 2009), expand their commitment to society (Lie, Baines, and Wheelock 2009), develop a sense of self-efficacy (Wilson and Musick 1999), and learn decision-making skills on critical issues of public importance (Crean 2012). These theoretical arguments can be traced at least as far back as philosopher John Stuart Mill (1960, 164), who argued that through the voluntary action, individuals receive "mental education, which is a mode of strengthening their active faculties, exercising their judgment, and giving them a familiar knowledge of the subject with which they are thus left to deal."

Second, individuals interact with one another through their nonprofit volunteering activities, which promotes social connectedness, mutual trust, reciprocity, and a sense of community (Putnam 1995a; Wollebæk and Selle 2002). People also become naturally exposed to political and social issues in their daily lives as they

communicate with others in the community and exchange ideas about how to solve problems of public importance. In this sense, when individuals take part in nonprofit volunteering, they become "engaged citizens" (Dalton 2008) who are active in ways that go beyond their citizenship duties (e.g., voting, paying taxes, or reporting crimes). Together, cultivation of qualities reflecting both democratic and engaged citizens again highlights nonprofit organizations' roles as schools for democracy.

Given the theoretical arguments above, the logic behind the claim that nonprofit volunteering increases political participation is easy to see. First, citizens with higher levels of empowerment, self-efficacy, and decision-making skills seek to obtain policy outputs and public services that better resonate with their interests (Frederickson 1996, 265; King, Felty, and Susel 1998). Second, citizens who have developed a strong social commitment and a sense of reciprocity toward fellow citizens want to create a better society and improve social conditions for themselves and for others (Walker 2009). In both cases, citizens become more interested in and involved in political processes, because public policies are the primary means to achieve their goals (Putnam, Leonardi, and Nanetti 1994, 182). In turn, a politically active citizenry may result in closing the gap between citizen opinions and policy decisions, which would contribute to addressing democratic deficits in public administration (Nabatchi 2010). In short, individuals are more likely to participate in political processes when they volunteer for community activities through nonprofit organizations.

The relationship between nonprofit volunteering and political participation hypothesized above is particularly true for participatory activities that aim *directly* to

influence policy and administrative processes (rather than indirect participatory forms through politicians). Assuming that "risk-averse, resource-dependent and media-conscious politicians" shift responsibilities of dealing with civic debate on public issues to the work of bureaucracy (Nabatchi 2010, 379), citizens are likely to become more interested in and involved in political activities related to administrative arenas, where key political agendas are formulated and appropriate policy actions are implemented. As these forms of political participation are predicated upon one's interest in social issues and civic dispositions (Brewer 2003; Huckfeldt 1979; McClurg 2003), the link between nonprofit volunteering and political participation holds across attending public meetings, signing petitions, or protesting. Uninterested citizens often do not know what is happening in their communities, and in this case, they are less likely to participate in any of these activities. Furthermore, a variety of civic dispositions, such as commitment to society, reciprocity, and solidarity, as well as higher levels of empowerment and self-efficacy can also be positively related to individuals' likelihood of participating in all three types of direct political participation occurring at the administrative arenas. Hence, this paper hypothesizes that *nonprofit volunteering promotes direct forms of political participation that seek to influence public administration and policy (i.e., attending public meetings, signing petitions, and protesting).*

Although this hypothesis is not entirely new, empirical testing has been both scant and methodologically challenged. On the one hand, little empirical research has directly analyzed the relationship between nonprofit volunteering and political participation. Instead, most research on political participation has investigated general

associations among social connectedness and/or social capital, public participation, and democracy (e.g., McClurg 2003; Newton 1997; Wollebæk and Selle 2002). For instance, McClurg (2003) finds that social interaction among community members has a significant impact on individual participation in electoral activities. Other studies contend that social connectedness and political participation are positively associated (e.g., Newton 1997; Putnam 1995a).

On the other hand, the few empirical studies that examine the relationship between nonprofit volunteering and political participation suffer from methodological challenges, most notably endogeneity. For example, both Jeong (2013) and Van Der Meer and Van Ingen (2009) find relationships between individual participation in nonprofit organizations (including volunteering) and political participation; however, both studies employ standard analyses (OLS and/or logistic regressions), which cannot account for endogeneity issues. In essence, the potential endogeneity problem stems from the fact that a variety of civic dispositions – an individual's level of commitment to the community, connectedness with other community members, sense of empowerment and efficacy, and interest in social issues, among others – may determine both her/his nonprofit volunteering and her/his political participation. As Van Der Meer and Van Ingen (2009, 282) write, "Certain personality traits stimulate citizens to join voluntary actions and engage in political activities at the same time, without a causal relation between the two." Thus, examining the claim that nonprofits serve as schools for democracy is difficult because it is unclear whether nonprofit organizations *train* individuals as democratic and engaged citizens, or whether individuals *self-select* into pools of civically

active groups who participate in politics and voluntary actions (Van Der Meer and Van Ingen 2009). Therefore, addressing the endogeneity problem is important for testing the relationship between nonprofit volunteering and political participation. The following section explains the methods used in this paper to test the hypothesis and address the endogeneity problem.

METHODS

Empirical Strategy

To address the endogeneity problem that the explanatory variable (nonprofit volunteering) and dependent variable (political participation) might be jointly determined, this paper employs two-stage regression using an instrumental variable approach[3]. The instrumental variable method is advantageous in that it can mimic the randomized controlled approach (Stel et al. 2013), thereby allowing for causal estimation. Two key assumptions should be met to use this method. First, an instrumental variable should predict the variations in the explanatory variable or ensure that "the covariation between the explanatory variable and the instrument should differ from zero" (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin, 1996, 445). Second, an instrument should affect the outcome variable solely through its effect on the explanatory variable, which means that "the correlation between the instrument and the error term of the outcome variable should be equal to zero" (Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996, 445).

In the context of this study, an instrumental variable that can meet these two conditions is *the presence of state-level policies that make community service a*

requirement or a credit towards high school graduation. First, these types of policies can directly and positively affect individuals' nonprofit volunteering. Previous research in the fields of psychology and education has found a significant relationship between community service requirements and volunteering activities in adults (Hart et al. 2007). People tend to volunteer more for nonprofits in their communities when they are provided with more opportunities for volunteering during their school years; the underlying assumption is that through opportunities for community service, students obtain civic norms and knowledge (Hart et al. 2007, 200), which may last into adulthood and continue motivating them to volunteer with nonprofit organizations. Recent findings from public management and political science research have also provided similar evidences on relationship between skill development during school years and civic behaviors in adulthood (Holbein 2017), as well as the effect of community service activities on the promotion of individuals' prosocial and civic behaviors (Holt 2019).

Second, the existence of these state-level policies does not directly affect individuals' political participation. The adoption of community service policies is a state level decision, which does not relate to individual-level characteristics (such as their levels of civic dispositions, awareness about social issues, interests in politics, and so forth). In other words, the adoption of these policies is "random" enough to be considered as exogenous to political participation. This instrument, therefore, largely rules out the alternative explanation – that different individuals' differing levels of civic dispositions, interests in social issues, and commitment to society may jointly determine nonprofit volunteering and political participation.

Data and Variables

This study uses the 2006 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey (SCCB Survey) dataset for the analyses. The SCCB Survey includes variables measuring nonprofit volunteering and political participation, along with individual-level characteristics that can be used as control variables. The John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University conducted the SCCB Survey, and the resulting dataset is available at the Roper Center for Public Opinion Research at the Cornell University. The 2006 dataset consists of a nationwide sample of 12,100 individuals who were selected using the random-digit-dial survey method (Roper Center 2009, 8). As the state-level community service policies were first initiated in the early 1990s, the sample includes 1,039 individuals who completed high school after 1990. Due to missing responses in survey questions used to construct nonprofit volunteering variable, the final analytic sample is 744.[4]

<<< Insert Table 1 about here>>>

Table 1 presents summary statistics of all variables used in the analysis. First, individuals' *nonprofit volunteering* was measured with four survey questions that ask respondents about their involvement during the past 12 months in four types of organizations: (1) religious organizations (other than the place of worship), (2) charities, (3) youth organizations, and (4) arts or musical organizations. These types of organizations are selected because they do not directly conduct political activities and are

classified as 501(c)(3) public charities according to the National Taxonomy of Exempt Entities codes. Responses to these questions are binary, with "0" referring to "No" and "1" referring to "Yes." This paper uses an additive index based on individual responses to these four survey questions.

Second, each of the three forms of *political participation* is measured using individual SCCB Survey questions. Specifically, the Survey includes the following questions:

- "How many times have you attended any *public meetings* in the past 12 months?" The measure for attendance at public meetings ranges from 0 to 60.
- "Have you signed in a *petition* in the past 12 months?" The measure for signing a petition is binary, with 0=No and 1=Yes.
- "Have you participated in [*protests*, such as] demonstrations, boycotts, or marches in past 12 months?" The measure for protesting is binary, with 0=No and 1=Yes.

Third, several control variables are included in the models: (1) *gender* (1=female, 0=male), (2) *racial minority* (1=Non-Whites and Hispanics, 0=Whites), (3) *education level* (1=less than high school, 2=High school diploma, 3=Some college, 4=Associate degree or specialized technical training, 5=Bachelor's degree, 6=Some graduate training, and 7=graduate or professional degree), (4) *household income* (1=$20,000 or less, 2=over $20,000 but less than $30,000, 3=over $30,000 but less than $50,000, 4=over $50,000 but less than $75,000, 5=over $75,000 but less than $100,000 and 6=$100,000 or more), (5) the number of *children* in the household, (6) two dummies for *political party*

identification; one for Democrats, and another for Republicans, (7) frequency of talking to or visiting with neighbors, which serves as a proxy for *social connectedness* (1=never, 2=once a year or less, 3=several times a year, 4=once a month, 5=several times a month, 6=several times a week, 7= just about every day), and (8) level of *social trust* (responses to the question, "would you say that most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful in dealing with people?"; 0=can't be too careful, 1=depends, 2=people can be trusted).

As noted above, the instrumental variable used in this analysis is whether the state in which a respondent resided during her or his secondary school years had policies requiring community service or learning credit for graduation. The information about state policies is obtained from the Education Commission of the States and a Google search. The states with such policies include: Arizona, Arkansas, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Maryland, Nevada, and Rhode Island, as well as the District of Columbia. It is worth noting that there is a possibility of individuals moving into the state of residence after graduating from high school (and thus not being affected by the current state's policy). Therefore, individuals who might have completed their high school in the current state of residence are identified using the respondent's age and the number of years the respondent has lived in the current community. After then, based on the year the state-level policy was adopted, respondents who were in high school after the policy adopted were coded as 1, and other individuals were coded as 0.

Analysis

A total of six models are used in the analysis, including two for each of the three types of participation, one with the instrumental variable and one without the instrumental variable. Specifically, Poisson regression and IV Poisson regression models are employed for the analysis of public meetings, since the variable is a count measure, and probit and IV probit models are used for the analysis of both petition signing and protesting. The purpose of running standard and IV models for each of the three forms of political participation is to determine whether there are differences between the results with and without the instrument. In addition, first-stage regression results (presented in Appendix 1) and the first-stage F-statistics (discussed in the Results section) are used to check the relevance and strength of the instrument. As additional robustness checks, I have run control functions tests and linear IV regression models; these results are available in Appendices 2 and 3, respectively. All models include the same set of control variables (gender, racial minority, education level, household income, number of children, party identification, social connectedness, and social trust). Finally, all models are estimated using robust standard errors.

RESULTS

<<<Insert Table 2 about here>>>

Table 2 shows the results from the Poisson regression and probit models without the instrument. In these models, nonprofit volunteering is positively and significantly

associated with all three forms of political participation. That is, all other things being equal, people who engage in nonprofit volunteering are more likely to attend public meetings, sign a petition, and protest. The results resonate with the theoretical arguments on civic engagement in voluntary associations and democracy (cf. Putnam 1995a; 1995b; Tocqueville 1945), as well as with findings from previous empirical studies (e.g., Jeong 2013). The effects of control variables are generally as expected. Other things being equal, females and Republicans are less likely to attend public meetings, and those with higher education levels are more likely to attend public meetings. Moreover, racial minorities and those with more number of children are less likely to sign a petition, while Democrats are more likely to sign a petition than Independents. Lastly, racial minorities are more likely to engage in protests, and those with higher household income and women are less likely to protest.

Given endogeneity issues, however, these results may be inaccurate. Thus, the paper also presents a series of models that include the instrument (using the IV Poisson and IV Probit estimators) to account for endogeneity.

<<<Insert Table 3 about here>>>

The results from models with the instrument are shown in Table 3. It is worth noting that the first-stage F-statistic is 10.1, which meets a common threshold of 10, and that the instrument is statistically significant in the first-stage model (presented in Appendix 1). This may indicate that the models do not suffer from a weak instrument

problem (i.e., a weak correlation between the instrument and the endogenous regressor). Moreover, the results from control functions tests (presented in Appendix 2) show that the residuals from the first-stage regressions are not statistically significant in all second stage models, which may suggest that the instrument is exogenous.

Once instrumented, the impact of nonprofit volunteering on signing a petition and protesting becomes insignificant; the effect, however, is still significant for attendance at the public meetings. In other words, for those who were affected by policies requiring or encouraging community service during secondary schools, nonprofits volunteering increases their participation in public meetings. Nonprofit volunteering, however, does not seem to motivate citizens to sign petitions or get involved in protests. There are a few changes in the results on the control variables with the instrument. First, education level becomes significant in the petition signing model. Second, several variables become insignificant after being instrumented, including racial minorities and number of children in the petition signing model, and gender in the protest model.

DISCUSSION: NONPROFITS AND DEMOCRATIC PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

The two sets of models (i.e., the models with and without the instrument) produce different results, which suggests that endogeneity concerns in testing the relationship between nonprofit volunteering and political participation are reasonable. Thus, the findings from the models with the instrument can be regarded as more robust than those from models without the instrument. The results from the instrumented models

indicate that individuals who engage in nonprofit volunteering are more likely to attend public meetings. Nonprofit volunteering, however, does not increase petition signing or protesting.

These results make sense if one considers the differences across the three forms of political participation. First, protests are often confrontational and aggressive (e.g., Caren, Ghosal, and Ribas 2011, 126), and thus perhaps less appealing (Yang and Callahan 2007; Walker 2010) to those who have higher levels of social connectedness and mutual trust developed through nonprofit volunteering. Second, petition signing is more like an individual activity (Caren, Ghosal, and Ribas 2011, 127) and decisions about signing a particular petition might be driven by individuals' specific interests in a certain public issue. Therefore, developing the qualities of "engaged citizens" – a greater sense of self-efficacy, empowerment, commitment to society, and interests in community and social issues through nonprofit volunteering – may not significantly matter for individuals' likelihood of petition signing.

At public meetings, however, citizens can get information about, and express opinions on, an issue of interest directly from and to public officials. Therefore, public meetings often attract citizens who are concerned about potential risks from a public issue and/or who are curious about community affairs (Adams 2004; McComas, Besley, and Trumbo 2006). In this sense, the pathway from nonprofit volunteering (where individuals' civic dispositions can be nurtured) to attending public meetings (where individuals have a direct voice in policy and administrative decision-making processes) seems quite plausible. Future research may need to further investigate how nonprofit

volunteering differently affect individuals' participation in different forms of political participation.

These findings yield several implications for the fields of public administration and nonprofit studies, particularly in terms of nonprofits' roles in achieving democratic values in public administration. First, this study provides some support to the argument that nonprofit organizations serve as schools for democracy, and accordingly may contribute to democratic public administration. Nonprofit volunteering opportunities can attract individuals into the community, where participants are supposed to be naturally trained as democratic citizens (Frumkin 2005). Individuals become empowered, are provided with opportunities to express their opinions and interests, and learn skills to critically evaluate policy problems, throughout their engagement in nonprofit organizations (Dodge and Ospina 2016). Ultimately these individuals are more likely to attend public meetings to influence public decision-making processes. In this sense, nonprofit organizations can play a critical role in supplying public administration with "talented, committed, and civically engaged individuals" (Nesbit and Brudney 2010, S112). Yet, volunteerism and civic activism in nonprofit organizations have been undermined in recent decades (Eikenberry and Kluver 2004; Eikenberry 2009; Maier, Meyer, and Steinbereithner 2016), which is detrimental to democratic public administration. Therefore, public managers should help revitalize nonprofits' civic activism and volunteerism forces (Eikenberry and Kluver 2004), and need to think of nonprofits as vehicles for engendering a sense of community and restoring government-citizen relationship (cf. Denhardt and Denhardt 2000; Feldman and Khademian 2007). In

short, nonprofits should be viewed as vehicles for democracy, beyond their role as a partner for service provision based on the hollow state and privatization trends.

Second, on a related note, the study suggests that nonprofit organizations – particularly the ones that offer charitable and public benefiting volunteering opportunities – might help address citizenship and democratic deficits in public administration, namely the erosion of civic virtues and the failure of public institutions in implementing policy actions that resonate with public interests. Such deficits have exacerbated one another in a vicious circle, which significantly threatens democracy of public administration. Nabatchi (2010, 379) writes,

> "As *citizens withdraw from political activities, their preferences are less known, and therefore, less well reflected in public policy decisions. In turn, as more policy decisions poorly manifest public preferences, citizens further withdraw from political activity. The threat is that as citizens withdraw support from government, the legitimacy of the democratic regime is called into question."*

To address these deficits and to enhance democracy in public administration, we should seek to bring citizens back into public governance (Fung 2015). Nonprofit organizations can be an important venue for doing so, as supported by the findings from this study. Specifically, these organizations may first bring citizens back into communities – through charitable and apolitical volunteering that may also work for those who have turned back from politics – and then may engender civic dispositions among the individuals who participate in community activities. These individuals then become more politically active, and are more likely to attend public meetings to express their opinions on public

issues. This again shows nonprofits' potential role as mediating institutions between citizens and government (LeRoux 2007), which addresses citizenship and democratic deficits. In other words, the study provides some support to the role of nonprofit organizations in promoting democratic public administration.

Lastly, the study suggests that one way to increase attendance at public meetings is to encourage individuals to engage in more nonprofit volunteering. State-level initiatives on community service, which were used as an instrument in this study, could serve as a policy intervention for attaining the goals (see Hart et al. 1998). The findings are of particular importance given a low level of public participation in public meetings (McComas, Besley, and Trumbo 2006). Public meetings are the most common form of direct public engagement in administrative decision-making processes (Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015), which are frequently used by public organizations to meet legal requirements, to garner public support for policy decisions, and to incorporate diverse citizen opinions (McComas 2001; Rhinard 2002, 191). Ensuring individuals' participation in public meetings is important for citizens who want to give direct inputs in policy proposals, as well as for public administrators who seek to make decisions that are legitimate and accountable to the citizenry (see Adams 2004). As such, the main finding from this study – that nonprofit volunteering has a positive effect on attendance at public meetings – provides insights on how to achieve key values of democratic public administration and management.

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the effect of nonprofit volunteering on three forms of political participation aimed at affecting policy and administrative outcomes (attending public meetings, signing a petition, and protesting). The findings here address the problem of endogeneity, which has been largely ignored in previous studies. Indeed, the differences in the results on two forms of participation – petition signing and protesting – from the models with and without the instrument suggest that the failure to account for endogeneity may result in the incorrect conclusion that volunteering in nonprofits increases all types of political participation. As indicated by the results from the models with the instrument, attendance at public meetings is promoted by nonprofit volunteering, while the effect on protesting and signing petitions fades away. That being said, the finding that nonprofit volunteering increases the likelihood of attending public meetings is promising, given the importance of this type of participation as the most common form of direct participation in public administration (see Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015).

This study also offers several agendas for future research. First, this paper specifically focuses on public meetings, petition signing, and protesting. Future studies may need to expand testing of the effects of nonprofit volunteering on other types of public participation, including public deliberation, contacting public officials, and e-participation (e.g., submitting comments online, completing online surveys, indicating preferences on social media, etc.), among others. Second, given that nonprofit organizations significantly vary in terms of their missions, domains, and subsectors, future research could examine how different types of nonprofit organizations may differently affect individuals' involvement in political and administrative arenas. Lastly,

the paper uses a cross-sectional data that includes questions on individuals' volunteering and political participation during the past year. Thus, it would be interesting to investigate how individuals' nonprofit volunteering over time (or volunteering that have been done a few years ago) can shape their current political engagement. Using longitudinal data is necessary in examining such dynamic relationships.

When people actively volunteer for nonprofits, they are more likely to put efforts in fulfilling civic duties by attending public meetings. This suggests that individuals may be acting more as "full time citizens" than as "taxpayers, spectators, or occasional voters" who are engaged actively in public administration and policy (Adler and Goggin 2005, 236, citing President George W. Bush's address at the Ohio State University 2002). Moreover, it provides support for a theoretical argument that nonprofit organizations act as a school for democracy (Tocqueville 1945; Putnam 1995a; Frumkin 2005), which offers a different view of nonprofit organizations. Specifically, it shows that in addition to providing social services that benefit the public, nonprofits also contribute to society as institutions for promoting democratic public administration. Since representative democracy and bureaucracy work best when they reflect the public's voice as closely as possible, a decrease in political participation is problematic – it can undermine legitimacy and accountability of public administration and management. This problem is already present, given the occurrence of citizenship and democratic deficits (i.e., erosion of civic dispositions and the disconnection between policy actions and public opinions) in public administration (Nabatchi 2010). For our public administration systems to function better and to address such deficits, we must promote public participation. The findings here

suggest that encouraging individuals to volunteer with nonprofit organizations, which boosts attendance at public meetings, could be one way to do just that.

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Tables

Table 1: Summary Statistics

Variable	Obs	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Nonprofit volunteering	744	0.989	1.101	0	4
Community service policy	744	0.129	0.335	0	1
Public meetings	744	2.625	7.732	0	60
Petition	744	0.335	0.472	0	1
Protest	744	0.101	0.301	0	1
Income	744	3.183	1.502	1	6
Racial minority	744	0.374	0.484	0	1
Gender	744	0.575	0.495	0	1
Education level	744	3.305	1.644	1	7
Number of kids	744	1.013	1.247	0	12
Democrats	744	0.294	0.456	0	1
Republicans	744	0.243	0.429	0	1
Social connectedness	744	4.715	1.953	1	7
Social trust	744	0.786	0.953	0	2

Table 2:

The Relationship between Nonprofit Volunteering and Political Participation (without IV)

	Public Meeting	Petition	Protest
Nonprofit volunteering	0.603***	0.256***	0.217***
	(0.080)	(0.046)	(0.052)
Income	0.05	0.018	-0.081*
	(0.091)	(0.036)	(0.047)
Racial minority (Non-Whites=1)	-0.047	-0.284**	0.453***
	(0.206)	(0.114)	(0.145)
Gender (Female=1)	-0.489**	-0.108	-0.229*
	(0.200)	(0.102)	(0.137)
Education level	0.182***	0.046	0.021
	(0.057)	(0.035)	(0.051)
Number of kids	0.073	-0.076*	-0.086
	(0.062)	(0.042)	(0.061)
Democrats	-0.272	0.250**	0.051
	(0.227)	(0.116)	(0.144)
Republicans	-0.523*	0.093	-0.235
	(0.282)	(0.129)	(0.194)
Social connectedness	0.06	-0.005	0.04
	(0.063)	(0.026)	(0.035)
Social trust	0.03	0.012	0.031
	(0.105)	(0.053)	(0.071)
(Constant)	-0.678	-0.763***	-1.525***
	(0.511)	(0.212)	(0.306)
Pseudo R-Squared	0.221	0.0684	0.0812
Endogeneity in the sample?	N	Y	N
N	744	744	744
Estimator	Poisson	Probit	Probit

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses

Two-tailed test of significance; * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Table 3: The Relationship between Nonprofit Volunteering and Political Participation (with IV)

	Public Meeting	Petition	Protest
Nonprofit volunteering	1.082**	-0.275	0.293
	(0.544)	(0.334)	(0.499)
Income	0.055	0.019	-0.081*
	(0.099)	(0.034)	(0.047)
Racial minority (Non-Whites=1)	-0.257	-0.066	0.424*
	(0.363)	(0.189)	(0.248)
Gender (Female=1)	-0.539**	-0.109	-0.226
	(0.238)	(0.097)	(0.141)
Education level	0.136*	0.113**	0.009
	(0.079)	(0.048)	(0.092)
Number of kids	0.074	-0.05	-0.088
	(0.077)	(0.044)	(0.063)
Democrats	-0.343	0.247**	0.046
	(0.255)	(0.113)	(0.149)
Republicans	-0.709**	0.189	-0.251
	(0.330)	(0.130)	(0.221)
Social connectedness	0.018	0.039	0.033
	(0.084)	(0.037)	(0.059)
Social trust	0.042	0.047	0.025
	(0.115)	(0.053)	(0.079)
(Constant)	-1.246	-0.760***	-1.504***
	(1.042)	(0.205)	(0.354)
N	744	744	744
Estimator	IVPoisson	IVProbit	IVProbit

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses
Two-tailed test of significance; * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Appendices

Appendix 1: First-stage Regression Results

	DV: Nonprofit volunteering
Community service policy	0.368***
	(0.127)
Income	0.004
	(0.028)
Racial minority (Non-Whites=1)	0.336***
	(0.085)
Gender (Female=1)	-0.024
	(0.081)
Education level	0.159***
	(0.026)
Number of kids	0.035
	(0.029)
Democrats	0.063
	(0.091)
Republicans	0.214**
	(0.101)
Social connectedness	0.092***
	(0.019)
Social trust	0.072*
	(0.041)
(Constant)	-0.304*
	(0.160)
R-Squared	0.1124
N	744

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses
Two-tailed test of significance; * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Appendix 2: Control Functions Tests (Robustness Check)

DV:	Public Meeting		Petition		Protest	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5	Model 6
Residuals from the first stage	-2.845	-0.794	0.186	0.587	-0.022	-0.079
	(2.636)	(0.761)	(0.129)	(0.410)	(0.097)	(0.511)
Nonprofit volunteering	4.781*	1.381*	-0.093	-0.322	0.061	0.294
	(2.731)	(0.752)	(0.129)	(0.407)	(0.098)	(0.514)
Income	0.106	0.051	0.007	0.022	-0.013	-0.081*
	(0.264)	(0.091)	(0.013)	(0.036)	(0.008)	(0.047)
Racial minority (Non-White=1)	-0.982	-0.337	-0.023	-0.077	0.072	0.425*
	(1.201)	(0.383)	(0.060)	(0.185)	(0.046)	(0.236)
Gender (Female=1)	-1.224*	-0.458**	-0.039	-0.128	-0.039*	-0.227
	(0.627)	(0.202)	(0.035)	(0.103)	(0.024)	(0.139)
Education level	0.108	0.065	0.043*	0.133*	0.002	0.010
	(0.484)	(0.134)	(0.023)	(0.071)	(0.017)	(0.093)
Number of kids	0.190	0.046	-0.018	-0.059	-0.013	-0.089
	(0.271)	(0.061)	(0.013)	(0.044)	(0.010)	(0.065)
Democrats	-0.966	-0.312	0.093**	0.289**	0.015	0.046
	(0.649)	(0.221)	(0.041)	(0.119)	(0.027)	(0.149)
Republicans	-1.934**	-0.687**	0.072	0.222	-0.039	-0.252
	(0.960)	(0.298)	(0.054)	(0.160)	(0.036)	(0.226)
Social connectedness	-0.122	-0.007	0.014	0.046	0.006	0.033
	(0.292)	(0.102)	(0.014)	(0.044)	(0.011)	(0.059)
Social trust	-0.264	-0.031	0.018	0.055	0.003	0.025
	(0.373)	(0.126)	(0.020)	(0.060)	(0.014)	(0.079)
Constant	-0.382	-0.530	0.187**	-0.890***	0.060	-1.509***
	(1.507)	(0.543)	(0.078)	(0.231)	(0.058)	(0.327)
N	744	744	744	744	744	744
Estimator	Regression	Poisson	Regression	Probit	Regression	Probit

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses

Two-tailed test of significance; * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Control functions tests are conducted to ensure whether or not the instrument is exogeneous. The results show that residuals from the first stage models are not statistically significant in all of the second stage models, which suggest that the instrument is exogeneous.

Appendix 3: IV Regression Models (Robustness Check)

	Public Meeting	Petition	Protest
Nonprofit volunteering	4.781*	-0.093	0.061
	(2.717)	(0.143)	(0.097)
Income	0.106	0.007	-0.013
	(0.267)	(0.014)	(0.008)
Racial minority (Non-White=1)	-0.982	-0.023	0.072
	(1.202)	(0.066)	(0.045)
Gender (Female=1)	-1.224*	-0.039	-0.039*
	(0.645)	(0.038)	(0.023)
Education level	0.108	0.043*	0.002
	(0.479)	(0.026)	(0.017)
Number of kids	0.190	-0.018	-0.013
	(0.270)	(0.014)	(0.010)
Democrats	-0.966	0.093**	0.015
	(0.698)	(0.044)	(0.027)
Republicans	-1.934*	0.072	-0.039
	(0.992)	(0.058)	(0.036)
Social connectedness	-0.122	0.014	0.006
	(0.297)	(0.016)	(0.011)
Social trust	-0.264	0.018	0.003
	(0.391)	(0.022)	(0.014)
Constant	-0.382	0.187**	0.060
	(1.520)	(0.083)	(0.057)
N	744	744	744
Estimator	IV Regression	IV Regression	IV Regression

Notes: Robust standard errors in parentheses

Two-tailed test of significance; * p<0.10, ** p<0.05, *** p<0.01

Poisson estimators often produce more false positives than OLS (Sturman 1999). To ensure the robustness of the findings, I run IV regression models and find consistent results.

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NOTES

[1] Different forms of direct public participation, including public meetings, protests, and petitions, do have different characteristics. Among many others are: 1) Public meetings are organized by government organizations, while protests and petitions are organized by civic organizations and/or individual civic leaders. 2) Public meetings are more frequently held, especially at the local level, whereas protests and petitions are rarer, focusing on issues with high level of salience. 3) Public meetings enable attendees to directly interact with public officials, while protests and petitions do not usually involve interactions with government officials. I briefly discuss this matter as it relates to the analysis results in the discussion section. Further distinguishing forms of public participation is beyond the scope of this paper. For more explanations on different public participation forms, see Nabatchi and Amsler 2014; Nabatchi and Leighninger 2015; Rowe and Frewer 2000.

[2] For detailed qualitative case evidences on how nonprofit organizational practices transform individuals into politically active citizens, see Dodge and Ospina 2016.

[3] For more explanations on the instrumental variable estimation, see Angrist, Imbens, and Rubin 1996. Also refer to Wooldridge 2016, Chapter 15.

[4] To check the representativeness of the sample, I have compared characteristics of this final sample, first with the full sample from the SCCB Survey, and second with a nationwide sample from the 2006 General Social Survey conducted by National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago. The comparison criteria include gender, race, education level, political party identification, employment status, and household income. The results suggest that the sample used in this study does not substantially differ from the full sample from the SCCB Survey and the General Social Survey, and that it is broadly representative of the US adult population.