Public Perceptions of and Trust in Associations and Volunteers

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A. Introduction

This chapter summarizes and categorizes findings from research on perceptions of volunteers and of membership associations (MAs) among actors in three types of positions vis-à-vis nonprofit organizations (NPOs): members of the general public, actors in government, and actors in the corporate world of business. A fairly stable core of these perceptions depends on individual characteristics of these stakeholders. Three failures of NPOs threaten perceptions of MAs: (1) amateurism, (2) overexclusion, and (3) lack of transparency, the potential for fraud, and violations of the non-distribution constraint in NPOs. MAs and other NPOs can influence perceptions by changing their behavior in interaction with stakeholders and in their communication strategies. Finally, the chapter summarizes findings from research on perceptions of MAs in four specific world regions.

How are volunteers and MAs perceived in society? We summarize and categorize findings from research on perceptions of volunteers and associations among actors at three types of positions vis-à-vis NPOs:

(1) members of the general public;

(2) actors in government; and

(3) actors in the corporate world of business.

Members of the general public are stakeholders in NPOs in various roles: they can be recipients targeted by the organization, clients of services provided by the organization, donors to the organization, volunteers (including active members), or members of nonprofit associations). Volunteers, members, and donors have some direct influence on the organization because they provide a part of the resources that the organization works with. Recipients typically have less influence because they are dependent on the resources of the organization.

The government's relationship with NPOs is complex. The government can be a partner, donor, client, competitor, and/or a regulatory body. These roles can also be combined, even within the same dyadic relationship. As a partner, it collaborates with NPOs in delivering services. As a donor, it funds and supports NPOs to implement programs. The government may also be a client or a competitor for funds and programs from international donors. Finally, the government can also take the responsibility of regulating the nonprofit sector (NPS), trying to monitor and evaluate non-governmental organization (NGO) activities or even to control, limit, or eliminate them. See Chapter 53 for a discussion on this relationship.

B. Definitions

The general definitions in the Handbook Appendix are used in this chapter. For the sake of simplicity, we label as *insiders* those who belong to an association as active volunteers or inactive members, and contrast them with *outsiders*, people who do not belong to a specific association or any association.

C. Historical background

Perceptions of volunteers and associations have been studied since Sills' (1957) seminal research on volunteers for the "March of Dimes." The literature on perceptions of NPOs versus for-profit service providers (e.g., in the health sector) originates from economic theories on market failure (Hansmann 1980; Weisbrod 1977). Survey research on public opinion toward volunteers and

associations was spurred by the collection of comparative data in Almond and Verba's (1963) five-nation study of the civic culture.

D. Key issues

1. Perceptions of volunteers

Research on perceptions of volunteers departs from definitions of volunteer work as unpaid voluntary work for others through a NPO. Public perceptions of "who is a volunteer" depend on the degree of choice, remuneration, the level of formal organization, and the relationship with the recipients of service or output (Cnaan, Handy, and Wadsworth 1996). Citizens who have more choice, are rewarded less, are active through organizations, and have less personal relations with beneficiaries are more likely to be perceived as volunteers. One could argue that the net costs of volunteering are highest in these cases. Volunteer work that is more demanding, involves higher opportunity costs, and is less likely to yield explicit personal benefits is more likely to be perceived as volunteering (Handy et al. 2000). To the best of our knowledge, no research to date has examined how these perceptions vary between insiders and outsiders or between business and government stakeholders.

2. Interdependence theory

Research on perceptions of associations is largely atheoretical. We suggest that perceptions of associations may be analyzed from the theory of interdependence in social dilemmas (Van Lange, Joireman, Parks, and Van Dijk 2013). We sketch the theory here and encourage researchers to apply it to NPOs in the future.

A social dilemma occurs when the pursuit of individual interests leads to a collectively suboptimal outcome. Classic examples of social dilemmas are situations in which common pool resources can be used by individuals in a way that threatens the quality or even the future existence of the common pool (Ostrom 1990). This theory has been developed to explain collective outcomes from strategies of individuals. Interdependence involves trust: shared

objectives are more easily achieved when interaction partners assume they will not behave opportunistically.

The starting point of our analysis in this chapter is that NPOs are goal-directed actors. This is not to say that they are acting as one homogeneous entity or to deny internal conflicts; obviously, there are always differences of opinion among insiders. At the same time, however, a collectively shared mission is the soul of each association. Given the mission and the objectives of the association, these objectives can be achieved in a variety of ways. Protest movements may self-define as being in opposition to the powers that be.

As NPOs are trying to achieve their missions, they have to communicate and collaborate successfully with the general public, government, and for-profit actors. These actors provide support to NPOs as volunteers, donors, sponsors, and grant makers.

Perceptions of NPOs are shaped by the goal that the relationship with the association should serve. Classifications of relations with NPOs have been developed for government actors (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002): Young (2000) discerns *supplementary, complementary*, and *adversarial* relationships; Najam (2000) discerns cooperative, confrontational, complementary, and co-optational relationships; and Coston (1998) classifies eight types of relationships from *repression* to *collaboration*. Relations of NPOs with other actors than government have less often been studied; research on business perceptions of NGOs and business sector relations is underdeveloped (Austin 1998; Austin and Seitanidi 2012; Harris 2012).

Generally speaking, for outsiders the relationship with the association could represent different strategies. In research on social interactions among individuals (Messick and McClintock 1968; Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, and Joireman 1997) the three most common strategies are as follows:

(a) Cooperation, or maximization of joint outcomes: the association is a partner in a joint effort to achieve collectively shared aims and objectives

(b) Competition, or maximization of inequality of outcomes: the association is a competitor in an individual effort to achieve an aim that cannot be simultaneously achieved by multiple parties

(c)   Individualism, or maximization of own outcomes: the association is an independent actor in an individual effort to achieve its own aims and objectives

Cooperative relations between NPOs and government exist when both parties share some collective goal and try to achieve this by working together. Examples include local organizations that offer social services, food banks, and shelter, cooperatives providing social housing, sports clubs, and recreational groups. The activities of organizations in this category serve goals that are also valued by local governments. At the national level, health charity organizations that raise funds for medical research and patient support, Alcoholics Anonymous, and other self-help groups are examples of organizations with activities that contribute to outcomes desired by the government. Cooperative relations between NPOs and for-profit corporations are visible in CSR programs of corporations that involve NPOs. Sponsoring of NPOs by corporations, employee-volunteering programs, payroll-giving schemes, and matching programs are examples of such cooperative relations.

Competitive relations exist when both parties have conflicting interests. In terms of government relations, many cash-strapped local governments in the United States are challenging the tax-exempt status of larger nonprofits, such as universities, and asking for payments in lieu of taxes, commonly referred to as PILOTs (Longoria 2014). In many contexts, nonprofits challenge governments in terms of their transparency in the use of public resources and seek to expose corruption, as Transparency International does. Examples from the corporate world are action groups protesting against infrastructure projects and environmental damage by corporations, or nature conservation groups, animal rights activists, and squatters. More recently, some corporations have complained of unfair competition from the NPS, when the latter are exempt from the payment of taxes and offer goods and services to the public. However, this complaint goes back decades (e.g., Bennett and DiLorenzo 1989).

Individualistic strategies reflect mutual ignorance: each actor strives to achieve its objectives, but the actions of others are not deemed relevant for the outcome. Objectives can be shared between NPOs and other actors, but if they are unaware of each other's efforts and/or do not communicate and adapt to each other's behavior, the strategy is still individualistic.

Social dilemmas can be solved by changing the expectations of actors about the behavior of others. These expectations are influenced by fairly stable characteristics of individuals, as well as by interaction experiences (Van Lange, Joireman, Parks, and Van Dijk 2013). While the former are beyond the control of NPOs, they can try to influence the experiences of stakeholders in interaction with the organization.

3. Three failures theory

While the non-distribution constraint generally favors perceptions of NPOs as more trustworthy than for-profit organizations (Drevs, Tscheulin, and Lindenmeier 2014; Handy et al. 2010; Hansmann 1980; Schlesinger, Mitchell, and Gray 2004), collaborative relationships with other actors can be endangered by failures, as identified in "three failures theory" (Steinberg 2006; Weisbrod 1977). Government, business, and the general public often lament (1) amateurism, (2) overexclusion, and (3) lack of transparency, the potential for fraud and violations of the non-distribution constraint, in NPOs.

(a) Amateurism. The voluntary nature of philanthropic initiatives creates the danger of amateurism. NPOs have limited instruments available to them for the management of volunteers (Pearce 1993). To some extent, volunteer workers and their managers (whether paid or unpaid) share a commitment to the mission of the organization: "We all want the best for our clients!" Yet, the volunteer may refuse to carry out tasks that he or she thinks are not helpful in achieving this mission, threatening to quit. This can slow down decision making in NPOs working with volunteers, a particular disadvantage of the sector lamented by businesspeople (Austin 1998). Donors offer voluntary monetary contributions; however, they may stop donating when they disagree with the organization's activities. These tendencies may make voluntary associations inefficient.

(b) Overexclusion. To the extent that markets do produce collective goods, they often limit access to consumers who are willing and able to pay for them (e.g., museums, university education). This is the problem of overexclusion. Services provided by an NPO are often directed at the social group that founded the organization, such as a specific ethnic, religious, or professional group. In these cases, the social identity of the organization is linked to the founding

group. The services provided by such organizations are colored or guided by the group's cultural tradition, values, ideology, or worldview. Even when the services are available for the general public, they may be less open and attractive to members from other social groups with a different culture.

(c) *Asymmetry of information.* It is often difficult, if not impossible, to determine the quality of public goods, regardless of whether they are provided by the government or by NPOs when the services are patient care and prevention of diseases, scholarships for high-quality students or artists, awareness and advocacy campaigns for groups that are discriminated against, and literacy or poverty reduction programs in developing countries. Consumers may have an interest in these services without being or knowing a recipient. However, consumers have little interest in gathering information on the quality of these services. Because trust is such a fundamental feature of the relationship between consumers and producers in the philanthropic sector, the damage potential for violations of the public's trust is high.

4. Factors affecting negative perceptions

When there are widespread (not necessarily prevailing or majority) negative public perceptions of associations (Light 2002, 2008), NPOs, and/or the NPS, there are many possible, underlying causes. One set of such causes is significant mass media attention to the flaws, failings, "scandals," or "Dark Side" of these phenomena. Many members of the public may also form negative perceptions of associations, NPOs, and the NPS because of their own or kin's and peers' personal experiences or knowledge of such instances of harmful or negative outcomes of one or more of these groups (Schlesinger, Mitchell, and Gray 2004).

At the "darkest" extreme, there are many fundamentally deviant nonprofit associations in nearly every contemporary society (Smith 2016a, 2016b). But even various conventional nonprofits, including foundations and trusts, occasionally engage in crimes and lesser deviance (Freemont-Smith 2004; Johnston 2005; Smith 2011; Smith, Eng, and Albertson 2015; Stern 2013; Wagner 2000; White 2006; Zack 2003; see also Handbook Chapter 53). More "gray" and common kinds of Dark Side phenomena are dysfunctions, inefficiency, and ineffectiveness in

associations and other NPOs (Bennett and DiLorenzo 1989, 1994; Block 2004; Rauch 1995; Stern 2013; White 2006: Chapter 1; see also Handbook Chapter 53).

The title of Chapter 1 in White (2006) sums up nicely the general situation for NPOs: "Big Promises, Small Outcomes." Wagner (2000: v) refers to the NPS as the "Sanctified Sector," not deserving of its widely positive reputation in America. These views fit better with paid-staff charitable agencies than all-volunteer associations, but also fit many national and international associations that do high-intensity marketing for donors and members (Smith et al. 2014). Paid-staff NPOs, including large national or international associations, have received negative publicity and perceptions remarking on their overemphasizing "excess revenues" (the technical term for the profits or nonprofits) in their collection of donations, grants and contracts, and revenues from fees and other sources (Bennett and DiLorenzo 1989; Weisbrod 1998). Other critics point to their excessive compensation of executives and/or high administrative expenses relative to program expenditures (Frumkin 2002; P. Smith and Richmond 2007).

Media reports of abuse, waste, or inefficient spending of funds by charities are often disastrous for donations to these specific organizations, but not necessarily so for other charities (Bekkers 2010). Providing donors or clients with factual information about the way NPOs work does not necessarily reduce negative perceptions: such information is often interpreted in line with previous opinions. Schlesinger, Mitchell, and Gray (2004) found that explaining the nonprofit status of hospitals in a survey experiment made perceptions even more negative. Bekkers (2003) found that awareness of an accreditation system regulating accounting and governance practices of NPOs was associated with higher giving among more trusting donors, but not so among those with less trust.

5. *Factors affecting positive perceptions*

As with negative perceptions, positive public perceptions can also come from exposure to the mass media and/or from one's personal experiences or similar experiences by close people, among other factors. Research by Sagawa and Jospin (2009) makes it clear that both NPO leaders and the general public often have fairly consistent perceptions of certain high-impact,

trusted, national or international associations and other NPOs. There is similar evidence for consistent positive perceptions of certain associations in municipalities (Smith 1986).

The underlying reasons for such positive net perceptions can often be traced to various causes, including (a) perceived high positive impact or effectiveness of associations or NPOs generally or of specific organizations (Crutchfield and Grant 2008; Sagawa and Jospin 2009; Smith 1986); (b) media coverage and endorsements of trusted ambassadors, such as celebrities (Kim and Walker 2013; Kelly et al. 2014); (c) high socioeconomic status or wealth/income of the members/leaders of the relevant associations or NPOs (Smith 1986); and (d) other demographic, personality, and attitudinal variables (Brooks 2006: Chapter 8).

When such positive perceptions are cumulated across a whole nation/society over a long time period, because of perceived high positive impact and/or high status of members/leaders, the result is often national or state/provincial government tax breaks for the NPOs involved (Weisbrod 1992; White 2007: Chapter 18). Some institutional isomorphism of national government taxation agencies may also play a role (Dimaggio and Powell 1983). Pallotta (2008) argues at length that the US government does not go far enough in facilitating NPOs, imposing unreasonable restraints on their activities. Stern (2013: 54–57) discusses the historical development of a positive image for the NPS and NPOs/associations in America, where the initial perceptions were quite negative in the mid-1700s to the mid-1800s. More recently, perceptions of the effectiveness of NPOs have become less positive in the United States (O'Neill 2009), as well as in the Netherlands (Bekkers and De Wit 2013).

6. Measures of relationship perceptions

Perceptions of relationships with volunteers and NPOs are typically measured in surveys with questions that ask respondents for an evaluation of NPOs in general, or in some specific respect. A common question in surveys is to ask respondents to report the level of trust they have in NPOs (Bekkers 2003; O'Neill 2009). In general household surveys such as the General Social Survey, the World Values Survey, or the European Social Survey, questions on trust in NPOs are typically included in a battery of questions on institutions. This enables a comparison of the level

of trust in NPOs relative to the level of trust in other institutions such as government, parliament, the police, and corporations.

A problem of such questions is that trust is not defined. As a result, the validity of the responses is unclear. Trust exists in a relationship when actor A is confident that actor B, who may influence the outcome for actor A, will not do so opportunistically (Coleman 1990). For example, if two persons who conspired to commit a crime are captured and questioned separately, they may engage in a deal offered by the authorities to the person who confesses. In such a prisoner's dilemma, the person who does not trust his conspirer will confess because this may reduce his sentence. If both confess, their joint outcome is the worst-case scenario of maximum imprisonment for the crime committed. Trust in the relationship between donors/volunteers and NPOs is different from trust among prisoners because it involves a third party (actor C): the recipients of services provided by the NPOs. Donors and volunteers of NPOs care about the outcome of the activities of NPOs. Low trust reflects doubt about the effectiveness and efficacy of the activities of NPOs. The presence of a third actor in the relationship makes trust in public service organizations different from trust in corporations.

A more positive response to the question "how much do you trust A" is a measure of the general attitude toward A. This attitude depends on awareness of the activity of NPOs (McDougle 2014), as well as on the general tendency to trust others, or *generalized social trust* (Bekkers 2003, 2006; Uslaner 2002): the belief that A is trustworthy and resources provided will not be abused. Trustworthiness has several dimensions. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) distinguish ability, benevolence, and integrity as factors of perceived trustworthiness. Research on trust in charitable organizations – also called charitable confidence – has distinguished judgment, service quality, motives, role competence (Sargeant and Lee 2002), ethical behavior, and humane treatment of clients (Schlesinger, Mitchell, and Gray 2004) and forbearance from opportunism (Sargeant and Lee 2004) as characteristics of organizations that donors perceive to be trustworthy.

7. Macro-level correlates

McDougle and Lam (2013) examined correlates of confidence in NPOs in San Diego County, finding no significant variation across zip codes in the area. No studies to date have investigated correlates of perceptions of NPOs in a comparative cross-national design. Legal requirements imposed on NPOs are likely to play a role (Fleischman 1999; Mead 2008), but data on a sizeable number of countries are not yet available. A new analysis of data on almost 50 countries from the World Values Survey (2005–2008; see supplementary materials posted at the Handbook website) shows that countries in which citizens have higher levels of trust in "charitable and humanitarian organizations" are countries in which citizens have a higher level of trust in government ($r = .57$). Charitable confidence also shows positive – albeit much weaker – relations with generalized trust ($r = .20$) and the proportion of the population that is an active member in voluntary associations (.14). Political preferences are hardly related to charitable confidence ("In political matters, people talk of 'the left' and 'the right.' How would you place your views on this scale, generally speaking?": .03; "Incomes should be made more equal" vs. "We need larger income differences as incentives for individual effort": –.10; "The government should take more responsibility to ensure that everyone is provided for" vs. "People should take more responsibility to provide for themselves": –.08). Across countries, charitable confidence is unrelated to the proportion of the population that is volunteering (–.03) or the country rank on the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) of Transparency International (.00).

8. Micro-level mobilization and socialization

In cross-section, insiders naturally have more positive perceptions of NPOs, government, and people in general than outsiders (Bekkers and Bowman 2009; Bowman 2004; McDougle and Lam 2013). The World Values Survey data show that members and especially active members of voluntary associations have more charitable confidence, in part because they have more trust in people in general (see supplementary materials at website). The positive relationship between charitable confidence and trust in government that we saw at the macro level also appears at the individual level. The US may be an exception to this rule, as some studies do not find this relation, depending on the covariates included in the analysis (Brooks and Lewis 2001).

Over time, selective mobilization and organizational socialization are both likely to contribute to the difference in charitable confidence between insiders and outsiders (Bekkers and

Bowman 2009). Future insiders are likely to have – on average – more positive perceptions of NPOs even before they start participating than those who will remain outsiders. Positive perceptions enhance the likelihood that individuals find participation attractive. In the absence of a request from others to start participating in the organization, individuals with more positive perceptions are likely to enter the organization.

The more common pathway to participation in associations, however, is via a request to participate. Dutch evidence shows that only 15% of volunteers started volunteering without a direct request from another person (Bekkers 2005). Musick and Wilson (2008: 290) found exactly the same proportion in the United States. Furthermore, in both countries effective solicitations are more likely to come from individuals who are already participating in the organization. Because participants will selectively target their requests for participation toward individuals who can be expected to comply with the request, individuals with more positive perceptions will be more likely to receive requests to participate. In addition, positive perceptions of NPOs will also enhance the likelihood that individuals will comply with the request. Once individuals are participating, positive perceptions are likely to be strengthened as participation is sustained. In addition, a process of selective attrition contributes to the maintenance of a difference between insiders and outsiders: those who have less positive perceptions at the onset of participation are more likely to become less positive. Research on blood donation has shown that over time blood donors self-identify more strongly as a blood donor (Callero, Howard, and Piliavin 1987).

9. National and world region research

(a) Russia

Results from a 2011 nationwide representative survey in Russia on "Citizens' Attitudes to and Expertise in Civil Society Practices," conducted as part of the National Research University – Higher School of Economics' Centre for Studies of Civil Society and the NPS's monitoring research, showed that there is little trust in NPOs (Mersiyanova and Korneeva 2011). Respondents who claimed to know or have heard of local NPOs (76%) were asked the question, "Which public associations and other non-profit organizations and civil initiatives do you trust?"

Twenty-one percent of them said none, while another 18% did not give an answer. Considering that 24% of respondents did not answer the original question about knowing any NPOs, this means that only 37% of the Russian population trusts any NPO. Respondents that claimed to trust a specific organization most frequently referred to consumer rights organizations, veterans' organizations, gardening associations, trade unions, and disability groups. Respondents had less trust in professional associations or creative unions, territorial self-governing societies, local initiatives to protect property, housing and consumer rights groups, groups to protect the interest of local citizens, ethnic groups, political youth groups/informal networks, and national patriotic movements.

There was no significant difference based on gender or income level in answers to the question "Which public associations and other non-profit organizations or public initiatives do you trust the most?" The difference by age group was also small. Trust in NPOs increases as education level rises. There is also a statistical difference based on two occupational groups: students and entrepreneurs (self-employed people). Entrepreneurs showed above average trust in consumer rights organizations. Students were more likely than others to trust school and student governing organizations, as well as sport, travel, hunting and automobile clubs and organizations. They were also more trusting of political youth groups. These findings are consistent with the hypothesis that participants in associations have higher trust in the specific associations they participate in.

The level of trust among those who participate in at least one NPO in other public associations, NPOs and civil initiatives was notably higher than the national average. The variety of forms of participation in Russian NPOs in tackling social issues is extensive (Mersiyanova and Yakobson 2011). Responding to a question about quality of services offered by NPOs, only a quarter of NPO leaders (26%) consider the contribution of civil and other NGOS and NPOs to solving social issues in the country to be "good." Among the federal elite and the population overall, these figures are 1% and 4%, respectively. Representatives of the federal elite hold a relatively negative view of the contribution of NPOs in solving social issues: more than half of those surveyed (53%) gave it a grade of "bad," and only a third (30%) said it was "satisfactory" or "good." Representatives of executive powers gave a more balanced response – 44%

"satisfactory" or "good" and 44% "bad" – while lawmakers were more critical – 18% "good" or "satisfactory" and 61% "bad."

The overall population had a similar breakdown of "good" and "satisfactory" answers as the representatives of the federal elite. This low opinion of NPOs' activities, along with a large share of respondents that did not answer, may be due to a lack of awareness among the population about the useful things that NPOs do and a lack of awareness in society about the importance of what they do. Those that they help – children, the elderly, disabled people, and other vulnerable groups – are not in a position to inform the general public about the activities of NPOs via the mass media in order to increase their reach. The organizations themselves, especially the small ones (and the vast majority are small), are also unable to spread information about the results and projects.

(b) South Asia/India

In South Asia, members of the general public report mixed perceptions of NPOs and the voluntary sector. On the positive side, people in Nepal report that NPOs contributed to changes in education, agriculture, social awareness, sanitation, and drinking water (Roka 2012). They were further recognized for their support for school buildings, micro-finance, vegetable farming, and supplying medicines in rural areas. Similar perceptions were reported from other countries in the region. De Souza (2010) reports that the media in India view NPOs as pioneers, creative, novel for programs on the empowerment of women. In Sri Lanka, NPOs are praised for their work in the aftermath of the tsunami (Fritz Institute 2005). Likewise, NPOs are highly regarded for their role in helping poor women through their micro-finance programs in Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan (Roka 2012; Sultana and Islam 2009). In Bangladesh, female participants said NPOs open their eyes to think rationally about social norms and values (Sultana and Islam 2009).

Despite these positive perceptions, the people of South Asia also express strongly negative feelings toward NPOs. In a survey by Transparency International in 2005, NPOs were identified as being more corrupt than religious bodies, military, and the media (Hardoon and Heinrich 2011). In South Asia, the highest rates of respondents who regarded NPOs as corrupt were found in Pakistan (50.8%), followed by India (36.5 %), the Maldives (26.1%), Nepal

(25.1%), Sri Lanka (16.2%), and Bangladesh (15.6%). To fight corruption, the majority of the respondents trusted the government. Only 8% trusted NPOs to fight corruption. The general public in India had more trust in NPOs to fight corruption than in other South Asian nations.

In another survey, conducted by IDRC, policy makers and the public expressed concerns with the quality of research by NPOs (Cottle 2011). The respondents reported that in South Asia think tanks were the only institutions providing top-rated research information that could be used for policy formation. In addition to the above concerns, people in the region were critical about sustainability, transparency, accountability, effectiveness, and implementation. While scholars have identified similar weaknesses within the NPS, we discuss only topics directly identified by the public in the region.

Financial transparency is one of the major concerns with NPOs working in the region. For example, in Nepal, people complained that NPOs did not reveal how much money they had received from donors, what the budget for the project was, how much they spent for their staff, and how much was spent in the field. As a result, local people have become distrustful: theysuspect NPOs make profits from their programs (Roka 2012). People in Bangladesh expressed similar concerns, where they believed NPOs mostly working on micro-finance were making profit from their projects (Safa 2006). In India, respondents reported how NPOs cook up projects to get funding from donors (Baroi and Rabbani 2011; Kapoor 2006). In Pakistan, the public, government, and even staff of NPOs said that educated people established NPOs for personal gain (Bano 2008). In Sri Lanka, NPOs are criticized for making profit from the peace building process during the insurgency (Devotta 2006). These concerns question the nonprofit aspect of the NPOs that are managed as a family enterprise using paid staff earning more than government staff. Financial misuse within the NPS is a threat for the future of voluntary and collective actions in the region.

Another major concern among the public in South Asia concerns accountability of NPOs. The general public does not agree with claims by NPOs of downward accountability toward communities. They are criticized for addressing only concerns of donors. People are also concerned about them claiming to represent local communities. For example, Forbes (1999) studied protest against a hydroelectric project in Nepal and found that local people were mostly

unaware of activities of NPOs that were occurring in Kathmandu or Washington DC to garner support to stop the project. Devotta (2006) reported how the public in Sri Lanka criticized NPOs as dancing to the tune of donors. Similarly, in Nepal, rural people indicate that NPOs show little concern with solving community issues and focus on delivering what their donors tell them.

Effectiveness of projects of NPOs is also of concern to the public in South Asia. People dislike claims by NPOs of doing this and that but putting little on the ground. For example, NPOs report micro-finance as a major success in India and Bangladesh in uplifting women from poverty and empowering them. However, in a survey by World Bank it was found that the people in the two countries were negative about the program (Narayan et al. 2000). They complained that the loan from NPOs was too small for any productive activity and the program succeeded because staff terrorize, insult, and lock up defaulters. In another study, Narayan et al. (2009) reported that only 0.3% of the respondents in India indicated NPOs had helped them reduce household poverty. Even the activity of NPOs immediately after a disaster was little compared to the government. For example, after the tsunami it was found NPOs contributed only 14% support in the first 24 hours in Sri Lanka and only 9.4% in India. Only 13% of the shelter was provided by NPOs in Sri Lanka (Fritz Institute 2005). In addition to the above concerns, people are critical of the working modality of NPOs. In Bangladesh, they criticized NPOs' tight program strategy and bureaucratic structure (Safa 2006). In Nepal, rural people are dissatisfied with voluntary labor for projects of NPOs (Roka 2012).

(c) Mexico

Survey results in Mexico (Layton and Moreno 2013) echo the generally negative perception of nonprofits in South Asia, with some interesting twists. In a question in the National Survey of Philanthropy and Civil Society on levels of institutional trust, generic non-governmental or social organizations garner trust from only 25% of respondents, while another 25% express little trust and 44% have no trust at all: this places nonprofits somewhat below the three levels of government and a bit above big business, unions, political parties, and the national legislature. The Red Cross, however, comes in a virtual tie with the most trusted organization, the church, with two-thirds of respondents expressing confidence in this major institution. The Red Cross plays a unique role in responding not only to natural disasters but in providing emergency care

throughout Mexico. In another question measuring trust specifically in ten national fund-raising campaigns, six of the campaigns were trusted by a majority of respondents, while the remaining four had relatively high levels of "Don't know/no answer": those with higher levels of trust have a greater presence in the media, and those that lagged behind have a lower media profile. This lack of trust has a direct and detrimental impact on nonprofit fund-raising: When asked why they do not donate to nonprofits, the single most important response was that respondents did not trust organizations (17%), and when asked how they prefer to donate, 82% of Mexicans preferred to give directly to the needy and only 10% preferred to donate to organizations (Layton and Moreno 2013).

(d)Arab Countries

For Arab countries, including the Gulf region, the Levant, and the Maghreb, results from the recently completed sixth wave of the World Values Survey (Abu Rumman 2014) provide the first evidence on perceptions of NPOs (see Figure 49.1). There is considerable variance in confidence between Arab countries. In Qatar, Kuwait, and Iraq, respondents expressed a relatively high level of confidence ("a great deal" or "quite a lot") in charitable and humanitarian organizations in general (86%, 62% and 60%, respectively). Confidence levels were lower in Morocco, Libya, and Egypt, hovering around 55%; considerably lower in Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria, and Yemen (around 40%), and lowest in Tunisia (31.5%). Unfortunately, the WVS does not include data for Saudi Arabia. An earlier study found negative perceptions of volunteering among students as an obstacle for their participation in volunteer work (Al Sultan 2009).

. **Figure 49.1** Arab confidence compared to other parts of the world

(e) Lithuania

The Lithuanian case exemplifies the dynamics of voluntary activity in the post-Soviet society. Here, the development of voluntary sector during the last two decades went through different stages from the postcommunist legacy of *compulsory volunteering* (with emphasis on the state compulsion, so the voluntary nature was not present, and the *volunteering* label was a lie) with no positive connotations (as it could not become a form for individual self-expression or

common leisure activity) through the outburst of registered NGOs right after the collapse of the system (not paralleled, however, with an increase in the number of people actively taking part in their activities) to the stabilization phase (Juknevičius and Savicka 2003; Savicka 2005).

After the downfall of the Soviet regime, the voluntary sector in Lithuania had to be built upon the unfavorable postcommunist legacy, where it used to be fully controlled by the state and was based neither on the essential principle of voluntary choice of an individual nor on the civic networks of trust and reciprocity, as social capital. This social context has not been favorable to fostering an atmosphere of trust in voluntary associations in the society; it discourages association members from active participation in their activities.

The deepest survey of Lithuanian attitudes toward NGOs was conducted by SIC Market Research in 2002 at the request of Lithuanian Non-Governmental Organizations Information and Support Centre (2012). The survey addressed the issues of general knowledge of NGOs and support for them, as well as attitudes toward their activities. Some 46% of the participants in this survey were not able to name even one voluntary organization. The best-known NGO was Caritas, which was mentioned by 12% of all respondents (or 23% of the ones who named at least one NGO).

In order to understand attitudes toward NGOs and voluntary activity, the respondents were asked whether they strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with each of the following statements:

1. NGOs have very good prospects and are going to become an integral part of Lithuanian society.

2. NGOs can be important partners of government in providing social services and representing the interests of social groups.

3. NGOs are really a cover for individuals who seek to increase their profits by avoiding taxes.

4. The state should transfer such functions as care for neglected children, the elderly, the handicapped, and so on to NGOs by partly financing their activities.

5. The NGOs that I know about work very professionally.

6. The NGOs that I know about are managed poorly and work unprofessionally.

7.   NGOs are not important because social services should be provided only by the state.

8.   NGOs are unreliable.

9.   Most Lithuanians have negative attitude toward voluntary work and social activism.

10.   Lithuanian law does not encourage the activities of NGOs.

Among these statements, the first, second, fourth, and fifth describe positive attitudes toward NGOs, and the third, sixth, seventh, and eighth describe negative ones, while the ninth and tenth describe attitudes not toward NGOs themselves but toward the environment in which they operate. Generally, Lithuanians have a positive view of NGOs and perceive them as a promising factor in Lithuanian society (46%) and an important partner of government (63%); there is also a public feeling that NGOs work professionally (31%) and are reliable (42%). Negative statements about NGOs found less support: 24% of population feel NGOs are means to avoid taxes, 7% – that they are managed poorly, 24% – that they are not important, and 20% – that they are unreliable. Despite the dominance of positive evaluations, almost half of the respondents (48%) expressed the feeling that people in Lithuania have a negative attitude toward voluntary work and social activism. This response means that despite their own positive perceptions of NGOs, people feel that such attitudes are not characteristic of the society as a whole. Also, they are convinced that Lithuanian law does not promote voluntary activity.

As more recent (2012) survey data show, not much has changed in the public attitudes during the last decade. According to the data of the representative survey conducted by public opinion research center Vilmorus, again at the request of Lithuanian Non-Governmental Organizations Information and Support Centre in 2012 (Lithuanian Non-Governmental Organizations Information and Support Centre 2012), the majority of Lithuanians (54%) were not able to answer the question about whether they trust NGOs, but 32% gave positive answers and the rest 14% gave negative answers. With these results, NGOs in Lithuania are trusted less than the president, the army, the church, the police but more than banks, the courts, government, the Parliament, or political parties. The high proportion of people having no opinion if NGOs could be trusted can be explained by the fact that absolute majority of people (69%) acknowledged they had no live contact with NGOs. Among different social groups, more trust in NGOs expressed the youth and more educated people. As survey data show, these people are also more inclined to join voluntary activities. To sum up, most Lithuanians do not understand

the role of NGOs in society, nor do they fully appreciate the potential of voluntary organizations to effectively solve grievous social problems. Therefore, there is a lack of contact with voluntary organizations and of most forms of involvement in their activities.

E. Usable knowledge

Perceptions of NPOs influence the way actors approach and deal with them. Positive attitudes toward NPOs depend to a large extent on personality and sociodemographic characteristics of actors, which cannot be influenced by NPOs. Still NPOs can alter perceptions among stakeholders through their own interventions. As perceptions depend on live contacts with citizens and media coverage of NPOs, it is important for managers of NPOs to invest time and effort in relationships with citizens, journalists, opinion leaders, and celebrities. In addition, public image management and branding should obviously be based on substance. Integrity, honesty, and transparency of the work that NPOs do is a fundamental prerequisite to changing these perceptions. NPOs should signal these qualities to stakeholders, keeping in mind that previously crystallized perceptions are not easily corrected.

F. Future trends and research needed

We expect ever-increasing future attention on perceptions of volunteering, associations, and the nonprofit sector (NPS), more generally. In many nations, the NPS and its organizations, both associations and agencies, are being subject to increasing scrutiny and criticism in terms of corruption and waste, and often of foreign influence, which may also be seen as a kind of "corruption by foreigners." We encourage research on the general attitudes and perceptions of volunteering, associations, nonprofit agencies, and the whole NPS, with special attention to the sources of these attitudes and perceptions in the mass media, personal-social media, and personal experiences. Very little is known specifically about the latter issue of underlying determinants of NPS attitudes and perceptions.

The growing use and availability of information through the Internet facilitates the instant mobilization of volunteers for specific projects. Online social media such as twitter and online platforms enable the incidental donation of time (crowdsourcing and micro-volunteering) and

money (crowd-funding and micro-lending). The success of such forms of episodic pro-social behaviors depends in part on perceptions of these projects as effective and "fun to be part of." These perceptions can be highly dynamic and short lived, but still productive in mobilizing volunteers. We encourage research on the formation, dynamics, and consequences of perceptions of volunteer opportunities for specific projects.

We also encourage research on the formation, dynamics, and consequences of trust in NPOs, including associations as well as nonprofit agencies. Earlier in the chapter we provided a theoretical framework for this new field of research. As perceptions of NPOs clearly depend on generalized trust, it is important to know where trust comes from and how to increase it. An intriguing finding is that trust appears to have virtually no genetic basis (Van Lange, Vinkuyzen, and Posthuma 2014) and is rooted entirely in unique environmental factors. Thus far, however, no study has been able to establish how generalized trust develops in social interactions. A society's level of economic inequality seems to be a detrimental macro-level factor for generalized social trust (Leigh 2006). It is likely that perceptions of NPOs are also affected by economic inequality. Future research should test this hypothesis as well as hypotheses on other macro-level context factors. Interdependence theory suggests that interactions of stakeholders with volunteers and NPOs affect perceptions. We encourage research on meso- and micro-level characteristics of stakeholders as predictors of such interactions. In addition, we encourage experimental research on perceptions of NPOs. Following the example of Schlesinger, Mitchell, and Gray (2004), survey experiments (Mutz 2011) are perfectly suited to examine how perceptions are affected by characteristics and behavior NPOs in conjunction with individual characteristics of stakeholders.

G. Cross-references

Chapters 43, 52, 53, and 58.

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