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Pro-Social Attitudes of Sophomore Men at University of Dayton

Maggie Gillespie
Advisor: Dr. Molly Schaller

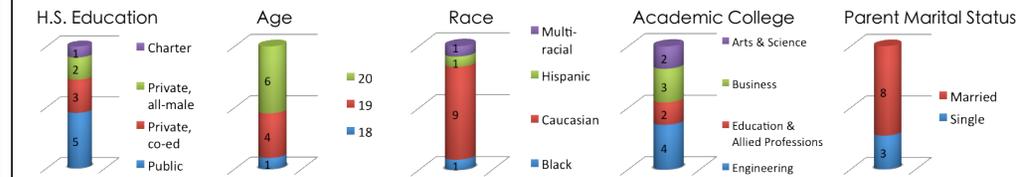
Purpose of the Study

To examine the pro-social attitudes of sophomore men at the University of Dayton – where it is learned, what perpetuates it and what factors are most influential. By understanding the factors that are truly the most influential in pro-social attitudes, student affairs practitioners can help to perpetuate and support those influences.

Methodology

Sample – sophomore males at UD identified as pro-social by a professional staff member
Data Collection – demographic survey, 2 focus groups (11 participants total)
Instruments – anonymous demographic survey & list of focus group questions
Data Analysis – transcriptions, member checks and peer debriefing

Student Profile



Influential factors on male behavior – study results vs. literature

1. Siblings

- **“Having younger siblings, especially having younger brothers – you have to understand they’re looking up to you even if you don’t realize it – they probably idolize you more than you think, which makes you really want to do the right thing because more than anything, you want to be a good example.”** --Cameron
- Kimmel argued that students pay more attention to the demands of their current surroundings, given the decrease from familial authority. Here, Field was more accurate in his conviction that family was the “crucial” factor despite their decrease in presence (2002, p. 21).

2. Family Environment

- **“I am definitely the product of my family environment – I was raised in a household of ethics and morals and accountability and respect.”**--Marshal
- Although Kimmel (2008) cited “current environment” as a major influence, participants reported that in spite of the lack of familial presence, they continued to follow the examples set by their parents (2002, p. 21). It was evident in the discussions that participants were shaped by their parents’ attitudes and actions, which confirmed the Social Learning Theory - development starts at an early age with imitating and modeling (Mcleod, 2011).

3. Media

- **“We don’t think about media that much – the good guys I mean – I don’t care if you think I’m cool or not, I do what’s healthy for me, what will be good for me in the long run.”** --Joe
- While there is no denying that messages in the media can perpetuate stereotypes and be “detrimental to a male’s expression and personal definition of masculinity,” the participants were able to identify the differences between a media character and their own values (Kuettel & Plannert, 2011, p. 2).

4. Social environment/friends

- **“It’s so important to be comfortable with yourself and not letting others define you. When and if I drink, it’s when I want to and however much I want to.”** --Matthew
- The participants did not seem concerned with breaking the “guy code,” therefore subjecting themselves to “social penalties” (Kimmel, 2008). In these conversations, the participants were not as interested in being accepted into “guyland” as they were in acting consistently with their pro-social values (Kimmel, 2008).

5. Self-satisfaction

- **“I get satisfaction in making other people feel good.”** --George
- Of the 11 participants, only two referenced self-satisfaction as a factor in their decisions to behave pro-socially. This coincides with the literature, which does not illuminate self-satisfaction as a factor.

Recommendations

By understanding which factors are most influential to behavior, student affairs practitioners can concentrate on perpetuating and supporting those factors. Given siblings were the most influential factor in this study, it may be interesting to see if that “role model” responsibility would transition into a mentorship or peer educator role - if the role of a big brother causes men to act pro-socially, taking on a mentorship role to a younger college male may be productive, as long as those males are educated about how external factors (media, social settings) play a role in their gender identity development. After all, as Bennett (2011) concluded in his study, “each generation of men...[has] an obligation to teach the younger males.”