



Giving time - can volunteers be nudged?

A learning event about the *Giving Time* study - randomised experiments in interventions to encourage volunteering
Thursday 19 November 2015, The Bond, Birmingham, B5 5SE

10.15 – 10.30 REGISTRATION

10.30 – 10.45 Opening remarks and introduction

10.45 – 11.45 WORKSHOP ONE (choice of 3)

Can social information change behaviour - experiments with student volunteers and the National Trust
Presenters: Professor Oliver James and Dr Alice Moseley (Exeter Uni)

The headline findings of this unique RCT was that there may be situations where we may increase our own volunteering as a result of receiving 'social information' i.e. being informed about the amount others are doing.

The research challenges of large scale RCTs with volunteers and volunteering organisations
Presenter: Professor Peter John (UCL)

Giving Time presented a number of new challenges for the researchers. One of the biggest surrounded the fact that relationships between individual volunteers and organisers are often casual, messy, and undocumented. This meant research in this area was very different from, say, research into financial giving, or into more formal types of civic activity.

Lessons from other studies - Untold Stories of Volunteering (part of AHRC's Connected Communities)
Presenter: Professor Mihaela Kelemen (CASIC) and Sue Moffat (new Vic Borderlines)

Mihaela is the Director of Keele University's new Community Animation and Social Innovation Centre (CASIC) which uses creative animation techniques both to mobilise community assets and conduct innovative social research. Sue is Director of Borderlines (CASIC partner) at the New Vic Theatre in Stoke.

11.45 – 1.00 PLENARY

Towards 'Extreme Citizen Social Science' – or volunteering as a tool for both social action and enquiry
Presenters: Liz Richardson (Manchester Uni), Prof Muki Haklay (UCL), Jemma Moulard (Family Mosaic)

For many, the scale of engagement with volunteers undertaken through Giving Time brings to mind related questions about the role of citizens in formal research – and then of course Citizen Science – or perhaps 'Citizen Social Science'? At the same time we see the emergence of "Extreme Citizen Science" aimed at stimulating debate and challenging power relationships through citizen involvement in large scale scientific investigations. Extreme citizen science often starts from natural and physical sciences and has citizen researchers working with formal researchers to define the central research questions, and methods of investigation. But what is the potential for Extreme Citizen *Social* Science – characterised by being large scale, focused on social science questions, exploiting digital technology, having a high degree of participant control, and orientated towards influencing policy?

1.00 – 1.45 LUNCH AND NETWORKING

1.45 – 2.45 WORKSHOP TWO (choice of 2)

Surprising results - why was peer endorsement a turn-off for students?

Presenters: Professor Peter John and John Braime (UCL)

One interesting and surprising result was that when student volunteers received emails with messages from other students extolling volunteering - this was in fact associated with decreased in volunteering among email recipients. Why might this be? What sort of endorsements might have been more effective?

As a consequence of taking part in the experiment, UCL's own volunteering team experienced increased interest in volunteering – but is this type of spike in volunteers always helpful? What strategies have been tried to increase student volunteering at UCL and what has worked well?

Can behavioural insight help participation in local democracy? Experiments in Parishes
Presenters: Prof Gerry Stoker, Dr Matt Ryan (Southampton Uni) and Steven Lugg (Hants Association of Local Councils)

One set of Giving Time experiments was with Parish Councils aimed at encourage more people to become councillors. So what are the existing obstacles to recruiting parish councillors and how might social information encourage more people to participate?

What were the effects of nudge letters and a nudge briefings on parish councillor recruitment? What does this tell us about how to support and build participation in the first tier of our representative democracy.

2.45 – 3.30 PLENARY

So, *can* volunteers be nudged? Turning the spotlight on the future of Nudge techniques. Presenter: Professor Gerry Stoker (Southampton Uni)

Research about charitable giving has shown we can be positively influenced by social feedback about how much money others have given.

But our findings suggest the giving of time is quite different from giving money –which in turn raises interesting questions about applying behavioural economics to volunteering

Volunteers will save us – volunteering as a panacea. Presenter: Dr Justin Davis-Smith (National Council for Voluntary Orgs)

Organising and co-ordinating volunteers requires skills, expertise and resources, while sustainability among voluntary sector organisations and public service volunteer and community teams are more fragile than ever.

Yet often it seems volunteering is viewed as a policy panacea – solving the twin challenges of innovation and cost savings. So what are the real-world lessons we might take from Giving Time in terms of volunteering policy and the practical co-ordination of volunteers?

3.30 – 4.00

Panel discussion, with questions from the audience and closing remarks

Panel: Peter John, Gerry Stoker, Liz Richardson, Justin Davis-Smith, Muki Haklay, Vivien Lowndes

Quick fire questions from the audience on the theme of
'Community resilience and the role of volunteers'