

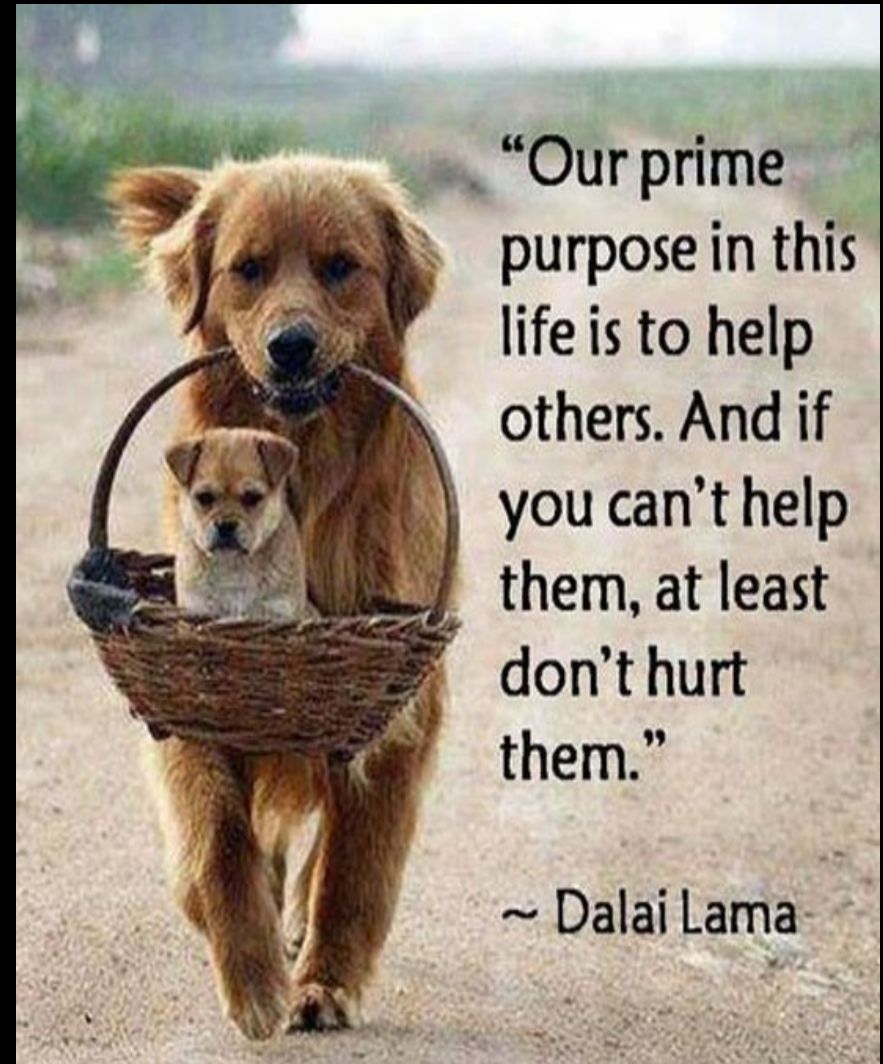
# Prosocial Behavior in the Cyber Context

Michelle F. Wright, Ph.D.

Masaryk University

# The Beginnings

- What are some activities we can do through the cyber context?
- What are prosocial behavior?
- Forms of prosocial behavior in the cyber context



# What makes prosocial behavior via the cyber context unique?

- Ease of access
- Not limited by one's physical appearance or characteristics
- Ability to use a fake name or screen name
- Great flexibility in wanting or giving help
- Ability to control when to help
- Ability to choose when the giver wants help

# Who helps? Who is helped? Is it even rewarding?



- The people we help may include a range of individuals
- Prosocial behavior are rewarding for both givers and receivers
- No formal organizations are necessary
- Direct reciprocity isn't expected

# Benefits of Prosocial Behavior through the Cyber Context

- Receivers:
  - Health benefits
  - Reduce stress
  - Career advantages
- Givers:
  - Higher personal satisfaction
  - Health benefit
  - Learning and reputational benefits



# The Origins

- The original Internet!
- The release of open source software guided the origins of prosocial behavior through the cyber context
- Projects: Linux, Mozilla, StarOffice, Apache Webserver, BSD operating system
- What is the motivation for sharing open source software?

# Online Support Groups

- We discussed characteristics which transformed the desire to seek help or give help
- Stigmas and geographical boundaries were no longer hindrances to giving or providing help
- Many forms: corporate employees, caregivers, disabled individuals, sexual abuse survivors, people living with ADHD, etc.

# Online Mentoring

- Importance: expertise and assistance may not be available in the mentees' school or community, interactions can occur frequently and at convenient times, greater privacy and anonymity
- Types: college students, teachers learning about classroom discipline, women entering management positions, adjunct faculty, and mental health professionals



# Electronic Fundraising/Donating

- What does this mean? What are the statistics? What happened?
- Each of these combine to highlight the importance of harnessing the power of the internet for fundraising and donating
- Motivations: knowledgeable of the organization, use of the organization at one time

# Virtual Voluntarism

- Googling “Online Voluntarism” yielded 313,000 results in .25 seconds
- Many opportunities to volunteer in the virtual world
- Unique characteristics of volunteers
- How to keep volunteers engaged?

# Other Types of Mediums

- Online gaming
  - MMOs, action games, Facebook games
- Social networking sites
- Chat programs
- Email
- Text messages



# Theories



- Social cognitive theory
  - Helping through the cyber context is learned
- Co-construction theory
  - Helping through the cyber context is an extension of how someone is face-to-face

# Future Directions

- A ripe area for future research!!!
- But what needs to be done:
  - Examine the quality of help
  - Recipients of the behaviors
  - Longitudinal designs
  - Individual differences

