

Running Head: VOLUNTEERING BEHAVIOR

Who Volunteers: A Look Into How Race, Gender, Religious Background and Socioeconomic

Status Effect Volunteerism in America

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Word Count- 4,784

KEYWORDS: Prosocial Behavior, Volunteerism, Gender, Family, Religion, Socioeconomic Status

ABSTRACT:

The purpose of the study was to investigate how one's race, religious background, socioeconomic class, and gender affect how likely one is to volunteer. In this project, prosociality is defined as how often someone has volunteered within the past year. Previous literature shows little relationship between prosocial behavior and gender or race. With regard to socioeconomic class, results are mixed and vary depending on the economic system in the country the studies are performed in; i.e. socialist, capitalist, etc. However, many findings support a correlation between prosociality and religious participation or priming. I predict that regardless of race or gender, those in lower socioeconomic statuses and/or identify as growing up with a particular religion will be more prosocial than those of other classes. The data was collected from GSS for the year 2012 and tests were performed in SPSS. My findings demonstrate a statistically significant mixed correlation between socioeconomic class and prosociality. The findings provide no clear-cut answer because the quantitative analysis found to be in between the previous findings in similar studies. Further research in America could determine the volunteerism rates.

INTRODUCTION:

Race, gender, religion and class are aspects about a person which play a factor in their day-to-day actions. Specifically with prosocial behavior, acting in voluntarily manners beneficial to others whether individuals or society, there can be a variety of aspects of the person which makes them want to perform acts beneficial to others. Prosocial behavior is, according to Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, et. al., “performed to benefit others, rather than benefit the self” (2007). These can include donations of money, donations of clothes, or in the case of this study, volunteerism. Religiosity, gender, race, and economic class may impact an individual's tendency to engage in prosocial behavior. In this study, I examined how gender, race, religious background and the socioeconomic class affect the likelihood of someone performing prosocial actions. Those who are of higher socioeconomic status are more likely to have excess in money and/or wealth and are more likely Caucasian. Because of this a general assumption could be that those in higher classes, particularly Caucasians, would be more actively engaged in prosocial behavior. This could be due to they may have fewer stresses and can afford to help while those in a lower class may have been conditioned to be more selfish and not engage as much, if at all, in prosocial behaviors. The purpose of the study is to encourage further volunteerism, or any manner of prosociality, among all persons. Yang and Tsiah (2010) have found altruism and prosocial behavior have increased where there are active in-the-field studies of altruism going on at the time.

LITERATURE:*Race and Prosociality*

There are multiple variables at play as to whether or not someone will perform a prosocial act for someone else, one such variable that has been shown to have an impact is race. Stepanikova, Triplett and Simpson (2011) researched how likely White people were to perform prosocial acts towards Black people using the Implicit Association Test (IAT). They found implicit anti-Black bias had shown a negative effect on generosity shown towards Black people. White people were more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors helping other White people than Black people. Saucier, Miller and Doucet (2005) found similar results, however discrimination occurred against Black people at higher rates when rationalized by the participants. Rationale used to justify helping included risk, length, difficulty, effort exerted and distance from the perceived person in need. The higher the emergency, the lower chance Black people would receive help. Burns (2006) found in South Africa, Black children were less trusting of other Black children than they were of their White peers. These issues are lessened in more diverse schools.

Piff, Kraus, Cote, Cheng and Keltner's (2010) research about social class and prosocial behaviors found race and gender did not play a role in prosociality. Other studies in regards to prosociality and race focus on prosociality performed *toward* other races, not by the race performing the action. Dovidio and Piliavin (2012) found humans have biologically evolved to

be more prosocial. Mesch, Rooney, Steinberg, et al. (2006) researched the differences of race, gender and marital status on giving and volunteering behaviors. They had found, in relation to race, while there is a difference in dollar amount donated, it is not statistically significant; White people had donated more per dollar than Black people overall (and overall minorities). The study was specific to the state of Indiana and may or may not be a picture of the United States overall. Similar to Mesch and company, Musick, Wilson and Bynum Jr. (2000) had found, via survey, there is a difference in amount of volunteering performed between White people and Black people; however not enough to be statistically significant. Although, they had noted Black volunteering is more affected by church-going and the community built from it, comparatively to White people. Burns (2012) found that the less racial diversity students are exposed to in South Africa the more it would affect their perception of Black people and non-Black people, where there was less trust toward Black partners, even among other Black people. Overall, aside from just being of a certain race to perform prosocial actions, studies have shown being a certain race can also affect if one is the target of a prosocial act. There are numerous factors in prosociality amongst race, such as diversity exposed to, the race of the person being aided, however one's own race may not affect their likelihood of performing prosocial behaviors.

Socioeconomic Status and Prosocial Actions

In studies performed there have been mixed findings on whether or not socioeconomic status affect the likelihood of prosociality. Korndoffer, Egloff and Schmukle (2015) studied

higher-class families. Their study found they are more likely to donate to charities, more likely to volunteer, more helpful and trusting of the economic system while interacting with strangers. Lower-class families were less likely to partake in these activities. They studied German and American socioeconomic classes, finding in both economic systems those in a higher status were more likely to volunteer, donate, etc. They do write however, “The United States has an only slightly elaborated social-welfare system that is difficult to compare with those of European countries (e.g., Germany...)”. Churches (i.e. religious institutions) may play a role in lower-class societies because said religious culture can moderate the behaviors of people, such as performing prosocial actions. The authors believe the difference of Germany taxing churches, compared to America where churches have a tax-exempt status, may play a role in donations and prosocial actions by/to churches. The studies were carried out by adjusting to household size and through the data collected the amount, via percentage, of the income donated; while the predictive U-Curve showed the higher-class shot-up in regards to donation amounts. Korndoffer, et al. (2015) notes the German social welfare system may play a role since they have a more socialist system than the United States. The final study they performed demonstrated the same results, minus the U-Curve from earlier.

However, (Piff et al. 2010) had found those who were of lower class were *more* likely to engage in prosocial behavior such as being more charitable, trusting and helpful. They defined these using the Dictator Game, which measured how much a person would give to their anonymous partner. They found lower-class individuals would give more to their partner.

Finding neither race nor gender played a role; they believed religiosity may play a role. In China, a study was conducted by Yongxiang Chen, Liqi Zhu and Zhe Chen (2013) where 469 four-year-old children played the Dictator Game. The resource was stickers; the findings were children in lower-income families had donated more stickers than those from higher-income ones. There were both strangers they could donate to and friends; they chose to donate to friends far more often. Bekkers (2007) had used surveys along with the Dictator Game and the findings were that, the higher their income, anonymous participants were more likely to donate the survey money they were offered. It is important to note, however, the other variables within the same survey also increased alongside income were age, education, value of prosocial behavior and general social trust. Participants involved were not able to split the earnings, proportional to the amount of time it took to fill out the survey, between themselves and the charities they were allowed to donate to. This study was conducted in the Netherlands and had found findings dissimilar to findings in the United States, it may have correlation with cultural and/or economic systems differences.

Gender and Prosocial Behavior

In relation to gender prosociality, Zimmer-Gembeck, Geiger, and Crick (2005), had found in their multi-year study the changes in aggressive attitudes and prosocial behaviors among males and females from third grade to sixth grade. The authors note, “There was no gender difference in relational aggression among third grade children (about age 9); however, by

sixth grade (about age 12), girls were more relationally aggressive than their male peers” (445). They also found female peers were preferred to their male counterparts by sixth grade. Choosing preference was based on a voting system of the top three most favored compared to the bottom three in favoritism for the class. After standardization of scores, they found females to be the popular choice while prosocial behaviors were determined by questions such as, “people who do or say nice things to others in the class,” etc. (p. 430).

Contrasting to the study above, McMahon, Wernsman, and Parnes (2006) had found among African Americans as they grew older, males were more empathetic and reportedly more prosocial than their female counterparts. It is indicative to note this is within one grouping of people, however, the numbers were noticeably different according to the graph they provided. They believe there is a connection to prosociality and empathy. Espinosa and Kovarik (2015) had concluded with social framing, women are more likely to be prosocial than male counterparts, in terms of playing the Dictator Game where an individual could dictate how much money is allocated to the recipient and themselves. However, when encouraging reflection, a male is less likely than other males to perform prosocial behaviors. Depending on the framing type, men and women can be influenced in their perception/acts of prosociality.

Bekkers (2007) study in the Netherlands with the altered Dictator Game had found females were less likely than males to engage in generosity. The paper notes prior laboratory experiments with the dictator game had found the opposite.

Religiosity and Prosocial Behavior

In her study Lam (2002) had found no significant effect on how important one finds their religion to be to volunteerism behaviors. Although, she determined frequencies of prayer and reading affected the overall volunteerism one would perform, but volunteering within a religious organization and attendance at services had a negative effect on volunteering behaviors. From her third hypothesis Lam states, "...affiliation with Protestant churches has a positive effect on voluntary group membership. Liberal, moderate, and conservative Protestants are two times more likely than individuals with no religious affiliation to be voluntary group members" (Lam 2002: 411). Regardless of political affiliation, Protestants were more likely to volunteer than those without a religious affiliation.

Shariff and Norenzayan (2007) had found in their study of offering money to an anonymous person, in their paper titled "God is Watching You", religious priming had a stronger effect on theist than atheist, also finding via religious priming a participant was willing to offer two dollars (USD) more than their control group counterparts. To perform this they had implicitly activated God-concepts, concurrently reducing selfishness and overall increased prosocial behavior. They write, "God concepts, activated implicitly, increased prosocial behavior even when the behavior was anonymous and directed toward strangers. God concepts had as much effect in reducing selfishness as did concepts that activated a secular social contract, and the effect size was quite large" (Shariff and Norenzayan 2007: 807). Shariff and Norenzayan mention how results in accordance to atheist proves inconclusive because the effect in the first

study all but disappeared in the second study performed. Alike to Shariff and Norenzayan, Ahmed and Salas (2011) had used religious priming through a scrambled sentence method to see how it would affect decision-making in the dictator game and the prisoner's dilemma. Ahmed and Salas had found regardless of religious affiliation, priming had significantly affected the prosociality in both games. In comparison to the control group, those who were subject to religious priming were more likely to be generous and cooperative. Overall they found no correlation between self-reported religiosity and generosity or cooperation.

Stavrova and Siegers (2014) had found in their study within countries without social pressures to follow a religion, those who identify as religious are more likely to perform charity work, disapprove of lying for the interests of oneself among other findings. The effects that occur are less likely to show, or disappear outright, in countries where religion is enforced. Meanwhile, Furrow, King and White (2004) studied how the youth development is affected by religion and used a questionnaire to determine religiosity, self-understanding, prosocial behaviors, etc. Their findings found a positive relationship between religious self-understanding, personal meaning and prosocial behaviors. As Furrow, King and White note in their abstract, their findings support the consideration of religion as a developmental resource that can affect the concern for others. This study was performed across 801 urban public high school students. In contrast to the study, De Angelis, Acevedo, Xiaohu Xu (2016) had found childhood religiosity plays a role in future volunteerism. In a study performed in South Texas, they wrote, "...we find that it is emerging adulthood religiosity that transmits childhood religiosity into greater secular

volunteerism in later life.” (p. 1). but this importance continues onward as long as religiousness persists into their adulthood.

METHODS:

Data

Data was collected from the General Sociological Survey (GSS) from the year 2012. The GSS collects information from respondents who anonymously answer questions to keep a historical record of societal changes in America. Information drawn from GSS is often used in social studies because it is the second largest survey group after the Census Bureau in the United States.

Variables

The variable gender, “gender1”, is binary, including only options of male and female. There was a sample size of 2,538 respondents in the year 2012 for gender, race, and social class. The variable “race” is based on how the participant considers himself or herself between three options: White, Black, and Other. The variable is labeled as “race” in the GSS. Respondent’s income, “coninc”, was collected by dollar amount adjusted for inflation and sorted afterward. Volunteering behavior, “volchrty”, was measured on a scale between 10 possible answers. For “volchrty”, the respondent number totaled 2,538; although, there were plenty of answers for “Not Applicable” in 2012. The variable “relig16” includes 1,962 applicable respondents in the year 2012 ranging from “Protestant” to “Native American”.

Procedures

The dependent variables are gender, religiosity, race, and socioeconomic status while the independent variable is prosocial behavior. All of the dependent variables will be ran as categories alongside with prosocial behavior. In SPSS I ran the Chi-Square for race and volunteering, religion and volunteering, and gender and volunteering. An ANOVA Test was performed for the socioeconomic status and volunteering.

Sample

The variables from GSS I will be using will be labeled “gender1”, “race”, “relig16”, “coninc”, and “volchrty”. The categorical variable “gender1” was the answer to the question “gender of the first person” (in regards to number in the household) with the options of Male, Female, Don’t Know, No Answer or Not Applicable. The variable will be narrowed in SPSS to only include Male and Female. For the next categorical variable, “race”, respondents were asked, “what race do you consider yourself?” The available responses were: White, Black or Other. “Other” will not be kept in SPSS due to uncertainty of the races involved. Categorical variable “coninc” asked respondents “Inflated-adjusted family income”, in which the answers were based on their annual family income. Categorical variable “relig16” asked, “in what religion were you raised?” Originally there were 16 options however they were condensed into five as there were few respondents for many of the categories. They were condensed into “Protestant”, “Catholic”, “Eastern Religious”, “None” and “Other”. The final categorical variable “volchrty” asked participants if, “During the past 12 months, how often have you done each of the following things: E. Done volunteer work for a charity?” The scale measured from: “More than once a

week, Once a week, Once a month, At least 2 or 3 times in the past year, Once in the past year, Not at all in the past year, Don't know, No Answer and Not Applicable." Overall 1,288 responses were accounted for in the testing. Those ranging from "Don't know, No Answer, and Not Applicable" were discounted from the SPSS test run. I downloaded the 2012 GSS file and used Chi-Squares and an ANOVA on IBM SPSS to conduct the statistical analysis of the data from GSS.

RESULTS:

In the following I ran three Chi-Square tests: one between volunteering within the past year with race, volunteering within the past year and religion, and volunteering within the past year and gender. Another test run was an ANOVA with volunteering within the past year and inflation adjusted income.

Race and Volunteering

A Chi-square test was performed to examine the relationship between race and amount of volunteering performed. Variables ran were "volchrty" and "race" with the response "Other" taken out of the "race" category. The relationship between these variables was not significant, $\chi^2(2, N=1167) = 8.433, p > .05$.

Table 1. The Amount of White People and Black People and the Amount Volunteered in the Last Year

			More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	Total
White & Black Race	White	Count	33	55	95	163	103	521	970
		% within White & Black Race	3.4%	5.7%	9.8%	16.8%	10.6%	53.7%	100.0%
	Black	Count	15	9	17	37	20	99	197
		% within White & Black Race	7.6%	4.6%	8.6%	18.8%	10.2%	50.3%	100.0%
Total	Count	48	64	112	200	123	620	1167	
	% within White & Black Race	4.1%	5.5%	9.6%	17.1%	10.5%	53.1%	100.0%	

“Other” was not factored due to too many other race possibilities. Overall, White people and Black people volunteer at approximately the same rates.

Between the races, the biggest difference overall is “more than once a week” where there is a 4.2% gap between Black people (7.6%) and White people (3.2%). “Not at all in the past year” has a difference of 3.4% between White people and Black people.

Gender and Volunteering

A Chi-Square test was conducted to examine the relationship between gender and amount of volunteering performed. Variables were “gender1” and “volchrt”. The relationship between these variables found no significance, $\chi^2(2, N=1301)=2.125, p>.05$.

Table 2. The Amount of Men and Women and the Amount They Volunteered in the Last Year

			More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	Total
Gender of 1st person	MALE	Count	28	38	68	117	85	409	745
		% within Gender of 1st person	3.8%	5.1%	9.1%	15.7%	11.4%	54.9%	100.0%
	FEMALE	Count	23	30	51	99	53	300	556
		% within Gender of 1st person	4.1%	5.4%	9.2%	17.8%	9.5%	54.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	51	68	119	216	138	709	1301	
	% within Gender of 1st person	3.9%	5.2%	9.1%	16.6%	10.6%	54.5%	100.0%	

Testing found no significant difference between the two genders, although there is an overall difference. The biggest discrepancy is “Not at all in the past year” where females (47%) are 6.8% less likely than males (53.8%).

Socioeconomic Status and Volunteering

An ANOVA test was performed to examine the relationship between socioeconomic status and amount of volunteering performed. Variables ran were “coninc” and “volchrty”. The relationship between these variables was statistically significant, $F(5, N=1153)=5.143, p<.0001$. Those in a lower socioeconomic status were significantly more and less likely to perform volunteering in the category. A downward opening parabola is formed due to the disparity between the income and volunteering time.

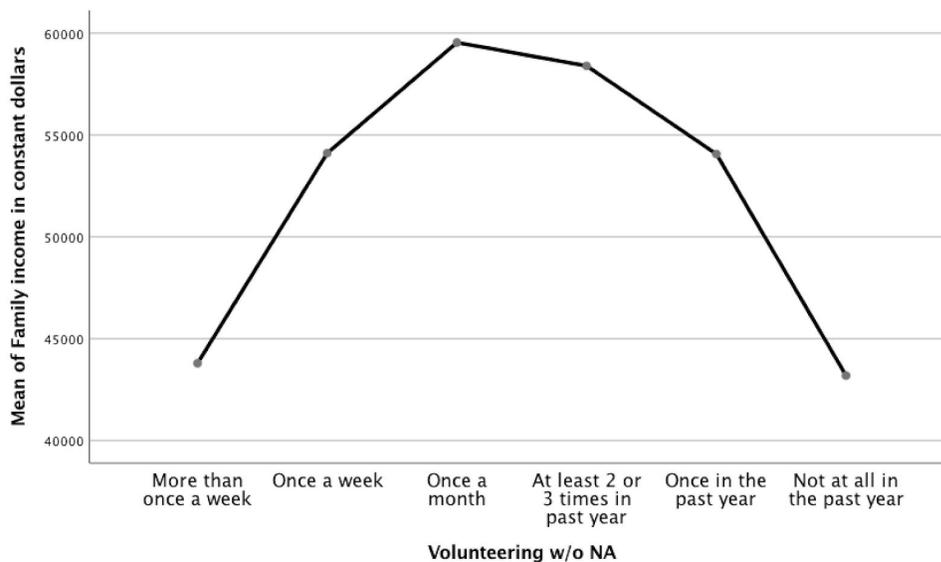


Figure 1. An ANOVA Graph Between the Socioeconomic Status and Volunteering

This graph shows the dollars made on average and amount of volunteering the respondent performs per year.

The beginning of the graph starts at approximately \$43,000/yr. and begins to climb until it reaches a vertex point at around \$59,000. At said point (approximately \$59,000/yr.), the graph begins to fall again and approximately at \$42,500/yr. the graph reaches the least volunteering performed in the past year. The results neither contradict nor reaffirm previous research in terms of SES and prosocial behavior.

Religiosity and Prosocial Behavior

A Chi-Square test was conducted to examine the relationship between gender and amount of volunteering performed. Variables were “relig16” and “volchrty”. The relationship between these variables found no significance, $\chi^2(2, N=1288)=5.89, p>.05$.

Count		R done volunteer work for a charity						Total
		More than once a week	Once a week	Once a month	At least 2 or 3 times in the past year	Once in the past year	Not at all in the past year	
condensed	CHRISTIAN	33	44	73	114	72	366	702
	CATHOLIC	16	19	34	70	46	260	445
	JEWISH	0	2	2	6	0	7	17
	NONE	1	3	8	20	15	55	102
	MIDDLE-EASTERN	0	0	1	3	1	5	10
	MOSLEM/ISLAM	1	0	0	1	1	9	12
Total		51	68	118	214	135	702	1288

Table 3. The Rates of Which People Volunteered Separated by Religious Background.

Testing found no significant difference between religions and those who do not ascribe to a religion. The biggest discrepancy is between Christian, Middle-Eastern and Jewish, where Christians performed “More than once a week” thirty-three times, while Jewish and Middle-Eastern did not at all.

DISCUSSION:*Implications*

Results from the Chi-Square had shown no statistical significance between the variables of volunteering and gender, volunteering and religion, and volunteering and race. Prior literature has found varying answers dependent upon location, type of research and different styles of collecting data (Korndoffer et al., 2015; Pitt et al., 2010). Korndoffer et al. (2015) had found higher volunteering in higher-class families. However Pitt et al. (2010) had found the opposite, with lower-classes more likely to engage in prosocial behaviors as a whole. The statistical significance can have a few implications because lower-SES respondents were both more and less likely to perform volunteering. According to the findings, there could be numerous reasons they find themselves in both extremes, such as either volunteering a lot or not at all. A theory I have is those who performed volunteerism in lower-SES were more likely to be religious than those who did not. Another possibility is those in lower-SES status are more accustomed to knowing those who require help, therefore making them more likely to perform acts to aid those who need it. This may be due to a prior history to requiring help or noticing plights in lower-income lifestyles in America.

The data analysis indicates there is no significant difference in frequency of volunteering and gender. This finding correlates with most of the research in America where males and females perform similar acts of altruism, save for a few exceptions. Aspects can be related to the upbringing of the genders, as Zimmer-Gembeck, Geiger, and Crick (2005) had found, as children

age, students who were more likely to perform prosocial behaviors would be more popular as voted by their peers: the majority were female peers.

Data also showed no significant differences in race and volunteerism. This supports prior research, which had not found a difference in altruism based on race, however prior research had found the likelihood of providing altruistic behavior was tied to race. The current research does not have the capability to neither confirm nor deny those findings.

For religion the results showed no statistical significance of religious affiliations growing up with likelihood to volunteer and does not supports prior findings. It is imperative to mention approximately 700 responses were not accounted for because of different ballots for religion and volunteerism. Said findings do not support the findings of Stravova and Steiger (2013) as there was a close spread among religions throughout the United States according to the census. There is a chance due to the amount of possible answers for the GSS variable, along with there being different religions, SPSS was stretched out and the results were affected by it.

Limitations

Limitations present in the study are the fact it is tied to the resources available through GSS. The variables used in the study were from 2012, which, at the time of this study, is approximately six years after the initial survey. Certain questions could be answered providing a more favorable view of themselves, such as amount volunteered. The study is limited with access to relevant journal articles and research. Due to the combining of answers for religions, there is a potential skew not accounted for. The study also only accounted for white and Black people in

the racial category due to limitations in questioning from the GSS. The caveat should be considered is not all volunteering is “prosocial” since it may or may not be effective/intended with a good heart.

Future Research

Future research could perform with the same variables in a year closer in data than the present research. This could provide more accurate implications in current society in the United States. An adjustment could provide different results could be if the respondent is religious or not, as opposed to *what* religion one is.

Conclusion

The current study was performed to analyze the relationship between race, religion, gender, SES and the amount of volunteering done in the past year. GSS data indicates there is no significance based on race, religion or gender, however there is statistical significance on volunteering performed based on SES. This study should not be taken as a defacto answer to who volunteers, however, the hope is this pushes others to be more proactive in intentional volunteerism and prosocial behaviors done from the good of heart.

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