



Socialising adolescent volunteering: How important are parents and friends? Age dependent effects of parents and friends on adolescents' volunteering behaviours



Anne A.J. van Goethem^{a,*}, Anne van Hoof^a, Marcel A.G. van Aken^a,
Bram Orobio de Castro^a, Quinten A.W. Raaijmakers^b

^a Department of Developmental Psychology, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 1, P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands

^b Institute of Child and Adolescent Studies, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 1, P.O. Box, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 November 2012
Received in revised form 28 October 2013
Accepted 20 December 2013
Available online 13 January 2014

Keywords:

Volunteering
Parents' volunteering
Friends' volunteering
Civic family orientation
Open family communication
Adolescents

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relative importance of best friend's and parents' volunteering and civic family orientation (combined with open family communication) in adolescent volunteering, and the moderating effect of age. Results, involving 698 adolescents (M age = 15.19; SD = 1.43), revealed that adolescents were more likely to volunteer when their best friend and parents volunteered, and volunteered more frequently when their family had a stronger civic orientation combined with more open family communication. Clear age differences were found: when adolescents get older, friends become more important for whether they volunteer, and the family's civic orientation becomes important for their volunteering frequency. An implication of these findings may be that, depending on adolescents' age and the aspect of volunteering, interventions may focus on targeting parents' or friend's civic behaviour to stimulate adolescent volunteering.

© 2013 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adolescence is a central period for prosocial development which is characterized by increased emotional responsiveness, a growing awareness and concern for the needs and interests of others, and increased levels of prosocial and civic behaviour (e.g., Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; for an overview, see Eisenberg, Cumberland, Guthrie, Murphy, & Shepard, 2005). One important example of these prosocial and civic behaviours is adolescent volunteering. Volunteering is not only part of adolescent prosocial development but, in turn, also stimulates this development and has positive effects on other aspects of adolescents' lives such as their life-satisfaction, self-rated health, and academic and occupational achievement (e.g., Wilson, 2000; Youniss & Yates, 1999).

As volunteering behaviour increases during adolescence and has positive effects on adolescent development, the promotion and socialisation of adolescent volunteering is a topic of major interest and concern. Two of the most important socialising agents who influence adolescents' volunteering development are parents and friends. Parents are important as they provide the first context for socialisation and

adult role models (cf. Caputo, 2009; Eisenberg, Fabes, & Spinrad, 2006), and friends are important as they share the same interests, traits and social power (e.g., Cohen & Prinstein, 2006; Smetana, Campione-Barr, & Metzger, 2006).

In the current study we focus on parents' and friends' influence on two aspects of volunteering: whether adolescents volunteer or not and, if adolescents volunteer, how often they volunteer, also referred to as adolescents' "volunteering frequency" (e.g., Andolina, Jenkins, Zukin, & Keeter, 2003; McGinley, Lipperman-Kreda, Byrnes, & Carlo, 2010). These two aspects of volunteering may be qualitatively different as research suggests that they are related to both different internal psychological processes (e.g., van Goethem et al., 2012), and external processes and influences (e.g., McGinley et al., 2010). In accordance with this idea, indication has been found that parents and friends could influence volunteering behaviours in different ways (e.g., Janoski, Musick, & Wilson, 1998; Law & Shek, 2009; McGinley et al., 2010). Janoski et al. (1998) theorised that two of the most important ways by which adolescents' volunteering is stimulated, is by social practise or "behavioural modelling", and by "value transmission".

In our study we therefore examine the extent to which parents and friends affect adolescents' volunteering through behavioural modelling. In addition, we study how parents might influence adolescents' volunteering through value transmission. Further, in contrast to most research in this field which has been conducted in the USA, we

* Corresponding author at: Institute of Developmental Psychology, Utrecht University, Heidelberglaan 1, P.O. Box 80140, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands. Tel.: +31 30 2534838; fax: +31 030 2534718.

E-mail address: A.A.J.vanGoethem@uu.nl (A.A.J. van Goethem).

examined these socialisation practises in the Netherlands and, with that, the generalizability of these practises.

Behavioural modelling: The relation between parents' and friends' volunteering and adolescents' volunteering

In case of behavioural modelling, the desired social skills and behaviours are learned by habituation, social comparison, and regular practise within stable situations and social relationships (cf. Janoski, 1995; Janoski et al., 1998). Translated to the socialisation of volunteering, this would mean that adolescents are stimulated to volunteer because they routinely encounter the volunteering of their parents and friends.

In accordance with this behavioural modelling perspective, there is a relatively large volume of published studies showing that whether one or both parents volunteer is one of the best predictors of whether adolescents will volunteer (e.g., Andolina et al., 2003; Metz, McLellan, & Youniss, 2003; Metz & Youniss, 2003), and how often adolescents volunteer (e.g., McGinley et al., 2010; Smetana & Metzger, 2005). Two recent studies, conducted in an American sample (Andolina et al., 2003) and a Dutch sample (Bekkers, 2007), found that volunteering is even transmitted from parents to their children while controlling for family background variables such as the level of education and religion. This seems to suggest that actual modelling of the volunteering behaviour takes place.

Although there is a relatively large amount of evidence showing that volunteering by parents influences the volunteering by their adolescent children, relatively little is known on whether the volunteering by friends also influences adolescents' volunteering. The few available studies however do suggest that adolescents are more likely to volunteer when their friends also volunteer (Clary et al., 1998; Okun & Schulz, 2003), especially when the volunteering is performed by close friends (Barry & Wentzel, 2006; McLellan & Youniss, 2003). Close friends are likely to be similar and share interests and therefore also influence and share each other's social behaviours such as volunteering (e.g., McLellan & Youniss, 2003). The current study extends this research by investigating the influence of parents' and best friend's volunteering on both whether adolescents volunteer and how often adolescents volunteer.

Value transmission: The role of open family communication in the relation between civic family orientation and adolescents' volunteering

In addition to behavioural modelling, past research has indicated that value transmission, passing on core beliefs about how one ought to think or behave (Flanagan, Bowes, Jonsson, Csapo, & Sheblanova, 1998), can have an important impact on adolescents' civic values and engagement such as volunteering. This is true for American samples (cf. Hart & Fegley, 1995; Janoski et al., 1998; Pratt, Hunsberger, Pancer, & Alisat, 2003) as well as non-American samples (e.g., Chinese sample; Law & Shek, 2009).

Especially civic values or attitudes and civic engagement, together referred to as "civic orientation" (cf. Crystal & DeBell, 2012), are primarily learned within the family (for an overview, see Smetana et al., 2006; White & Matawie, 2004). Through parental practises such as teaching or discussing civic values and behaviours (e.g., Andolina et al., 2003; Boyd, Zaff, Phelps, Weiner, & Lerner, 2011; Diemer & Li, 2011; Erentaite, Zukauskiene, Beyers, & Pilkauskaitė-Valickiene, 2012), adolescents can adopt their parents' moral or civic orientation (e.g., Hart & Fegley, 1995) and/or translate this orientation into civic behaviour (e.g., Law & Shek, 2009; Pratt et al., 2003).

However, the extent to which the transmission of this civic family orientation actually takes place depends on the content, style, and context in which this orientation is presented and communicated (e.g., Hardy, Padilla-Walker, & Carlo, 2008; Knafo & Assor, 2007; Pratt et al., 2003; Smetana & Metzger, 2005; White & Matawie, 2004). Generally, the internalisation of values and orientations are stimulated when

these are presented in a positive context. Research suggests that adolescents are more open to their parents' orientations and understand and analyse these orientations more, when family members stimulate each other's participation in family discussions and are open to each other's perspectives, in other words, when they use a more open family communication. This in turn increases the chance that adolescents internalise their parents' civic orientation (cf. Hardy et al., 2008; Smetana & Metzger, 2005; Thompson, Meyer, & McGinley, 2006; for an overview, see White & Matawie, 2004). Without this positive context of open communication, the internalisation of the family's civic orientation and the translation of this orientation into civic behaviour may not take place (cf. Rosenthal, Feiring, & Lewis, 2010).

However, although open family communication can stimulate adolescents' internalisation of the family's civic orientation, it is still unclear whether it also stimulates the translation of this civic family orientation into actual civic behaviour such as adolescents' volunteering. In the current study, we therefore examined whether and how a more open family communication affects the relation between the civic orientation of the family and adolescents' volunteering behaviour.

The role of age in the relative importance of parents and friends in adolescent volunteering

Until now, most research on volunteering has focused on the independent influence of parents' civic orientations and volunteering, and friends' volunteering. However, only a few studies have recognized the importance of studying the relative contribution of these influences in adolescent volunteering (Law & Shek, 2009; McGinley et al., 2010; McLellan & Youniss, 2003). Moreover, even less attention has been paid to the possible shifts in the relative contribution of these factors during adolescence. So the question arises whether the effects of parents' compared to friends' civic behaviour on adolescent volunteering may be age-dependent.

To address this question, we take the perspective of Lambert (1992), Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, (2002) and Smetana et al. (2006) into account who assume that the relative amount of influence of parents compared to that of peers on adolescent behaviour depends on the topic or domain of this behaviour. In line with this theoretical perspective, some studies found indication that parents have more influence on long-term issues, such as morality, school, and occupation (Smetana et al., 2006), whereas peers have more influence on present life-situations such as leisure time and friendships (cf. Meeus, Oosterwegel, & Vollebergh, 2002).

Based on this perspective and these findings, there are two alternative hypotheses on the importance of parents versus peers in adolescent volunteering. The first hypothesis is that parents stay important, or become even more important for their children's volunteering behaviour when adolescents grow older (e.g., Law & Shek, 2009; McGinley et al., 2010; White & Matawie, 2004). This is because volunteering is often considered to be moral behaviour (e.g., McLellan & Youniss, 2003), and parents are important role models for moral behaviours (e.g., Smetana et al., 2006; White & Matawie, 2004). Furthermore, as adolescents grow older they further develop their moral conscience and identity (Eisenberg et al., 2005), and as a result the importance of parents in adolescents volunteering could also increase. This may also imply that parents have a stronger influence on adolescents' volunteering than friends, which would even more strongly apply for older compared to younger adolescents. In contrast, the second hypothesis states that, as volunteering can also be part of a social activity or of sustaining relationships in daily life (e.g., McLellan & Youniss, 2003), the volunteering by friends may be as important as the volunteering by parents. Furthermore, when adolescents grow older and spend an increasing amount of time with their friends and peers (e.g., Smetana et al., 2006), friends may become a more important influence on adolescent volunteering than parents (e.g., McLellan & Youniss, 2003). Again, this could apply more strongly to older than to younger adolescents.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/359724>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/359724>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)