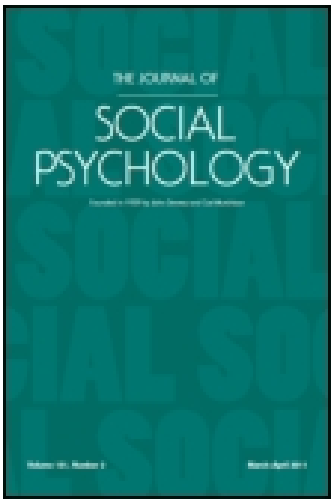

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BLOOD DONOR RECRUITMENT: A CASE STUDY IN THE PSYCHOLOGY OF COMMUNICATION*

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> This term we will be working on a project: The recruitment of donors for the campus blood drive. Each of you will recruit donors for the drive, keeping a log of your thoughts and conversations. After the drive is over, you will receive a list of the people who gave your name as their recruiter. You may then compare this list and the reasons given by these actual donors with your own list of prospective donors and appeals. Finally, you will be asked to hand in an interpretive report applying principles of social psychology to your own experiences as recorded in your log. You will not be judged according to how many donors you recruit, but how well you understand the social psychology of communication. The reasons for this project are threefold: first, it will focus your attention upon a common problem; second, it will emphasize that social psychology takes place in the active social world; and third, it may help us understand the problem of blood donor recruitment.

Fifty-nine class members influenced 408 students to donate blood, an average of 6.9 donors per recruiter with a range from zero to 50. Twenty-one per cent of the 1,910 persons who filled out slips after donating blood in the campus drive during winter quarter 1954 listed members of this class as their recruiters.

The project was not without prior thought. Six months before a tornado ravaged Flint. Blood was desperately needed and donors flocked to replenish the supply. Some of us asked ourselves: how does a disaster affect the neighboring community? To what extent does the disaster area depend upon supplies from safer localities? To answer these questions we studied the characteristics of donors to the Lansing Regional Blood Center on the Flint-disaster days of June 9 and 10. For a control group we gathered data on persons donating during the same period of the previous year and for four weeks before and after the Flint period. We also tabulated donors who responded to another disaster, the Korean blood appeal of July 12, 1953.

Our conclusions were easily summarized. Significantly more women who had never donated blood before responded to the Flint disaster than to the

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normal or Korean control periods (.01 level) (all differences were tested by chi-square). A check of the sections of Lansing from which the Flint donors came indicated that there was no difference between the ecological backgrounds of the control and Flint groups. Moreover, our data confirmed the study done by Waugh in Tucson, that most donors come from middle-class areas which have above average neighborhood interaction (7). Unfortunately, the percentage of donors for any section was so small that more research must be conducted before we can draw these conclusions with confidence. Finally, the Flint disaster did not call forth donors from any special blood type or Rh factor, even though appeals stressed the need for rarer blood.

With these data behind us, we discussed the matter with the Red Cross. Dr. Sam T. Gibson, Associate Director, Blood Program, American National Red Cross, indicated that his staff would be interested in blood donor recruitment. With the campus blood drive imminent, and an eager class of social psychology students, we decided to study the problem.

We had two types of information—the logs kept by the recruiters and slips filled out by the donors. Each donor received a slip before he left the donation center. He was asked to complete the sentences, "I donated blood because . . . ", "I was influenced to donate blood by . . . ", and "My name is . . .".

In view of the fact that there is little correspondence between the predicted and actual donors or the appeals in the logs and the appeals listed by the donors, we shall place greater stress upon the data from the donor slips than from the logs.

The greatest lesson the logs teach is this: to be able to recruit someone else, one must convince himself first. It is interesting to read how the recruiter changes his own opinion about donating blood as he tries to influence others. More than one student remarks upon his increased success in recruiting (for which we have no objective evidence) after he himself has decided to donate. The class seemed to learn that in order to communicate successfully, you have to communicate about *something,* and you do even better if you *believe* in that something. Not selling, not even selling a product, but selling a product in which you have confidence makes the difference to the salesman.

All sorts of appeals were used by the recruiters—from swapping beers, kisses, and dates to saying that without 50 donors one would flunk the course! Most of the appeals were made in hangouts on the campus and in the community. Incidentally, we discussed social ethics after the logs had been

turned in. One always wonders in such projects whether the students learn half as much as the professor.

Some of the conclusions which many recruiters reached have a familiar ring. "People do not like to admit they have been influenced." "Only the indecisive can be swayed." "Personal solicitation is the best appeal." "Prospective donors can best be influenced in a group." But on the contrary, "I could have influenced him except for the group pressure against me." It would be informative to study the conditions under which group pressure works for and against recruiting blood donations.

A final note must be made, indicating the intricacy of research which tries to trace the flow of communication. While sorting the donor slips we noticed one recruiter's name, an editor of the campus newspaper, listed by more than a dozen donors. Yet there was no single appeal or cluster of appeals among these donors. One might expect an editor to use various appeals, which is rare for most recruiters but befits an editor's rôle. So we found the editor's own donor slip—the appeal he listed was "social pressure." The person who recruited him was the chairman of an organization sponsoring the blood drive. So we sought the chairman's donor slip. He donated because, as chairman of the sponsoring organization, he had no alternative!

The study of appeals, therefore, underlines the importance of rôle and status. As a bureaucrat one may be compelled to act and also to influence others. Under this circumstance, the appeals used to recruit others may best be called rationalizations. Likewise, if one of the donors recruited is also in a status position, as for instance the editor of a newspaper, he may proliferate appeals as a function of his rôle, regardless of his own reasons for donation. Rationalization, a psychological explanation of appeals, applies to the recruiter who recruits because of his status in some institution.

Rôle-actualization, a sociological explanation of appeals, applies to the recruiter's own reasons for donating. Thus the recruitment process was in fact a social psychological phenomenon which could not be fully understood by psychology or sociology alone. The class sensed this in interpreting their logs.

A further example of the rationalization vs. rôle issue arises when one inspects the campus leadership. These donors are much more likely to list no one as influencing them to donate. Why? Are they self-motivated or status-motivated? Or do they deny they can be influenced in order to protect their self- or status-perception?

Turning more directly to the analysis of donor slips, one problem is whether the activity of donating blood attracts a different sex sample than

that prevalent in the total college population. The answer is no. There were no significant sex differences between the number of men and women enrolled and the sex division in the social psychology class, the number of donors of each sex, the number of donors who failed to name a recruiter, and the number of no answer and nonsense appeals listed by donor. Nor were the sex differences between the number of donors and recruiters significant. However, that recruiting was generally a masculine activity was demonstrated by the significantly greater proportion of male recruiters than men registered winter quarter (.01 level). While it is true that a veterans' club, composed primarily of men, and a fraternity competition were two recruiting organizations, there was ample room for women to recruit through formal organizations, although this did not occur.

The recruiting agencies listed by donors were placed in five classifications: (*a*) the social psychology class; (*b*) special organizations (such as the veterans' club, fraternal or departmental competition, a drive to beat U.C.L.A., and the campus newspaper); (*c*) one's self; (*d*) informal agents (friends, family, or roommate); (*e*) no one or blank. The appeals listed by donors were placed into seven classes: (*a*) filial—"I (my family or friend) may need (needed) blood"; (*b*) humanitarian—"save a life"; (*c*) voluntary social—"the need," "it's a worthy cause"; (*d*) involuntary social—"the group donated," "social pressure"; (*e*) voluntary personal—"I wanted to," "I was curious"; (*f*) involuntary personal—"it's a habit," "I'm a gallon-club member"; (*g*) none or nonsense.

Consider first the sex differences between donors and recruiters. Significantly more men and women were influenced by men from the special organizations concerned with the blood drive. Where did female recruiters play a part? In the informal approach. More women were listed as informal recruiting agents (.05 level), and more women donated because of informal agents (.05 level). In brief, women donors were influenced by women acting as informal recruiting agents (.01 level).

This does not mean that women cannot recruit through the formal organizational structure. Women recruiters enrolled in the class influenced proportionately more men than did men recruiters in the class (.05 level). And proportionately more men listed women than men recruiters from the class (.01 level). So, women can recruit blood donations as well as men, if their organizations are involved in the drive. It might be interesting to explore the question: do men prefer to recruit, and do they excel as recruiters, when organizational pressures are strong? Do women perform better with a minimum of organizational pressure? Our data do not answer these ques-

tions, but a sex difference might not be surprising in view of McClelland's studies of achievement motivation (4).

The next relationship to consider is that between sex and appeal. (No pun is intended.) When men influence one another, the filial appeal ("I may need blood myself") is significantly more frequent than the humanitarian, "save a life," appeal (.01 level). In fact, recruiting agents aside, more men than women donors list the filial appeal (.01 level). And fewer women recruiters are associated with this appeal (.05 level). We could conclude that this is the usual selfish versus humanitarian difference found between the sexes (1). For example, more women than men donate for humanitarian reasons (.01 level). But another explanation is that many of these filial statements refer to military experiences in which the men again predominate. The data do not allow us to control for military experience and then test for the significance of sex differences. That could be an important analysis for future studies of blood donor recruitment.

One further point about the filial appeal. Donors who claim to have recruited themselves list the filial appeal significantly more often than donors influenced informally by others (.01 level). Recall, however, that women are apt to be the informal recruiters and women avoid the filial appeal.

Women not only prefer humanitarian appeals, they also donate more frequently for voluntary social reasons than do men (.01 level). Of course, men's organizations supported the drive more actively. The man-to-man approach is blunt: "The group is donating—so are you!" The woman-to-woman approach is apt to be: "Donate your blood and save someone's life" (.05 level). An indication of how entirely voluntary the voluntary social appeal seems to be is seen in the fact that donors who list this appeal indicate that no one else has influenced them (.01 level). It seems reasonable to conclude that just as self-influence is related to selfish reasons, the absence of influence is related to altruistic reasons (8).

Male donors excel as far as listing no appeal or making some nonsensical remark (.01 level). Fewer female recruiters are associated with nonsensical or absent appeals (.05 level). This might represent masculine bravado, or it might indicate that men rationalize less. It might also mean that men were less aware of their reasons for donating.

Members of the class use more social appeals stressing the need, social pressure, or both, in contrast to filial or human welfare appeals. Social appeals appear to be the recruiter's first resort. Donors influencing themselves or listing no one as influencing them claim filial or humanitarian and personal appeals rather than the need for blood or social pressure (.01 level).

Recruiters from special organizations receive credit for more social than personal appeals. No appeal or nonsense is associated with recruiters from the class and from informal agents rather than with recruiters from special organizations or those who influenced themselves, respectively (.01 level).

Now, as a colleague of mine would ask: so what?

A letter from Dr. Joseph H. Venier, Director of the Lansing Regional Blood Center says: "We . . . wish to thank your class for their wonderful recruitment work. A great deal of the credit for breaking the college record is due them for this work." The data support him. Without prior involvement, regardless of their individual attitudes, each student influenced nearly seven persons to donate blood. And there is no way of estimating the word-of-mouth support which the class contributed to the over-all success of the drive.

A dittoed report from the Polk County Chapter, Des Moines, Iowa, says, ". . . sending out someone without their being trained and sold on the program will bring absolutely nothing (3)." Certainly the Red Cross cannot take the casual approach to donations which we could. However, we learned something which might aid "training and selling" people on the program—instead of asking for donors, why not ask for recruiters? The logs demonstrate that in the process of recruiting others one convinces himself. This, too, confirms a principle in the social psychology of change.

Applying the principle, persons who are rejected from donating blood could be encouraged to recruit a donor in their place. Often "rejects" leave with a feeling of shame if they have come with a group or guilt if they came alone. Under such circumstances we suspect that rejects do not compliment the Red Cross. Giving them a rôle to play in blood donor recruitment might solve a number of problems.

It is well known that blood drives are carried by men who donate time after time. The Flint data suggest that women who have never before donated rally to domestic disasters. On the campus, proportionately as many women as men donate. On the other hand, the campus data show how frequently women recruit and donate free of formal group structure and employing humanitarian appeals. Do disaster and the campus function to make women feel they belong to a community? Men, apparently, through their jobs and organizations, feel they belong to the community. Certainly we cannot wait upon disaster to encourage women to donate. We might improve the recruitment of blood donors if we relied more upon the organizations to which women belong.

Following this line of reasoning, we might like to know whether the

humanitarian and voluntary social appeals would diminish if women were recruited as organization members. We might be able to trace changes in selfish, status, and cultural appeals. For instance, if blood donation is the criterion for successful communication, then a critical test of appeals would be the relationship between stated reasons for donating and future donations. Does the bravado answer indicate a likelihood that the individual will donate again? If social pressure is the appeal, will it continue to function without formal organization to support it, as during an industrial strike?

It is not difficult to see how blood donor recruitment fits the paradigm for communication (2). Recruiters and donors correspond to senders and receivers. The topic is blood requirements. For successful communication, the recruiter must be trained and sold (or train and sell himself) on the blood program. What are the effects we seek in this communication? The *manifest* effect is keeping the appointment to donate blood. This can be achieved by a variety of agents using various appeals. If we are interested in the "old reliables," upon whom the success of many blood drives depends, then we should want to know which agents and appeals return these donors to the center. The attitude toward donating is the *latent* effect. Suppose we do not want to depend upon the few "old reliables." Suppose we want to broaden the base of responsibility. How can we encourage a donor to recruit other people? This is also a latent effect. Since we must rely upon the "old reliables" until the base for donations is sufficiently broad, we must strive for both of these latent effects in our communication. Thus the question for future research becomes: what agencies and appeals meet all these purposes (6)?

Special organizations using social pressure elicit blood donors. But do these donors return? If they do not return, do they recruit new donors? Or is social pressure a one-shot affair which may actually defeat the long-range purpose for communication?

Filial appeals, crises in family and peer groups, stimulate men to donate. How long does the memory of crisis operate? How effectively can personal experiences be communicated in order to recruit someone else's donation?

Women donate under the stimulation of domestic crisis or as part of a community. They recruit with and donate for humanitarian reasons. Informality typifies their approach. How well do women achieve the manifest and latent effects we seek?

The next step for research is evident. We must find which agents and appeals influence donors to return and/or recruit new donors. We might expect to find that an agent or appeal which accomplishes one purpose defeats

another. We should be able to schedule recruitment such that successful communication can be optimized. We can accomplish this goal by working within an adequate theoretical structure (2, 4, 5) in coöperation with agencies like the Red Cross and with persons as unselfish as the class which participated in this preliminary study.

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