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The Giving Environment: Annotated Bibliography

The research highlighted in this annotated bibliography focuses on and describes five key themes that impact charitable giving:

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We explore and examine each of the themes throughout The Giving Environment series to understand how ideas and prosocial behaviors present in the above themes influence participation and decisions in charitable giving.
Understanding of Community

This section looks at how community affects philanthropic giving. In communities outside of the United States, a prevalence in giving circles has been observed where members of a particular group come together to pool their funds in order to contribute to charitable causes. These groups vary across different demographics, and some groups are formed entirely of young professionals, administrative staff, and other social circles hoping to engage in philanthropic giving. Donations from such giving circles tend to go to organizations within the local community opposed to larger national organizations. The primary recipients are smaller charitable organizations in communities where the members of the giving circle live and work.

A person’s reputation in the community is another possible motivation for giving. Giving to charitable causes is a pro-social behavior that boosts one’s social capital among their group of peers. We repeatedly observe that when donors are met with the knowledge that a friend has donated, they too are likely to donate. Many organizations have donor circles or giving levels for this very reason. When a donor contributes at a certain giving level, they receive various forms of recognition which helps increase and maintain their reputation within their social communities.

Much like giving circles, social media has increasingly emerged as a way in which the digital community and large groups of individuals can support a cause. We see many universities and educational institutions maintaining a robust social media presence to connect with their alumni. They do so by sharing the impact of their donations while also connecting peers and alumni with each other, as well as with their alma mater community.

There have also been numerous observations that suggest individuals who are more religious have a greater sense of community, and thus volunteer and donate at a higher frequency in comparison to individuals who do not have a religious background or affiliation.


This article looked at giving circles in the United Kingdom and Ireland that have developed in response to an increased emphasis on philanthropic giving through policy changes. Through a review of existing literature, the authors discover that hundreds of giving societies exist in countries around the world, like those in the United States. They also found that many of these giving circles are made up of women and young professionals.

There were approximately 80 giving circles identified in the United Kingdom and Ireland at the time of this study. The study was conducted through interviewing the members of over 50 giving circles. The giving circles represented different groups and regional affiliations, and of those that were interviewed-- 21 were volunteers, 17 were administrative staff, and 9 were other staff members. Two thirds of the respondents were women. The interview questions explored the origins of the giving circle, how it operates or functions, and the benefits and challenges. This study was conducted to determine if giving circles are beneficial to philanthropy.
The researchers found that donation amounts, and volunteer hours increased specifically among individuals in the giving circle. It is also observed that members felt more encouraged and intentional with their purpose of contributing at the organization. Some of the groups had unrealistic expectations of what their funds could do at larger organizations which is why many of the circles give to smaller organizations. Some of the other benefits of giving circles were found to be more personal, such as using the circle as a forum to network with other individuals. Another prevalent theme was that of individual empowerment through processes of decision-making and social engagement as a group. Based on the interview responses, giving circles not only increase philanthropic giving but also expand it through volunteering and strategic funding conversations with organizations.


This research specifically observes university alumni groups on Facebook and its effects on social ties between individuals. The study was conducted in two parts. The first part consisted of exploratory interviews and participant observation of 12 alumni from a university in Northeastern USA. The researchers combined 3 university alumni Facebook group pages to observe and understand how and why alumni use Facebook, and how this affects their relationships with other alumni and the university. The second part was conducted through an online survey of 3,085 alumni for hypothesis testing.

The interviews revealed that volunteering and charitable donations are the primary activities through which alumni think about their connection to the university. Many also stated it was easier to keep in touch with classmates through social media pages for alumni, as their university email addresses are discontinued. The researchers also believe that the connections made through social media will lead to an increase in volunteerism and charitable giving, based on existing field research. To test their hypotheses, they used a structured analysis of the responses from the survey. Through the studies the researchers found that social networks are a viable source to build strong ties with other alumni, and that the results are concurrent with what previous observations in similar research studies on social networks and philanthropy. They also found that increased communication did not predict volunteerism or charitable giving but were key indicators in engagement behavior that correlated to volunteerism and charitable giving.


In this article, the authors seek to better understand how organizations ask for funds, and the reasoning used by individuals to determine the amount of their donation. They examine empirical data to determine the power-law distribution of philanthropic behavior. They utilize anonymous gift data from six organizations across the nonprofit sector to run this experiment. Through their evaluation of the anonymous gift data, they found a weak power law between the organizations and that some organizations see plateaus at various gift levels like $1,000. However, it was also observed that some organizations, like the higher education institution, have maintained consistent levels of
donations over several decades. They find that giving levels vary across types of organizations and that some of these variances are tied to the income of the donors.

When organizations are preparing for capital campaigns, the authors recommend looking at the top 12 contributors to the organization as a means for raising 65% of the funds needed to reach the campaign goal. It is not guaranteed to work every time but will provide a good base for an initial prospect pool. They also provide insights on how various organizations can interpret the 80/20 rule of fundraising as it relates to median gift amount, based on gift data they have collected.


This paper examined pro-social behavior focused on social image and recognition from contributing to charitable causes, and if that inspires individuals to donate. It also examines how recognition and the ability to influence others affects giving through a laboratory study. The overarching field experiment was conducted via phone with 4,000 prior donors to Dwight Hall at Yale University. Initial studies show that donors are motivated by the social image attached to them when their donation is made public. Some donors are egoistically motivated in this way, whereas those who are more altruistic make contributions with the hope of inspiring others to join them in supporting the cause.

Dwight Hall already has a history of donor giving circles at the 100-, and 500-dollar level. So, researchers examined the response from potential donors for a gift ask at the circle levels as opposed to the controlled renewal ask which did not mention the giving circles. 13% of those solicited made donations to Dwight Hall with an average gift amount of $186. They found that donors were 2.7% more likely to make a gift across all of the variables they tested. When the newsletter was mentioned, donors were nearly 2% more inclined to make a gift greater than or equal to $100, while the probability of a gift at or above $500 was just under 1%.


This article examines role identity and how it relates to private goods. The researchers look at how organizations can appeal to the identity characteristics of a donor through mail appeals. The research is derived from two role identity priming field experiments conducted by the American Red Cross. The theoretical framework of priming facets is used to invoke a response from the donor based on a group response, such as how an organization would communicate with a prior donor. When priming former donors, it should evoke a more significant response as opposed to non-donors. The data used for this study comes from two large scale experiments using mail solicitation appeals conducted by the American Red Cross. The Red Cross shared mail solicitation data from January of 2006 to October 2011 to individuals who were classified as nonregular donors but had made donations to the national organization for Hurricane Katrina, Rita and the Southeast Asia Tsunami. The researchers evaluated the responses based on the population of each of the mail solicitations.
Solicitation 1 was mailed on January 4, 2010, to 17,061 former donors who were classified as lapsed (they had not made a gift for at least 24 months). Donors were broken into one of two categories: one would get a conditional identity-based letter that contained previous gift data, while the control group would not include the conditional information. Solicitation 2 was mailed on November 2, 2009, to 41,104 individuals, a set of perspective donors not included in the first experiment. These individuals were assigned one of four solicitation styles. The conditions were the annual drive, the winter drive, the state drive, or the community drive. All the solicitation letters were identical but included a mention of a particular drive. This solicitation did note that all donations would be directed to the general fund.

Solicitation 1 revealed that including the last date of a donor’s donation increased the probability of a charitable contribution by over 20%. The average gift from these respondents also increased by just over 4%. This proves that by priming the date of the last gift in the solicitation, the organization is appealing to the donor’s sense of self identity as a donor to, in this case, the American Red Cross. The data from Solicitation 2 revealed that the appeal noting their community and state responses were higher than the seasonal, and annual drive. This observation highlights that donors are concerned with the fund being used in their own communities. In total, community responses received over 5% while the other two demonstrated a response rate between 3.8 and just over 4%. It was also observed that priming a donor’s identity centered on community resulted in an average gift amount nearly 5 times larger than the other campaigns. The article states and notes that individuals who live in smaller communities have a greater sense of a communal identity as compared to those in larger communities. Overall, the results show that when organizations prime appeals based on donor identity, particularly former donors, you can retain and reacquire these donors to increase retention rates, which often results in increased dollars as well. It is also observed that priming based on community is a way to increase donations from individuals who have a higher sense of community, particularly donors in smaller communities.


This paper looked at social networks that are religiously based to determine if religious based relationships influence civic engagement such as voting, volunteerism and charitable giving. This article uses data from the first Portraits of Life survey data which included a sample of 2,610 individuals. The surveys were conducted in a face-to-interview format.

The research highlights that higher levels of religiosity have shown increases in both formal and informal societal engagement. In the USA, it is observed that individuals who are more religious donate more money than those who are less religious. Similarly, existing literature also shows that individuals who are more religious are more civically engaged and spend more time volunteering than those who are not religious. Survey data on volunteering and religiosity also shows that there are links to non-religious volunteering.
Researchers believe that the altruistic and theological beliefs of a person are the two factors that drive religious people to be more sympathetic, hence, feeling a higher need to help others. Similarly, congregations teach members how to attend meetings and be part of a larger group, fostering the behavior of civic mindedness. The clergy also plays a role by sharing political and societal beliefs with their congregations. This varies across religions, but Catholics have the highest rate of volunteerism. Through religious networks and social engagement, individuals form societal bonds with their peers. Researchers believe that these religious networks promote helping behavior through higher social support and resources. Religious networks are also recruitment networks for volunteers and create space for individuals to meet politically and socially involved friends. This literature shows how religious networks have a powerful influence on civic engagement. It was also found that the more social a person is the higher the likelihood they will engage in formal and informal forms of philanthropy.


This article looks at collaborative consumption, alternative giving, and gift giving through a nonmonetary or reciprocal lens in the age of digital and mobile marketing and social media. Alternative giving is conceptually different than traditional gift giving and presumptive sharing, as it often requires no reciprocation and no expectations for how the gift should be used. Social media has made alternative giving much easier to engage in and brings parties together where there is no reciprocation or monetary exchange required. There are many that believe this is a new form of civic engagement.

The researchers used publicly posted information from users on freecycle.org from September 2012 to March 2013 that were in the Orlando freecycle community. They downloaded more than 7,000 posts, of which over 1,200 were usable for the study. 1,070 were wants and 225 were offers to give. Through the coding of the data, they found a prevalence for fulfilling a unitarian need, which included posts about needing a computer, and posts requesting for assistance with Christmas presents due to economic hardship. Participants in this environment were able to engage in free market exchange of goods, anti-consumption, and creatively recycling goods that would otherwise end up in a landfill. It was also observed that users were motivated to repurpose the over purchasing of some goods, such as baby formula.

Organizations like The Freecycle Network provide an avenue where users can share and freely donate goods and prevent items from ending up in landfills. This alternative giving allows users to give a used item to someone else, prolonging the use cycle. It was observed that both donor and beneficiary received pro-social benefits of giving in this environment.


This article looks at how social capital can be used as a means of curtailment in communities where there is a push for pro-environmental outcomes. It is noted that as individuals focus on minimizing their carbon footprint, they will begin to decrease certain
activities such as driving, and energy consumption. The researchers specifically look at how relational social ties, community social capital, and generalized trust have effects on environmental policy and giving trends. The data for this study was derived from the 2010 General Social Survey with particular focus around the environmentally concentrated questions within it.

Relational social ties refer to a person’s relationships with others, which can be categorized as either bonding or bridging. Bonding relationships exist among individuals with a high level of affinity and emotional support such as close friends and family, with a drawback being the presence of expected behavior which can constrain an individual’s thoughts and feelings, guiding them in a different direction. Bridging ties bind us to those who we are not particularly close with, like our neighbors or others in our sphere of influence. There is evidence that suggests individuals interact more with their neighbors as opposed to individuals from their close circles, when they develop a willingness to adopt their norms to fit a specific group, like taking up conservation efforts. Volunteering, participating in clubs, being a member of an association, etc. are examples of community social capital. It is noted that this can be linked to a sense of civic mindedness and representing the community. Generalized trust is a form of trust commonly observed in groups and is derived from the collective trust in the group by its members. It is also closely associated with altruism as these members have an understanding they and the group exist for the benefit of others in the community.

The authors divided the observations and responses of the survey results into three categories based on the hypothesis: environmental lifestyle, willingness to sacrifice, and environmental activism predictors. It was observed that an individual’s own sense of self and their awareness of risk paired with their sense of environmental awareness, displayed a strong predictor that they would drive less, reduce energy consumption and decrease use of non-environmentally friendly products. Another key finding highlighted was that social gatherings with neighbors were highly ranked as a social capital factor. Among this group, it was observed that with increased population comes an increase in taxes, with a willingness to make certain consumption reductions. It was all about trust when it came to social capital—those who are more religious are willing to pay higher taxes and those that watch a lot of television are likely to be less trusting. It was also found that giving to environmental causes is strongly linked to education and household income. Additionally, it was noted that men were less likely to engage in environmental activism, and that individuals residing in urban areas are more likely to engage. Overall, the results of this study show that social gatherings with neighbors have a great significance, which is linked to the fact that energy consumption data is publicly available to the neighborhood, making it likely for an individual to reduce their consumption to match their neighbors.


This article looks at the effects of social media on charitable giving. The researchers seek to determine whether social media is an acceptable platform for making online donations. It also examines how those who prefer to give and engage online differ from those who prefer to give and engage offline. Further, this article examines pro-social and social exchange behaviors of donors, as well as the social diversification hypothesis that states that internet adds to social interactions rather than detracts from them. Social
media provides a forum for donors to interact with organizations and choose the ones they want to engage with, while also making it easier to learn more about social causes. Individuals also go online to diversify their networks and meet other like-minded individuals. There are observed socioeconomic effects of internet usage, particularly with older generations who did not grow up with internet and social media.

This research study comprised of 6270 individuals in USA and used data from PEW internet, and American Life Project from Princeton Survey Research Associates. They found that internet usage compliments offline relationships but does not replace them. Online usage was found to be positively related to offline giving as opposed to online giving; those using the internet for interacting within a group are more likely to make contributions online. They also observed that those who use the internet frequently at home or at work were less likely to give online, but still give through traditional offline means. For organizations that align ideologically with the donor, the propensity for online contributions increases. They found that there are similar tendencies between online and offline engagement of individuals with the organization.


This research analyzes employee giving campaigns by reviewing donor behaviors of state employees at a public university that has workplace giving campaigns. The goal of this study is to look at individual behaviors in a public giving campaign in the workplace compared to private giving. Another area the article explores is workplace philanthropy and the various solicitation strategies that are used to solicit employees. The last area the authors evaluate are the employees’ perception of the partner charity, and its influence on philanthropic giving. They take a triadic approach to better understand these topics by looking at Microlevel: Individual Crowding, Mesolevel: Relation-Based, and Macrolevel approaches. The data for this survey comes from a 2008 survey that was administered at the close of the state-employee combined giving campaign. The survey resulted in 720 usable responses and was sent to all university faculty and staff. Each state-university and state-run organization participated in the campaign. Donors gave through payroll deduction, cash, and credit card. They were able to direct the gift to unrestricted, and specific purposes. They collected data about the number of employees at each level of the organizational structures for faculty and staff as well as the percentage of employees at each level that participated.

Microlevel observations revealed that entry level, and hourly staff and faculty gave less than those in more senior staff positions. They were also not able to find data which would support the claim that donations in the workplace crowded out private giving. In fact, they found that donors who give in the workplace give privately in greater amounts. Approximately 97% of tenured staff give in large amounts privately. Individuals in senior positions and nontenured staff also gave at a similar rate. They point out that the findings are more indicative of social capital, than economic capital for the organization.

Meso-level data is much more qualitative as it is collected through open-ended surveys. They found evidence which supported the hypothesis that employees will give because of the relationship with the university. Hesitant donors stated that the only reason they
gave was because they thought it could negatively impact their career otherwise. There was also evidence that giving campaigns can create an environment where employees are more likely to protest the parent organization for things such as not allowing staff and faculty to park for free or conducting a campaign during a hiring freeze. Donors who did contribute to the campaign stated that the email messaging and the print media around the office encouraged them to give. Some respondents thought the emails were sent too frequently and only donated to be removed from the list.

Macrolevel findings indicated that the reputation of the United Way was contested amongst donors, with some donors thinking the United Way played a part in the campaign from the start to the finish. The survey responses show that the individual perceptions of the United Way influenced charitable giving.


This article looks at the effects of bridging and bonding in personal volunteering networks, and its effects on recruitment and volunteering. They then look at how social tie diversity implicates network diversity. The authors point out that there is no good quantifier for time spent with an individual to examine the bonding ties. Instead, there are causal and effect indicators that help to drive the bonding of individuals. The article uses social tie diversity to express the bridging form of social capital. The research here is set on the idea that social capital and volunteerism is based around being recruited. For evaluation purposes, the authors hypothesized that religious involvement increases the likelihood for being recruited; social tie diversity decreases the chances that religious involvement will result in being recruited; and association and social tie diversity increase the probability of volunteering and not being recruited.

Utilizing data from the 1999 Giving and Volunteering in the United States Survey, this sample of the U.S. population consisted of 2,404 American adults of different racial and ethnic households making over $70,000. It was found that 50% of the respondents were asked to volunteer in the prior year, while 67% of those asked to volunteer actually did volunteer as compared to the 13% that stated they volunteered without being recruited. 17% of those with no ties volunteered, compared to 23% of those with at least 1 social tie volunteering. This supported the claim that bonding and bridging social capital are linked to volunteering. It was also found that men, older Americans, and those that rent housing have a decreased likelihood of being recruited to volunteer, while parents were most likely to be recruited to volunteer. Being asked to volunteer results in a 40% higher likelihood that the person will volunteer.

Overall, the data from the survey supported the hypotheses of the researchers about the relationship between recruitment and volunteerism. They found that individuals who are not recruited have higher social density and bridging social capital tendencies over bonding social capital.

This article relays the compilation of survey data in developing and testing a multiple variable causation model of various determinant factors of individual giving which include social, demographic, economic factors. The paper is structured with a literature review of ethnographic observations; the second section is about the data from the surveys; the third section looks to see if quantitative data of the five-variable model has been applied to households; and the fourth section looks at the factors that are most indicative of giving behavior. The authors believe that the identification model is superior to the altruism model as it evaluates a person’s sense of self with a greater motivation than altruistic tendencies. The identification model shows the self-interested nature of a person to act selflessly for others.

The authors determined that there are pro-social factors leading to recruitment, such as links to one or more person in the movement contributing to involvement and an absence in other counter networks. They state that there are five variables that support the identification model and find that the communities of participation or the informal and formal networks that individuals are involved in influences their philanthropic behavior. Frameworks of Consciousness is the second factor within an organization that inspires individuals to volunteer and donate based on the person’s understanding of the beneficiary. Direct Requests is the third variable, which is the actual ask for the donation or for a person to volunteer. The fourth variable, Models of a Person’s Youth, states that the experiences from a person’s youth and their surroundings influence volunteered and donor behaviors in adulthood. The final variable is the Availability of Discretionary Funds which is the ability of a person to donate money without putting themselves into financial hardship.

These five variables were analyzed with data from the 1992 Survey of Giving and Volunteering in the United States conducted by Gallop, of a cross-sectional sample of the U.S. population consisting of 2,671 American Households where the survey respondents were at least 18 years of age or older. They restricted the data set to 2,065 households in which respondents, often with their spouse, were involved in making charitable decisions. They find that there is evidence that the five variables evaluated are related to one another in some way, often in a cause-and-effect relationship. All of the variables have the ability to increase and motivate a person to give both time and money to charitable organizations.


This research delves into the reasons why individuals of older age are less likely to donate. They test a longitudinal study of 5 waves of the United States Health and Retirement Study from 1998-2006 which includes 85,607 individuals that are over 50 years of age. The authors hypothesize that there are two key reasons for a decline in giving at older ages: a decline in the health of the individual and a decline in the person’s cognitive abilities to make decisions for themselves.
When the researchers look at declining health, they observed that almost 20% of Americans aged 65 to 74 have been diagnosed with cancer, with this percentage continuing to increase as the person gets older. The statistics are even more pronounced when looking at those who have been diagnosed with heart disease. Due to the costs associated with medical care, this can erode a person’s ability to make charitable contributions. Many donations by this age group are made outside the home, like religious giving, and those with health issues are less likely to leave their home to be able to make donations. There is also a decline in egocentric networks and a rise in kin-networks in this age demographic, with many drawing up their wills. Looking at the decline in cognitive abilities, researchers considered psychology and how cognitive ability leads to pro-social behavior. Cognitive research shows that those with high cognitive abilities have a greater ability to put themselves into other people’s situations. As individuals get older there is a tendency for them to either no longer desire control of their financial affairs or lack the ability to do so. This limits the ability of the individual to make charitable donations.

Through the results of the 5 waves of surveys, the authors found that attending church is a factor that drives charitable giving for this age group. As these individuals become unable to attend church, they are asked to give less frequently. It was also noted that those who believe they have rapidly declining health increase religious giving.
Trust

The articles in this section demonstrate the importance of trust in determining donor behavior to support, or not support, an organization through a charitable contribution. The primary ways in which donors build trust with an organization are through the perception that the organization is maintaining ethical conduct and managing funds appropriately. Donors also find trust in organizations that have a higher social standing. It has been observed that the more an organization is accountable, not only to its donors but also to the outward community, the more they place trust in donors and increase charitable contributions. Several articles looked at the differences in institutional and social trust. Institutional trust is how the organization builds trust with its donors while social trust pertains to the societal perception of the organization. The two types collectively influence donor behavior and determine how much, when, and if donors make charitable contributions.

It has been observed that there is a higher level of trust among donors who volunteer or are closely involved with the organization because of the personal relationship they share with the organization. These donors have also been observed to give more money to the organization due to a greater understanding of charity needs and how the funds are used. Volunteerism has been on the rise since the past decade in the USA with no evident decrease in sight. However, a strong lack of trust has been observed in millennials which is likely a result of economic conditions tied to the poverty rate and growing income inequality across class and generations.

Recent behavioral and attitudinal data across philanthropic subsectors has been emerged to show that there is a lack of overall confidence in the nonprofit sector. This is mostly true, but there are circumstances where this is challenged—generally in times of organizational crises, such as in the cases of the American Red Cross and the United Way after the 9/11 attack.

Key findings also highlight that social capital and the reputation of the organization play an integral role in donors’ perceptions of finding an organization trustworthy or not. It is important to maintain a strong online presence and a clean reputation in this digital age, where virtually all information is readily available. Research shows that a positive reputation plays an important role in a person's willingness to donate. When current and potential donors see negative comments online about an organization, they are discouraged to give. This aligns with the research on pro-social behavior of donors and how their beliefs and feelings need to align with the organization to build a foundation on trust.


This article examines how trust affects giving to charitable organizations in Saudi Arabia. They focused on how individual trust is created, the role of trust as it relates to donors’ intention to donate, and the extent to which individuals’ trust in an organization relates to the amount of monetary donations. They discovered that trust is made up of four thought processes: perceived ability, perceived integrity, perceived benevolence and individuals’ disposition to trust. Their hypothesis was validated through findings that revealed that trust in an organization is developed when donors are assured that the organization can perform their mission, while also being honest on how donations are...
used to care for the beneficiaries of their philanthropic support.


This study investigated if organizations received increased public trust if they increased their accountability activities. A study of 4 research groups, all given the same but slightly different information, found that individuals have more trust in organizations who are more transparent, go above the government minimum regulations, and hold certifications from outside organizations. They also found that these accredited organizations are more trustworthy than those that do not have accreditations. The research for this study was conducted through online interviews of 407 participants who were all given the same information with slight variations in the text.


This article looks at institutional and social trust and covers the theoretical issues of trust and how economics, law, and politics play a role in charitable giving and trust in nonprofit organizations. The article briefly highlights that trust is a form of social capital, in the context that civic engagement creates a form of trust between citizens. Bekkers notes that there is a thin relationship between trust and civic engagement in the Netherlands. Reports in the Netherlands over the last decade saw that the amount of money going to charitable causes steadily increased. Additionally, fundraising costs decreased because of more money coming in.

The Dutch introduced an accreditation system for charities because of public dissatisfaction with fundraising practices. Accountability and transparency are becoming more important particularly in the UK and USA. A research study conducted on religious motives for charitable giving saw an increase of trustworthiness among the respondents who know about the accreditation seal. Donors are motivated to give because of the trust they have in an organization to use their funds appropriately and sensibly.


It is perceived by many that volunteerism, civil engagement, and trust are mutually beneficial and causal in a relationship. Civil engagement has a positive impact on society. If volunteerism and trust are linked, then there should be a relationship between trust and civic engagement. The data for the Giving in the Netherlands Panel Survey (GINPS) was collected from 2002 to 2006, from a pool of approximately 72,000 individuals in 40,000 households. To determine if there is a causal relationship between trust and volunteering, trust was measured with 2 statements. This study enforces the idea that although volunteering may influence trust, it is not ensured to happen. Additionally, it was found that the standardized estimate in the stability of trust over 4 years is
approximately .73. It was also found that volunteers have an increased level of trust; those who are less trusting are less likely to volunteer their time. It is important to note, however, a long history of volunteerism does not create trust.


This research study relied on data obtained from the Edelman Trust Barometer, a study that lasted 9 years and took place in 31 countries. The data was used to review general trust in nonprofits, rather than looking at the sub sectors that make up the nonprofit landscape. The article highlights some scandals that have theoretically caused trust in the sector to falter, such as the American Red Cross’s handling of funds for 9/11 victims. It also pooled the many headlines from around the world regarding declining trust in the sector. This could be a result of increased accountability placed on nonprofits and the effects of negative press that an organization receives when they fail to meet the set accountability standards. The author cited the Moral Disillusionment Theory which suggests that nonprofits are held to higher standards than other sectors as they are typically known to have a higher sense of ethics and morality. The Edelman Survey consisted of people aged 18 and older from 31 countries, yielding roughly 1,150 people per country. The authors reviewed 294,176 responses to just 1 question: “how much do you trust nongovernmental organizations in general to do what is right.” Factored out and graphed over the 9-year period, the results showed a rather weak but increasing trust in nonprofits, with the relationship between time and trust varying from country to country.


The authors of this article evaluate three ways in which trust plays a role in donations to an organization. The first is the implicit bias that those with a positive view of others are likely to contribute more, and more frequently as a result of institutional and generalized trust. The second addresses the types of organizations that an individual can donate to. The third evaluates the socio-economic conditions in which donors live. They utilized the European Social Survey of 2002 to gather their data points. This study involved more than 33,000 individuals from 19 European countries and the United States. The study found that one third of Dutch and Swedish individuals donated to activist organizations as compared to other counties where less than two percent donated. Swedish and Norwegian individuals were more likely to donate to leisure organizations. Hungary had the lowest measure of giving among all countries reviewed in the study. The highest levels of generalized trust were observed in Denmark, Finland, and Norway while the lowest were Poland and Greece. The results show that there is cross national variance in donating to the three types of organizations reviewed. Institutional and generalized trust have a positive impact on donations, except for institutional trust on interest organizations.

The research team used a computerized model to determine whether altruistic charitable giving behavior correlates to trustworthiness. They used a dictator game combined with an investment game to separate trustworthiness from other motivational factors. The study was conducted with 42 supposed individuals, with 26 choosing to donate based on the scenarios provided. They also observed that donors sent higher amounts than those who were coded as non-donors in the model. This evidence proves that cooperation can be motivated by social preferences among individuals. They also found that there is a correlation between altruism and trustworthiness, and that altruists have a higher expectation of being trustworthy in a social exchange. The behaviors they have could also be explained as indirect reciprocity theory.


This article addresses four types of generalized trust in the nonprofit sector: identification with a specific organization, trustingness of others, generalized trust in institutions, and confidence in the effectiveness and orientation of the nonprofit sector. The research was collected through Arizona Knowledge Works and the sample consisted of 50,000 U.S. residents aged 18 or older, of which 1,000 were from Arizona. The study included six questions around trust. They found that generalized trust is a primary factor in social change and is a deep-rooted moral value that is learned through social interactions. The authors believe that the decline in charitable giving has more to do with impulses that are not rooted in trust of stranger or institutions, but that giving is a condition on experiences and relationships with organizations. Sector confidence and its relationship to charitable giving stems from an individual’s trust in the sector compared to the organization they are donating to.


This paper explains the factors that influence a donor to contribute to various causes in the sector. They reviewed this by looking at literature and through a nationally represented sample from Austria. The authors reviewed the factors influencing causes and the amount a person is likely to donate to. The data is derived from a 2011 research study of multi-staged face-to-face interviews of 1,011 Austrian adults, from age 15 and up. The study found that generalized trust, empathic concern, religious affiliation, and religious attendance were key indicators for the amount donated. Those who have 12 or more years of education were found to be more generous.

This research study examines if the relationship between trust and collaboration with other team members influences the feelings of the collaborative process and its outcomes in a nonprofit. The authors reviewed documents, protocols, and presentations, as well as interviewed 11 participants at the senior director level from various organizations. The study found that trust is essential in interorganizational relationships and is composed of many personal characteristics. Issues that bring out distrust include differences in the vision and unclear expectations and lack of direction and a cooperative agenda.


In this article, the authors examined the relationship between institutional and social trust, and provided causal evidence demonstrating that institutional trust influences social trust and that social trust can be increased by increasing institutional trust. Through two Danish Panel surveys, the authors find that institutional trust influences social trust. One of the surveys was part of the European Value Survey and the Danish Social and Political Attitudes Survey which is based on the European Social Survey. It was also evident that institutional trust is a key predictor of social trust.


The researchers of this study look at whether the trust placed in people is related to an increase in volunteering through charitable organizations in Japan. Volunteering is a concept that has been brought back in Japan as a result of the government restructuring of the nonprofit sector. The government is motivated to utilize volunteering to assist with the aging population and slow economic growth. Charitable giving is an integral part of Japanese culture with many traditions linked to the Buddhist practice of Koden: the giving to family members of a deceased person to help pay for the funeral with the expectation they will pay it forward to another family.

To link the relationship between trust and charitable giving, they used data from the 200 Japanese General Social Survey, which is modeled after the US General Survey. The sample used consisted of 1954 individuals. They found that 22.3% volunteered, 66.1% made monetary donations, and 18.3% donated money and volunteered. The authors found that institutional trust is directly related to charitable giving at an increased capacity more significantly than social trust. It was also found that social networks are relevant in explaining volunteerism, rather than charitable giving.
This article compared civic engagement and volunteerism in the United States before and after 9/11. The authors make note that volunteerism increased in the decades post 9/11 citing a higher rate of high school seniors volunteering. They have also observed an increase in the number of young voters as compared to other generations. They attributed this to a sense of nationalism. They also mentioned that there are class disparities that could result in a divide of those who are and are not engaged. It is determined from this study that a new arrival from the millennial generation is unlikely based on the responses from the nationally representative survey data. It is noted that the decline in trust could be a result of economic conditions related to vast income inequality and growing poverty rates.

The authors evaluate trust in the United States to determine if it is waning, and if so, what are the causes. They evaluated at a 40-year time period in the United States using the General Social Survey and the Monitoring the Future Survey, and looked at trust on the individual level and trust in institutions. From 1970 to 2012, trust in individuals has declined. It was also observed that trust in institutions has declined since 1970. It is noted that the decline in trust could be a result of worsening economic conditions exacerbated by income inequality and growing poverty.

It is presented here that there are many factors that affect how and why donors donate. Economists, sociologists, and psychologists all have their reasons for the motivations of individuals to donate and volunteer. This article focuses on the overlap of those reasons by looking at what makes up social capital and how that influences an individual to donate and/or volunteer with an organization. The authors believe social capital, volunteering, psychological propensity, human and financial capital, and demographics are the combined characteristics of individual giving.

To test the hypotheses, researchers utilized a sample of the 2000 Social Capital Community Benchmark Survey which consisted of 1,946 respondents. They selected religious and individual giving as the dependent variables, and social capital, happiness, volunteering, religiosity, human and financial capital, and demographics as the independent variables. The researchers found that there is substantial support showing that social capital increases the likelihood of charitable giving. Individuals who have increased trust in others also have a higher likelihood of donating to religious organizations. If an individual has heightened diversity within their social network, they have a greater likelihood of donating to both secular and non-secular organizations. The authors also revealed that individuals who are involved in formal groups donate more to secular causes. This displayed a strong relationship between social capital and
This paper looks at trustworthiness and how it is perceived based on social media comments on a nonprofit organization’s (NPO) campaign, compared to comments made on a fictitious campaign. Communication plays an integral role in the world of social media as it provides a medium for the NPO to reach a larger audience for generating economic support. It has also been shown that the comments made on social media posts can make or break trust in an organization since the comments are public and shared with others. These all relate to the trustor’s ability and willingness to see that their donation will be used as intended and achieve the desired outcome. Trust leads to more lasting and impactful relationships between NPO’s and individuals. Individuals who have high levels of trust are more likely to talk about the organization publicly and this word-of-mouth publicity impacts their network by building credibility and trust in the NPO among those that are skeptical, or do not know about the organization.

The authors believe that there is a correlation between trust and reputation. They hypothesize that reputation leads to trustworthiness. Reputation is built upon past behavior whereas trust is based on the ability of the organization to fulfill its mission and values. To navigate the hypothesis, researchers used a sample of 369 Germans who were randomly selected to be a part of the experimental group. Then, a survey was employed to understand participants’ perceived trustworthiness in the organization. The researchers found that negative comments had a significant influence on trustworthiness in the first experiment, as compared to the control groups. The study found that positive comments had little to no effect on the perception of trustworthiness of the organization. A high level of trustworthiness corresponds with a high level to act, which is related to a high likelihood to donate.
Information and Choice

The articles in this section looked at how donors interpret information and use it to make charitable giving decisions. Several studies reveal that a robust way to build trust with donor bases for greater affinity and monetary support, is through increased transparency around fund allocation and utilization, and disclosing your organization’s financial information. International studies also have revealed that donors have higher trust in an organization when they specifically share cashflow statements and total revenues, which can also increase the likelihood of a gift.

However, evidence also shows that donors have a harder time deciding which organization to give to and the contribution amount to each when solicitation requests increase in volume. These donors tend to use mental maps and general rules of thumb to help them make their decisions. It is also observed that a donor’s personal background and their giving habits are factors that influence their philanthropic decision making. This research guides us on how donors create moral budgets on how much they give to an organization. The donor’s moral budget is surrounded by some uncertainty as donors’ economic and general budgets dictate their giving situation and capacity.

An interesting finding from one of the articles highlights alumni’s perceptions of services they were offered as students, and what they expect from the organization as alums. Results from the alumni surveyed demonstrate that they want greater services from the organization like continued support of the career development office. But they also state that they need to be incentivized to give and would like to be able to give to specific purposes. These are all available options to alumni and shows that organizations need to employ better communication to increase donations.


This article utilizes data collected during the Salvation Army’s Red Kettle campaign to see how the presence of bell ringers, and solicitors, who make an ask, while some others remain silent, affects donations, to test the ideas of altruism and avoidance. The study was conducted in suburban Boston over the course of four days. The goal of the study was to find out if altruistic people use avoidance to conceal their empathetic emotions. The study was conducted at a department store that had two entrances off the main parking lot where one of the bell ringers would just ring the bell, while the other would ring the bell, make eye contact, and ask for a donation. The donations were counted with a clicker in each of the person’s apron pocket, and store foot traffic was calculated by other researchers inside the store. The study then breaks down the utility of the donation based on the persons thought process to give, or to avoid the opportunity to give. They observed, on average, that 13 individuals made a gift every hour, and the average gift amount was 55 cents per minute. Out of the 3 scenarios tested, the ones where there was an ask, observed a threefold increase in the gift amount from 33 cents to 99 cents. They observed that giving increased by 55% when asked, and total donations went up by 69%. By looking at shoppers entering the store, they also found that asking for a donation caused nearly 30% of them to avoid the solicitor.

This research looks at the extent to which charities are transparent with information to provide guidance for financial reporting standards in Malaysia. It is noted that organizations who disclose their financial information in the form of reports and other documents see an increase in donations because they are deemed more trustworthy. This study looks at all registered nonprofit organizations in Malaysia at a total of 1,262 organizations who qualified as tax-exempt in 2010. The sample size was stratified to 101 organizations based on willingness to participate in the study. They find that charity management should try to disclose financial data to their stakeholders, particularly cashflow statements, as it is almost the most requested by donors. By disclosing this information, they can achieve increased trust from donors in the organization.


This research study looks at how donor behavior changes when provided information on the organization’s total revenue. Existing research on this topic shows inconclusive evidence that government grants to organizations crowds out donations from individuals. The framework study was conducted in Mannheim, Germany by sending out letters to individuals to be a part of the study and earn 40 euros. The study was conducted as a framed field experiment because it provides more control than an actual field study. A total of 223 participants signed on to the study in July of 2009 at the Center of European Economic Research. They were assigned at random by drawing lots at the beginning of each session. There were 12 sessions in total that lasted 60 minutes each.

The study asked donors to donate to one or more of 4 categories without knowing the identity of the organization: disabled care, development aid, medical research, and animal protection. This was done to ensure there was no bias based on organization reputation. All of the donation decisions were anonymous and voluntary. The respondents were divided into 2 groups. Group 1 included 110 participants who were provided information on organization revenue, membership fees, and public subsidy information based on 2006 data. Group 2 included 113 participants who were not given any of the previously mentioned information. Researchers found that donors prefer to give to smaller organizations, compared to larger organizations. This proves that donors try to have the greatest possible impact with their donation and supports existing research theories that claim there is no crowding out.


This article seeks to understand donor motivations in the United Kingdom by evaluating giving decisions, instead of counting them as previously done. To achieve this goal, qualitative research methods were utilized using phone interviews with 60 current
donors. The donors were recruited by the Charities Aid Foundation and were asked various questions about their giving habits.

This research found that although donors might be committed, that does not equate to deliberate action. Some respondents stated that they do not put much thought into their philanthropic contributions, while others stated giving to causes that catch their eye; they often had difficulty explaining what it was that inspired them to give in the first place. Donors also stated that it is hard to manage the number of solicitations they received and described the difficulty in discerning the organizations to support. When trying to make philanthropic decisions, donors use general rules of thumb. Some stated that looking at high profile donors shows the trustworthiness of the organization and its reputation. Others stated that they donate to organizations where they know someone who is working at the charity. Donors automatically discern organizations deserving and undeserving of support. Many noted an explicit rule for excluding certain charities like animal causes because they are not animal owners, and this makes it easier to justify not contributing.

Donor taste is a dominant factor in the charitable organization selection process. Many of those interviewed stated they give to organizations that appeal to their likes and interests. Some donors utilize mental maps and self-realized classifications for helping them to understand the nonprofit sector. It was also found that personal background is an influencer of donor giving behavior. This is a direct result of the donor’s upbringing and lifelong observations. Habit of giving is a driving force for the path ahead for some donors. Donors stated that they look at the causes they have supported previously and make a conscious effort to not add any new charities to their list. Overall, the researchers reinforced prior research and showed that the normally accepted assumptions of donor behavior and rationale are not an adequate descriptor for modeling donor decision making to philanthropic causes.


This article looks at how an organization’s debt may or may not impact donor decisions. The overall goal of this research is to see if secured and unsecured debt held by an organization have any effects on private donations to the organization. To test this hypothesis the researchers broke this idea into three categories: expansion, donor preference, and concerns of bankruptcy.

To test these theories, the authors use a log-linear model and add another variable of nonprofit secured liabilities and nonprofit unsecured liabilities. The data in this study was pulled from The National Center on Charitable Statistics GuideStar National Nonprofit Research Database from 1998 to 2003 and includes all nonprofit organizations required by the Internal Revenue Service to file a form 990. Then, they adjusted the financial data for inflation over time using the Consumer Price Index. They eliminated organizations with incomplete, inaccurate, and other missing data points which could skew results, from the original sample of 1.4 million observations. They also removed organizations that did not report donations or any liabilities during the reporting period. The final sample contained 460,577 observations for 105,273 nonprofit organizations. The results of the study found that both secured and unsecured debt had a crowding-out effect on
donors. This supports the researchers’ initial hypotheses that debt has an effect on contributions from individuals to nonprofit organizations.


This body of research seeks to utilize the theory of planned behavior to better understand the determinant factors of why young people donate. The theory looks at determinant behavior of positive and negative influences, subjective norm, and the perception of control. The study uses an expansion of the planned behavior theory to better understand the giving behavior of 18–24-year-old Australians, who happen to be the population with the lowest giving rates in the country.

The research study was conducted with permission from the University of Research Human Ethics Committee. This sample was made up of 40 male and 170 female university students aged 18-24 years old from a university in Victoria, Australia. The responses to survey questions were rated on a 7-point Likert scale. The study found that moral normative and past behavior are indicators of giving. Young donors who have a favorable attitude toward donating feel that they have control over the donation and the perception that they are morally obligated to donate.


This research uses consumer behavior analysis to examine the mental budget that donors use to make their subsequent donations. The researchers aim to prove that donors keep a mental budget of charitable contributions to nonprofit organizations and that these budgets are fluid. Prior research suggests that the mental budget on charitable giving is flexible, while some donors may have a fixed idea of their charitable giving. It is suggested that a nonprofit organization that can solicit donations across multiple mental budget categories would be more successful. This shows that donors can utilize both philanthropic and non-philanthropic budgets to justify their charitable giving. The overall goal of this study is to provide the psychological explanation of donor behavior and provide insights on ways to enhance and increase nonprofits' solicitation processes. Three specific questions were addressed: do donors have mental budgets; do they limit charitable giving to just the philanthropic budget or do they access other budgets to make up giving; and what factors affect changes in the philanthropic budget.

To evaluate these areas, they conducted 1-hour interviews of 30 men and 12 women who have made charitable donations previously and have varying financial means. The donors were identified through a University in the US Pacific Northwest and a community foundation in Canada. The results found that many donors so have mental philanthropic budgets. They also find that this budget is often equal to 10% of the individual/couple’s annual income. Donors who were on a fixed income, such as retirement, were a little more frugal and cautious with their philanthropic budget. Further, donors responded that galas and other special events are examples where other
budgets are utilized as the perception of these events is more about networking and meeting other donors than it is about gift solicitation. Finally, the survey results find that most donors are willing to be flexible with their budgets and donate more if the right cause or purpose arises. This also increases the donor’s perceived capacity for donations. Some older donors mentioned that they are at a stage in life where they are thinking about their legacy which influences their decisions.

This research shows that donors do maintain and have mental budgets which encompasses philanthropy. Most donors indicate planning to give 10% of their annual income. Organizations should focus solicitations on donor capacity and their motivations for giving. The most important finding is that donors do have flexibility in their moral budget to increase philanthropic gifts.


This research study looks at family-controlled organizations in China and how they facilitate corporate philanthropy. The researchers believe that socioemotional wealth considerations coupled with personal decision-making influence corporate philanthropy based on the idea that philanthropic giving by the corporation will result in increased favorability. This increased corporate giving will lead to increased giving from the individuals in the family as they move through succession. The researchers also seek to find out if those family members that are intrinsically inclined to give due to religious beliefs favor corporate philanthropy over the extrinsic idea of their own personal philanthropy.

The researchers use expectancy theory to drive the research study. It is a great way to evaluate how different family members will interact to corporate philanthropic decisions. It can systemically evaluate how family members will make philanthropic decisions, and it has been rigorously tested in many other similar studies. The researchers seek to confirm that members of the family act heterogeneously when making corporate philanthropic decisions and they are individually motivated to give because of the extrinsic benefits that they will receive. The data used to evaluate these ideas is a national survey conducted in 2010 of privately owned corporations in China. For classification, they determine a family owns the corporation when they own greater than or equal to 50% of the shares. The final sample contained 1,923 significant answers to the various questions in the survey from which observations were made. The research found that intrafamily succession in the organization had a positive impact on corporate philanthropy. When families have an increased social status and are not religiously affiliated, this relationship is greatly increased which shows they are motivated to maintain their status in the community.
This study looks at the thoughts and feelings of young alumni and its correlation with those of the university development office. The study uses qualitative analysis of responses to a survey to discover the mindset of young alumni donors as they make charitable donation decisions to their alma mater. The reputation or prestige of the university or college has been found to have an impact on charitable giving from alumni. Existing research also states students who took out student loans are less likely to make charitable contributions to their alma mater. While this is true, it is important to note that students who received scholarships and other financial awards are more likely to donate. The data for this study was shared by an annual giving office at a large public land grant university located in the US Midwest. There were 2,273 survey participants and the data for only those that had donated were used, narrowing the overall sample to 204. Several themes emerged from the results of the survey they centered around career services, the desire to give to specific areas and purposes, and donor incentives.

It was observed that many respondents were upset at the lack of career services offered to them as students. The research team notes this is surprising given the large size of the career services department at the university that offers its services at no expense to students and alumni. There was also evidence that some young donors were inclined to give based on the specific "gift" they would receive for donating. Some donors stated that getting special university branded items was a good way to get other young alumni to give. While some respondents focused on gifts, others said it would be beneficial to gain access to specific university resources. Quite a few responses mentioned serving alumni in greater capacity and keeping them connected to classmates as opposed to asking for money. There is also evidence that some donors wanted to know how being a donor would impact them personally and professionally. Many of the responses from the survey stated they would be more inclined to give if they could pick the specific area to support. Numerous suggestions surrounded giving to student-experience-focused initiatives and programs. Other respondents mentioned they would give to their specific academic programs and colleges.

The overall results of this qualitative study show there is a relationship between a positive university experience and giving. One of the more surprising outcomes of the study is the lack of knowledge on career services offered to students and alumni and raises questions around whether the university is effectively communicating and promoting these services. Giving to specific areas, like career services, is something that is open to all donors and for many to not know this was a possibility is a lack of communication on the development office. This study suggests there is a detachment from the overall institution and a greater attachment to the specific program or unit that the person has the most contact with.
This article looks at the effects of peer-to-peer fundraising and whether giving by peers influences others to give. This paper uses a unique set of data to evaluate the effects of personal solicitation. In particular, the author looks at how giving varies between familiar donors and strangers, and if shared experiences between the solicitor and donor have any influence. The data is derived from an anonymous university’s development data of alumni donations between the years of 1983 and 2007 and registrar data from 1972 to 2005. The overall dataset was reduced to 139,860 observational characteristics for 18,060 alumni due to inaccuracies or missing information for alumni records in this period. The sample was guided by the university development office whose fundraising calendar begins on July 1 and ends on June 30. All alumni receive 2 mailings and several email solicitations per year.

The researchers look at those who have shared experiences, and volunteer with the university to make sure that they can gather the correct sample that will allow them to evaluate the effects of being solicited by peers. The researchers observe a strong correlation between peer pressure and giving; they found that personal solicitation influences the likelihood of a donation as well as the average amount of the gift as well.

This article looks at the use of storytelling in fundraising appeals that causes the potential donor to feel negative thoughts, and then examines the resolving action of making a donation to relieve this tension. Good stories are ones that provide a resolution or lessons learned at the end which are built into the "ask" of the solicitation. The research also investigates the positive outcomes the organization receives through the storytelling technique of solicitation. The goal is to provide negative emotions like guilt or sadness. To test these ideas, the researchers had 319 individuals respond to a questionnaire regarding a fictional organization aimed at helping impoverished children. The survey respondents were undergraduate students at a US university that provided extra credit for participating. They were given different stories and asked to list the negative and positive emotions they felt. Through the research they found that storytelling can evoke negative emotions that can be converted to positive when the reader can donate. Donors evoke a greater level of positive emotions after donating.

This research expands existing knowledge of moral foundation theory. The researchers used data from Sweden to look at moral inclinations of donors, outside of their
relationship, to charitable giving. Past research shows that moral intuitions tend to follow the left- and right-wing political definitions. Those who are more liberal give to international causes and human rights initiatives whereas the more conservative donors give to veterans and religious organizations. The researchers used a study of street beggars in the EU and the organizations that help them, to determine the moral compass of donors. Participants signed up online to be part of a nationally representative sample, which found that there is a correlation to fairness and harm reductions between supporting the organizations that help those deemed as in-need.


This paper looks at six separate factors that influence charitable giving (employer recommendation, previous experience with the organization, the services provided, awareness of the organization and its programs, the organization’s reputation in the community, and advertisements/solicitations for donations to the charity) to determine which ones have the greatest impact. They seek to conclude if the reputation is a main determining factor, what the demographic breakdown of donors is and if the influence of each of the factors differs across various demographic groups.

The research team implemented a mall survey in a town of 300,000 individuals in the US with a median income of $47,600 per the 2000 census. The surveys were conducted every day for 2 weeks which resulted in 304 usable surveys from 143 men and 161 women. The results of the survey show that the reputation of the nonprofit organization is a primary determining factor for donors to give to an organization. The scope of services offered by the organization is the next factor that stood out. They found that those with less education were more likely to respond to solicitations as compared to those with more education. Younger individuals were more likely to rely on the solicitation method as well. Women also stated that they were more likely to give to organizations that they have an existing relationship with.


This article looks at giving behaviors in Malaysia. The research looks at the reputation, attitude toward charitable organizations, if reputation effects giving, and the effects of religious beliefs on charitable giving. The study is developed around an extensive literature review which led to the hypothesis formation and the subsequent study.

The researchers used a survey conducted inside a mall in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The survey was conducted by selecting the 5th shopper to walk past a designated spot in the mall, over 3 weeks on both weekdays and weekends. A total of 310 surveys were conducted and only 203 surveys were usable due to some incomplete answers. Based
on the results of the survey group which predominantly consisted of individuals who were aged 19-25, female, had a bachelor’s degree and were from Malaysia. It is observed that the image of the organization is a predominant determining factor as to why they give. It was also learned that respondents believe the government should be doing more to help those in need and not relying solely on charitable organizations. Those that had a negative view of charitable organizations noted they would be more likely to give to an international organization. The survey results also show that when donors have a positive view of the charitable organization, they have a higher likelihood to donate based solely on the reputation that organization possesses in the community.


This study looks at the direct and indirect donor behaviors that are stimulated by reviewing the cognitive process generated by receiving the same stimuli. Existing research around this topic has proven that past donor behavior will lead to future donor behavior, and that positive experience can lead to other types of giving not related to each other. This study was set up in two parts, with a pilot study to determine the layout of the solicitation which would evoke a guilt response. The second part was a survey conducted in Lithuania with 374 usable samples. The sample was 63% female and 37% male aged 18-45 years old. The study shows that there is a positive relationship between guilt and donations.


This research article looked at the propensity of donors to give to professional associations by evaluating if the tax deduction has a factor on giving. Some of the other primary questions asked were: do membership fees result in fewer charitable gifts; are committed members more willing to donate; does involvement in the organization result in an increase in charitable giving; do members respond to the associations solicitations; and does the effect of solicitations vary depending on the individual characteristics of donors who give to associations. The data in the article comes from the ASAE survey conducted in 2009 and the respondents had to be a member of one of these organizations: American Academy of Neurology and American Academy of Neurology Foundation, the American College of Healthcare Executives, the American Society of Civil Engineers Foundation, the American Society of Association Executives, APICS the Association for Operations Management, and the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers. They had around 5,000 respondents to the 40-question survey. Missing values were replaced with the men of that category given that 17% of all surveys had at least one missing value.

The study found that the longer the individual is a member, the more likely they are to recommend the association to others and that they are more likely to be donors. It is
also observed that there is a linkage between volunteering for the association and donating. When an employer covers the cost of the membership in the association, this has a negative effect on giving. When age and work were reviewed it was observed that young individuals and those who had retired were more likely to be donors to the association. It is also observed that donors in the United States are more likely to give to associations as compared to other countries that have similar organizations. The perceived needs that are conveyed through solicitations to members were also found to have a positive impact on donations.
Habit Formation

Numerous articles on habit formation looked at the probability of a second gift based on the interactions following the first donation. There is clear evidence that people are more likely to donate the same amount when they are solicited similarly to how they were the initial year. Several studies demonstrate how recurrence in donations can decrease solicitation costs over time. This is a result of the lower costs of retaining a donor as their lifetime giving increases in relation to the solicitation cost, especially if they give each year. While the cost of acquiring a new donor is higher, there are many other motivations and considerations that donors use to evaluate their giving decision at a particular time.

There is also research pertaining to habit formation that examines a person’s upbringing and religious perspectives, in addition to the reputation of the organization. These considerations have the tendency to drive habit formation in donors who grew up in households where charitable giving was discussed and expressed and that are particularly more religious. This is evident when looking at altruistic donors as existing research demonstrates that altruistic donors will give in higher amounts to a fewer number of organizations, as opposed to donors who give in lower amounts to a greater number of organizations usually out of impulse and emotional reactions.

An interesting finding to note is that lapsed donors tend to give more and higher when information on other donors is shared with them. Matching gift campaigns are another way to “reacquire” lapsed donors, in addition to marketing. There is evidence that shows that marketing, if applied effectively, can invoke emotion, and connects the donor and the beneficiary closer together.


This article reviews trends in donor behavior when a second solicitation is forthcoming. The authors look at whether the second solicitation turns potential donors away or increases giving over time. The authors seek to suggest that repeat giving is closely tied to habit formation, and that donations to the same cause over time serve as substitutes. The survey for this experiment was conducted using donor data of gifts to an Opera House in Germany. They discovered that 455 individuals donated, which resulted in a response rate of 1.27%. 9,221 individuals received a second mailing, and of those, 367 made a second gift resulting in a response rate of 4%. They also found that revenue increased year over year by 87%. Based on these initial findings in a new fundraising campaign, the likelihood of future asks decreases giving. However, there was evidence of a formation of a giving habit as the renewal solicitation suggested that giving was consistent with the prior year.
This study focuses on giving recurrence, and intimates that the cost associated with getting a donor to repeat their gift decreases each time the donor repeats giving, which is the direct inverse of the cost of acquiring new donors. The study is set in the USA and Netherlands due to the strong giving history observed in both countries. The recent Giving Index placed the Netherlands in third with 73% of the population donating, in comparison to 57% in the United States. The study highlights the different factors that influence recurring donations in both countries, with Americans donating more to religious organizations and education, and the Dutch giving more to international affairs, health, environmental issues, and culture. The sources of donations also vary as 73% of donations in the United States comes from individuals, compared to 43% in the Netherlands.

The researchers hypothesize that affinity to the organization, trust, opportunistic behavior, and concerns of opportunistic behavior influence recurring donations. To test these hypotheses, the researchers implemented a survey of Dutch and American citizens over a 3-month period. The first phase involved 273 Americans in several cities, whittled down to 184 respondents with a 67% response rate. The second phase was conducted in the Netherlands with 346 individuals in various cities which resulted in a final sample size of 196 individuals with a response rate of 57%. The results revealed that the aforementioned factors highly affect repeat donations in Dutch and American individuals.

This article looks at the cause of giving outside of the egoistic and altruistic motivations of Dutch citizens to donate to organizations. This study utilized data collected from Dutch donors in Eastern Netherlands to look at the positive relationship of the first donation that drives future giving. There are many factors that influence recurring or repeat donations to an organization, such as moral obligation, relationship to the mission, trust, and the reputation of the organization.

The behavioral component to continued donations are not only first-time donations but donors repeating their donations. This research study looks at donors’ intention to make a repeat donation and acknowledges that instances may arise where a donor will not make a second contribution to an organization. Factors such as media stories highlighting an organization’s unethical behavior, or senior staff of a charity earning a disproportionate salary in comparison to the rest of the professional staff, can affect repeat donations. To test the hypothesis that the aforementioned factors influence repeat giving, a survey of 304 data samples was collected. The first part of the survey asked respondents to select the top 25 charities in the Netherlands that they have previously donated a large sum of money to. It was discovered that 8% donated to Worldwide Nature Fund and 7% to UNICEF. Overall, the study proved that a donor’s past experience with an organization impacts the likelihood that they will continue donating.

This article looks at two organization’s solicitations and asks donors to upgrade their gift either a month or two after the initial gift. It was conducted within the normal solicitation schedule of the organizations. This study also looks at how temporal choices impact altruistic behavior. From the results from the solicitations, the researchers found that one group upgraded their gift after a 12-month period, and the other after 6 months. These results show a very low rate of cancellations across both groups with more than 96% of donors continuing their recurring contributions. They also found that less than 1% of donors decreased their giving amount while almost 3% of donors chose to increase their giving. Women responded better to a longer lag time between the initial gift and the solicitation of a monthly gift, whereas men preferred the more immediate approach. Practitioners in the nonprofit sector can offer donors the option of opting into a recurring gift and cancelling at any time which increases overall revenue while decreasing costs. This research suggests that temporal choice does affect altruistic behavior.


This paper examines altruistic behavior across multiple factors and looks at different causes and effects. A personal factor on generosity is also discussed which states that a person who donates more will appear to be more generous than their peers, which links to societal status that can be obtained. Adversely, the offering of special benefits to a donor may make them in turn feel selfish and could result in decreased giving. The authors point out that the only purely altruistic donation might be the one made anonymously. The authors state that altruism budget encompasses all donations regardless of the donor’s motivations.

The altruism budget extends beyond monetary giving, and includes volunteer hours, blood and organ donations, gifts in kind, and reputation, to name a few. While these are very hard to quantify, there are ways to look at the trade-offs created in order to get a true sense of altruism. Research suggests that increased giving to one organization will result in increased giving to other organizations; this is particularly evident in times of disaster and crisis. Current research also finds that when a donor increases one type of giving, for e.g., time, then it correlates to an increase in the amount of money donated as well. However, this is not an easy correlation to make due to other influential factors such as charitable tax deductions. Research data also suggests that giving larger gifts today does not decrease giving in the future. This is very evident when you look away from money, such as blood donations. This proves that forming a giving habit in the younger years will extend and continue into an individual’s later years. Overall, the data is mixed and inconclusive if the altruism budget is a fixed number or if it is as flexible as giving.

This article looks at data that surrounds lapsed donors using data from a direct email solicitation that regularly occurred during the fundraising campaign of a large capacity health-related US nonprofit. The study is centered on how donors respond to societal information based on the donation amount of another individual. Using this method, the organization was able to increase the average amount donated from lapsed donors by 37%. For the most part, there is not a great volume of existing literature on the giving behaviors and patterns of lapsed donors. However, there is some research that suggests that matching gift campaigns tend to crowd out lapsed donors. There is also evidence that shows announcing or publishing donations creates an incentive to be "counted in" which helps maintain donor retention and reduces the number of lapsed donors.

For this study, the sample population consisted of 15,166 lapsed donors who had given less than $100. The solicitation letters were sent out 7 times over the course of 4 weeks. Donors to any of the solicitation waves were excluded from the solicitation emails of the next wave. The overall email campaign aligned with a matching gift challenge that would match donations 2:1, or $2 for every $1 donated. Of the 15,166 individuals in the study, only 55 donated to the organization. This represents a .36% response rate which is lower than the 2 to 5% response that the organization normally saw. This is not surprising when you observe the low prior gift amounts coupled with their inconsistent giving. All donors to this research campaign came in three of the seven waves. Overall, it can be determined that social information does influence a lapsed donor’s likelihood of being reactivated.


The research in this study is built around the idea that those who donate based on altruistic behavior will donate more money to fewer organizations, while those who donate for the warm glow effect will donate less money but will give to more organizations. It is also believed that those who donate based on altruism will be more favorable of organizations that effectively promote their mission, as opposed to those who donate based on the emotional appeal of the warm glow effect.

Conducted in partnership with Freedom from Hunger, this study occurred in 2 waves. One group received an emotional appeal with information on a particular beneficiary, while the other got received an emotional appeal that included information on scientific research. The research is based on gift size because smaller gifts are given more casually whereas larger gifts are generally more based on organizational effectiveness. The research was conducted in two rounds within regularly scheduled fundraising appeals. The first round reached out to donors who gave greater than or equal to $100, and the second round to donors who gave $.01-99.99 the previous year. The first wave went out to 16,000 individuals and the second wave to 17,000 individuals. Each wave was divided into groups of roughly equal thirds. The overall results from this study show that donors who give smaller amounts tend to give more out of impulse, whereas donors
who give larger amounts tend to be more altruistic and focused on ensuring effective service provision and higher efficacy of their donation.


This article sheds light on how customer retention and donor retention are similar and discusses how acquisition and retention strategies can be used to affect recurring giving. The article also points out how allowing donors to designate their gift to particular causes and organizational directives helps to increase gift amount. The researchers also seek to learn how donations can change based on utilizing strategic and targeted marketing.

Intrinsically, donors tend to give to organizations that they have a connection with. Donors are also motivated by external factors to give, such as marketing campaigns and word-of-mouth promotion from social circles. Data from a university foundation was utilized to observe a high correlation between donation variety and expected giving. A field study tested how marketing can be utilized to drive giving across multiple initiatives. The study engaged a random sample of 1,200 alumni from the business school divided into 4 groups based on prior donations, and the type of degree they received. The study found that by encouraging donors to give to multiple initiatives, you can increase the amount donated and the overall number of donors.


This research uses longitudinal data to look at how previous donation decisions affect future decisions. The authors utilized a study of real donors and their donations, consisting of 20,000 individuals and their collective 300,000 donation decisions over a 10-month period. These individuals were paid to complete surveys and were given the choice to keep the money or donate it to a list of charities. They found that personality traits and greed could not predict the individual’s behavior. But when the data is synthesized based on simple demographics, the study discovered that liberals, and those that make twice the modal income, are more likely to be donors. They also found that women are more likely to be donors, and that older individuals are more likely to be keepers of income.


This author of this article used donor information from an anonymous university to develop a predictor for habits formed through the action of making a gift, and the gift amount. Donors were classified into giving as young, and giving when old based on graduation date, and class reunions. The data also included many other demographics like an individual’s major and minor, extra-curricular activities, and involvement in varsity athletics and conference finishes during their undergraduate careers. The dataset includes the information of 7,113 alumni records. 71.3% of the alumni made a gift from their 20th year post graduation with an average gift of a little over $2,000.
80% of 7,113 alumni made a gift during the first 5 years post-graduation with 26% donating in each of those 5 years and the average amount of donations among the young donors being $50. Those who gave as young alumni and continued to give in their older alumni years made up almost 94%. Even when the study looked at factors such as athletic team performance for student athletes, campus leadership, and roommate selection, a correlation between affinity and giving was observed. This supports the idea that giving at a younger age influences giving later in life.


This study looks at donors of a child sponsorship organization and addresses how marketing can be used to increase donor retention and acquire new donors. The research was conducted through interviewing donors who sponsor children. From the interviews, it was discovered that meaningful relationships developed between the donors and the children that they sponsored. Donors also experienced happiness and mentioned that they had to give up both time and money to achieve this feeling of happiness. Overall, the study found that sponsors develop a meaningful relationship with the children they are sponsoring and are willing to give up time and money to do so. Furthermore, these donors also seek to help children with a perceived similar background to their own, such as same nationality. This is indicative of them avoiding guilt if they stop donating and the need of the relationship due to viewing children they sponsor as family.


This article analyzes research on habit formation and econometric results in determining whether altruistic behavior at a young age is a predictor of altruistic behavior at an older age. Data was used from the Independent Sectors Survey of Volunteering and Giving in the United States. The survey includes questions geared toward donations and time and was conducted every two years beginning in 1988. The research is based on data collected in 1992, 1994, 1996, 1999, and 2001. In total, respondent answers were looked at for 13,630 individuals. From the data, it was determined that 69% donated in the previous year, and that 37% of respondents volunteered 23.4 hours on average in the previous month. 50% of respondents stated that they saw at least one of their parents engage in volunteer activities during their childhood years.

The findings from the compiled data revealed that giving increases over time while volunteering seems to peak at the 30-year age range. They also found that men are less likely to engage in volunteer work than women. Additionally, it was discovered that working led to higher rates of volunteerism and lower rates of donating. They found that individuals who engaged in fundraising in their younger years were 3.1% more likely to donate in their adult years with an average increased donation of $122. Those that volunteered in their younger years were 8% more likely to be donors as adults with an average increased donation amount of $329. Individuals from a household where the parents volunteered, saw an increase in donation amount that was $217 higher on
average. Overall, it is proven that engagement in altruistic behavior as a child greatly increases the likelihood of volunteering and donating as an adult.


The author examines for-profit and non-profit literature regarding marketing strategies to evaluate donor retention and attrition rates. This literature review looks at the factors that affect a donor's discontinuation of giving based on driving factors of loyalty: satisfaction, identification, commitment, and trust. The author also looks at triggers that affect giving, situation, influences, and reactions. The last section looks at the value determinants that affect giving.

The author points out that organizations should look at the long-term benefits of donor loyalty and how that can sustain long-term giving to the organization. In order to increase loyalty, organizations should track donors' perceptions on the services that they offer. This will allow them to focus on identified weaknesses of the organization and improve them. The authors suggest that an organization must maintain consistent messaging aligned to the organization's values and connect it to how the donor can make an impact. Organizations should seek to build trust with their donors by being cognizant of the situations and motivations previously mentioned. Being transparent about the performance of the organization is a very effective tool for stewardship. By highlighting the role donors play in progressing an organization's mission, donors can be swayed to make additional gifts. Ultimately, an organization should maintain constant contact to ask for a donation if they want to advance the relationship and build a sense of loyalty and trust, while also empowering the donor to live out their ideals.
Collectively, technology has been a great enhancement to the philanthropic sector and has allowed organizations and donors to connect in new and more profound ways. Crowdfunding has been looked at by many organizations as a tool for donor acquisition, but new research looks at how to utilize this tool to minimize donor attrition rates. This research shows that the faster a donor receives a “thank you” from the organization, the higher the likelihood of a second donation. It has also been observed that some donors develop an affinity or connection to the funders, the project, and its goals. This level of affinity also builds into the donors’ feeling of reciprocity and paying it forward to help others.

Other studies examine the likelihood of a person sharing their gift or donation instance with their broader network on Facebook or other social media sites. This research finds that for those donors who are logged into social media at the time of the donation, they will donate at a rate greater than 100%. This allows the organization to connect to an even broader and more diverse group of donors by tapping into networks that are outside of their initial sphere of influence.


This article looks at crowdfunding and how it can be used to minimize donor attrition for first-time donors who give through an online platform helping teachers acquire essential classroom items. They reviewed a dataset of 3.9 million donations from 1.5 million donors over the life of DC.org, a crowdfunding website, from March 2000 to October 2014. The dataset was restricted to January 2009 due to the company going national in 2008. They found that around 20% of the donors returned to make at least one other donation after their first. The study also finds that donors are more likely to be retained when they give to successful campaigns. They found that those who were directly solicited by specific teachers were likely to give to only those campaigns. Those with no affiliation to a particular teacher’s campaign had a higher retention rate and were likely to live further away. There is also a correlation between donor retention and the amount of personal information that is shared-- the more information that the donor shares the higher the possibility of a repeat donation. The researcher also looked at teachers with 20 campaigns and donors who made a repeat donation and see a downward sloping trendline. This implies that teachers do not get more effective at fundraising over time and that the donors are likely in their network and thus are a finite resource.

On the donor stewardship front, they found that when a donor receives a thank you message within 24-hours of the donation they are more likely to make a second gift. Another factor that increased donor retention is communicating the impact of the donation to the donor. However, the retention rate drops when the time since the donation to the communication increases. This insinuates that donors want to hear of their impact as close as possible to the gift to help influence them to give again in the future. Overall results show that crowdfunding sources face the same donor retention efforts as the traditional counterparts.

This research study looks empirically at donor motivations behind financially supporting an organization through crowdfunding in Iran. For the purpose of this article, the researchers define motivation as the behaviors that are influenced by social, physical and cognitive constructs guiding them to perform the behavior of donating. The researchers looked at intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of giving like altruism, as well as trust in the organization, and the ease of giving using the crowdfunding software as possible motivators for giving. Hamijoo, a crowdfunding program in Iran was used to follow the donations of 13 individuals who were combination first-time and returning donors. Through interviews with the participants, they were able to find that donors in this study were mainly motivated by intrinsic factors. These factors ranged from their personal interests in the topic and the content of the campaign. They also discovered that personal connections to the benefactors of the cause, like refugees, targeted the donors’ emotions to get them to make a monetary donation. Another key factor in donating for some of the individuals was their connection to the project’s founder. It is also important to note that some donors revealed that they were more inclined to donate because others in their sphere of influence had made donations.


This article looks at the psychological effects of reciprocity and socialization on crowdfunding campaigns. The authors tested a series of five hypotheses and used a survey to justify their findings. They hypothesized that crowdfunding is unrelated to tangible rewards; crowdfunding is positively related to differential tangible rewards; crowdfunding is related to the donor’s experience of belief in a common cause; crowdfunding is directly related do a donor’s desire to pay back; and crowdfunding is related to the ability of the funder to signal their funding needs to others.

To test these hypotheses, they used the popular online game Natural Selection to create 2 teams. The game was funded through a crowdfunding campaign and the researchers use data from 2002 to 2008 when data was available to both funders and non-funders. Total contributions over the period totaled to over $100,000. A survey was conducted by the funders to determine the motivations of donors. They were able to collect 762 responses. Through the survey, researchers found that donors experienced affinity with the funders, the project, and its goals. They also discovered a high level of reciprocity and a tendency of donors to pay back rather than pay forward. It was also discovered that social interactions did not play a large role in why donors made contributions.


This article looks at the motivations of donors to contribute to an organizational crowdfunding campaign, and if & when they share the campaign on Facebook either in a personal message or in a post to their entire network. They used several motivators after
the donation was completed to see if donors would respond to an incentive to share the post on Facebook if a small donation was made in their name after they performed the requested task. They observed 5,587 donor behaviors across 8 category groups from mid-January to the end of February in 2013. They disqualified 1,323 observations for various reasons, leaving them with a total population of 4,264. They found that over 60% of donors were first time donors and over 40% of them were logged into Facebook at the time of checkout. They discovered the average donation across the groups was $50.

Based on how donors responded to the prompt of sharing on the Facebook wall or a private message, there was a personal solicitation cost on the part of the donor. Overall, they found that 4.4% of the time donors who are asked to share on their wall will do so, while those offered to add funds to their name will do so 12.6% of the time if offered $1 and nearly 17% of the time when offered $5. Those logged into Facebook at the time of checkout will comply 130% more than those not logged into Facebook or any form of social media. The researchers also observed that asking individuals in a donor’s social network led to an increase in first-time donations.


This article seeks to determine if a mandatory spend out rate on Donor Advised Funds (DAFs) respond to DAF’s use of noncash assets. The article provides a general framework of what a DAF is and its purpose in the philanthropic sector, particularly DAFs that are managed by National Supporting Organizations (NSO)’s like Fidelity, Charles Schwab, and the United Way. DAF’s allow donors to contribute money that is tax-deductible to the NSO’s that they then have advisory authority over and can decide when, where and at what amount to donate to a charitable organization. These organizations must be a 501(c)3 public charity. There are 3 views of DAFs: a quasi-private foundation, substitutes for public charities, and DAFs good for the future of philanthropy.

The main goal of DAFs is to collect funds and then divert giving of those funds to a later date. For this reason, there is a belief that there should be legislation. DAFs are not legal entities in themselves and the NSO is the organization that holds the 501(c)3 status thus the regulatory factors would be imposed on them as a legal entity. These NSO’s serve as a pass through between donors and charitable organizations. While other fundraising organizations and foundations are mandated to have a payout, the NSO’s argue this would be redundant since many of them report payout rates at or above 20% per year. There are proponents that say it should not be based on the NSO, but it should be mandated at the fund level for a mandatory payout rate. This is because some funds may not grant out any money for several years or more thus not fulfilling the original charitable intent of the donation until a later date.


This article looks at some of the motivations of donors to give through crowdfunding given the absence of guilt, reciprocity, and other key motivations. They also look at how donor behavior differs with crowdfunding compared to giving to individuals and
organizations. Additionally, they look at the amount of information sharing and how that impacts giving to organizations and individuals in the online giving format. To answer these questions, they looked at data from Razzo, a crowdfunding website, which was chosen because since inception in 2006 they have raised $270 million, nearly half of that amount was raised in 2013 alone. The other reason it was selected is because it caters to both projects and fundraisers. Projects are run by organizations and fundraisers by individuals.

They analyzed three factors that were fundraising targets which was the total goal of the fundraiser, campaign dialogue which was comprised of the total comments on a campaign, and campaign discloser which was the number of characters in the campaign's description. They found that the average amount raised was $499.32. They note there were quite a few campaigns with no funding and those were omitted from the study. Over 75% of the campaigns analyzed were fundraisers as opposed to projects. They found that .41 donations were made per day and that on average campaign descriptions had almost 1,300 characters. Given these findings they show there is evidence of diverging donor behavior towards individuals and organizations in crowdfunding. Lastly, they observed that pure altruism and warm glow have an outcome on crowdfunding donations.


This article looks at the All or Nothing model where fundraisers only get to keep the funds if they reach their goal as compared to the Keep it All model where they get to collect the donated funds even if they do not reach their goal. The data here was pulled from Kickstarter and Indiegogo which shows donor preferences under the two opposing models. Kickstarter only offers the all or nothing model while Indiegogo provides both; nearly 100% of campaigns are keep it all on Indiegogo.

The data was collected over a two-year period and includes over a quarter million campaigns. The author found that fewer campaigns on Kickstarter go under-funded than on Indiegogo. The largest donation amounts occur at the beginning and the end of campaigns. It was found that donors' motivations are based on project funding; they donate based on the expectation that the campaign will be fully funded. On Indiegogo, they also found that donors are fine with charities keeping the funds regardless of the goal, if the campaigns raise at least 60% of their total goal.


This article looks at transparency in the crowdfunding space. They are specifically looking at how organizations disclose how the funds will be used behind the scenes and show how the organization is fulfilling legal and regulatory requirements. The researchers are particularly looking at the transparency efforts that surround humanitarian campaigns, like those run by the American Red Cross after a natural disaster. They performed this study in the Amazon Mechanical Turk with over 300 participants. They showed all the participants one of 3 emergency funding campaigns;
one of those had no updates, one had non-operational updates; and the last one had single operational work-related updates.

They have data from over 100,000 campaigns spanning 7 years and identified almost 10,000 certified emergency campaigns and over 55,000 campaigns that posted at least one update. They also found that almost 23,000 campaigns have daily updates. When the researchers put their findings of the 300 participants to the test, they found that those with the work-related update had higher giving amounts than the other two tests. The donor’s willingness to donate was based on the updates provided, and the increases were based on the number of updates. Across the two studies, it was observed that certified disaster fundraisers that provide updates to donors convey a greater level of trust and will in turn raise more money as compared to uncertified campaigns, and those that provide no updates.


This article looks at donation-based crowdfunding and how it is generally more effective. Specifically, the authors are interested in pure donations where no benefits are provided to the donor. They reviewed 92 scientific publications and found that this is a great way to use digital media to appeal to a wide range of audiences and pair them with causes that are meaningful and impactful to them. They found that social capital is a motivational factor for donors as well as the legal benefits they can receive for their donations.


The authors look at fundraising campaigns through social media, what makes them successful, and the factors that help organizations generate large amounts of social networking donations. They reviewed Facebook fundraising data coupled with IRS form 990 data from 100 large nonprofit organizations in the United States. The launch of social media networks in the 2000s allowed organizations to directly connect to the masses. The launch of Facebook Causes in 2007 allowed these organizations to directly solicit from those individuals who were connected to them and reach individuals across their broader network. Of the 100 large nonprofits, 66 of them had a Facebook Causes page. They then examined the aggregate data to find information on total donations. The organizations had a combined total of 318,000 followers and received more $1,200 during the monthly study; the average donation was $3. It was also discovered that the more followers the organization has, the higher the likelihood of increased donations.


This article evaluates peer fundraising and looks at donation size based on their peers. The study is based in the United Kingdom and tracked fundraising campaigns on Just
Giving and Virgin Money to raise funds for the 2010 London Marathon. The initial sample contained 12,000 fundraising campaigns between the two platforms. They found that each fundraiser acquired 34.5 donations, raised 1,093 Euros on average, and that the average donation size was 30.31 Euros. They also find that when one donor gives a large amount it signals other donors to also give a large amount. This is a psychological factor as it makes other donors want to show they are close to the person running the fundraiser, or how wealthy or generous they are. They found that campaigns with goals have stronger peer effects, and that once the goal is met the gifts decline in amount.


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This paper evaluates donors’ behavior when it comes to making the decision of when to donate to a campaign. They evaluate why donors would give at the beginning instead of the end of a campaign. There are some observations from organizations like Kickstarter that donations come in quickly in the beginning of a campaign, slow in the middle, and pick up again as the deadline for the campaigns approach. To test this theory on how donors behave, the authors set up a campaign and allowed donors to decide when to donate and provided them the campaigns they could donate to, and a sum of money that could be used as donations. They did this by using a game type model and incentivized donors with additional money if the project was funded in a specified period of time. Of the 6 campaigns in the game, they found that donors gave to 1.3 campaigns on average in the 60 second time frame. Repeat donations occurred less than 50% of the time. The overall results show that donating early is the favorable outcome; this is particularly true for those who could benefit from the project being funded. It was also discovered that the campaign end date could be an inefficient way to foster donations in a particular timeframe and encourages donors to hold out on making their donations to the closer end of the campaign.


This article looks at the consequences of a crowdfunding campaign when it is not fully funded. The authors set up a game with 6 players having 150 credits each. If the project received the goal of 400 credits, then they received a payout. Participants received their payout regardless of whether they donated to that campaign or not. Under the return rule test, the players donated an average of 30 credits more than if the standard donation rule was applied. It was also observed that under the return rule test the players donated 121 credits of their 150 totals that they could contribute, and only 60% of the time players donated the full allotment of 150 credits. They also found that return rule donations had a greater effect on donations to campaigns that were classified as high-risk, whereas those that had little to no risk saw no change. It was determined that the return rule is favorable to donors’ individual intentions. Under the return rule, there was less collaboration between donors compared to the donation model.