

Volunteering patterns in the context of Packe Street Park

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1.0. Executive Summary

1.1 Our research studies the volunteering patterns of a small-scale, local community garden and park, called Packe Street Park (PSP). The St. Albans East and Edgware community took ownership of the 2,301 square metre area after the two pre-existing houses became available on the market in 1995. Though there is a division of labour and responsibility with the Christchurch City Council, the maintenance of PSP is mostly dependent on volunteers. This is why our community partner, Di Lucas, approached us with an interest in understanding how to diversify and increase their volunteering community.

1.2. Our research questions are:

1. Are there demographics that are underrepresented in PSP volunteering, and why might this be?
2. What methods could be used to improve the identified demographics' representation in the Park?

1.3. Our methodology consisted of go-alongs, a focus group, and a door-to-door survey partnered with census analysis.

1.4. Our key findings were:

1. There are underrepresented demographics in the existing volunteering community of PSP.
2. Underrepresented demographics were found as individuals in young adulthood, those with school-age children, persons of Asian ethnicity and those new to the area.
3. A range of methods can be employed to increase community awareness and engagement with PSP, which we have outlined and discussed.

1.5. We recognise the following limitations across our research:

1. Low response rate to our survey.
2. Outdated census data.
3. Potential focus group and prestige bias.
4. An absence of in-depth explanation for non-volunteering nature due to our collection and analysis methods.
5. Recent alterations to PSP's coordination, officially unobserved by us.
6. Seasonal bias and human error in observational data.

1.6. Future research may be aimed at understanding the relationships or trends between demographic variables and volunteering patterns. This would allow a greater understanding of how to motivate and maintain volunteering participants from diverse demographics. There may also be value in adding a spatial component to analysis, such as

analysing the buffer zones of knowledge or participation around the park itself. Future research could also expand on this report by connecting further with non-volunteers, potentially through conducting focus groups with various community groups.

2.0. Introduction

Our report analyses the volunteering patterns of a small scale, community garden and park called Packe Street Park. Through discussion with our community partner, we identified their primary concern being the diversification of the existing volunteering community. We produced from this, and an analysis of relevant literature, our two research questions;

1. Are there demographics that are underrepresented in PSP volunteering, and why might this be?
2. What methods could be used to improve the identified demographics' representation in the Park?

In resolving these questions we aim to give feasible and relevant recommendations for diversification to our community partner.

This research also matters as an analysis of volunteering patterns for small scale, volunteer-based gardens could be utilised by other community groups struggling to achieve their mission due to a lack of participation. Furthermore, involvement in volunteering has benefits for an individual's physical and mental well-being (O'Brien, Townsend & Ebdon, 2010. Webb, et, al. 2017). In considering a wider context, this research could have potentially significant implications for mental health promotion. Study has found groups of people who volunteer are often those who can build more adaptive and thriving communities (Lovell, Gray & Boucher, 2015). This is critical in post-earthquake Christchurch where mental health issues are prevalent and, volunteering has previously been seen as a means of fostering resilience.

The report is structured to provide the reader with an overview of the pertinent literature, a summary and justification of our methodology, a combined review of results with discussion and explanation, recommendations for PSP and finally concluding remarks.

3.0. Literature Review

3.1. The Interest of Community Partner

The following review of literature will identify if there are missing demographics within volunteering worldwide and, more specifically, in New Zealand. After determining any common missing demographics, a theoretical framework will be presented. The framework will be used as a tool to gain an understanding of the diversity of demographics which will in turn help frame our future methods and research.

3.2. Demographics Surrounding Volunteering

The studies of Jardim and Marques da Silva (2018) and Allison, et al. (2005) have shown there are high numbers of young adults volunteering worldwide. Young adults involve themselves to escape from unemployment and precariousness, creating opportunities for skill development, increasing the opportunity to travel and cultural exchange (Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2018). Literature offers examples of college-level students' motivations such as the organisation's mission, work shift, task type, travel distance, and reference (Lee & Won., 2011). However, young adulthood can also become a busy time of life due to transitions into careers and full-time work (Li & Ferraro, 2006). This indicates what barriers can arise regarding their engagement in voluntary work.

Another age group with a high rate of volunteering worldwide is middle-aged adults. This is due to having children and being involved in school activities, sports and religious organisations. Older adults also have more time and the desire to contribute to society through environmental and community events (Li & Ferraro, 2006). However, participation for the oldest ages of adults can be limited by health decline, mental health issues and widowhood (Gray et al., 2012). This indicates that the demographics that are underrepresented throughout volunteering worldwide could include young adults with full-time jobs as well as young adults with children below the age of five. The oldest aged adults may be underrepresented in volunteering spheres as participation declines when these oldest ages are reached.

3.3. Demographics Surrounding Volunteering in New Zealand

Volunteering rates differentiate across social groups. Thornton and Clark (2010) stated that New Zealand's most common demographics of volunteers include women, Maori, part-time employees and people who have religious affiliations. This research re-establishes previous conclusions that volunteering increases with age. These national findings were replicated by Lovell, Gray, & Boucher (2015) where the study uncovered that people who volunteer, people who are older and people of Christian religion are likely to build more resilient, adaptive and thriving communities. This corroborates the Thornton and Clark (2010) paper and could suggest that people who volunteer may fit into one or more of these demographics. Based on these reports, we might expect the volunteering community at PSP to lack diversity in demographics regarding age, gender, working hours, ethnicity and religion.

3.4. Theoretical Framework

To help us design the research project, we considered the theoretical framework of the life course theory, explained in the literature. Gray, Khoo and Reimondos (2012) studied how participation in volunteering varies at different stages of life; delineated as the youth, young adults, middle-aged adults and older adults. This theory recognises there are barriers and benefits at each stage in life that can have controls on voluntary engagement. These could be factors such as more demographically

dense periods of life, as well as the important events and circumstances that occur at different stages. This is shown in previous literature when the barriers and benefits of engaging in voluntary work change across age groups. For example, Li & Ferraro (2006) conclude those in young adulthood experience barriers from this being a busy time of life and transitioning into full-time work. This theory will shape our research as the framework can be used as a tool of analysis to understand how social roles affect volunteering throughout the stages of younger, middle and later adulthood. On this analysis, it can be predicted what age groups are likely to be volunteering at PSP or underrepresented.

Literature has stated that volunteering could result in more harm than good for volunteers in specific life stages (Li & Ferraro, 2006). For example, encouraging an older adult with health issues to physically volunteer could result in adverse outcomes for the individual but benefit PSP. It is fundamental that the members of PSP are aware that increasing the community's diversity may benefit the park itself, yet could compromise the health and well-being of these new volunteers. These readings provide information that will advise the appropriate method towards encouraging voluntary environmental work at PSP.

4.0. Methodology

4.1. Go-along

4.1.1. The first method selected was a go-along at the Thursday and Saturday PSP working bees. A go-along is a practical method of collecting in-situ data by working in the study environment and collecting on-site mobile interviews (Bergeron, Pauquette, & Poullaouec-Gonidec, 2014). As a group, we participated in volunteering tasks such as weeding, trimming and clearing beds as well as socialising during the regular afternoon tea.

4.1.2. A go-along was chosen as an initial method of collecting qualitative data regarding PSP and its volunteers. Carpiano (2009) discusses that using quantitative techniques may yield data that is insufficient to provide insight into the real sense of belonging developed from links of people and place. It is expressed that vacant space can be transformed into a communal network provider; connecting participants into a social group. A go-along can produce narratives of the meaning of places and reveal landscape values (Bergeron, Pauquette, & Poullaouec-Gonidec, 2014). Literature also highlights the greater ability to understand the historical context of a place when qualitative methods such as a go-along are used (Carpiano, 2009). The relevance of this literature was evident in the context of PSP. Undertaking the go-along gave us a contextual understanding of the dynamics of space and place at PSP. It was found that socialising, especially during the afternoon tea, was a vital part of the scheduled working bee time. Fostering a social community at PSP was just as highly prioritised as volunteering tasks. The historical significance of the Park was appreciated as researchers, invoking passion for the project, and was recognised in the long-standing

connections volunteers had to PSP. The narratives produced were of volunteers more connected to PSP as a place of meaning than volunteering as an activity.

4.1.3. Practically, a go-along was beneficial as it was a way of forming initial relationships with the committed volunteers at PSP. From this, we were able to gather participants for a focus group. A go-along was very beneficial as it gave contextual understanding to shape future methodology and effectively informed all stages of the research process moving forward.

4.2. Focus group

4.2.1. Secondly, from the connections made at the go-along, a focus group was conducted with seven participants. These people were all volunteers at the Park, of both administrative and working bee roles. This focus group was conducted in a style mixing structured and open-ended questions to allow volunteers the freedom to discuss their own experiences with PSP.

4.2.2. A focus group was chosen as a further source of in-depth qualitative data. This method was utilised as the primary means of collecting data from the perspective of those who already volunteer at PSP. Focus groups have the potential to show a researcher how and why people think in a certain way and see collective perspectives emerging (Kitzinger, 1995). This allowed the participants to drive the interview, resulting in authentic opinions voiced in the individual's way (Kitzinger, 1995). During the focus group, personal insight was sought into what these volunteers thought were the incentives to volunteering at PSP, their own experiences at PSP, and the effectiveness of the current approaches used to attract volunteers to the Park.

4.2.3. Conducting a focus group was beneficial to our research as a high quality of data was able to be produced. This provided narratives of the unique perspectives, opinions and beliefs of those most connected to PSP. It was also practically useful to compare this data with the attitudes of our survey, which would aim to connect with non-volunteers.

4.3. Survey

4.3.1. The final data collection method in the process was a door-to-door community survey distributed in the surrounding residential area, within Edward Avenue, Madras Street, Barbadoes Street and Bealey Avenue. This boundary was chosen as literature has raised the idea that communities often exist within the boundaries of significant roads (Appleyard, 1980). Variable distribution times, including 1-5 pm Friday, Saturday and Sunday were chosen to limit bias and minimise the possibility of a specific demographic not being represented within the survey.

4.3.2. A survey was chosen as a means of collecting quantitative demographic data to complement the qualitative data produced from previous methods. While our survey

engaged both those who volunteer and those who do not, this method was primarily used to connect with individuals not currently volunteering at PSP. Further, this data was collected to understand the demographics of the surrounding community and provide information on indicators often relevant to volunteering, such as children or living situation of individuals.

4.3.3. The community survey method was beneficial to our research by providing data on the missing perspective of non-volunteers that was absent before. This was helpful in answering the research question of why there are underrepresented demographics at PSP. Also, the first-hand qualitative responses on why members of the community were not volunteering were beneficial to compare with the assumptions from current volunteers found in the focus group. The quantitative data collected was then analysed in conjunction with census data to understand the unique demographics of the community surrounding PSP.

5.0. Results // Discussion

5.1. What demographic is present in Packe Street Park volunteering, and why might they be volunteering.

PSP does not provide an exhaustive, or current, list of their volunteering community. The casual nature of the volunteering commitments making such a list unfeasible. Therefore, to determine the existing volunteering demographic, we utilised results from the qualitative data collection methods such as the go-along and the focus group. We recognise that observational techniques may assume narrowed results, e.g. we may observe what we believe to be a Pākehā individual but who may identify differently. As well as this, we observed over a short period and could not recognise trends or seasonal changes in volunteers. However, the volunteering community is overwhelmingly comprised of individuals who are 60+ years, of European / Pākehā ethnicity, with very few having young children living at home, and most having a long-term commitment to the area through residency upwards of 10, and even 20 years. The survey and focus group allowed for PSP volunteering respondents to express motivation for their participation. Recognising the survey's small population size of 100 is important. Estimated at a relatively low 1/8 response rate, this limitation weakens the reliability of the resulting data.

The survey did, however, establish that recreational use of the park was the predominant reason for visitation. 12% of respondents' recognised recreation and only 3% recognised harvesting as their primary motivations, with 6% recognising both as equal motivation.

There were some visible themes across the participants' self-identified motivation that we were able to extract; these have been displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. *Subjective volunteering motivations by broad themes and exemplifying quotations*

Themes in volunteering rationale	Quotations
Environmental	<p>“Learning more about gardening.”</p> <p>“Planting more trees.”</p>
Social	<p>“Good company.”</p> <p>"To feel a part of the community."</p>
Post-disaster resilience	<p>“[It was a] wonderful time for the community after the quakes, most people hadn’t experienced this before.”</p> <p>"Because of the Earthquake, I had reduced hours and could attend working bees."</p> <p>“Nothing says hope like planting a garden.”</p>
Mission statement attraction	<p>“Packer Street Park has been [an] exploration of what community volunteering means.”</p> <p>“Trying to keep this fantastic initiative going.”</p>

The motivations were of environmental and social rationale, as well as due to an association with post-disaster resilience (to the 2011 Christchurch earthquake) and the mission statement of PSP. It is critical to recognise within this stage of our analysis that there is potential for bias from both sources. The motivational rationale provided from the focus group participants may be biased, as they are existing and long-standing members of the PSP community who have an invested interest in the future of the park. The survey introduces the potential for prestige bias. This bias may occur as social pressures and norms act on respondents encouraging them to appear ‘good’ to us as the survey administrator. We would expect the ensuing bias to skew results towards ‘positive’ or exaggerated interests and motivations in volunteering.

5.2. What demographic exists within the surrounding area but is underrepresented in Packer Street Park volunteering, and why might they be absent.

If demographics were absent from the volunteering community yet present in the surrounding community, we considered them underrepresented.

Our group utilised the primary, qualitative data regarding the PSP community’s demographics, and compared this to both our primary quantitative survey data and the secondary quantitative census data.

The purpose of the comparison with census data was twofold; firstly, to increase the reliability of our survey responses, and secondly, to determine if the survey provided

a representative sample of the complete residential area’s demographics. Our survey included questions which were comparable with the census questions for this purpose. The suburbs chosen for comparison within the broader Christchurch data were St. Albans East and Edgeware. This decision was made as PSP is located within 200m of the Edgeware to St. Albans East suburb boundary and because this boundary falls across the determined survey distribution zone (justified above in section 4.3). It is important to recognise that the most current census data available was from the 2013 release, which lessens its reliability, as well as the aforementioned low response rate. However, these limitations do not make conclusions impossible to draw as both were used in comparison to offset random discrepancies particular to either data set. Through this analysis, we identified four primary demographics that are currently underrepresented. These are individuals (who fall into any or multiple of the following demographics); aged between 26-35 years, with children residing at home, of self-identified Asian ethnicity, or living in the Edgeware or St. Albans East area for less than five years.

5.2.1. Age

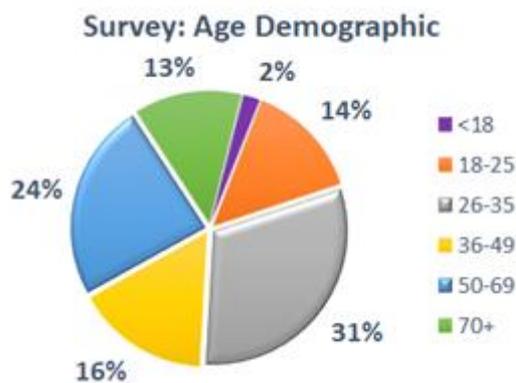


Figure 1. Age demographics from GEOG309 survey respondents 2018.

Figure 1 shows the age distribution for our survey population. The most significant represented age brackets were 26-35 years and 50-69 years. The latter age bracket was to be expected considering the dense representation of this age group in the PSP volunteering community. However, the 26-35 years bracket is present in the surrounding surveyed population but absent in PSP volunteering and thus underrepresented. To provide efficient and feasible recommendations to our community partner, we aimed to focus on only one underrepresented group from each demographic variable.

We found 20% of respondents identified as having dependent school-aged children. We consider this to be significant because it is higher than the Christchurch average of 17%. This above-average representation of school-aged children is not surprising considering over 45% of the surveyed population is between the ages of 26-49 years, and the median age for an NZ woman’s first birth is 28 years (Stats NZ, 2012), meaning the next 13 years of schooling for children could fall within the 26-49 years age bracket of the parents.

5.2.2. Ethnicity

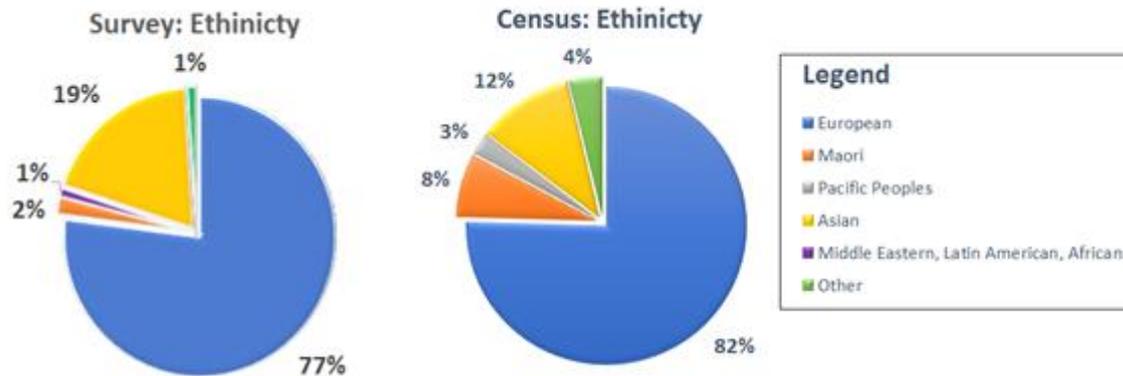


Figure 2. Ethnicity demographic from Census 2013 (RIGHT) and GEOG309 survey respondents 2018 (LEFT). (Census data may include double counts due to a person registering multiple ethnicities; as a result, it does not sum to 100%).

Figure 2 above shows the ethnic distribution for both our survey population and the census population. The comparison offers one example of why our survey was a relatively representative sample of the wider census data. The two most significantly represented ethnicities in both the survey and census populations were European/Pākehā and Asian. The former being expected in consideration of their density within the PSP community, however, individuals of Asian ethnicity are present in the surrounding community yet absent from PSP volunteering and thus underrepresented.

5.2.3. Length of St. Albans East // Edgware residency

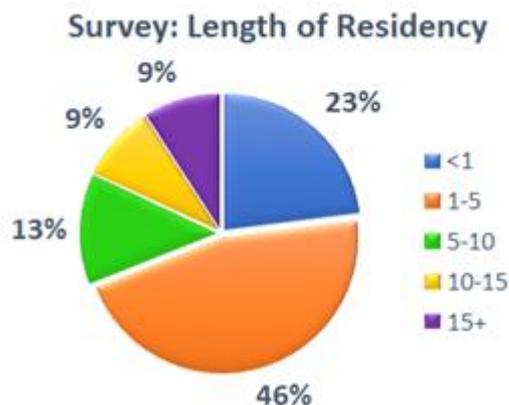


Figure 3. Length of residency by years, from GEOG309 survey data 2018.

Figure 3 shows the distribution for the length of residency within St. Albans and Edgware. 69% of the surveyed population had resided in the area for less than five years. This shows the importance of the survey as opposed to census analysis alone;

the census will omit residents who have resided in the area for less than five years due to its age. This means that the survey is the only means of these individuals being represented in this study. It also suggests that the PSP volunteering community are within the minority for the length of residency and that the area is either highly transient or that there has been an irregular influx of residents to the area within the last five years. This makes residents of less than five years an underrepresented demographic within PSP volunteering.

5.2.4. Possible explanations of underrepresented demographics.

The survey provided the respondent’s potential motivations to begin, or re-establish, volunteering activities at PSP. We recognise that the survey made excellent preliminary contact with non-volunteers (79% of respondents), but it did not facilitate in-depth accounts of why they do not volunteer. Retrospectively, this limitation could be mitigated if an additional interview method was employed. We analysed the available data through grouping responses into significant themes and determining their relative prioritisation (see Table 2 below).

Table 2. Self-identified potential motivations for current non-volunteers grouped by significant themes and in descending order of frequency, retrieved from GEOG309 survey data

Themes	Frequency (%)	Examples (quotations)
Better working bee hours	29	“More friendly working bee times.”
Nothing	29	
Advertisement / knowledge	14	“Haven’t heard about it.” “Advertising & signage.”
Other	10	
Don’t know	10	
Friend’s / children’s involvement	5	“If friends got involved.” “Family and friends' days.”
Better health/age difficulties	3	“If I was younger.”

We considered “nothing” and “don’t know” as separate responses because the latter suggests there may be an unidentified motivation that could arise in the future. To provide useful recommendations to our community partner, we will not include the “nothing” suggestion in our analysis. Also, the theme “other” included a variety of motivations such as greater volumes of produce to harvest, the ability to cultivate cannabis, more seasonal events and better weather. They were combined because all had 2% or less support individually.

Existing literature shows that the likelihood of an individual volunteering increases when their partner volunteers as well (Rotolo & Wilson, 2006). 90% of our survey respondents did not reside with individuals who volunteer in any capacity, and 65% of households had only 1 or 2 residents (identified living situation being either 'single' or 'partner'), thereby households contained fewer individuals to act as the motivating initial volunteer. This could explain the low general, and specific PSP, volunteering rates; 59% of respondents do not volunteer at all, and the next largest group of 24% volunteer only yearly.

More suitable working bee hours that fall outside of regular employment hours (9am-5pm) was a significant suggestion from non-volunteers. 85% of our surveyed population falls within the typical age range of employment (18-69 years); thus, unsuitable hours will be inhibiting a large portion of the available community from participating in the current, and most developed, working bee of 2pm-4pm Thursdays. This is corroborated by the resulting 53% saying that they are never home during the day on weekdays.

Advertisement and knowledge of PSP was also a significant theme, as this may explain the disconnect with the 69% of people who have resided in the area for less than five years, as they have had less time to become associated with the community. This was unsurprising as 49% of respondents had not ever heard of PSP, and 81% reported feeling no connection to the park.

Recommendations regarding the incorporation of friends and children, more specifically the call for encouraging children's participation in activities, suggests reasoning for the absence of adults with dependent children in PSP volunteering.

5.3. Methods which could be employed by Packe Street Park to diversify their volunteering community with particular reference to the absent demographics discussed above.

We recommend strengthening the Saturday working bees by increasing their coordination and consistency. A known structure allows participants to identify and involve themselves with their greatest interest (McDougle, 2011). Further, it has more potential to encourage those demographics associated with task-driven volunteering as well (Randle, & Dolnicar, 2009). We also recommend focusing on incorporating children-friendly activities. This will provide an opportunity for full-time weekday workers to volunteer and resolve potential barriers to demographics with young adults (Li, & Ferraro, 2006). Children's participation is known to increase the likelihood of parent's involvement in the same community; the age bracket associated with parenting school-aged children is characterised by increased parental volunteering in particular communities such as schools (Gray, Khoo, & Reimondos, 2012).

Literature references a shift towards self-interest in initial motivation for new waves of volunteers (Lee & Won, 2011. Jardim & Marques da Silva, 2018). This applies particularly to younger volunteers as they are in a demographically dense phase of

their lives and require extra motivation for commitment (Gray, Khoo, & Reimondos, 2012). We, therefore, recommend satisfying this motivation through introducing means of recognition for commitment. We recognise the fluidity of volunteering hours at PSP and thus suggest methods such as character references from the community or the park coordinator. This would be an excellent mode of initiating a connection with the park, from which altruistic motivation will develop (McDougle, 2011).

While recognising this shift in initial motivation, literature also shows that altruistic values develop with a continued commitment to volunteering communities once an individual feels socially connected to the enterprise (McDougle, 2011). We recommend developing the culture of socialising that already exists, such as the afternoon-teas, to foster a sense of community.

To ethnically diversify, we recommend a diversification of social events to demonstrate an acceptance of different cultures. For example, celebrating Diwali or a Chinese Lantern Festival to mark the New Year. Incorporation of existing Asian communities will increase their connection to, and knowledge of, the park as well as ensuring the festivities are sensitive to the culture's norms. Communities such as the Korean Presbyterian church, located south of the Park on Packe Street, or language schools for the area exist and are within local proximity of the Park.

Strengthening PSP marketing and advertising is recommended. This will increase knowledge within the community, and diversity across demographic variables. Modes of advertisement such as Instagram, Facebook and St. Albans Newspaper could be utilised further, as well as signage for the Park; as we were recommended directly from respondents. Focused advertisement on existing groups within the community such as churches, schools and language groups could target the underrepresented demographics. These methods are cost effective and not too excessive for the community's budget.

It is also possible that the responses indicating inhibitions due to "not knowing what it involves" are expressing of poor advertisement of PSP's mission statement. A mission statement that includes multiple and overlapping interests will benefit diversification in a volunteering community (Veen, 2015). Volunteering respondents showed a strong motivation due to the mission statement as well as the 2011 Christchurch earthquakes. Contemporary youth are shown to have a strong connection to environmentally focused communities due to increased exposure to ecological disaster (Measham & Barnett, 2008). Therefore, encouraging this image of PSP may connect youth to the Park's purpose.

We must recognise that during our observational period at PSP they were in the process of appointing a Park Coordinator. Since then, a coordinator has been appointed who may have implemented change. This potential change is absent from our results and recommendations.

6.0. Conclusion

Volunteering patterns of PSP have been identified through the use of a go-along, a focus group and a survey. The results have allowed for greater understanding of the St. Albans and Edgware community available for volunteering. With knowledge of the underrepresented demographics in PSP, recommendations have been compiled to improve the involvement of said underrepresented groups. PSP has exhibited a priority in cultivating a robust social community within the surrounding area. Future action by the park developed from the literature and our recommendations could lead to a larger, more diverse, volunteering base and stronger community.

We have recognised the limitations within our research and the methods we employed to offset or mitigate them. We have also observed research standards and norms. For these reasons, we believe the reliability of our research is ensured.

Final recommendations include improving the marketing and advertising strategy, vocalising the ethos or mission statement of the volunteering community, integrating a more ethnically diverse social event scheme, incorporating activities for children and families and improving the inclusion of new people to the area. Through these means, PSP, and St. Albans East and Edgware, shall benefit from a broader and more diverse volunteering community.

7.0. Acknowledgements

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