

Synopsis

Title: Political Efficacy and Its Effect on Volunteering

Subtitle: The role political efficacy plays in community engagement.

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Many people participate in some kind of charity throughout their week. Why does someone surrender their time to something or someone? I determined there is a strong relationship between people giving their time and this thing called social capital. Social capital can be defined as the positive relationship between the individuals of the community and its leaders. Social capital creates value for the people who are connected and, at least sometimes, for bystanders as well. I predict communities with a higher level of social capital will experience more individuals participating in community events, charities, and social gatherings. To determine the level of social capital I will try to connect with communities who I feel thrive in community engagement and look to locate communities who lack in it. After deciphering between these, I will then be obtaining data from surveying, studying, and comparing. A factor that I anticipate could influence people's participation is political efficacy. We observe two kinds of political efficacy in society and they are internal and external. Internal

political efficacy is when individual's decisions are based off the idea that their participation, volunteering, or efforts in a circumstance will actually have an impact on the outcome. External political efficacy also occurs just as frequently and it is observed when individuals are utilizing circumstances or volunteer opportunities to network, or promote themselves in some manner. Gaining some insight on the decision individuals make to participate in community events or volunteering can generate a positive response in communities. This data can be utilized to increase social capital in communities with the focus of growing a stronger, more vibrant community.

When I observe our community as a whole I see many flaws. There is no direction for the city itself and complacency has settled in. People lack the desire to change the streets they use, clean the parks their kids play in, or inspire the community to come together. All of this is very possible and can bring a community to new heights. But what does it take? I believe that community engagement is derived from creating a vision for the community and a strong social capital. Creating this vision first can continually give direction and focus to the people. My goal is to provide a tangible conclusion that city governments can begin to implement.

I will survey individuals from communities of all different size and locations. Using an online survey that has been coded to numerically define a participants level of social capital will give me a better understanding of how important volunteering is to someone who lives in a community that is either strong in social capital or weak. My thesis is that individuals from communities with a high social capital will display a higher overall participation in volunteering, giving charitably, and are much more engaged in their community.