

The Psychology of Charitable Donations to Disaster Victims and Beyond

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This contribution summarizes the literature on the psychology of charitable donations to victims of disasters and other unfortunate circumstances. Four distinct research areas are reviewed. We begin with the literature on donations in general, and then move to the literature on donations to disaster victims specifically, which is what most of our own research has focused on. We then review the literature on intergroup prosociality, because many donations occur in some kind of intergroup context. We then cover some of the main insights from the literature on generic prosocial processes, which has generated insights that are generalizable to donations and have applied implications. Finally, we summarize some of the main recommendations for eliciting donations which can be generated from these literatures. An emphasis is placed on the translation of academic knowledge into practical steps which practitioners might find useful.

Introduction

Charitable donations by individual donors are a lucrative business involving huge sums of money. In 2012–2013, individuals in the United Kingdom donated circa 10.4 billion pounds (Charities Aid Foundation, 2014). In the United States, individual donation levels were approximately 227 billion dollars in 2012 (Giving USA, 2013). Although individual donations can be an important tool to affect positive change, currently not enough is known about how to encourage donations. In 2011, the U.K. government issued a policy paper, arguing that the stagnating

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donation levels and differential levels of donations by different segments of the population should be addressed (HM Government, 2011). A need to marry social policy with research into charitable giving was proposed. Encouraging generosity across society is as important as it ever has been.

This contribution will present an overview of the psychological research on factors that can encourage donations. Of course, other disciplines have grappled with this question, for example, economics (e.g., Andreoni, 1998; Frey & Meier, 2004; Smeaton, Marsh, Rajkumar, & Thomas, 2004), sociology (e.g., Simmons, 1991) and marketing research (e.g., Krishna, 2011; Louie & Obermiller, 2000; Webb, Green, & Brashear, 2000). Such approaches will be touched on, but they are not the central focus.

Recommendations emerging from academic theory and research can be grouped into three broad themes, all of which will be of relevance to practitioners: (1) Which donors should be approached, for example, when trying to target specific demographic groups represented in a large database? (2) How can donor responsiveness be optimized when approaching individuals face-to-face on the street? (3) How should appeals (for example, adverts on trains, Internet presence) be designed in order to optimize donor responsiveness?

The second section will summarize some of the most pertinent findings of research on donations. The focus will be specifically on monetary donations, as opposed to the large literature on other types of donations, for example, blood donations. The third section will highlight the specific case of donations to disaster victims, which much of our own research has focused on. We will also review the extent to which monetary assistance to disaster victims presents a special case. The fourth section will focus on intergroup prosociality. This is when one group is in some way prosocial to another, but the term can also apply to prosocial acts between individuals, as long as they are aware of their group memberships while interacting (Turner, 1987). Of course, donating to those in need often—or arguably almost always—invokes different group memberships. At a most basic level, donations imply a distinction between the “haves,” i.e., the donors who are in a fortunate position, and the “have-nots.” The body of work on intergroup prosociality is therefore highly relevant. The fifth section will cover some of the classic findings from research on the psychological predictors of general prosocial behavior, defined as voluntary behavior intended to benefit another. Of course, donations are one instantiation of this behavioral type; other examples are helping, sharing, cooperating, and volunteering. However, some basic processes motivating prosociality can be assumed to be shared across different manifestations of prosociality, which is why we will summarize some of the key findings from this literature. The sixth section will synthesize the evidence reviewed and propose some practical recommendations.

Insights from Research on Donations

The topic of donations has received considerable attention recently (Oppenheimer & Olivola, 2011). Some of the psychological work reviewed in this section is focused on donations specifically, and other studies are interested in prosocial behavior more generally but use donations as a convenient operationalization.

Demographic Characteristics and Giving Behavior

There is considerable evidence that demographic characteristics matter: Some types of people give more than others. Although these findings are often qualified in important ways (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011), overall, we can say that level of education is positively related to donations (Wunderink, 2002). Women generally tend to donate more (Charities Aid Foundation, 2011), possibly because they are higher on empathic concern (Mesch, Brown, Moore, & Hayat, 2011). Wiepking and Bekkers (2012) also found that family composition matters, with married people being more likely to donate than single people, and with children in the household increasing giving likelihood.

Income and giving levels are also clearly positively correlated when considering the total amount donated (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2011; Chowdhury & Young Jeon, 2013; Wiepking & Bekkers, 2012). However, if giving is considered as a proportion of income, those who are financially poorer give a substantially greater proportion of what wealth they have (3.6%), compared to the wealthiest in society who give only 1.1% of their earnings, at least in the United Kingdom (Cowley, Mckenzie, Pharoah, & Smith, 2011; see also HM Government, 2011; National Council for Voluntary Organisations & Charities Aid Foundation, 2009).

Age is also positively related to donations (Wunderink, 2002). There may also be generational differences in philanthropy (Charities Aid Foundation, 2011, 2014; Cowley et al., 2011; Pharaoh & Tanner, 1997). Recent research suggests that the over 60s are six times more generous than those under 30, prompting fears that a generation gap might pull the rug from under charitable institutions (Smith, 2012). However, at present, it is unclear whether the younger generation will become substantially more philanthropic with age.

There are also suggestions that different demographic segments do not only manifest different mean levels of donations, but that they also favor different types of donations (Wiepking, 2010). For example, in a study of over 2,000 Americans conducted by Grey Matter Research & Consulting (http://www.greymatterresearch.com/index_files/Causes.htm), political liberals were more likely than conservatives to support animal welfare causes, the environment, human rights, education, cultural, and public policy causes. Conservatives were more likely to give toward veterans and religious causes. International relief also falls into the support sphere of the political left, while donations to

the arts are strongly dependent on social class membership (Wiepking, 2010). Age, which, of course, is not independent from political outlook, also mattered. Younger donors favored human rights, child development, childhood education, and cultural causes, while older donors were more likely to support domestic hunger and poverty, religious, disabilities, and veterans' causes. Other details include the fact that both disaster relief and domestic hunger or poverty relief was more likely to be supported by women than men.

The implications for charities are clear. For example, level of education and income often vary according to postcode, and charities may attempt to target their mailing campaigns accordingly. Moreover, when given a choice of addressing a letter to a woman or a men living at the same address, it will probably be more beneficial to target the woman. The differential preference for different causes by different people might also be taken into account. Where information about age is available, for example, human rights Organizations should focus on targeting younger donors, and veterans' organizations will be more likely to get lucky with an older demographic.

Psychological Motivators of Giving

Decisions to donate are informed by both emotional and rational processes (Dickert, Kleber, Peters, & Slovic, 2011). For example, in a study of donations following the September 11 attacks (Piferi, Jobe, & Jones, 2006), six motivations for helping emerged: to relieve one's own distress, to show patriotism, to show civic responsibility, the desire for support in a similar situation, knowing someone involved, and relieving the other's distress. In the following, Bekkers and Wiepking's (2011) literature review will be discussed in a little more detail, because it is one of the most thorough works available on the topic to date.

Bekkers et al.'s literature review. Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) identified eight potential mechanisms as important for motivating donations: "awareness of need," "solicitation," "costs and benefits," "altruism," "reputation," "psychological benefits," "values," and "efficacy." Most of these overlap strongly with processes described in sections below and will be covered elsewhere. However, three of the mechanisms are not covered in detail below and deserve a mention here: costs and benefits; reputation effects, and efficacy.

Donors will often weigh up the cost of a donation against the potential benefits. Both costs and benefits to the donor (losing money; feeling good) and to the recipient (getting support; being kept in dependency through handouts) are relevant. Costs and benefits are also theorized in the general literature on prosocial behavior reviewed in the fifth section. For example, the bystander-calculus model (Piliavin, Dovidio, Gaertner, & Clark, 1981) proposes that people weigh the consequences of helping against the consequences of not helping, taking into

account both material resources given up (e.g., time, money), and psychological costs (e.g., feeling bad about nonintervention).

A cautionary note is, however, in order regarding the impact of perceived costs and benefits. Despite the intuitive appeal of the idea that donors consider these factors rationally, there is evidence that perceived benefits to the donor sometimes decrease donations. This paradoxical situation is known as a crowding-out effect and was first theorized by Titmuss (1970) when he argued that the intrinsic motivation for giving blood would decrease if replaced by an extrinsic motivation (e.g., a cash incentive). A possible explanation might be that extrinsic rewards can move the donor's focus from a moral arena (I'm doing this because it's right) to a financial one (is this a good deal?) (Heyman & Ariely, 2004). Since a donor is always financially better off not giving, the intrinsic motivation is therefore "crowded-out." Experimental studies (Ariely, Bracha, & Meier, 2009) and economic field experiments (Meier, 2007) support the existence of a crowding-out effect. There is also research suggesting that cause marketing, whereby firms link products with a cause and share proceeds with it, can reduce overall contributions (Krishna, 2011). Yet, not all studies have found consistent crowding-out effects (Brooks, 1999, 2000, 2003; Marcuello & Salas, 2001). The precise psychological mechanisms of the crowding-out effect are complicated. From an applied point of view, interventions aimed at optimizing the cost-benefit ratio of a donation will be effective as long as they avoid triggering such effects.

Bekkers and Wiepking (2011) also highlight "reputation" as influential. Economic research has shown that most people prefer their donation activity to be public rather than private (Andreoni & Petrie, 2004), that they are more likely to give in a public situation (Alpizar, Carlsson, & Johansson-Stenman, 2007; Alpizar & Martinsson, 2013), that they will suffer a loss in an economic game in exchange for increased favorable reputation (Clark, 2002), that they prefer giving money physically in person rather than anonymously (Hoffman, McCabe, & Smith, 1996), and that not giving is seen as affecting one's reputation negatively (e.g., Barclay, 2004; Bateson, Nettle, & Roberts, 2006; Bereczkei, Birkas, & Kerekes, 2007). Unsurprisingly, "conspicuous" helping (Grace & Griffin, 2006; West, 2004), whereby a donation is conspicuous via the purchase of empathy ribbons, pins, or other markers of altruism, is very popular with donors (although West argues that the ostentatious nature of the behavior may undermine donation amounts).

Related to the concept of reputation is the feeling of being watched. A recent study found that eye images displayed on a charity collection box in a supermarket resulted in a 48% increase in donations (Powell, Roberts, & Nettle, 2012). In fact, the donor need not be consciously aware of the eye image (Haley & Fessler, 2005). Giving the donor the option of donating publicly or privately, offering markers such as support buttons or wrist bands, and using eye images could all be used to increase donations.

“Efficacy,” as highlighted by Bekkers and Wiepking, has some immediate applied implications and does not need much explanation. Improving the donor’s trust in the reputation of the charity, for example, by providing financial information about the charity organization’s good track records, should be beneficial.

The identifiable victim effect. Donors are more likely to be moved when confronted with the suffering of a single, identifiable person, than by the knowledge that large numbers of people are suffering (Small, Loewenstein, & Slovic, 2006). Very subtle cues sometimes make big differences in terms of identifiability and helping behavior: Even just telling donors that a family which will benefit has been chosen, rather than that a family will be chosen, can increase donations (Small & Loewenstein, 2006). Counterintuitively, people seem to be less moved to help even when just confronted with a small but still identified group rather than with one individual—knowing that Rokia is suffering is a more potent cue than knowing that Rokia, Sonia, Lara, and Susie are suffering (Kogut & Kogut, 2013; Kogut & Ritov, 2005a). Moreover, asking a donor to make a hypothetical donation to a single individual has been shown to subsequently increase donations toward a larger group (Hsee, Zhang, Lu, & Xu, 2013). When speaking of big groups, it is even more apparent that dry statistics fail to spark those emotions necessary to propel people into acting (Slovic, 2007). However, it is yet somewhat unclear in how far the identifiable victim effect holds true for both ingroup and outgroup members (Kogut & Ritov, 2011). Given that disaster relief appeals often benefit victims in other countries, and given that donors can often be assumed to be aware of the different nationalities involved, more research on this topic would urgently be needed to ascertain how the effect might best be utilized by practitioners.

Many charities have inferred the psychological effects of identifiability, by offering donors to sponsor, for example, a specific child depicted in an image. Although this kind of aid is far from being the most effective mechanism of support, this mechanism is popular with donors because it allows them to project their emotions onto a specific individual, thereby motivating them to act prosocially. The use of pictures of concrete individuals, and giving donors the option of sponsoring a specific individual, are effective tools.

Psychophysical numbing. Whether people are willing to make a sacrifice to save a certain individual depends, rather irrationally, on how big the group of sufferers is (Fetherstonhaugh, Slovic, Johnson, & Friedrich, 1997). People are more willing to send aid to save 1 person out of 10 sufferers (10%) than they are to save 10 out of 1,000 (1%): The proportion of lives saved is more important to donors than the total number of lives saved. Marketing experts have also found that how donations are framed, e.g., in absolute or percentage terms, impacts on donation decisions (Chang, 2008; Chang & Lee, 2010). Relatedly, if people

believe the funding goal is approaching, they believe that a fixed donation will be more impactful than the same amount of money when the funding goal is far away (Cryder & Loewenstein, 2011). Thus, donors are happier to contribute a set amount of money if 95% of the funding target has already been reached than if only 5% of the funding target has been reached.

The implications are that practitioners might be well advised to be cautious about overly emphasizing the extent of need. It might not always be beneficial to greatly emphasize that the need for help is vast, because a great need for help is inversely related to the impact a fixed donation can have. If donors feel that their contribution will only be a small drop in the ocean, they might be less inclined to help than if they feel their contribution can be substantial. Moreover, sending messages that the funding target has almost been reached might prompt people to donate, because the subjectively perceived contribution of a fixed amount of money will be greater than if the funding target is far away.

Social norms. It has been shown that people are more likely to reach for their wallets if they believe that others have also donated (e.g., Wiepking & Heijnen, 2011). This is borne out in data showing that when offering donors information about what people typically donate before asking for money, donors use this information as a benchmark and can easily be nudged upward in their contributions (Croson & Shang, 2008; Croson, Handy, & Shang, 2009). Furthermore, the effect is particularly strong when the anchor reflects members of one's ingroup as opposed to an outgroup (Hysenbelli, Rubaltelli, & Rumiati, 2013). These findings are in line with a natural field experiment investigating voluntary contributions to an art gallery, where the amount of money previously placed into a transparent box had a significant effect of donations, showing the power of social norms (Martin & Randal, 2008, 2011). Accordingly, practitioners can increase donations by creating social norms that encourage contributions, for example, by directly or indirectly telling potential donors what other people have given, or by putting more notes rather than coins in a transparent collection box (for further practical interventions, see Cabinet Office (2013)).

Mood and positive/negative emotion effects. Whether positive or negative mood is better suited to inducing donations has been a matter of debate. There is now evidence that general positive mood and feelings of general happiness boost donations (Aknin, Dunn, & Norton, 2012). Having said this, there is also evidence that when the focus is on low cost helping—and donations are arguably such a form—both positive and negative mood inductions encourage more help than neutral mood (Kayser, Greitemeyer, Fischer, & Frey, 2010).

Moreover, although general happiness might increase donations, feeling specifically sad about the situation of the victims might also have this effect (Anik, Aknin, Norton, & Dunn, 2011). Relatedly, marketing research has

established that when using pictures of victims showing emotions, these emotions are contagious for potential donors, and that sad expressions elicit more sympathy and helping than happy or neutral expressions (Small & Verrochi, 2009). These contagion effects seem to be particularly strong if the victim and the perceiver share the same group membership (Weisbuch & Ambady, 2008).

There is also some evidence that emotions about life in general and about the victims specifically impact the donation decision process in different ways. According to Dickert, Sagara, and Slovic (2011), the decision on whether to donate at all has a self-focus and is related to general mood management. In contrast, the decision how much to donate is victim-focused and related to emotions toward the victims such as empathy.

The effect of mood/emotions on donations is bidirectional. In addition to mood and emotions affecting donation decisions, there is also good evidence that helping others, for example, by donating money, can have a very positive effect on the happiness and well-being of the donor (Aknin et al., 2012). In fact, spending money on others increases happiness to a greater extent than spending money on the self (Dunn, Aknin, & Norton, 2008). Interestingly, donation frequency is more important for happiness than the total overall contribution: Two small donations make the donor feel better than one big one (Strahilevitz, 2011).

There are some obvious applied implications following from this. Generally, donation requests should elicit more positive responses when donors are happy: Exposing potential donors to cheerful music, smiling at them, or collecting money on a sunny day, should all be effective. At the same time, donation appeals need to be designed in a way that the cause in need of support makes donors sad for the victims—pictures and graphic descriptions of suffering might be more effective than upbeat messages.

Another approach could be to make donors aware of the positive effects on their mood which can be expected following altruism, and through this attempt to prompt donors to be more generous. However, it is possible that, in line with the crowding-out effect described above, such messages would reduce the intrinsic motivation to help, thereby possibly producing a counterproductive effect (Anik et al., 2011).

Other emotions: Guilt, nostalgia, and elevation. A specific form of negative mood induction involves guilt. There is evidence that making donors feel guilty about the situation of the victims might increase their donation proclivity (Haynes, Thornton, & Jones, 2004; Hibbert, Smith, Davies, & Ireland, 2007). Similarly, emphasizing the donor's responsibility for a problem will increase donations (Basil, Ridgway, & Basil, 2006). However, there is the danger that explicitly encouraging a sense of responsibility via guilt will cause anger and reactance effects (Feiler, Tost, & Grant, 2012). Guilt induction might also be most beneficial if people are allowed to reaffirm their personal integrity after having been made to

feel guilty, prior to the attempt to elicit a contribution (Harvey & Oswald, 2000). Nonetheless, previous research has found no interaction between positive mood and guilt in their effect on helping (Cunningham, Steinberg, & Greu, 1980).

Practitioners might conclude that gently reminding donors of their own responsibility for a state of affairs, thereby prompting feelings of guilt, might increase donations. For example, although the Darfur disaster might be described as a result of interethnic conflict, it can equally validly be described as a conflict over scarce resources caused by drought and climate change, which is ultimately due to the wasteful lifestyle of Westerners. This link could be highlighted in promotional material. However, overall, it seems that guilt effects are currently not understood well enough to make strong practical recommendations.

In contrast to guilt, nostalgia can be considered a positive mood. A study by Ford and Merchant (2010) suggests that nostalgic emotions can be effectively harnessed to elicit donations. The data suggest that making people recall a memory which triggers nostalgic emotions (e.g., a charity devoted to child well-being could ask donors to recall the birth of their own children) might positively affect donation proclivity. However, more research on the robustness of this effect would be valuable before strong practical conclusions can be drawn.

A further recent study highlights the impact of the emotion of elevation. Schnall, Roper, and Fessler (2010) elicited elevation, defined as an emotion that occurs in response to witnessing another person perform a good deed. Participants were more likely to act prosocially if the emotion of elevation had been induced in them previously by exposing them to different video clips. Schnall et al.'s (2010) study suggests that inducing elevation in donors will be beneficial, for example, by projecting stories of admirable deeds by other donors, by telling donors about someone else who has given away a substantial amount of their money, or potentially even the victims themselves prior to asking for a contribution (for some related findings, see Freeman, Aquino, & McFerran, 2009).

Terror management and mortality salience. There is some evidence suggesting that an awareness of one's own mortality can increase donations. Terror management theory (Greenberg & Arndt, 2012) argues that people are terrified at the thought of their own death, and that they engage in different strategies to manage this. One hypothesized effect is that people engage more in culturally prescribed behaviors, including prosocial behaviors such as donating, when mortality salience is high (Jonas, Schimel, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 2002). Indeed, Jonas et al.'s participants reported more positive attitudes toward charities when they were interviewed in front of a funeral home rather than several blocks away. However, there are instances when mortality salience results in hostility (for a review, cf. Jonas & Fritzsche, 2013). One explanation is that mortality salience motivates the individual to achieve goals and adhere to prescribed norms. However,

it is possible that the prescribed norm is nonsocial, e.g., the drive to accumulate individual wealth at the expense of others. In this context, mortality salience can result in reduced prosociality, but this effect can be negated if a prosocial norm is made salient as a precursor (Jonas, Sullivan, & Greenberg, 2013). The fact that nonsocial norms might mitigate donations is also illustrated by work showing that simply just reminding people of money as a concept makes them less altruistic and less willing to help others (Vohs, Mead, & Goode, 2006).

Another study, that shares with work on terror management but focused on anxiety management, demonstrated that people are more likely to donate when they are waiting for an outcome which they perceive to have little control over (e.g., a job application, medical test results; Converse, Risen, & Carter, 2012). In such situations, people might be more prosocial because they wish to subconsciously encourage fate's favors. This would suggest that situations that make people anxious, as can be assumed for those in GP waiting areas or potentially airport lounges where people are latently worried about plane crashes or terrorism attacks, might be more responsive than those who can be assumed to be more relaxed.

One conclusion from this could be that it might be productive to remind people of their civic duties alongside their own vulnerability. For example, donors could be invited to imagine that they themselves had been adversely affected, maybe even lost a loved one, and then asked to donate to a local or national cause. However, there are some obvious ethical concerns about making people feel uneasy in this way, or exploiting their anxieties.

Inferred motivation. Responses to help are dependent on people's inferences about what motivates the offer of help (Weinstein, DeHaan, & Ryan, 2010). Similarly, data suggest that people respond more readily to requests for help by someone to whom the cause seems to be personally relevant (Ratner, Zhao, & Clarke, 2011). Hence, people who are asked, for example, to support Handicap International will be more responsive if the request for support is made by a parent of a disabled child than if it is made by someone who is thought to be paid for their fundraising activities. Therefore, fundraisers should reveal the personal relevance of a cause to them where such a relevance exists.

Separate or joint consideration of causes. Perplexingly, people might also respond to the same disaster appeal differently, depending on whether it is presented alone or jointly with other causes (Kogut & Ritov, 2005b). For example, in one study that asked participants to support either an animal welfare or a cancer prevention cause, the animal cause received more support when the two causes were presented separately, but the cancer prevention cause received more support in the joint presentation condition where people were asked to choose just one cause to support (Kahneman & Ritov, 1994). This might be because separate judgments are more influenced by emotions, while joint judgments are more driven by

rational considerations. Research in the judgment and decision-making tradition also shows that a decision to donate might be influenced by how many options people are confronted with (Soyer & Hogarth, 2011). This means, for example, that the number of causes supported by a single charity might impact on both the distribution of donations across causes and on the overall amount donated. The fact that individuals seem to have a giving threshold points in the same direction. In a report on international comparisons of charitable giving, the Charities Aid Foundation highlighted that giving to the Asian Tsunami disaster of 2004 was diverted from other causes (Charities Aid Foundation, 2006). In other words, whether donors will support a cause depends on which other causes compete for their attention (Payne, Schkade, Desvousges, & Aultman, 2000).

Moral cues. Reminding people of religious concepts increases prosocial behavior (Pichon, Boccato, & Saroglou, 2007). However, one caveat is that religious donors are likely to donate almost entirely to organizations within their own faith (Eckel & Grossman, 2004). Fortunately, research has demonstrated that secular moral concepts such as “truth” and “honesty” are equally effective in increasing prosociality, with no differences between the effectiveness of religious and nonreligious words (Shariff & Norenzayan, 2007).

From a practitioner’s point of view, this means that any manipulation which reminds people of moral concepts can be expected to be beneficial. Reminding donors that it is lent, or that it is almost Christmas, will help. Making the faith of religious donors salient, or priming nonreligious donors with the concepts of “honesty” and “truth,” might help. Manipulations can be subtle, for example, by incorporating into the narrative that a victim “prays every day that things will improve for her,” a religious focus can be prompted.

The concept of moral purity might also be invoked by scents: One study revealed that clean scents can promote charitable behavior (Liljenquist, Zhong, & Galinsky, 2010). The authors of this study argue that this effect is due to ideas of physical cleanliness transcending the domain of the concrete and being transferred to ideals about moral purity. The underlying psychological mechanism might be that clean scent primes notions of moral purity, which in turn increases prosocial tendencies. This means that fundraisers who are in direct contact with the public could be encouraged to use perfumes with a fresh note (e.g., fresh cotton, citrus).

Friendship effects. People are not only more likely to help if they are friends with the victim, but they are also more likely to help as long as one of their friends is a member of the victim group (Small & Simonsohn, 2008). Research that encourages intergroup friendship as a means of improving intergroup attitudes has found that people do not even need to engage in actual friendship with an outgroup member, but that it is sufficient for them to imagine being friends with an outgroup member in order to manifest more positive attitudes toward this outgroup (Crisp &

Turner, 2009). Potentially, a similar approach could be used to increase donations: Asking people to imagine being friends with a victim (e.g., “imagine Sonja (an identified victim) was your friend”), or merely priming friendship concepts per se before eliciting a donation, might have an augmenting effect on the contributions.

Features of the organization and the donation request: Marketing principles.

Marketing research has unearthed a number of important factors impacting on donation decisions. For example, the perceived trustworthiness of a charitable organization, organizational accountability, and organizational commitment have all been found to inform willingness to support an organization (Polonsky, Shelley, & Voola, 2002; Sargeant & Lee, 2004). A belief that the need for help is short-term rather than long-term also has a beneficial effect on donation proclivity (Warren & Walker, 1991). Thus, appeals could stress that the organization does not anticipate having to ask for assistance in the long run.

From a practical point of view, sometimes even quite simple measures such as the use of the phrase “every penny (or cent, Euro, etc.) will help” can significantly increase donations (Weyant, 1984). The use of negative pictures has also been shown to be effective (Chang & Lee, 2010; Thornton, Kirchner, & Jacobs, 1991). However, negative images have sometimes been found to cause psychological reactance against donations (Isen & Noonberg, 1979) and positive photographs may also be useful in the right context. For example, in one study, donations were boosted by putting a pleasant picture (as compared to no picture) on the collection box displayed in some local shops (Perrine & Heather, 2000).

There are also suggestions that people are more willing to donate if they obtain a product in exchange for their donation, even if that product holds little appeal (Holmes, Miller, & Lerner, 2002). Many charities seem to have inferred this, as is evident from the fact that so many mailing campaigns include a small token item such as a pen.

One compliance method that has been found to be effective uses the foot-in-the-door method, which involves getting a person to agree to a large request by first getting that person to agree to a modest request (Freedman & Fraser, 1966). The effect can even be observed when the two requests are elicited by different people (Chartrand, Pinckert, & Burger, 1999). One explanation for this effect might be related to self-perception—performing a small act leads to a redefinition of attitudes toward the issue or the specific behavior required (DeJong, 1979). Compliance with the small request sets the person off on a specific direction of behavioral change, and increases willingness and perceived obligation to continue and go along the chosen direction, even when the requests get bigger. Initial compliance creates a bond between requester and requestee. The requestee might infer from his/her initial compliance that they genuinely agree with the requester’s goals, or that they have a bond with the requester which obliges them to continue along the initiated path, even if they might initially have complied only out of

politeness. This means that donors who have already given a small amount might be more easily persuaded to give a larger amount than people who have not previously donated anything.

In contrast, the door-in-the-face (DITF) technique is a compliance method which uses a large request first. The respondent will most likely turn down the large request, but is then more likely to agree to a second, more reasonable request, compared to a situation where no large request has been made first (Cialdini et al., 1975). Several psychological mechanisms have been suggested to underline the effectiveness of the DITF method. The social responsibility explanation proposes that it is an adverse experience for people to refuse a request if they believe they have an obligation to help, and that they are therefore more likely to comply with a second, smaller request after having refused the first, large request (Tusing & Dillard, 2000). Other explanations involve concepts such as reciprocal concessions (Cialdini et al., 1975), or positive self-presentation and guilt reduction.

Another way of boosting donations could therefore be to ask people for a larger request (e.g., to volunteer) before eliciting a smaller request (e.g., a monetary donation; Liu, 2011; Liu & Aaker, 2008). Donation appeals could be designed in such a way that donors are first indicated whether they are willing to donate time (for example, by helping with the charity's admin work). Relatedly, a further measure to increase donations might be to elicit precommitment by asking donors to agree to a future donation request. This reduces the psychological cost and discomfort of an economic donation, i.e., it reduces the discomfort of parting with funds (Meyvis, Bennett, & Oppenheimer, 2011).

Some further studies on basic psychological processes have generated insights that can be translated into marketing principles. A paper by Baumeister, Masicampo, and DeWall (2009) reported a series of studies which document that belief in free will can promote helpfulness, while a disbelief in free will reduces it. Another study focussed on relatedness, which is the extent to which a person feels connected to the people around him or her (Deci & Ryan, 1991). Pavey, Greitemeyer, and Sparks (2011) manipulated this variable and found that this increased the participants' donations to charity. These types of studies find changes in behavior following very subtle manipulations and interventions, for example, by just changing one or two words in an introductory paragraph (e.g., Pavey et al., 2011). The simplicity of such manipulations makes them a ready tool to be used in the design of donation appeals. From an applied point of view, we would conclude that subtle messages emphasizing the potential donor's free will or relatedness might include donations. Including words like "choice" and "decision" in donation appeals will subtly emphasize free will; while including words like "together," "connected," or "shared" can prompt feelings of relatedness.

Having reviewed some of the key factors which trigger donations to charitable causes, we will next turn to the specific case of donations to disaster victims. As will become clear, although many of the processes described above will be relevant to

disaster donations, there are some further factors which are specific to disaster relief, and which should be considered when theorizing this particular type of giving.

Donations to Disaster Victims

Most people will be able to think of a large number of humanitarian disasters and emergencies which occurred relatively recently. Humanitarian disasters can be defined as catastrophes that cause great damage or loss of life. Different models explaining donations to disaster relief campaigns have been proposed (e.g., Cheung & Chan, 2000; Oosterhof, Heuvelman, & Peters, 2009). There are interindividual differences in giving. For example, those who have given in the past are more likely to do so again (Simon, 1997), suggesting that particularly approaching past donors will be fruitful. There are also intersituation differences (Jonas et al., 2002), interorganizational differences (e.g., some charities might be preferred because they are seen as more trustworthy; Polonsky et al., 2002), and intercampaign differences (e.g., some campaigns might be more successful because they included pictures; Perrine & Heather, 2000).

Of particular interest to us are between-cause differences. For example, in the United Kingdom at least, medical, hospital, and children's charities consistently receive more support than appeals toward the homeless or overseas appeals (CAF, 2011a). Some events tend to elicit more donations than others. To illustrate, the Disasters Emergency Committee received a total of £200 million for the Tsunami Appeal in 2005 in contrast to the £13.6 million donated to the Darfur Crisis since May 24, 2007. According to Oxfam, the 2004 tsunami killed 169,000 people and left 600,000 homeless. In Darfur, the conflict has rendered 1.5 million people reliant on humanitarian aid.

One reason why some causes might elicit more support is because they receive greater media exposure (Bennett & Kottasz, 2000; Simon, 1997). A clear practical implication is that advertising, rather than being part of an "overhead" cost which donors like to see being kept at a minimum, is absolutely essential. Another striking factor is the distinction between naturally caused and humanly caused events. Of course, real-life disasters always differ in a number of ways, and differences in donor responsiveness can therefore not be attributed with certainty to any one feature of the event. To ascertain whether differences as the one observed between the Asian Tsunami and the Darfur crisis can indeed be attributed to the perceived cause of the event, we conducted a series of experimental studies. We will describe one of these studies in a bit more detail to give a sense of the type of methodology typically employed in this kind of psychological research.

Natural versus humanly caused events. In one study (study 3, Zagefka, Noor, Randsley de Moura, Hopthrow, & Brown, 2011), just over 100 participants were presented with a fake newspaper article summarizing a fictitious annual report of

a major international charity. The report highlighted famine as one of the main causes of suffering. There were two versions of the article, and participants were randomly presented with one of the two versions. In one case, the report suggested that most of the famines were due to natural drought and the extremely dry weather conditions. In the other case, the cause was presented to be armed conflict and the multitude of current regional disputes and civil wars. All other information in the report was held constant between the two conditions. Participants then filled out a number of questionnaire scales, and they were also invited to donate some actual money to the victims of the event they had read about. By manipulating the perceived cause of the disaster event in this controlled way, we could monitor whether participants' responses would be affected by the perceived disaster cause. And indeed, participants donated more money to famine victims if the event was naturally rather than humanly caused.

From an applied point of view, these findings suggest that the reported cause of a disaster event can be very important for people deciding whether to donate. In fact, many events are actually caused by a combination of natural and human causes, and these can be differentially emphasized when portraying the events. For example, the Darfur crisis can be construed as being due to natural factors (drought) or due to human causes (ethnopolitical conflict). It is imperative that wherever possible charities stress natural over human causes for events for which they wish to elicit support.

Victim blame. The data of the 2011 paper (Zagefka et al., 2011) also revealed a couple of other facts. First, people were less inclined to donate if they perceived the victims to be responsible for their plight (see also Campbell, Carr, & MacLachlan, 2001; Harper, Wagstaff, Newton, & Harrison, 1990). Indeed, this effect has been established when looking at other types of helping too (e.g., Meyer & Mulherin, 1980). Moreover, a perception that the disaster event was humanly caused increased perceptions that the victims are to blame. Humanly caused events generally offer more opportunity to blame the victims than naturally caused events. For example, it is unlikely that victims would have caused a tsunami, earthquake, or hurricane. However, it is at least possible that the victims of humanly caused events might have contributed to the crisis by engaging in armed conflict or electing an incompetent government. In our data, the mere possibility that the victims might have played a role in their plight was sufficient to elicit victim blame, and the presence of positive evidence for victim involvement was not required. Our participants were therefore displaying what is essentially a bias against victims of humanly caused events.

Many charities have inferred the importance of victim innocence in public appeals. This might be why children are such a popular choice for images typically used in relief appeals. However, a further step that could be useful would be to explicitly stress that victims are innocent, especially for victims of humanly caused

conflict for which the default assumption otherwise might be to apportion blame (e.g., “Saskia has done nothing to provoke the repeated attacks on her”).

Self-help. Last but not least, results in our 2011 paper also suggested that people were more willing to donate if they thought the victims were making an effort to better their situation. We asked participants a number of questions about whether they thought the victims are making an effort to improve their situation and to be proactive in tackling their plight. In line with previous survey research (Bennett & Kottasz, 2000), perceiving the victims as proactive and as making an effort to help themselves clearly increased donation proclivity. Perceived self-help also covaried with other factors in a systematic way, so that more victim blame reduced perceived self-help efforts. We should add the cautionary note that some data exist, however, which suggest that the effects of perceived self-help on donations might sometimes depend on by other factors, for example, how strongly donors believe that the world is just (Appelbaum, Lennon, & Aber, 2006). More research is needed to determine the optimal level of perceived victim self-help, as messages that are too upbeat might interfere with sadness for the victims and therefore backfire. Nonetheless, it might be beneficial to present victims as proactive, for example, by using images that depict them actively rebuilding their houses rather than passively waiting for assistance.

Perceived need, impact, and donations by others. The importance of disaster cause and victim blame in driving donation decisions was also highlighted in another study (Zagefka, Noor, Brown, Hothrow, & Randsley de Moura, 2012) that asked participants to write down narrative accounts of their decision making. Some further influential factors emerged, namely the perceived amount donated by others, the perceived impact of a donation, i.e., whether people felt their contribution would make a tangible difference, and the perceived need of the victims. If people believe their money will not reach those in need because funds are likely to be mismanaged, this acts as a deterrent to donations (see also Cheung & Chan, 2000). Perhaps more interestingly, this research also found that the amount others are perceived to have donated matters. If people felt that others were donating so much that their contribution was not urgently required, this induced social loafing responses, and donation proclivity declined. Last, in these data a greater perceived need for help also nudged people into action (see also Levine & Thompson, 2004).

From a practical point of view, this means that although it is important to communicate that others also donate, it is crucial to communicate that the donor’s own contribution is still required and to not allow them to engage in social loafing, resting assured in the knowledge that others will take care of the problem. Moreover, it is important to communicate to donors that their contribution will make a difference and will have an impact. Finally, emphasizing that there is a vast need that needs to be addressed might be beneficial. As discussed above, however,

one important caveat practitioners should be aware of is that sometimes emphasizing need by telling people about the scope of the problem can actually decrease donation proclivity. This might reduce the proportional impact a potential contribution will have, as described in the effect of psychophysical numbing, or it might trigger the process of scope insensitivity whereby emotional responses necessary to trigger helping are actually undermined (Huber, Van Boven, & McGraw, 2011). More research is needed to ascertain the optimal balance for eliciting donations through promoting ideas of deep need and large scope without triggering scope insensitivity effects.

Knowledge about the event and the setting. Yet another factor potentially impacting on donation decisions was the focus of another series of studies which investigated responses to the Asian Tsunami of 2004 and the Chinese earthquake of 2008 (Zagefka, Noor, & Brown, 2013). In a survey focusing on the Asian Tsunami, those participants who reported knowing more about the area where the disaster happened were more inclined to donate to the victims. We reasoned that being familiar with and knowing more about an area might increase donation proclivity because it makes it easier for donors to identify with the victims. Such knowledge will make it easier to imagine the scene and form a mental image of the suffering. This will increase the ability to relate to the victims, and to identify with them, which in turn should increase donation proclivity.

This could be one reason why people donate more to events in areas which they have visited at least once: they simply know more about the area. The mechanism can also offer one explanation (although there are others, see above) why people help ingroup members more readily: People generally know more about ingroup members than outgroup members. This is the pattern that emerged in the study focusing on the Chinese earthquake in 2008. Chinese participants reported donating more than non-Chinese participants, and this difference was explained by differences in knowledge about the disaster area and subsequent difference in levels of identification with the victims.

One factor that makes knowledge interesting is that it can be reasonably easily manipulated. In one study (Zagefka et al., 2013), half of the participants were invited to complete a quiz about Thailand, and subsequently presented with the correct responses to increase their knowledge about the country's geography, climate, politics, etc. The other half completed a quiz about a different country. When subsequently asked how willing they were to donate money to Thai victims, those participants with experimentally improved knowledge about Thailand were significantly more willing to donate, indicating that knowledge can be quite easily manipulated in a bid to increase donation proclivity.

Intergroup conflict. In another study focusing on Asia, we explored how intergroup relations and historical animosities between countries might impact on potential donors' willingness to help outgroup victims (Shaojing, Zagefka, &

Goodwin, 2013). When studying the responses of about 700 Chinese participants following the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011, it emerged that a perception of conflict between the donors' and the victims' countries had a detrimental effect on positive emotions toward the victims, which in turn reduced donation proclivity. Participants who reported feeling very upset about the China–Japan war, the Nanjing disaster and the territorial dispute over the Fishing Island were reluctant to donate to help the Japanese victims, even if the victims themselves were not to blame for these events.

It should be noted, however, that the effect of intergroup emotions on donations and other indicators of intergroup concern were a double-edged sword. Although positive emotions had a direct positive effect on donation proclivity, they also had an indirect negative effect, in that positive emotions increased a perception of the Japanese people as competent. This, in turn, decreased concern for the victims (and with this donation proclivity), presumably because donors assumed that the Japanese people can take care of themselves and do not need assistance.

Disaster victims: A special case? As will be evident, much of our own work has focused to donations to disaster victims, rather than ongoing appeals. Of course, many charities cater toward both disaster and nondisaster causes (e.g., Oxfam might launch an emergency relief appeal, as well as working on the long-term goal of reducing world hunger). We would argue that supporting those different types of charitable causes is often caused by generic psychological processes and mechanisms. For example, increasing someone's empathy will increase the likelihood that this person supports all kinds of different charitable goals. But, in addition to the generic principles that we reviewed above which will all apply, another set of factors that is not relevant to other types of charity will also be important. This set of factors is to do with the fact that disaster giving often has an aspect of intergroup behavior, because often donations are elicited from Western donors to benefit victims in other countries. As such, giving to disaster victims often involves donations to victims who are perceived as members of an outgroup. The recipients in disaster relief are often geographically far removed from the donors, they are in great need and require urgent assistance, are often unlikely to ever come into firsthand contact with the donors, and are often not "identified" as in Kogut's research reviewed above. Some of these features of disaster relief are due to the fact that disaster relief very often entails intergroup prosociality. This is the body of research covered in the next section.

Insights from Research on Intergroup Prosociality

Prosocial behavior is intergroup by nature if helper and helpee belong to different social groups (e.g., national or ethnic groups), and if these different groups are salient to the actors. For example, if a British citizen volunteers to

help Nigerian orphans, this behavior would be intergroup if group memberships are salient to him/her, but it would not classify as intergroup if the helper sees him/herself and those in need simply as individuals while engaging in a prosocial act. As indicated above, donations/helping can inherently always be intergroup, if “haves” and “have-nots” are salient categories to the protagonists. A whole host of well-researched intergroup processes and phenomena will become relevant to a donations situation if group memberships are salient to donors and recipients. It is therefore imperative to consider how intergroup dynamics can impact on donations. The research reviewed in the following is focusing on intergroup prosocial behavior, with donations being one instantiation of such behavior.

The primacy of the ingroup. Recent years have seen a renewal in research interest in intergroup prosociality (Stürmer & Snyder, 2010). There is a large body of research showing that people are more willing to help ingroup members than outgroup members (Baron & Szymanska, 2011; Singer, 2009). This has been shown, among others, for ethnic groups (Gaertner & Bickman, 1971), artificial lab groups (Dovidio et al., 1997), and football fans (Levine, Prosser, Evans, & Reicher, 2005; for some boundary conditions of ingroup preference, see Kunstman & Plant, 2008; Saucier, Miller, & Doucet, 2005). Donations themselves also tend to be intragroup. For example, only 13% of donations in the United Kingdom are typically toward overseas causes, with the United States giving less than 3% to others (Charities Aid Foundation, 2006). Given that people generally perceive themselves to be more similar to ingroup members than outgroup members, it then comes as no surprise that perceived similarity to recipients is also related to donations. The similarity can be quite subtle, as underlined by a study which suggests that donations to hurricane victims are higher if the donor and the hurricane share their initials (Chandler, Griffin, & Sorensen, 2008). This means that practitioners might want to target specific surnames in their databases following different types of events. For example, it would have been sensible to particularly target those people whose first or second name begins with “K” following Hurricane Katrina.

The pattern that people prefer to help ingroup members can be expected on the basis of Social Identity Theory (e.g., Levine et al., 2005; Reicher, Cassidy, Wolpert, Hopkins, & Levine, 2006), which argues that people have a psychological bias in favor of their ingroup because group membership contributes positively to their self-esteem. It has been suggested that the reason why outgroup helping is less prevalent might be because people empathize with outgroup members less readily (Cikara, Bruneau, & Saxe, 2011). Stürmer, Snyder, and Omoto (2005) go further when they argue that ingroup and outgroup helping are driven by different psychological processes, with ingroup helping being driven by empathy, and outgroup helping driven by the degree to which helpers feel attracted to the person in need. There is, however, also good evidence that empathy can be felt

toward outgroup members, and that it will increase outgroup helping when it is experienced (Batson et al., 1997).

From a practitioner's point of view, the conclusions to be drawn are that more donations will be elicited if victims are perceived to be joint members of the same social category as the donor (but, see van Leeuwen & Mashuri, 2012). Recategorization techniques have been tested extensively in interventions designed to improve intergroup relations, and they can be achieved by making salient a superordinate category shared by the potential helper and helpee. Increasing the salience of a common identity has been found to favorably affect intergroup attitudes, for example, in work on the common ingroup identity model (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). It is reasonable to propose positive effects for intergroup helping too. For example, in one study (Levine & Thompson, 2004), salient self-relevant categories influenced which disaster victims participants wanted to donate to. For instance, participants were more willing to help disaster victims in Europe rather than South America when their own European identity was made salient by the subtle manipulation of putting a European flag on the front page of the questionnaire. Measures like this, which emphasize shared category membership, could easily be adopted by disaster relief campaigns.

Not unlike the concept of "psychological proximity" is the concept of "physical proximity." Recent findings suggest that the perceived obligation to help is stronger when the victims share physical proximity with the helpee (Nagel & Waldmann, 2010). However, physical proximity is likely to covary with other factors such as shared group memberships, descriptive and injunctive norms, and beliefs that donations to local causes are more efficacious. In a series of five experiments, Nagel and Waldmann (2013) demonstrated that physical proximity per se had no effect on helping behavior. To put it simply, psychological distance matters more than physical distance. Psychological proximity might be utilized through the use of statements which highlight shared proximity, e.g., "you and the victims are in the same neighborhood"; or "this problem exists in your local community." It could also be done by adjusting visual information (e.g., by emphasizing different state/county/continent borders so that donors and victims are placed in the same entity (Levine & Thompson, 2004).

However, sometimes donors and victims do not share any obvious regional, national, cultural, or continental categories. In such cases, it might still be helpful to emphasize the fact that donors and victims have a shared humanity (Wohl & Branscombe, 2005; see also Cuddy, Rock, & Norton, 2007): If those needing monetary assistance are seen as sharing the donor's humanity, then this should positively affect donation proclivity. Interventions can consist of explicit messages (e.g., "Do you want to lend your fellow Europeans a hand?") or of implicit influences (e.g., in order to encourage donations from Europeans to Europeans, a European flag can be included on the cover page, or a map of Europe which highlights European borders rather than national borders). Very broad social

categories can be prompted in the same way. For example, a message that “we are all citizens of the world” may prompt ideas about shared humanity.

Notably, the preference for intragroup helping is not manifested to the same extent in all individuals, but it is strongest for those highly identified with their group (Simon, Stürmer, & Steffens, 2000). In one clever study that operationalized support for a certain social movement in terms of self-reported donations to the movement, two identity-related factors interacted with each other: Donations were highest if people were simultaneously strongly identified with the movement, and if identity uncertainty was high, i.e., if people felt it was questionable if they were really an accepted member of the group (Simon, Troetschel, & Daehne, 2008). At the same time, there is evidence that full-blown social exclusion (as opposed to uncertainty about inclusion) decreases prosocial behavior (Twenge, Baumeister, DeWall, Ciarocco, & Bartels, 2007). In a series of studies that manipulated social exclusion, for example, by telling participants that they would end up alone later in life or that other participants had rejected them, such rejection reduced the participants’ capacity to emotionally respond to others in need, and thereby reduced helping proclivity.

The finding that uncertainty about belonging to a group, coupled with high identification, might foster donations could also be of applied relevance. One could imagine, for example, a donation appeal that starts by inviting people to state whether they are generous and care for others (most people will subscribe to such a view of themselves), and which then proceeds to question their self-view by asking them to recall a past behavior where they did not act generously. According to Simon et al.’s results, one would expect that making salient the donor’s identification with the group of generous/nice people, and then increasing uncertainty about belonging to this group, might increase donations. However, before strong conclusions can be drawn, more research would be needed, and there are also some obvious ethical reservations against increasing people’s uncertainty in this way.

Power and strategic considerations. There are some suggestions that power relations and strategic considerations often play a pivotal role in intergroup helping (see, e.g., van Leeuwen & Mashuri, 2012; van Leeuwen & Täuber, 2010). As demonstrated by Nadler (2002), we can distinguish between autonomy-oriented and dependency-oriented helping, with the former being aimed at true empowerment and the latter aimed at maintaining a certain power differential. Applied to the case of donations, the distinction might translate, for example, into differential support for advancing funds which the recipient country can utilize and administer as they see fit (autonomy) and for advancing funds where the way in which the money is spent is prescribed by the donor (dependency). Dependency-oriented helping might sometimes be preferred over autonomy-oriented helping because it is a way of affirming dominance and asserting superiority by the powerful group.

This might particularly be the case if the powerful group feels threatened and if the help is positively related to the donors' self-image (van Leeuwen, 2007).

From an applied point of view, this might mean that when donors feel threatened they might be more willing to advance funds if these are perceived to encourage dependency rather than autonomy. For example, Western donors who feel threatened by the rise of the Chinese economic powerhouse might be relatively reluctant to donate to Chinese victims (such as those of the Sichuan earthquake in 2008). However, if donation appeals had included messages about the fact the Chinese would not be consulted about how aid should be spent, thereby marking donations as dependency-oriented, this might well have encouraged donations overall. Hence, under some circumstances, information on the details of how aid is administered can have a crucial effect.

Another type of threat might be when donors are concerned about their own safety. This could be triggered by pondering emergencies which donors believe they could themselves potentially be exposed to (e.g., pondering helping victims of fire/flooding when the donor's own country is prone to such events). Van Leeuwen's results suggest that people should be particularly willing to donate if this charitable act is positively related to the national self-image. For example, reminding British donors that charity is quintessentially British, that it is an important value in British society, or presenting a charity-endorsing quote of an important national figure should increase donation proclivity, particularly under conditions of threat.

Intergroup stereotypes, emotions, and lay theories. Intergroup stereotypes and emotions also inform the likelihood of intergroup helping. According to the BIAS map (Cuddy, Fiske, & Glick, 2007), whether a tendency to help an outgroup (active facilitation) trumps other behavioral tendencies (such as active harm, passive harm, or passive facilitation) will depend on intergroup emotions and stereotypes of the relevant outgroup. Helping can be expected to occur particularly if warmth stereotypes prevail, i.e., if people have feelings of warmth toward the outgroup in need.

Relatedly, lay theories about the nature of groups are also important determinants of intergroup prosociality. For example, there is evidence that a perception that race is biologically/genetically determined, rather than socially constructed, is associated with less upset about the suffering of outgroup members (Williams & Eberhardt, 2008). A belief in genetic determinism (Keller, 2005) can therefore be expected to be negatively related to intergroup helping. This might explain why international relief appeals tend to generate more support among the political left (Wiepking, 2010).

The research on intergroup prosociality is one subsection of the large body of work on generic prosocial behavior. Some seminal findings that have emerged from this literature will be considered in the following section. Again, the rationale

is that although some predictors of prosociality might be type-specific (Kayser, Farwell, & Greitemeyer, 2008), many will generalize from other types of helping to donations.

Lessons to Be Learned from Generic Prosocial Behavior Research

The body of literature about factors promoting generic prosocial behavior is substantial (e.g., Penner, Dovidio, & Piliavin, 2005; Stürmer & Snyder, 2010). Factors facilitating prosociality can be categorized according to whether they are related to the situation, the victim, or the helper (for the latter, see, e.g., Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007). They might be cognitive in nature, emphasizing rational or biased thought processes of the donor, or affective, emphasizing emotional reactions. Another conceptualization differentiates the level at which prosociality functions: micro (the study of the most proximate mechanisms in the brain), meso (the study of interpersonal helping), and macro (the study of helping at group or organizational level) (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006; Penner et al., 2005). Clearly, donations fit into the macro category because they involve intergroup helping, but they might also be influenced by meso and/or micro factors (e.g., empathic neurological activations that facilitate helping). It is now generally accepted that both situational and dispositional factors can trigger prosociality, and that both types of factors can interact in determining whether a prosocial act will take place (Graziano et al., 2007; Van Slyke, Horne, & Thomas, 2005). Various evolutionary accounts of prosociality exist (e.g., Brown & Brown, 2006), however, these will not be reviewed because of space constraints. Similarly, we will not include a more thorough review of the volunteering literature, which has been covered elsewhere (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Mannino, Snyder, & Omoto, 2011). Instead, we will focus on the classic research areas of the bystander effect, empathy, and social influence.

Bystander effect. The seminal work on the bystander effect (Darley & Latane, 1968) describes a situation where a group of onlookers remains passive, unwilling or unable to help a victim. Social psychologists began studying this phenomenon after Kitty Genovese was murdered in New York City in 1964, and journalists reported that 38 people had heard her scream, but none felt compelled to intervene. Many instances of such events have been reported since. Several mechanisms have been found to cause the bystander effect: audience inhibition, i.e., worries that others will disapprove of someone intervening, and diffusion of responsibility, i.e., people feeling less responsible to act personally if there are others present in the situation who could equally act (Latane & Darley, 1976). Social influence is also important in that the presence of other passive bystanders might suggest that an intervention is not needed, because the situation is not in fact that serious. Applied to the context of donations, people might not donate because they believe

the appeal to be exaggerated, or because they believe others will act. This latter belief may especially apply to the state, who may be perceived as more responsible for international affairs.

How might one counter against these psychological mechanisms? As seen above, the establishment of a social norm for donating, for example, by telling donors that others have also contributed, will be helpful. With regard to diffusion of responsibility, this effect could be addressed by designing donation appeals in a way which highlights personal responsibility and the need to act. For example, it could be beneficial to include a message such as, “Your donation is important, don’t leave it for someone else to help,” or to include this message in an easily accessible visual form, by using images inspired by the iconic “We want you” recruitment poster designed for the U.S. Army.

Empathy and oneness. Another classic and robust finding is that empathy increases prosociality. In other words, a capacity or tendency to feel sympathy and compassion makes people want to help (Batson, 1991; Betancourt, 1990). Economists have discussed the “warm glow” caused by altruism (Andreoni, 1989). Recently, neural activity in empathic brain regions has been shown to correlate with donations after observing video clips of suffering victims (Ma, Wang, & Han, 2011). Considering making a donation activates the mesolimbic reward system in a manner similar to the activity observed when financial rewards are received (Harbaugh, Mayr, & Burghart, 2007; Moll et al., 2006). Behavioral paradigms have found that self-ratings of empathy correlate positively with charitable giving (Piferi et al., 2006; Wilhelm & Bekkers, 2010).

Related to this, a study by Levy, Freitas, and Salovey (2002) emphasized that actions can be construed at different levels of abstraction. For example, “voting” can be described as influencing the election (abstract) or as marking a ballot (concrete). This study found that a tendency to perceive actions in abstract terms increases perceived similarity between people, perspective taking and empathy, and therefore donations. This suggests that the use of abstract descriptions in donation appeals will be beneficial because these will encourage empathy and therefore helping. For example, rather than asking donors whether they want to contribute money (concrete), they can be asked if they want to help (abstract). Also, when describing the situation of the victims, abstract descriptions should be preferable—e.g., “the victims are in bad health” (abstract), rather than “the victims suffer from HIV” (concrete).

However, the view that charitable giving is largely driven by biological or socially learned empathic responses has been challenged by researchers who argue that helping is not driven by empathy but by self–other overlap, or perceived oneness with the victim (Neuberg et al., 1997). These scholars essentially suggest that people are never motivated to help others but that they are only ever interested to help themselves, and that by inference humans are fundamentally egoistic.

Evidence for both the egoistic and altruistic argument has been amassed (e.g., Batson et al., 1981, 1989; Maner et al., 2002). However, the empirical evidence collated by both the pro- and contracamps suggests that both empathy and oneness can be motivators of prosociality. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that perspective taking can significantly increase empathic reactions toward victims and therefore prosocial behavior (Batson et al., 1997; Batson, Eklund, Chermok, Hoyt, & Ortiz, 2007). It is likely that, almost by definition, perspective taking will also increase the perceived self–other overlap.

Therefore, interventions that invite perspective taking (e.g., including an instruction to “Imagine yourself in her/his place”) should also indirectly increase empathy and perceived oneness with the victims, and therefore increase donations. One caveat, however, is that there is now evidence that there might be certain boundary conditions, because empathy induction might have counterproductive effects for those persons low in prosocial motivation, at least when the costs of helping are high (Graziano et al., 2007).

Social influence. Various accounts have been developed which highlight social influence effects on prosociality. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1972) suggests that if someone has a certain prosocial behavior modeled by an important other, he/she is more likely to engage in this behavior him/herself. The social norms approach (Kallgren, Reno, & Cialdini, 2000) suggests that behavior is influenced by perceptions of what behaviors are generally believed to be socially acceptable and desired. Normative information can be included in persuasive appeals to affect compliance. Descriptive norms (the levels of others’ behavior) or injunctive norms (the levels of others’ approval) can both be influential, at least when norms are salient (Cialdini, Demine, Sagarin, Barrett, & Winter, 2006). Therefore, if prosociality is perceived to be the norm, then people can be expected to engage in it more, as already seen in the research on the influence of norms in the second section. A specific type of social norm highlighted by economists is “conditional cooperation,” i.e., a norm that suggests that people will be altruistic if they expect others to be (Frey & Meier, 2004).

The applied implications of all social influence approaches are similar, and have already been foreshadowed by the research reviewed above: Donations can be encouraged by presenting people with positive examples to imitate, and by enabling them to appreciate that others will expect and look favorably on a positive response to a request for a donation.

Summary of Practical Recommendations

We believe there are many promising conclusions for practitioners to follow from this research. While some are already well understood and utilized, others can hopefully provide new leads. At the same time, we are at present not in a

position to make very strong recommendations about the effectiveness of the measures summarized below, and the list is intended to be a useful heuristic rather than a summary of well-established insights. Definitive recommendations are premature because like any attempt at persuasion (Cialdini, 1993), persuading people to donate money can have unforeseen pitfalls. If persuasion attempts are too obvious, this might cause psychological reactance because people do not like to feel manipulated (Feiler et al., 2012). External incentives might also reduce intrinsic motivation to help (Anik et al., 2011). More research is needed to understand the best implementation of the psychological principles we outline which will avoid such counterproductive effects. However, some tentative recommendations can be made, and in the following, we will focus on those that seem most practical and well supported.

*Tentative Recommendation for Written Donation Requests/Mailing Campaigns:
Whom to Target within a Large Database*

Many charities have access to large databases of potential donors. However, because mailing campaigns are expensive, it might often be useful to think carefully about which segments of people to address.

As seen above, different segments of the population tend to support different types of causes. For example, people living in wealthy postcodes could be targeted, or letters could be addressed to a woman rather than a man living at the same address because women have been found to be more responsive to donation requests. Similarly, information on donor age could be used to target an age group that has been shown to be generally responsive to and concerned with the cause of the charity.

We also saw that people are generally more likely to help victims they see as similar to themselves. This could mean, for example, that charities supporting women's rights are likely to be more successful when targeting female donors. There is even some tentative evidence that banal similarities matter: For example, when eliciting donations to hurricane victims, it might be beneficial to target those donors whose surname starts with the same letter as the hurricane name. However, more research would be needed to confirm the effectiveness of this latter strategy.

In contrast, the finding that one of the best predictors of future behavior is past behavior is well-supported. Hence, those who have donated in the past are likely to do so again, and should certainly be targeted. Most charities will be well aware of this already.

The research on intergroup processes suggests that people prefer helping ingroup members to outgroup members. However, outgroup helping still does occur, but it is augmented by intergroup conflict. Overall, responsiveness will be higher for donations to victims in a country that is seen as a political ally rather than an enemy. This could mean, for example, that donations to victims in Syria

might not necessarily be highest from the wealthiest nations, but possibly from those which have shared cultural features or goals (e.g., Arab nations, Muslim nations).

Tentative Recommendations for Direct Face-to-Face Elicitation

As seen above, happy people tend to be more generous. When collecting from a stall in the town center, cheerful music could be used. It goes without saying that those eliciting donations should aim to be cheerful and smile. Collections might also be more successful when carried out on sunny days rather than rainy days.

Furthermore, because the motivation imputed into the fundraiser matters, it will be beneficial if fundraisers disclose a personal relevance of the cause to them if it is appropriate. For example, when fundraising for a cancer cause is motivated by a personal successful battle with cancer in the past, making this explicit will be beneficial. People may react negatively to solicitations from paid workers who approach them in public areas.

Humans are, often unconsciously, influenced by information from all their senses. Whether someone will respond to a donation request does not only depend on the verbal message they are exposed to, but also on other subtle cues. When fundraisers wear white shorts or a fresh scent with a citrusy note, this might not only give the impression of physical cleanliness, but it might also prime concepts of moral purity and thus benefit fundraising.

Tentative Recommendation for Written Donation Requests/Mailing Campaigns/Advertisements and Internet Presence: How to Phrase the Donation Request

The largest number of recommendations derived from the literature concerns the design of donation appeals. Relevant factors can be grouped under the following five headings: The effects on donor responsiveness of (1) the extent of exposure to the problem; (2) general marketing strategies and phrasing of the appeal; (3) the way in which the victims/recipients are represented, (4) concerns of the donors about the effectiveness of the donation; and (5) image concerns of the donors.

Extent of exposure to the problem. It is well documented that media exposure predicts public support. Any type of exposure (TV, posters, newspaper adverts, social media) will be beneficial to advertising revenue. This is supported by research demonstrating that familiarity with the cause prompts donation proclivity. The more donors are exposed to, and the more donors know about, the cause in need of support, the more they will be willing to respond.

General marketing strategies and phrasing of the appeal. A wealth of marketing strategies has been studied, and they were reviewed in more depth in the second section. For example, phrases that emphasize the need for help is short-term, or the use of pictures and token gifts, might all be effective under certain conditions. Moreover, there is good evidence that identifying single, individual victims is more effective than appealing on behalf of anonymous groups of people in need: Charities should focus on one, not many. The priming of religious or secular concepts, for example, by including information that “the victims are trying to make an honest living,” or that they are “praying every day for help,” will be beneficial. Perspective taking by the donor might be encouraged to facilitate empathy, for example, by including phrases such as “imagine your family/child suffered from this.” Moreover, research suggesting that donations might be maximized when donors feel good about their own life but bad about the situation of the people in need would suggest that messages that “we are lucky not to suffer from this problem” should be combined with messages emphasizing the victims’ despair. Last but not least, there is very robust evidence that donors will not act if there is diffused responsibility. A perception of responsibility could be instilled by including phrases such as “it is up to you if the suffering continues.”

Presentation of the victims/recipients. Because of the very strong evidence that people prefer to help ingroup members, any attempt to emphasize shared social category memberships between donors and recipients will help. For example, asking “British” donors to help “British victims” is an obvious way of making salient shared group membership. However, often less obvious shared memberships might be emphasized. For example, when appealing to British donors for help for recipients in other European countries, a European flag on the appeal could subtly prompt European group membership of the donors too, as elaborated in more detail in the fourth section. Furthermore, research on imagined friendship suggests that people are not only more likely to help if they are friends with one of the potential recipients, but that it might be sufficient to invite them to imagine being friends with a victim. Imagined ties could be encouraged by messages such as “Imagine this happened to your neighbor. Wouldn’t you want to help?” Moreover, there is good evidence that stressing the innocence of victims will be beneficial. Because donors might often infer that people in need are to blame themselves if not given any information to the contrary, this could be made very explicit by using phrases such as “Sam has done nothing wrong. He is an innocent victim.” Finally, for disaster appeals it will be useful to stress the natural over the humanly caused contributing factors to the problem. For example, including phrases such as “they were defenseless against the forces of nature” might help achieve this.

Concerns about the effectiveness of the donation. Since donors weigh the cost of donations against the benefits of a donation, the cost-benefit ratio should

be optimized. Published material should emphasize the effectiveness of a donation, highlighting that it will make a “real difference to people’s lives.” Because the scale of need is inversely correlated to the impact a set donation amount can have, information about the extent of need should be carefully balanced against information about the donor being able to make a substantial difference. Information about a charity’s good track record in financial management should also be published.

Image concerns of the donors. Because people are eager to conform to social norms, it should be communicated that there is a prodonation norm. Emphasizing that “others have donated generously,” or setting a default donation that gently nudges donors upward, might be helpful. Because it has been shown that donors are concerned about their reputation and want to appear as “good citizens,” conspicuous donations are useful. For example, donors could be offered small tokens publicizing their contribution (e.g., red noses, poppies, wrist bands, support pins). Moreover, the use of eye images has been shown to heighten concerns about reputation, and subtly including an image of a pair of eyes, for example, on a Web site, might help nudge donors upward.

It can be assumed that the five broad factors of Exposure, Marketing strategies, Perceptions of the recipients, Effectiveness concerns, and Image concerns, will interact in their effect on donor responsiveness. In other words, excellent marketing strategies will not favorably affect donations unless donors are convinced of the effectiveness of their contribution. Similarly, favorable perceptions of the recipients will not in themselves enhance donations unless donors also feel that social norms are in favor of giving. It then becomes clear why eliciting donations can be an uphill struggle: More than one aspect needs to be optimized in order to elicit generosity, while suboptimal design on just one dimension might automatically jeopardize clever design on another dimension.

To sum up, we have identified factors that are most pertinent for three different issues: Trying to identify whom to target in a large database, face-to-face elicitation, and the design of donation appeals. Some factors will be relevant in more than one setting. For example, the use of eye images (discussed under “Donation Appeals”) could also be relevant for face-to-face elicitation. Similarly, approaching the right demographic (discussed for “Databases”) can also be a factor in face-to-face interactions when deciding whom to approach in the street. We have merely highlighted the factors that seem most relevant to each topic, but they should not be understood as an exhaustive list.

When surveying current fundraising practice, some of the mechanisms outlined are already well understood and are evidently addressed in many appeals today. Other ideas, however, are not that well reflected in current practice. Although some of the recommendations proposed here are well-supported by research, others are still more speculative in nature. Hence, the present suggestions

should not be understood as “magic bullets” that will have a transforming effect on fundraising efforts. More research of applied nature is certainly needed to firm up some of the suggestions.

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