

ABSTRACT

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The Effect of Community Diversity on Volunteering: A Multi-Level Model

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Abstract:

Global migration has increased the population diversity of countries across the world. For example, by 2044, it is estimated that non-Hispanic whites will be a minority for the first time. How does diversity affect volunteering? Are individuals who live in diverse communities less likely to volunteer than individuals who live in homogeneous communities? While a growing body of literature explores the relationship between individual race and volunteering, we know little about how community diversity affects individual volunteering. Drawing upon a unique quasi-panel dataset of individual volunteering in the US (Current Population Survey (CPS)), we match individual responses about volunteering behavior to county level Census data. Using a multi-level model, we test how community diversity moderates the relationship between individual race and volunteering behavior both the likelihood of volunteering and the intensity of volunteer activity. Specifically, this research addresses three primary research questions: (1) how does community racial diversity affect volunteering, after controlling for individual characteristics, (2) how does community racial diversity moderate the relationship between individual race and volunteering, and (3) how does community racial diversity moderate the relationship between individual in-group membership and volunteering. Preliminary analysis finds that respondent race does affect individual volunteering for all races; however, the effect of individual race differs across racial groups. For example, the effect of geographic isolation differs across racial groups. Greater racial neighborhood isolation reduces the likelihood of volunteering for whites but increases the likelihood of volunteering for minorities.

Greater racial isolation increases volunteering hours among whites, but has no effect on the volunteering hours of minorities.

This research contributes to the study of philanthropy in several ways. First, our model tests the complex relationships between place-based characteristics and individual racial characteristics. Second, we test various dimensions of diversity, including in-group membership and geographic segregation. This analysis extends existing conceptual models of volunteering. Our paper also has important policy implications for communities as they grow and change, contributing to our understanding of the changing face of philanthropy in the new millennium.

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