

Script for Understanding and Motivating Community Involvement
by Alexander Maki
Presented at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College on July 27, 2017

Slide 1:

Well, welcome and thank you all for being here today. I want to thank the Tribe and Sheila. I am really honored to have the opportunity to be here tonight to speak about something near and dear to my heart.

My name is Alex Maki. I hail from Nashville, Tennessee these days, where I'm a postdoctoral researcher at Vanderbilt University. But, I'm also a local boy who grew up in Cloquet, attended Washington Elementary, attended the middle and high schools here, and studied psychology and philosophy as an undergraduate at the University of Minnesota Duluth.

I moved to Minneapolis after college, where I served for a year in an AmeriCorps program, which is a national service program kind of like Peace Corps but focused on communities here in the United States. While in AmeriCorps, I helped individuals with mental illness find and keep community employment. I then worked for a year as a program manager for that AmeriCorps program.

After that, I attended graduate school at the University of Minnesota from 2009 to 2015, where I studied social psychology and got my PhD. Since then, I've been a researcher with the Vanderbilt Institute for Energy and Environment.

So, it's fun to be back home, and to have this opportunity to discuss community involvement with all of you.

2:

So, because we're in an educational setting, we have to start with a pop quiz, right? If you had to guess, what state in the nation has the highest percentage of citizens who report at least occasionally volunteering?

Minnesota is one of the top states in the nation in terms of volunteer rates. I guess we're trying to live up to our "Minnesota Nice" moniker.

3:

Here's the top ten list of states high in reported rates of volunteering according to 2015 data.

Link to report: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla>

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4:

Minnesota is number two, behind Utah, which actually leads the nation by a wide margin. I think Utah has such a high rate, in part, because volunteerism is a huge cornerstone of the Mormon faith.

Link to report: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla>

5:

If we look at volunteer rates by large cities in the U.S., we again get to give Minnesota some respect.

Link to report: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla>

6:

Minneapolis, St. Paul, and Bloomington were collectively the highest in the nation in 2015 rates of volunteering by large cities.

So, we're doing a fairly good job of getting people out and involved in their local communities.

Link to report: <https://www.nationalservice.gov/vcla>

7:

But, things aren't perfect by any means. Rates of volunteerism have declined slightly nationwide, and even more dramatically in Minnesota. Over the last ten years, the number of Minnesotans who say they volunteer has dropped by about 6 percent—the drop nationwide has been about 3 percent.

Link to article: <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2014/12/18/minnesota-volunteer-rate>

8:

And these trends are just a part of a much bigger story. Across the United States, we've seen steady declines in participation in civic life on a number of fronts. Over the last 35 years or so, people are less likely to volunteer, but they are also less likely to get involved in civic groups like Kiwanis and Rotary, less involved in religious and labor organizations. Even less involved in public groups like bowling leagues. Sociologist Robert Putnam wrote about these issues in a book called *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American Community*.

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Putnam puts forth the idea in his book that the causes of this decline are complex, but are partially because people have changed how they spend their time. Technology has replaced some of the community time we used to spend, as we're increasingly on the internet and Facebook. Some of these activities have a sort of communal aspect, though I think we can all agree they're quite different than being in a bowling league. We're glued to the news 24/7, we're watching Netflix a whole lot. Playing more video games. It's less and less common to actually find people out in their communities.

Link to book: https://www.amazon.com/Bowling-Alone-Collapse-American-Community/dp/0743203046/ref=sr_1_1?s=books&ie=UTF8&qid=1500760515&sr=1-1&keywords=bowling+alone

9:

Research has also found similar changes over time in people's orientations to their communities. A recent review looked at how college students' empathic concern, or their willingness to think about how other people experience life, has decreased from the 1980s to the middle 2000s. This has been about a 10% decrease in empathetic concern over 30 years.

Link to research:

<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/e611/0444b492accc811291c8954b1f4cf5d349d9.pdf>

10:

So, we could say that increasingly over time, we have let Calvin, from Calvin and Hobbes, become a spokesperson for our relationships with our communities.

11:

But, we should care. These findings are troubling for a number of reasons. First, the fact is that helping others and volunteering tends to be associated with positive physical and mental health, for people from all walks of life, but particularly for our elders.

Community involvement and volunteering also helps important nonprofit, community, and philanthropic organizations. There are many communities across the country that need help and assistance, and volunteering helps create and sustain positive work by these organizations in our communities. In 2016, the value of volunteering time was \$24.14 per hour; Americans contributed \$193 billion of their time to their communities.

Research also suggests that tightly-knit communities are safer, have less crime, less poverty, and less social isolation.

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Finally, it's a strong cultural tradition in our country. To be concerned about social issues and invested in finding solutions that benefit everyone.

So, we need to figure out ways to help people become more involved in their communities.

Link to health research: <http://bmcpublihealth.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2458-13-773> and
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Elizabeth_Lightfoot/publication/222100447_Effects_of_volunteering_on_the_physical_and_mental_health_of_older_people/links/5429a5fb0cf277d58e86facb.pdf

Link to research on organizational benefits (email if you want a copy):
http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1300/J079v08n01_01 and
<https://www.nptrust.org/philanthropic-resources/charitable-giving-statistics/>

Link to report on community well-being: <http://www.oecd.org/site/worldforum/33703702.pdf>

12:

So this is what I hope to accomplish tonight. First, I want to define and explain what social scientists call "prosocial behavior." By drawing on research, I want to explore why people engage in all types of prosocial behaviors, but particularly helping others, volunteering, and donating to charitable causes.

And, perhaps more importantly, I want to talk about scientific ways to motivate people to engage in prosocial behavior. How do we get people to help their neighbors? To volunteer? To donate to important causes?

I'm going to talk for about 45 minutes. After that, I'm hoping we can have a conversation as a group about these ideas and issues.

Now, if you have any questions as I talk here, feel free to raise your hand or shout out ideas or questions. I'm pretty informal. If your questions or comments are a little removed from the topic I'm discussing at any given moment, maybe save those comments and questions for the end, and then we can touch on all sorts of topics.

13:

So, I just floated a term that's probably new to a lot of you: "Prosocial behavior." Well, what is prosocial behavior?

14:

Scientists use the term prosocial behavior to refer to any actions aimed at benefiting other people. Types of prosocial behavior include helping people during emergencies, such as a disaster, helping relationships, such as helping an elderly neighbor with yardwork or helping a sibling by babysitting their kids.

Prosocial behavior also includes volunteering, or being involved in your community through a formal organization such as Big Brothers Big Sisters. Prosocial behavior can be community activism, which is usually defined as involvement in a community without the help of a formal organization, such as going out and hanging flyers about an issue you care about. Prosocial behavior also includes donation behavior, such as donating blood to the Red Cross or donating money to cancer research.

Link to research: http://www.civilszemle.hu/downloads/recenzios-anyagok-2011/Prosocial_AR.pdf

15:

Now scientists have tried to answer questions such as why do people engage in prosocial behavior in the first place?

It's actually an interesting question, if you think about it. Helping people takes time, energy. Sometimes it's awkward or boring. And yet, as we all know, it's a fairly common occurrence.

Link to research (the book is super expensive, but here's link):
<https://global.oup.com/academic/product/the-oxford-handbook-of-prosocial-behavior-9780195399813?cc=us&lang=en&>

16:

Sometimes it's quite the commitment. Take Rochelle Ripley, for example. Rochelle Ripley is a member of the Lakota tribe, and was a Top 10 CNN Hero Finalist in 2015. Through her nonprofit hawkwing, she has delivered an estimated \$9 million dollars in services and goods to Lakota people in need since 2000. An incredible feat initiated by a single individual, of course now supported by dozens of people.

Link to article: <http://www.cnn.com/2015/07/30/us/cnn-heroes-ripley/index.html>

Link to hawkwing: <https://www.hawkwing.org/>

17:

But not every effort of community involvement has to be Herculean. Scientists also try to understand why people engage in one-time volunteering activities in their local communities. These efforts still take time and commitment. They may ask you to step outside your comfort zone. So, why do people get involved in their local communities, such as helping veterans or working to help the earth?

Link to Volunteer Services of Carlton County, Inc: <http://vscci.com/>

Link to The Yellow Ribbon Registry Network: <https://www.yellowribbonnetwork.org>

Link to Honor the Earth: <http://www.honorearth.org/>

18:

So we can ask why prosocial behavior happens at all. We can also ask what factors are linked to who will and will not help others.

Scientists have studied pretty much any explanation you could think of. Some have actually looked at how certain human genes are linked to helping. Some scholars have explored demographics linked to helping, such as gender or age. Developmental scientists have studied how upbringing, early life experiences, and parenting approaches are linked to children's helping behavior.

However, today I want to focus on factors we can have more of an influence on. Scientists have also looked at how people's emotions and motivations are linked to prosocial behavior. Social factors have been linked to prosocial behavior, such as the types of people we spend time with and how we feel about our communities. And finally, even policy can influence helping behavior.

So, I'm going to focus on these last four factors tonight. Emotions, motivations, social influence, and policies.

19:

And, I think it's useful to start with the first research on prosocial behavior in social psychology. It will help us understand what motivated scientists to first study prosocial behavior, but also HOW scientists tried to originally study prosocial behavior. And it started with research on helping in emergencies.

20:

And, it goes back to a tragic event, the murder of Kitty Genevese. Has anyone here heard of this event? Do you recall what happened?

Well, back in 1964, a young woman, Kitty Genevese, was heading home from work late at night. She managed a bar in Brooklyn, and as she arrived home and exited her car to walk to her apartment, she was attacked by a stranger. And this man stabbed her, and as she was being attacked, she screamed for help. A number of neighbors reportedly heard the screams, and one of them yelled out of his window at the attacker, and the attacker actually stopped his attack and fled.

Kitty struggled to the rear entrance of her apartment, but was unable to actually enter her apartment given her state. Neighbors supposedly saw the attacker leave in a car. But, he returned 10 minutes later, found Kitty still struggling to enter her apartment building, and killed her.

Link to more information about the Kitty Genevese murder:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_Kitty_Genovese

21:

The initial news coverage was limited, but once the story caught on there was a general belief that there were many witness to the murder, some estimated as high as 37 people, that nobody had made a personal effort to physically intervene, and very few people even bothered to call the police. There's been some historical debate about how lacking, exactly, the response of the neighborhood was to the event. But, regardless of exactly how many people knew and how many people failed to take some sort of action, the example still makes it pretty clear that people can sometimes be shockingly unresponsive to people in need.

22:

If you pay attention to the news, you can find similar events taking place fairly frequently. This is from Chicago in 2016. A man was crossing the street one night, and it wasn't apparent why this happened, but someone came up to him and punched him in the head, apparently knocking him out. Witnesses saw the event, but nobody rushed to help or intervene. In security camera video, you can see cars drive around his unconscious body. Eventually, a cab unknowingly ran over his body, killing him.

Afterward, his aunt, while talking to the Chicago Tribune stated: "I've never heard of anything like this where people just walk by a person lying in the street and nobody helped. I just don't understand it."

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Well, these kinds of events were the tragic inspiration for social psychologists to do just that-- try to understand why sometimes people don't help. And they designed a series of experiments to try to understand what they called the diffusion of responsibility, or the fact that people feel less responsible to help others when a lot of other people are around.

Link to article: <https://www.rt.com/usa/340554-marques-gaines-chicago-bystanders-effect/>

23:

I want to show a brief clip from a report on this research, to give you a sense of how they went about trying to understand this diffusion of responsibility effect. In this clip, you will see an example of an experimental study that John Darley and Bibb Latane ran back in the 60s and 70s, trying to test when people do and do not help.

So Darley and Latane ran a bunch of experiments over the years, where study participants were randomly assigned to, in this case, being the sole communicator with another individual during the study, or they were part of a larger group communicating. And in both experimental conditions, participants were led to believe someone was experiencing a heart attack and required help.

They found across many studies that the more people around when someone is in need of help, the less likely it was that any given individual will help. Diffusion of responsibility.

Link to video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q9Qf_omTFJE

24:

Well, what can we do to make people feel responsible for others? How can we make it more likely they'll care, and thus more likely they'll act to help others?

One approach is to try to inspire empathy in them. Make them aware of people in need, and help them put themselves in the other person's shoes.

We know from a lot of research that empathy is linked to a number of prosocial behaviors, so if we could increase empathy, we can increase community involvement.

Link to research:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Nancy_Eisenberg/publication/19598630_The_Relation_of_Empathy_to_Prosocial_and_Related_Behaviors/links/0f31753323eheadf81000000.pdf

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25:

So, in terms of tools and strategies to increase community involvement, I want to first focus on helping inspire empathy in people. How do we get people to care? How do we get them to develop empathy?

26:

First, and arguably the most effective way to elicit empathy, is to have people experience what others experience.

27:

Some research has actually used role-playing to build empathy through asking people to experience what another person experiences. In one such study, medical students were admitted to stay overnight in a hospital to experience hospitalization from a patient's perspective. The students who participated expressed greater interest in improving doctor-patient relationships, suggesting that this roleplaying exercise evoked empathy for patients.

So when possible, if trying to get people to feel empathetic toward others, give them brief experiences similar to the people you hope they empathize with.

Link to research:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Jerome_Hoffman2/publication/11325213_Students_benefit_from_experience_of_hospitalization/links/54171d00cf2f48c74a3f4b3.pdf

28:

Relatedly, empathy can be inspired by getting to know people with different life experiences and backgrounds. It may not be advisable to actually experience what someone else is experiencing when they are suffering. But, learning about their lived experiences can still help.

29:

A ton of research has tried to understand how do we help people decrease their biases toward members of other social groups. People living in poverty, people of different races, people with different sexual orientations, people from different parts of the country, people who COME from other countries.

A review of 500 studies on the topic back in 2008 revealed that one of the best ways to both decrease bias towards other social groups AND inspire empathy in people is to actually interact with people from those social groups. Get to know someone with a different background,

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particularly in a context where it's feasible that they could become a friend. That really makes a difference. This is partly what is so wonderful about educational opportunities for kids, teenagers, and young adults, where they have the chance to meet people from all different walks of life. They become more likely to develop empathy for others.

Link to research (email if you want a copy):

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ejsp.504/full>

30:

Well, sometimes you can't or don't want to experience what others experience. And, sometimes you can't easily get to know someone from a different social group. So another option to inspire empathy is to ask people to imagine how others feel.

31:

Mentally put yourself in someone else's shoes, if you can't do it physically. Some techniques ask people to consider how someone else feels. In one study, people were asked to imagine the life and feelings of someone from a stigmatized group, such as a person living with HIV/AIDS or a homeless individual. This led people to feel more positively toward that stigmatized person, and actually led people to feel more positively toward the entire social group.

Link to research: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Eddie_Harmon-Jones/publication/14200952_Empathy_and_Attitudes_Can_Feeling_for_a_Member_of_a_Stigmatized_Group_Improve_Feelings_Toward_the_Group/links/0fcfd51179ff76842b000000.pdf

32:

Another approach we sometimes see in public service announcements and request for donations is to use narrative to help someone learn about another person.

33:

So narrative is telling a story to help get across a point or motivate an action.

Here's an advertisement from St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, which is always looking for donations to fund research on types of cancers affecting children. This advertisement introduces us to Hayden. He lives with cancer, but it also tells us how he likes adventures, golfing, fishing, and riding his bike. This approach helps us get to know someone, in a sense, that is having a life experience that they need help with. It puts a face to a need. It makes it more personal.

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So narratives give us a window into the lived experiences of others who may need help or support. In one study on organ donation, when people were given narrative information about someone who needed an organ donation, people felt more empathy for the individual, and subsequently increased their own intentions to donate their organs after they pass away.

Narratives can be used in billboards and messages, commercials and documentaries. They can be relatively quick and easy to use.

Link to research (email if you want a copy):
<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00909889809365508>

34:

Another approach is to work activities into classrooms that help students develop empathy.

35:

So, these are examples of activities used in some classrooms to help students develop empathy. The activity on the left asks students to imagine being on a playground and seeing someone get pushed down, and then asks the student to put themselves in the shoes of the person who got pushed down.

The activity on the right asks students to imagine a number of scenarios, and to try to feel how that person feels in that situation. So, the third example is “Brooklyn shared that her cat died this past weekend. How do you think Brooklyn feels? How can you respond?”

A recent scientific review on this topic found that most of these programs aren’t informed by science, and thus many of them may be ineffectual, but when these empathy-teaching activities are guided by science, they tend to lead to small increases in students’ emotional abilities over time.

Link to research: http://www.tinamalti.com/assets/malti_et_al_jccap_2016.pdf

36:

Finally, there’s some brand-new research that came out of Vanderbilt this year on national service, and how national service influences the amount of empathy people serving develop.

37:

So national service programs like Senior Corps, Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, and Teach for America, are all national service programs where people usually serve for one to two years in

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communities in need, either here in the United States, or in other nations around the world. Older adults serving in Senior Corps may help run an afterschool program. People serving in Teach for America serve in schools that need extra assistance to help students get the attention and skills they need.

This recent research was actually on Teach for America service members specifically, and they found that people who serve in Teach for America not only develop more empathy for people living in poverty, but that change in empathy lasts AT LEAST seven years, which is how long they collected data for this study. So this wasn't some short-lived change in empathy, this was arguably a life changing experience for them.

Link to more information on this research (I don't think it has been published yet):

<https://news.vanderbilt.edu/2017/07/19/teach-for-america-service-leads-to-empathy/>

38:

Alright, that's overwhelming, probably, and I went through that pretty fast. But, what I hope you take away from all of this work is that empathy is a good thing for society, by and large, and there are lots of ways to inspire empathy in ourselves and others, including experiencing what others experience, getting to know people from other walks of life, imagining how others feel, learning about others' narratives, and experiences like classroom activities and even national service.

Thoughts on these approaches?

Well, I actually want to stay on empathy for just a bit more, because I've found in research with some of my colleagues that empathy is also important for determining the QUALITY of help people provide to others.

39:

Now, you're probably familiar with the adage "Give a man a fish, feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish, feed him for a lifetime." Well, scholars have explored this kind of distinction in relation to helping behavior.

The first is called "autonomy-oriented helping," which is a mouthful, but essentially means helping someone else to develop skills and knowledge so they can help themselves in the future. So, teaching someone to fish.

The other form of helping is called "dependency-oriented helping." Also a mouthful, but this is essentially solving someone else's problems for them. So, giving a person a fish, which solves their temporary hunger, but doesn't feed them the next time they're hungry.

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Link to research:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Arie_Nadler/publication/227730148_Inter-Group_Helping_Relations_as_Power_Relations_Maintaining_or_Challenging_Social_Dominance_Between_Groups_Through_Helping/links/0912f50f7bf39afee5000000/Inter-Group-Helping-Relations-as-Power-Relations-Maintaining-or-Challenging-Social-Dominance-Between-Groups-Through-Helping.pdf

40:

So let's make this more concrete. Imagine you volunteer with a nonprofit that focuses on helping veterans returning from service, and a veteran comes in and needs help creating a resume. You could help in two different ways. You could take the information about their past job experiences and skills and craft the resume for them yourself. Or, you could spend time helping the veteran craft their own resume, so the next time they need to create a resume or change their existing resume for a new job, they will have a better sense of how to do it themselves.

The first type of help would be an example of dependency-oriented help. The veteran is being helped, but not really learning any new skills. The second type is autonomy-oriented help, because you're teaching the veteran how to create and update their own resume.

So, autonomy-oriented helping, or teaching or empowering a person. And dependency-oriented helping, or solving someone's problem for them.

Well, when possible, we hope people help others in such a way that it empowers them, not just solves a temporary problem that may reemerge again.

41:

My colleagues and I developed a measure of people's helping preferences. You can find a copy of it, the Helping Orientations Inventory, on my website, totally for free. And what we found was that people high in empathy prefer to provide autonomy-oriented help to others, so they want to teach people in need new skills.

People with a bit of empathy, not as much as people who prefer to give autonomy-oriented help, preferred to provide dependency-oriented help, or wanted to solve others' problems for them.

Finally, we found that people with very little or no empathy were actually opposed to helping others. So, if we help inspire empathy in others, it makes it more likely the helping will be more autonomy-oriented and will empower those in need.

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Link to research: http://www.alexmaki.com/uploads/5/1/9/7/5197184/maki_et_al._-_the_helping_orientations_inventory__accepted_version.pdf

Link to the Helping Orientations Inventory:

http://www.alexmaki.com/uploads/5/1/9/7/5197184/hoi_scales_and_scoring.pdf

42:

Now, I opened with volunteer rates across the country. So, let's return to volunteerism again, and use it as a context to discuss motivation to help.

43:

So what is volunteering exactly? Volunteering is kind of a unique prosocial behavior in some ways because it's planned, unlike helping in emergencies, which we discussed. There's often little formal obligation to do it, unlike helping family members or friends. It can come with considerable personal cost, as volunteering may last months or even years, so there's a real time and energy cost to many volunteers. And, it's often facilitated through some organization.

Scientists trying to understand and inspire volunteering have often considered motivations for volunteering.

Link to a book on prosocial behavior, including volunteerism, which explores a ton of relevant research: <https://www.amazon.com/Social-Psychology-Prosocial-Behavior/dp/080584936Xh>:

44:

And, a lot of this work reveals around five common motivations why people volunteer. This isn't an exhaustive list, but it's helpful and captures many of the reasons why people volunteer.

One is the values motivation. So, someone may say "I volunteer because it's the right thing to do." This would be a values motivation. This is by far the most common motivation people report, but particularly older adults who volunteer and often want to leave a better world for their children and grandchildren.

Some people say that they volunteer for what is called understanding. So, they want to learn about a new culture, or they want to pick up new skills. Perhaps grow as a person. So, not necessarily the empathy focus that is all about just helping someone. A little bit more of "what's in it for me."

Link to research: <https://xa.yimg.com/kq/groups/20454064/692910115/name/Clary+et+al.pdf>

45:

People also report wanting to volunteer for career-related reasons. So, maybe get experience in a new field or network with others in the hopes of securing a future job. A fair amount of teenagers and young adults report this as an important volunteer motivation, particularly if they want to go into social work or service types of occupations.

People also report volunteering for social reasons. They want to meet people or they think their family members want them to. So a bit of social pressure, really.

46:

And finally, one motivation I love to talk about because it is very much focused on one's self, some people volunteer for what we call enhancement motivation. I want to feel better about myself. I feel good about who I am when I'm helping others.

Now, people very rarely say the only reason they're volunteering is to feel good about themselves. But, when asked, some people do report that it is one motivation, often among a few.

People often have very strong reactions to the idea that some people volunteer in part to feel good about themselves. They might feel like this is wrong. People should help because they want to help others, not because they want something out of it. I have gathered data from AmeriCorps service members, with paper-and-pencil surveys, and a couple of them actually wrote in the margins of the survey next to these kinds of items that the idea was offensive that some people may serve in AmeriCorps to feel better about themselves.

But, as a scientist, there is value in having an accurate picture of why people volunteer. And, as someone who wants to play a role in increasing rates of volunteerism, knowing people's motivations is useful.

47:

Useful, how? Well, a lot of great research has crafted messages and advertisements that fit people's different motivations.

So, if you think a lot of people in your community would volunteer because they want make a difference in their communities, then design a video or an advertisement that demonstrates that the volunteer opportunity will allow people to really make a difference.

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If you think people in your community may volunteer because they want to improve their career prospects, then design a video or an advertisement that demonstrated that the volunteer opportunity will allow people to pick up skills and improve their resume.

48:

So, that kind of video pushes the idea that what has sometimes been called “slacktivism,” or online activism, may not accomplish much, and for those who truly want to make a difference, they should volunteer.

49:

Of course, that has a highly-polished message, but messages can be a lot more simple. So here’s an example from United Way that has a values focus. These kinds of messages and advertisements should make people with values volunteer motivation more likely to pay attention, potentially reach out for more information, and even volunteer.

50:

This kind of advertisement, from Crafton Hills College in California, demonstrates how you might target people who see volunteering as an opportunity as a chance to gain near career-related skills.

51:

Or, these kinds of advertisements are harder to find, but if you were working with a group whom you felt was motivated in part to feel better about themselves, you could use this kind of message, focusing on the enhancement motivation.

52:

So, why do we care about trying to match advertisements or messages to people’s volunteer motivations? Well, first there’s experimental evidence that matching messages to people’s motivations indeed makes them more interested in volunteering. They pay attention, learn more, reach out, give it a shot.

Research, including some work I’ve conducted with my colleagues, has also found that people who have volunteer experiences that match their motivations tend to be more satisfied with their volunteer position and tend to stick in it for longer, which is important because volunteer burnout and volunteer turnover is something all nonprofits struggle with.

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So, if you design effective and genuine messages, you'll draw more interest, and potentially, if the opportunity matches your description, more satisfied and more long-term volunteers.

Alright, one volunteer motivation I kind of glossed over was social motivations.

Link to research: http://www.alexmaki.com/uploads/5/1/9/7/5197184/maki_et_al._-_the_helping_orientations_inventory__accepted_version.pdf

53:

So let's chat for just a little bit about social influences on prosocial behavior, including volunteerism.

54:

In 2010, an amazing 43% of volunteers stated that they volunteered because they were personally asked to. So, maybe a family member, friend, partner, church leader, etc., asked them to volunteer. Personal requests can be an incredibly powerful tool to inspire people to volunteer and become involved in their communities.

And this fact relates to a very traditional area of research in social psychology on persuasion.

Link to report: https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/volun_01262011.pdf

55:

Specifically, some of this research explores how the source of a request matters. So, who is asking you to volunteer? Characteristics of the source asking you to help make it more or less likely that you'll be persuaded to help.

First, is the person asking you to help an expert on the topic?

Link to research (email if you want a copy): <http://psycnet.apa.org/record/1954-05952-000>

56:

This is brief clip from an old comedy called "Spies like Us," and in this scene Dan Akroyd and Chevy Chase are pretending to be doctors.

So...would you follow a request from these so-called doctors? If they asked you to volunteer with some basic medical responsibilities in a volunteer clinic, would you say yes? Unlikely, because their fake expertise is quite obvious.

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However, if a real doctor in your community said that they needed some basic, volunteer help in a local clinic, you will be more likely to help.

57:

What about do you like the person asking you to help? This is distinct from expertise and even trustworthiness.

58:

Same, maybe you aren't a Belieber, and if Justin Bieber asks you to help out for an important cause, you'll probably be more likely to say no to Justin Bieber.

But, if someone you really like and respect, such as a family member, asks you to volunteer, then you'll be more likely to volunteer.

59:

And finally, are they like you? This is partially why it's so important that people from our own social groups ask us to get involved in the community. Like-you-ness isn't exactly scientific phrasing, but I think it pretty well captures what I'm going for.

And I really mean like-you-ness in a lot of ways. Demographics, so gender, race, or income. Age. Physical appearance such as the types of clothes you wear. The more the person asking you to volunteer is like you, the more likely it will be that you will say yes.

60:

So, if a Chicago Bulls fan asked me to help out with some social cause, given I'm a huge Minnesota Timberwolves fan, I might decline. They're not enough like me. Well, to be honest, I might help a Chicago Bulls fan because we completely ripped them off in the Jimmy Butler trade, and I kind of feel bad for them. So, I might help.

Anyway, your relationship with the person requesting you to help or volunteer makes a big difference.

61:

So, if you want to get more people out into the community, make sure the person asking others to get involved are an expert somehow related to the topic. Make sure they are likeable. And make them more like the community you are talking to. These are general persuasion principles

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relating to WHO is requesting someone to change their attitudes or behavior, and the principle holds for asking people to get involved in the community.

What also matters is your relationship to the wider community.

62:

Sense of community also matters. Sense of community is how much you identify with, and derive meaning from, the communities in which you are a member. So, how do you feel to be a member of the Ojibwe tribe? How do you feel to be a Cloquet citizen? A Minnesotan? An American? People who have positive feelings about their community are more likely to get involved in their communities.

There's been some experimental research on the topic. In one study, researchers partnered with a nonprofit to develop workshops aimed at helping people affected by HIV/AIDS develop greater sense of community among themselves. Some people were randomized to taking part in a workshop focused on developing sense of community with other people affected by HIV/AIDS. And other people affected by HIV/AIDS were randomized to taking part in a workshop just focused on learning more about living with HIV/AIDS, but not building sense of community.

And what they found was that individuals who took part in the sense of community workshop felt more connected to other individuals living with HIV/AIDS, they later participated in more activism and advocacy behaviors on behalf of AIDS-related issues, and were actually more likely to engage in HIV prevention behaviors afterward.

So, one's sense of community can be closely linked to advocating on behalf of one's community, and can even lead to people potentially taking better care of themselves.

Link to research:

<http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.972.5696&rep=rep1&type=pdf> and information on more research (email if you want a copy)

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2010.00667.x/full>

63:

Alright, we've discussed empathy, motivations, and social influences on prosocial behavior. I want to discuss one other factor, something I'm going to call policy influences.

64:

And, I want to highlight some interesting research on policy and organ donation.

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So, you may or may not know that each year 8,000 people die in the United States while waiting for an organ donor, not to mention the huge number of people who suffer a decreased quality of life because of a lack of donors.

Any idea what percentage of Americans state that they support organ donation?

Any guess how many Americans are signed up to be an organ donor?

So, there's a huge gap in people's attitudes toward organ donation and their own actual registration numbers. This is actually a common phenomenon that scientists wrestle with all the time. People don't always act on their good attitudes or intentions.

But, it demonstrates a point I love. Sometimes it's not about helping people feel empathy, or address their motivations to improve their own lives. It doesn't even have to be about social influence.

Link to organ donation statistics: <https://www.donatelife.net/statistics/>

65:

If you look at organ donation rates across other countries, European countries here, you find out something fascinating. Some countries have incredibly low donation rates. So here, Denmark, only 4.25% of people donate their organs. Germany is 12%. Netherlands is 27.5%.

Other countries have incredibly high rates of organ donation. Austria, 99.98%. Belgium, 98%. Sweden, 85.9%.

You'll notice, the US is somewhere in the middle of these two groups, actually.

Any guesses why we see these vastly different rates of organ donation across these European countries?

Good guesses; the huge difference between these two groups of countries is their policy. The countries on the right have what is called an opt-out program. Essentially, everyone is automatically signed up to be an organ donor when they pass away, and they can only NOT be a donor by actively opting out, and saying that want to be removed from the program.

Alternatively, countries on the left have opt-in programs, where people have to explicitly state at some point, "Yes, I would like to donate my organs after I pass away." This incredibly subtle policy difference, between opt-in and opt-out programs, leads to this amazingly large difference in organ donation rates.

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So sometimes it's not just empathy, motivation, or social influences. Policy influences can play an important role.

66:

One context in which this is clear is donations to philanthropic causes. Opposite of volunteer rates in the U.S., Americans ARE actually giving more to philanthropic organizations. Americans gave \$370 billion in 2016 to philanthropic organizations. This reflects a 4% increase from 2015, and you can see the total trend from 1975. If you control for growth in population over time, you still see a significant increase in donations over time.

Well, how can philanthropic organizations and social causes further increase their ability to receive donations?

Link to report: <https://www.nptrust.org/philanthropic-resources/charitable-giving-statistics/>
and <http://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/almanac/statistics/>

67:

First, make it super clear you're looking for donations, and what those donations will go toward.

Link to book on defaults: <https://www.amazon.com/Nudge-Improving-Decisions-Health-Happiness/dp/014311526X>

68:

If you want or need people to donate money, advertise it. And, make it clear, if possible, what the money will specifically go toward.

69:

Some organizations have even started to tell potential donors what different amounts of donations will go toward. So, donating \$15 to this organization will go toward giving an adult with a developmental disability one hour of service. \$75 will purchase one week's supply of diapers for all of their early childhood programs. And you can see right down the list what your money will help this organization accomplish.

This kind of information makes it obvious what your money is helping accomplish.

70:

Second, make it as easy as possible to donate or get involved.

71:

So, super obvious. But, if you want people to donate, give them options for how to donate. For example, PayPal, support for different card companies. The more ways they can donate money, the easier it will be for them to donate money.

72:

Also, if you're designing a website that asks for donations, or a message, make it super easy to spot the donation button. Don't make people hunt around your message or website how the donation link. Make the donate button clear, obvious, and make it stand out.

73:

Third, when possible, make it automatic.

74:

If this was the donation website for some cause, the automatic donation amount has an influence on how much people donate.

Here, when people log onto this page, the default is \$10. If you were to make it so \$15 was automatically selected, you might lead to, on average, higher donation amounts. This isn't because people just mindlessly donate, per se, but because the starting point frames how they think about what a reasonable donation amount is.

Link to research: https://www.econstor.eu/bitstream/10419/107311/1/cesifo_wp5118.pdf

75:

This is not a charitable cause, but a real-world example. Starbucks has an app, and you can use that app to upload more money into your account. And they set an automatic amount that you should upload. And, people probably tend to just upload the default amount.

76:

So, make donation amounts automatic, and fourth, make donation amounts expected.

77:

So, the range of options on a donation page can influence how much people donate. Experimental research exists on this topic as well, and what that work tends to find is that if you are looking for lots of smaller donations, having a lower range of donation amounts leads to more donations, though donations of less money. And if you're looking for larger donations, a higher range of donation amounts leads to larger amounts of donation, but from fewer donors. So, if you have a sense of how much folks you're targeting tend to donate, this could influence your strategy.

Link to research:

http://home.uchicago.edu/ourminsky/Charity_Default_Goswami_Urminsky.pdf

78:

You see similar approaches at some restaurants if they ask people to pay using an iPad or something similar. On those devices they'll actually give you three options for tip amount, and 15%, which is a decent tip amount, is framed as essentially the cheap skate option. Don't want to feel like a cheap skate? Better tip 20 or 25%.

79:

Fifth, and finally, make donating rewarding.

80:

One way to do this with donating is something I've actually seen done here at the intersection of Highway 45 and Carlton Avenue, which is to give people feedback on where the donation effort stands. Experimental research suggests that people actually donate more when a cause's donation efforts actually get closer to the goal. So, using a donation thermometer like this lets people know how close the cause is to their donation goal, which makes it more tangible and satisfying to donate. And, one idea might be to have multiple levels to the goals. So have a \$10,000 goal first, then \$20,000, then \$30,000. If people donate the closer the thermometer is to the top, well give them more chances to help reach a smaller goal.

Link to research:

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Cynthia_Cryder/publication/272079048_Goal_gradient_in_helping_behavior/links/553e57160cf210c0bda9b734.pdf

81:

Another way to make it rewarding is to tell them they just accomplished something with their donation. Instant, gratifying feedback. Tell them how they just helped. Maybe even offer testimonials from people who have been helped by similar donations, which combines this rewarding principle with the narrative idea from inspiring empathy.

82:

So, these principles can help generate prosocial behaviors of all types, but particularly in the donation context, designing your request for donations in these manners can help generate more donations. Have a clear goal, make it easy, make it automatic, make it expected, and make it rewarding.

83:

So, hopefully you've found these examples interesting, hopefully you've learned a bit more about social science, and how scientists go about trying to learn more about the world through research. And, if you're concerned about motivating community involvement, hopefully I've given you some ideas and tools to use.

84:

Just to quickly summarize, there are many factors linked to prosocial behavior that we can do something about.

So, we discussed ways to inspire empathy in others. Our experiences walking in others' shoes or meeting people from different social groups can inspire empathy. Narratives give people more insight into others' lives as well. And activities like educational lessons and even service opportunities can lead to increased empathy.

Understanding people's motivations for volunteering is important, as is matching advertisements and recruitment efforts to people's motivations.

Social factors can be important. Ask people to volunteer personally, particularly if you have things in common with the person you're asking. Try to elicit a sense of community in others. Used legitimate experts, people who are likable, people like the community you're asking for help from.

Finally, think about how structure your requests for help or donations. Make it clear, easy, automatic, expected, and rewarding.

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85:

Let me close with quote, when talking about service and community involvement it's almost mandatory to have a quote from Martin Luther King Junior. He once said "Life's most persistent and urgent questions is 'What are you doing for others?'"

Let's inspire people to become more involved in their communities.

86:

But, I can't help but offer another insightful quote, this one from the Dalai Lama. "The intelligent way to be selfish is to work for the welfare of others."

87:

Or, as Paul Wellstone used to say, "We all do better when we all do better."

88:

I want to thank you all for your attention and the opportunity to speak here tonight. We can continue the conversation now, but if you have to leave and want to reach out, feel free to send me an email. Or, check out my website, where you can find a lot more information about my work, including access to almost all of my papers, my blog, where I often write about my research in less technical language, and even some of the measures I've developed with my colleagues. I'll also put these slides up for free on my website, along with all of my talk notes and links to the research I discussed.

And, if you want to sign up for email updates of my new blog posts, there's a sign-up list in the back.

I also want to give a plug for a second talk I'm going to be offering with the help of the college here, specifically on environmental behavior change. It will have a similar structure and length as this talk, but all of the material will be new and will focus on environmental issues and behavior. So, if people have questions about environmental behavior or climate change beliefs tonight, or social science in general, I'm also happy to have a conversation about those issues.

So, let's open it up for questions, thoughts, and criticisms.