Understanding and Motivating Community Involvement

Alexander Maki, PhD
Vanderbilt Institute for Energy and Environment

Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College
July 27, 2017
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Minnesota's volunteers are a generous bunch, but there are fewer of them

Jon Collins · St. Paul, Minn. · Dec 18, 2014
BOWLING ALONE
THE COLLAPSE AND REVIVAL OF AMERICAN COMMUNITY
Robert D. Putnam
Figure 1. College students’ Empathic Concern scores by period
Note: Capped vertical bars denote ± 1 SE.

Konrath et al. (2011)
I've decided to stop caring about things.

If you care, you just get disappointed all the time. If you don't care, nothing matters, so you're never upset.

From now on, my rallying cry is, "So what?"

That's a tough cry to rally around.

So what?!
So What?

Jenkinson et al. (2013); Lum & Lightfoot (2005); Gidron (1985); Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2001)
Plan for Tonight

• What is prosocial behavior and why do people engage in it?

• How can we motivate people to engage in prosocial behavior?

• Summary and conversation
Understanding Prosocial Behavior
Prosocial Behavior

- Prosocial behavior:
  - Actions beneficial to other people
    - Helping during emergencies
    - Helping relationships
    - Volunteering
    - Community activism
    - Donating

Penner et al. (2005)
Prosocial Behavior

• Why does prosocial behavior happen at all?
  ▫ Requires a cost to the helper, sometimes a substantial amount
Prosocial Behavior

• Why does prosocial behavior happen at all?
  ▫ Requires a cost to the helper, sometimes a substantial amount

• What factors are linked to who will help?
  ▫ Genes
  ▫ Demographics
  ▫ Upbringing/experiences
  ▫ Emotions
  ▫ Motivations
  ▫ Social influences
  ▫ Policies

Schroeder & Graziano (2015)
Helping in Emergencies
“37 WHO SAW MURDER DIDN’T CALL THE POLICE”

- The New York Times

March 27, 1964
Bystander effect: Video shows man die in Chicago street while witnesses do nothing

Published time: 22 Apr, 2016 01:46

© Chicago Sun-Times / YouTube

Inspiring Empathy
Inspiring Empathy

- Experiencing what others experience

Wilkes et al. (2002)
Inspiring Empathy

• Experiencing what others experience

Wilkes et al. (2002)
Inspiring Empathy

• Experiencing what others experience

• Getting to know others with different life experiences and backgrounds
Inspiring Empathy

- Getting to know others with different life experiences and backgrounds

Pettigrew & Tropp (2008)
Inspiring Empathy

• Experiencing what others experience

• Getting to know others with different life experiences and backgrounds

• Imagining how others feel

Batson et al. (1997)
Inspiring Empathy

• Imagining how others feel

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• Experiencing what others experience

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• Imagining how others feel

• Narratives

Kopfman et al. (1998)
Inspiring Empathy

• Narratives

Kopfman et al. (1998)
Inspiring Empathy

- Experiencing what others experience
- Getting to know others with different life experiences and backgrounds
- Imagining how others feel
- Narratives
- Educational activities

Malti et al. (2016)
Inspiring Empathy

- Educational activities

Malti et al. (2016)
Inspiring Empathy

- Experiencing what others experience
- Getting to know others with different life experiences and backgrounds
- Imagining how others feel
- Narratives
- Classroom activities
- National service

Mo & Conn (2017)
Inspiring Empathy

- National service
Inspiring Empathy

- Experiencing what others experience
- Getting to know others with different life experiences and backgrounds
- Imagining how others feel
- Narratives
- Classroom activities
- National service
Empathy and Helping

Nadler (2002)
Empathy and Helping

Nadler (2002)
Empathy and Helping

• People high in empathy – prefer to give autonomy-oriented helping

• People with a bit of empathy – prefer to give dependency-oriented helping

• People with little or no empathy – opposed to helping

Maki et al. (in press)
Volunteer Motivations
Volunteerism

• Volunteering:
  ▫ Working on the behalf of others or a cause without payment for time and service
    • Planned
    • No obligation
    • Considerable personal cost

Dovidio et al. (2006)