

Volunteer Dilemma

Debrief

professor sanda kaufman
 icua/csu
 negotiation & conflict management

A group of penguins...

- ◆ is standing on an ice floe near the south pole
 - They are hungry and restless
 - They are moving to the edge because
 - ◆ There are fish but also
 - ◆ Killer whales and walruses

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A group of small birds

- ◆ is feeding on seeds from a farmer's field
 - They are checking the sky for predators
 - If anyone spots a predator it must sound the alarm but
 - ◆ If nobody sounds the alarm they all fall prey
 - ◆ A predator is attracted to the noisy bird in the group

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Volunteer dilemmas

◆ Good solution:

- the birds take off in a flock when one sounds the alarm and let the volunteer fly in the middle (threatened least)

◆ Less good solution

- The penguins jostle around and push one in the water to test for predators (they volunteer someone)

the kitty genovese story

◆ New York City

- Murderer spent 35 minutes killing victim
- 38 people witnessed the crime
- Only one witness called the police

◆ Why?

- With so many witnesses everyone thought someone else must have called the police
- Nobody felt critical

How does it work?

◆ Altruism:

people volunteer because they feel they are critical to the group outcome

- The larger the group, the less critical one feels
- proportion of volunteers goes down

Certainty and uncertainty

- ◆ **when a single volunteer is needed:**
 - everyone considers
 - ◆ benefits of volunteering
 - ◆ benefits of not volunteering
 - ◆ likelihood that someone else will volunteer
 - being certain that someone will volunteer may lead everyone not to
 - ◆ incorrect certainty is dangerous
 - more cooperation emerges with more uncertainty

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Volunteering

- ◆ **Examples of volunteering**
 - Staying late to finish report
 - Doing dishes because the usual person is tired
 - Nursing a partner back to health
 - Taking time to host a visitor at the expense of work
 - Giving a speech at retirement party
- ◆ **Critical to public & private sectors**
 - Some aspects would not function otherwise
- ◆ **Key aspect: volunteering helps solidify the volunteer and the others**

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