High School Students and Community Service: A Study of Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivational Factors
Abstract

This project studied high school students’ motivation when performing community service, specifically focusing on intrinsic motivation, which is doing an activity because one enjoys it, and extrinsic motivation, which is doing an activity to receive an award or avoid a punishment. This was tested by distributing a 26 question survey to 256 high school juniors and seniors that asked questions pertaining to their involvement in community service. The analysis of the results of this survey mostly proved the original hypothesis that high school students would be extrinsically motivated to perform community service at first, but over time become more intrinsically motivated. It was also found that students who had parents involved in community service were more likely to have a positive attitude towards doing community service and that females were more likely to be intrinsically motivated to perform community service compared to males.

Introduction

Motivation often dictates a person’s decisions of what to do and why. This is why motivation is of high importance for those in authority positions such as teachers, managers and coaches. Motivation is not only based on a person’s mindset, but also his or her environment. The two main types of motivation that will be the focus of this research are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, more specifically how these motivations impact high school students when the decision is made to perform community service.

The popular assumption would be that more sources of motivation lead to more success for a person in performing a task. However, a study of 10,000 West Point Cadets from the National Academy of Sciences that compared their stated motives at the start of their schooling with those in their eventual careers revealed that students who had multiple sources of motivation did not end up being more successful. This may be attributed to the two main types of motivation; intrinsic motivation (performing an activity for its own sake and because one enjoys it), and extrinsic motivation (performing an activity for a desired reward) (Amy Wrzesniewski, et al., 2014). Intrinsic motivation is stronger than extrinsic motivation, and usually leads to more success; however, when this intrinsic motivation is coupled with extrinsic motivation, it weakens and the person will not be as successful had he or she not had the lure of a reward. Although intrinsic motivation is clearly more important, most activities are not intrinsically motivated because after early childhood, the freedom to be intrinsically motivated is curtailed by social demands and roles that require people to do non-intrinsically interesting tasks. For example, people often have obligations that they might not enjoy doing, but must do, and these obligations increase from minimal obligations as a child to more extensive ones in adulthood (Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, 2000).
Intrinsic motivation, based on experimental research, has been defined as the “free-choice” measure. In experiments, participants were exposed to a task under varying conditions, such as receiving a reward or not. After this, the experimenter told the participants that they will not be asked to do the task anymore and then they are left in the room with other distracting activities. Now the person has a “free-choice” to do what they want, and if the person returns to the original task, it will indicate that they were intrinsically motivated to do it (Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, 2000).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and contains Cognitive Evaluative Theory (CET) and Organismic Integration Theory (OIT). SDT states that intrinsic motivation is more effective in education. It also distinguishes between multiple types of extrinsic motivation, in that someone could perform a task with resentment, resistance and disinterest, because they do not have a personal reason or desire to do it, or they could do it willingly because they accept and see the importance of the task even though they might not enjoy doing it. This is an important tool in education because educators know that many tasks that they assign students to perform are not something they are interested in, and are thus extrinsically motivated tasks (Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, 2000).

CET is used to specify the factors in social contexts that impact intrinsic motivation. It argues that interpersonal events like communications and feedback that lead to “feelings of competence” can enhance intrinsic motivation because they satisfy the biological need for competence. However, feelings of competence will not enhance intrinsic motivation unless they are accompanied by a “sense of autonomy,” meaning that people must not only feel competent, but also a sense of independence if intrinsic motivation will be heightened or maintained. OIT, on the other hand, details the different forms of extrinsic motivation and the factors that either promote or hinder it. OIT categorizes extrinsic motivation into five categories, ranging from amotivation, which is the least autonomous, to integrated regulation which is the most autonomous. Amotivation is when a person’s behavior lacks intentionality and it results from a person not valuing an activity, not feeling competent to do it or not believing that it will yield a positive outcome. For example, a student may be amotivated to do their homework if they feel that they are not mentally able to do it and it will not cause anything desirable for them. Next is external regulation which are behaviors that are performed to satisfy an external demand or obtain a reward, and this is seen as the “classic” form of extrinsic motivation where a reward is the main reason for doing the task. Introjected regulation is when a person performs an action because they feel pressured to in order to avoid guilt or anxiety or to achieve pride. Another form of extrinsic motivation is regulation through identification where the person realizes the importance of the action and thus accepts it as something he or she needs to do. Finally, integrated regulation is seen as the most autonomous form of
extrinsic motivation and is very similar to intrinsic motivation. It occurs when the person internalizes the reasons for an action and thus assimilates them to their own purposes, making the actions more self-determined. This, however, is different from intrinsic motivation in that the outcome and possible reward are still considered and underlie the main purpose of the action. An example of integrated regulation would be how a student may not necessarily enjoy studying, but they see it as vital for their future career and thus do it with less resistance. This is not intrinsic motivation, because if the student were intrinsically motivated he or she would study because he or she enjoys it, but in this case, the student only studies to satisfy a purpose that is meaningful to him or her, which is preparing for his or her career (Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci, 2000).

Although the motivation for an action is usually predetermined, it is more likely to be intrinsic if the person enjoys the activity. A person’s environment also plays a large role in determining the type of motivation that person will have. A social environment wherein a person feels competent and accepted will lead to a more internalized and self-determined motivation because that person will feel that they can handle the task, and will thus be more interested in it. If they feel incompetent, they would not be motivated to even try to complete the task. For example, praise from a teacher to a student will enhance general motivation, but it will only increase intrinsic motivation if it is phrased in a way that makes the student feel a sense of independence. Likewise, if the three basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness and autonomy are not allowed in a social context, intrinsic motivation will decline. This can be seen in education with deadlines where they often decrease intrinsic motivation because the person feels that he or she must think, feel or behave in a certain way, and thus feel controlled, which decreases autonomy. Intrinsic motivation can be facilitated for a person even if he or she does not necessarily enjoy the activity based on the principle of choice. When college students were given choices about what tasks to engage in and how much time to allot to each, they ended up enjoying the tasks more than students who were assigned the tasks and told when and for how long to do them (Edward L. Deci, et al., 1991).

These theories of motivation have a big impact in education and student’s achievement because in schools extrinsic motivation is usually facilitated through the use of rewards such as good grades. Tangible rewards propose a problem on the will to learn because if a student is used to receiving a reward for an action and then that reward is withdrawn, the student will be disinclined to continue their studies. They also pose a problem because if rewards are given for intrinsically motivated actions, this intrinsic motivation may decline and the motivation may lean more towards extrinsic motivation. For example, if a teacher praises a student for reading, assuming that the student enjoys reading, then his or her interest in reading may wane because he or she is expecting to be praised and thus, receive a reward. This makes fostering an interest in learning difficult because in many classrooms there is a small amount of rewards, such as good grades, and they are distributed unequally where the fastest learners and best performers
receive the greatest number of rewards. Although the competition for the scarce rewards may increase motivation for some, for others it may lead to failure and resentment because many see grades as a mark of worthiness. Schools have tried to solve this problem of motivation by arranging classes around the personal interests of students, however this often proves difficult. Another idea to fix this problem is to alter the meaning of failure and define success not only in terms of outperforming others, but by comparing students to a standard of performance, not their fellow classmates. An additional method is to not completely eliminate rewards, but rather to alter them, making them more intrinsically focused. For example, students could share the results of their work with others, or explain what they got out of the task, which would make it seem less like a task and more like an opportunity to share their ideas (Martin V. Covington, 2000).

Ohio State University expanded the studies of motivation beyond just in the school environment, studying motivation in performing community service for high school and college students. High school students were largely externally influenced to perform service by their parents and other family role models who performed community service as well. Another factor was religious foundations as many students got involved in doing community service initially through their places of worship and were influenced by religion to continue with their service. In addition, the school environment had a large influence, where students who went to Catholic high schools were more likely to become involved in community service. Many of the students surveyed described that they had a large peer influence in doing community service, revolving around spending time with their friends. The idea of having required community service was also studied and it was found that many students felt that if one is required to do the community service, then it’s not really service. This showed that much of the motivation for high school students to do community service was more external such as friends, family, requirements and recognition rather than solely to help others. Most of the students had personal reasons to start performing the community service and did not just decide to do community service randomly. Another interesting aspect of this study was that students were more likely to be intrinsically motivated to do community service in college, which was attributed to the change in environment and the increased free-choice that students have in college compared to high school (Susan R. Jones and Kathleen E. Hill, 2003).

Graduation requirements that force students to do community service poses a conflict between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. On the one hand, community service should be something students want to do to help their community, making it naturally an intrinsically motivated activity, but on the other hand, when it is required for students, it becomes an extrinsically motivated activity. The idea of community service implies free-choice and thus intrinsic motivation, however the requirement of community service blurs this definition. Once students are required to do community service, they may
be less likely to enjoy it because they will feel as though it is a task. Some schools do make community service a requirement to graduate because they feel that it will create a more “well-rounded” student and that it will encourage the student to help their community once they graduate. This, in theory, may be a good idea, but if excessive hours of community service are required, it could do the opposite and discourage the student from doing community service because they will see it as a task. On the other hand, community service requirements could be a good thing because they could introduce students to community service organizations and show them ways that they could help that they may not have known before.

This research will focus on the ideas set forth by Self-Determination Theory and its sub-theories, Cognitive Evaluate Theory and Organismic Integration Theory, which outline the different forms of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. These theories will be applied to high school students and their motivations in performing community service to determine what motivates the students, and if their motivations changed over time.

Methods

In order to analyze the motivating factors behind high school juniors and seniors in performing community service, a survey was conducted. The survey incorporated questions about specific reasons for students to do community service and was distributed to high school juniors and seniors at a variety of high schools.

The surveys tested a number of variables, including demographics, students’ involvement in community service, and students’ feelings towards community service. Demographic questions include gender, grade and religious affiliation. The other questions sought to find correlations between doing community service and things such as G.P.A., participation in extracurriculars and parental involvement in community service. Additional questions were asked to see how involved the students were in community service, including how many hours they have done in their high school career, if they have been awarded for their community service, and if the student volunteers for more than one organization.

The last series of questions measured the student’s feelings about community service and the motivating factors behind their participation through statements with which the student could strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with. In order to measure the enjoyment students get from community service, questions including “I enjoy doing community service and find it fun” and “I have a sense of fulfillment after doing community service” were asked. Statements like “Initially, I felt like I had to do community service and did not have any say in whether I did it or not” and “Over time my motivation for community service changed” sought to discover if students felt that their motivation
changed after initially beginning the community service. Finally, students responded to statements including “I believe that I am religiously obligated to do community service and aid those in my community” and “Americans in general should do more community service” to get the student’s stance on doing community service in general. These questions will measure what motivates high school students in performing community service.

Surveys were distributed to high school students, both during the school day in their classes and free periods, as well as electronically distributed via social media sites. Each student voluntarily completed 26 questions, and all responses were kept confidential.

**Results**

This survey found that the attitude of students towards community service was mostly positive, indicating that in the end, community service became an intrinsically motivated activity. Out of a total of 256 respondents, there was a roughly even split between males and females, and more 11th graders (53.3%) were surveyed than 12th graders (46.7%). Most students (52.5%) had a G.P.A. of 3.6-4.0 and 44.4% of respondents were Roman Catholic.

The next set of questions assessed general information about the community service that the students did. A majority of the students (55.5%) had parents who also did community service, indicating that parents who did community service influenced their children to continue with the community service. Few students (16.0%) performed more than 250 community service hours throughout their high school career, while 45.3% performed below 100 hours. Only 47.1% of respondents received awards for community service, but of those, 78.7% performed more hours than were required for the award. This reveals that students who complete community service awards ended up enjoying it so much in the end that they continued to perform the community service beyond the requirement. There was no significant difference between students who either had a personal connection to the organization for which they volunteered (56.9%) or those who did not (43.1%). However, a majority (79.4%) of respondents volunteered for more than one organization.

The last set of questions were Likert Scale questions that students could respond Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree or Strongly Disagree to. Questions used to assess the enjoyment of community service had mostly positive responses; 80.7% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I enjoy doing community service and find it fun,” while 87.0% either agreed or strongly agreed with “I have a sense of fulfillment after doing community service.” To get the respondent’s general stance on
community service, they responded to the statement “Americans in general should do more community service,” to which 91.7% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed.

Next, questions were asked to look specifically at the motivation of students in performing community service. Responses to “Initially I felt like I had to do community service and I did not have any say in whether I did it or not,” was mostly split, with a majority (56.9%) either agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, 56.8% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with “I feel that I need to do community service in order to please my parents and/or teachers.”

Questions specifically targeted at receiving awards for community service indicated that most students had reasons beyond just the awards to performing community service. When asked if the motivation in community service is doing the awards, 63% of respondents strongly disagreed or agreed and 72% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that “If there were no awards for community service, I would likely still do it.” Most respondents (68.8%) did not feel any religious obligation to perform community service.

Additional questions were asked to look at if the respondents will continue to do community service, with 83.6% stating that they will continue community service in college and beyond. When asked if they thought that community service was important for career prospects, 78.4% strongly agreed or agreed, and 87.4% thought that community service was an important asset to college applications. Finally, questions were used to assess the perceived impact that the students felt that their community service would have. Majority (86.1%) of respondents believed that their community service made an impact on the people that they had helped and 76.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they began to form bonds with those they either did community service for or with. The results from these questions indicate that most students had positive views on community service and did it for reasons other than just the awards.

Results 2

The results of the survey and the following bivariate analysis found that the two most pertinent factors that influenced high student’s motivation in performing community service were gender and parental involvement in community service. Females displayed an overall positive view of community service and enjoyed it more when compared to males, who saw it as more of a task to be completed for credit. Parental involvement in community service also played a large role, in that students who had parents that were actively involved in community service had a more positive view of it and were more likely to want to continue performing community service in college and beyond.
Initially, I felt like I had to do community service, and I did not have any say in whether I did it or not.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What is your gender?</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>% within What is your gender?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Total % within What is your gender? | 16.1% | 40.6% | 33.5% | 9.8% |

This crosstab compares the gender of the respondents with their response to the statement “Initially, I felt like I had to do community service, and I did not have any say in whether I did it or not.” More males (23.8%) strongly agreed that they were initially reluctant to do community service, compared to only 8.6% of females. Following in the same pattern, 38.6% of females disagreed to this statement, while only 28.6% of males disagreed. This crosstab is statistically significant, as \( p=0.010 \). Both the strong agreement of males to this statement and the disagreement of females to this statement show that females are generally more willing to participate in community service.

Other crosstabs that looked at gender showed similar results, in that females had a generally more positive attitude towards performing community service. The crosstab that compared gender with the statement “Eventually I began to form bonds with those who I either did community service for or with,” found that 86.7% of females either agreed or strongly agreed to this statement, compared to only 66.2% of males. Another crosstab compared gender and the respondents’ response to the statement “I enjoy doing community service and find it fun.” This showed similar results, in that only 7.8% of females disagreed, while 24.0% of males disagreed. Gender played a significant role in respondents’ attitudes towards performing community service in that females were less reluctant to do community service and enjoyed it more.
Community service is vital for career prospects? Such as to use as experience when applying for a future job.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>25.9%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>34.3%</td>
<td>44.1%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This crosstab shows that students who had parents that were actively involved in community service were more likely to see the importance in performing community service. This compares the parental involvement in community service of the respondents with their responses to the statement “Community service is vital for career prospects? Such as to use as experience when applying for a future job.” The respondents who had parents that were involved in community service were more likely to strongly agree (44.4%) to this statement, compared to respondents who did not have parents who did community service, of which only 21.4% strongly agreed. Likewise, only 8.5% of the respondents who had parents that did community service disagreed, while 25.9% of respondents who had parents that did not participate in community service disagreed. This crosstab is significant, as p=0.000. The results from this crosstab show the impact that parental involvement in community service have on students’ participation in community service.

Similarly, other crosstabs found a positive relationship between parental involvement in community service and students’ willingness to participate in community service. One crosstab compared the students whose parents did community service with their responses to the statement “I will continue to do community service in college and beyond,” and found that 45.8% of respondents who had parents that did community service agreed, compared to only 25.0% of those whose parents were not involved in.
community service. Another crosstab compared the parental involvement in community service of the respondents with their response to “If there were no awards for community service, I would likely still do it.” This found similar results, in that 35.9% of respondents who had parents that did community service strongly agreed, while only 18.9% of respondents who had parents that were not involved in community service strongly agreed. Finally, a crosstab looked at the parental involvement in community service and compared it to the respondents who received community service awards and if they did the bare minimum number of hours required for the award or more than what was required. This found that 85.3% of respondents who had parents that did community service did more than was required, compared to 69.2% of respondents who did not have parents that were involved in community service that did more than what was required. Thus, parental involvement in community service has a tremendous impact on the student’s involvement in community service.

Chart III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Throughout your high school career thus far, how many total community service hours have you performed?</th>
<th>Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zero to 50 hours</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-100 hours</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>100-150 hours</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>150-200 hours</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>200-250 hours</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% within Do your parents volunteer or do community service?</td>
<td>9.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This crosstab compares the parental involvement in community service of the respondents with the amount of hours that students performed throughout their high school careers. Parental participation in community service only impacted the number of community service hours performed once the students performed more than 150 hours. The most obvious impact of parental involvement in community service is when students performed more than 250 hours, where 22.5% of respondents who had parents that did community service performed more than 250 hours, compared to only 8.0% of those who had parents that were not involved in community service. This shows that parents who did community service influenced their children to perform more community service hours.

**Discussion**

The results from the survey and the following analysis partially proved the original hypothesis that students were initially extrinsically motivated to perform community service, and then over time became more intrinsically motivated. It was anticipated that students would be initially motivated by a less autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, however many students were motivated by a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, partially proving the first part of the hypothesis in that students were extrinsically motivated at first, but not to the extent as was expected. The second part of the hypothesis was shown to be true in that students did become more intrinsically motivated as they spent more time doing the community service. Other factors including gender and parental involvement in community service also played a role in determining students’ motivation.

The first part of the hypothesis was partly proven since although students did have some degree of extrinsic motivation when beginning the community service, it was to a lesser degree than what was anticipated. The responses to the statement “Initially, I felt like I had to do community service and did not have any say in whether I did it or not” show that some of the students did feel coerced into doing the community service at first, as 56.9% either agreed or strongly agreed that that was true. Although this is a
majority, it is only a slight majority, implying that some of the students decided to do community service by their own accord.

A student who may not feel that he or she was originally coerced to do community service may be assumed to be intrinsically motivated, however this may not be the case. The student could still be extrinsically motivated, however it could be a more autonomous form of motivation, such as regulation through identification or integrated regulation. Both of these are cases when the student realizes the importance of an action, and thus is less reluctant to do it. At the beginning of this project, it was anticipated that students would be motivated by a less autonomous form of extrinsic motivation, such as external regulation, which is seen as the “typical” form of extrinsic motivation, where a person performs a task in order to obtain a reward. The fact that students may have been motivated by an autonomous form of extrinsic motivation implies that the students saw a reason to do the community service, which was found to be to use on college applications and to use as experience for future jobs. An overwhelming majority (87.4%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that they thought community service was an important asset to college applications, and 76.8% agreed or strongly agreed that they thought community service is vital for future career prospects. The part of the hypothesis that assumed that students were extrinsically motivated when beginning the community service was partly proven, in that students were mainly extrinsically motivated, but in many cases were motivated by a more autonomous form of extrinsic motivation.

The second part of the hypothesis, which stated that the students became more intrinsically motivated over time, was proven. Many frequencies show that over time the students came to enjoy the community service, and thus wanted to continue doing it on their own, implying intrinsic motivation. A fair majority (63.4%) of students agreed or strongly agreed that over time their motivation in community service changed in some way. This shift in motivation was likely caused by the fact that the students may have liked the community service more than they thought they would have in the beginning.

Another possibility that was taken into consideration was if the students became more intrinsically motivated to do the community service because they formed bonds with those they did the service either for or with, and it was found that this was true, as 76.8% of students agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Many students (83.5%) came to enjoy community service so much that they said they would continue to participate in community service in college and beyond.

Finally, out of the 127 students that said they did receive an award of some form for doing community service, 78.7% performed more hours than were required for the award. This shows that even if students may have been extrinsically motivated to do the service initially just because they wanted to
receive the award, they became intrinsically motivated because they went beyond what was necessary, implying some form of enjoyment in the task. Thus, the part of the hypothesis that stated that students would become more intrinsically motivated to perform community service over time was proven as students eventually began to enjoy the community service more and became more willing engage in it.

Part of this research looked at the impact that external influences had on students’ decisions to participate in community service, mainly religious and parental influences. Religion did not appear to have a large impact on students, as 68.8% strongly disagreed or disagreed that they believed they had a religious obligation to perform community service. This lack of a religious motive could be due to the fact that the students were already motivated to do the community service by the rewards they were getting, that they did not really consider religion when doing the community service. Another possibility could be that although most students identified with a particular religion, they were not actively involved in religion, and thus didn’t focus on religion very often. Lastly, even religiously observant people may dissociate their faith from their work if the community service was not specifically sponsored by a religious organization.

The involvement of the students’ parents in community service also appeared to have a large impact on the students’ participation in community service. One of the many crosstabs that depicts this is when parental involvement in community service is crossed with the student’s stance on whether community service is important for future careers (Chart II). The students who had parents that did participate in community service were more likely to strongly agree (44.4%), compared to students whose parents were not involved in community service, of which only 21.4% strongly agreed. Other crosstabs between parental involvement in community service and other variables including continuing to do community service in college, still doing community service even if there were no rewards, and doing more than the bare minimum of hours required for an award, also found that students who had parents that were actively involved in community service were more likely to see the importance of doing community service and have a more positive attitude towards community service in general. This correlation between parents who do community service and their children’s positive attitude towards community service can be attributed to the psychological phenomenon known as modeling. Modeling is when a person learns a task by watching someone else perform the task. This can be seen here because the children could be seeing their parents do community service, and subconsciously pick up on this and learn that they, too, should do community service. Out of the two external influences that were tested in this project, parental influence appeared to play a much larger role.
The most significant factor that impacted student’s stance on community service was their gender, as girls generally had a more positive attitude towards community service. This was proven by the many crosstabs that compared the gender of the student with his or her response to different questions. The crosstab that shows the most variation between females and males is when gender is crossed with the students’ response to the statement that they initially felt that they had to do community service (Chart I). While only 8.6% of females strongly agreed with this, 23.8% of males strongly agreed, which shows that males were more reluctant to engage in the service in the first place. Similar crosstabs between gender and the students’ response to the statements that they formed bonds with those they did community service either for or with and that they enjoy community service and find it fun found similar results. These crosstabs all imply that females are generally more intrinsically motivated when it comes to community service. This could be due to the fact that females are stereotypically more nurturing and relational, so they may be more likely to see the importance in helping others, and they may have continued to do the service because they formed strong bonds with those involved in the service. Gender played a big role in determining students’ motivation in performing community service.

There were several parts of this research that could have been improved upon. One major part is that the surveys were mostly distributed in high schools that had community service requirements, so most of the students were to a degree extrinsically motivated to avoid the punishment associated with not doing the community service. If surveys were distributed to high schools where there were no community service requirements, the results may have varied because than the students would have been less likely to feel extrinsically motivated. An additional area of improvement for this research could have been an improvement in the research design tool used, which in this case was the survey. Many students to whom the surveys were distributed were confused about some of the questions. The question that appeared to have caused the largest problem was “If so, did you do only the bare minimum of hours for the reward, or complete hours beyond those that were required?” Students were only supposed to respond to this question if they said yes to the previous question, which asked “Have you received any awards for doing this community service?” but many responded to the question asking about if they did more than required or the bare minimum, even if they did not answer yes to the question. These two areas could be improved upon to enhance the quality of the research in this project.

The findings of this research can foster additional ways to research similar topics in the future. One way would be to conduct a focus group instead of just collecting surveys. Focus groups could be conducted with different groups that have students that vary in G.P.A., school of attendance, religion, parental involvement in community service, or numerous other factors. Students in these groups could be asked questions similar to those asked on the survey; however, different information would be able to be
gathered because students could respond with greater detail and expand on their thoughts and ideas. Another interesting study would be to look at college level students who do community service and analyze their motivations for doing community service and compare it to the motives of high school students. This project provides numerous avenues upon which further research could be conducted.

This project partially proved the hypothesis that students would be extrinsically motivated to do community service initially, and then become more intrinsically motivated over time. Although many students were extrinsically motivated at first, it was to a lesser degree than was expected. The second part of the hypothesis still held true in that students did come to enjoy community service more and thus become more intrinsically motivated to do community service over time.

Bibliography


