BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Seu, Irene Bruna (2017) Caring in crisis? Public responses to mediated humanitarian knowledge. In: Seu, Irene Bruna and Orgad, S. (eds.) Caring In Crisis? Humanitarianism, the Public and NGOs. London, UK and New York, U.S.: Palgrave Macmillan, pp. 23-58. ISBN 9783319502588.

Chapter2

Caring in crisis? Public responses to mediated humanitarian knowledge

Irene Bruna Seu

Introduction

The belief that 'if only people knew what was going on they would do something' is contradicted daily by ample evidence that the ubiquitous information about ==humanitarian crises== does not lead to commensurate moral response and action. This chapter is about bystanders – the fabled 'ordinary person' who is confronted daily with information about humanitarian crises and distant suffering. Because of technological advances and the pervasive mediatization of our lives, 'we' in the global north are all ==symbolic bystanders== to the suffering of Others (Cohen, 2001).

We know very little about these new, technologically mediated bystander phenomena. As a way of addressing this lacuna, this chapter reports on psychosocial findings from focus groups and individual interviews with members of the UK public about their responses to humanitarian communications. We aim to identify and reflect on both factors that come from 'out there' (the socio-cultural) and factors that come from 'within' people (emotional responses, biographies and psychodynamics), and on how the two interact and inform each other. Overall, we want to understand how the complex and layered mixture of =='internal'== and =='external' factors== affect the way people understand and ==respond== to humanitarian issues as well as to their communications. This is conceptualized through the metaphorical model

of a psychosocial prism, described in Chapter1, which places the information in context and makes it meaningful.

This chapter addresses three questions:

1. What are the moral responses and reactions evoked in audiences by humanitarian communications?

2. What socio-cultural scripts do people use to make sense of humanitarian communications and what are the ideological, emotional and biographical underpinnings of these responses?

3. How do people come to think and behave the way they do in terms of their biographies and their own histories of engagement with humanitarian issues?

In relation to the first question – what are the moral responses and reactions evoked in audiences by humanitarian communications? – the focus is not on abstract principles but on everyday morality and how principles of altruism and social responsibility become embedded and are manifested in everyday practices. In engaging with members of the public we aimed to get a sense of the landscape of thoughts, feelings and actions which are evoked by humanitarian issues and communications, and how they relate to the routine thinking and actions that constitute people's everyday morality.

Through the second question – what socio-cultural scripts do people use to make sense of humanitarian communications and what are the ideological underpinnings of these responses? – we aimed to investigate 'what was around' at the time of data collection

which informed and shaped people's understanding of humanitarian communications: that is, the current issues and debates, ideas, narratives, justifications, reactions and understandings available to the public at the time of the focus groups and individual interviews, to discuss humanitarian issues and their communication. As such, these scripts are similar to Lakoff's (2008) 'explanatory conceptual models': scripts and frames whose function is to provide a ready-made understanding of how some part of the world works (Darnton and Kirk, 2011). As society evolves, new scripts emerge; thus what is presented does not claim to be either an exhaustive or a static map.

The third question – how do people come to think, feel and behave the way they do in response to humanitarian communications? – explored the emotional and biographical nature of people's responses. That is, we wanted to find out about people's affective responses to humanitarian issues and their communication, people's history of engagement with humanitarian issues and how their attitudes and responses changed over the course of their lives, as well as what personal and socio-cultural conditions caused those changes.

The chapter is divided into four parts. First it looks at the meaning of psychosocial connectedness in the context of the humanitarian triangle and introduces the '3M' model. Second, it critically explores audiences' responses to the emergency model of humanitarian communication. Third, it presents a case study based on biographical narrative interviews. Fourth, it reports on the blocks to public responsiveness resulting from the closing of the'3M' channels.

Psychosocial connectedness in the humanitarian triangle: The'3M' model

There seems to be a paradox at the heart of public engagement with humanitarianism. On the one hand, we found that, overall, the British public are generous and engaged in helping distant others in need, and that this constitutes a key part of their identity. There is clear evidence that members of the public actively engage in caring for others in their community, but also that they respond emotionally and ==sympathetically== to distant sufferers.[vii]

On the other hand, however, there are strong indications that the public experience difficulties in establishing and maintaining a ==meaningful sense of connectedness== with humanitarian issues and distant sufferers over time, thus explaining at least in part the current drop in ==public engagement== with humanitarian issues and giving.

We conceptualize psychosocial connectedness as made up of two important aspects. As distinct from 'connection', a term implying a bridge between two separate entities, the term connectedness highlights the psychosocial continuity that stems from being components of the same thing. Crucially, connectedness refers to us as always geopolitically, socially and psychologically interconnected to others. A sense of connectedness involves ==solidarity== but transcends it too, insofar as our very identity as relational beings is built upon our physical, ==mental== and emotional connections with others. Hence the second aspect of connectedness refers to the ongoing capacity for ==bearing the other in mind==, which overcomes physical distance and separation.

As such, fostering and sustaining connectedness has the potential for far-reaching change and deep participation, and is of key significance in the humanitarian triangle at the center of this study, which is predicated on engagement with distant suffering.

Insert Figure 2.1.: The '3M' Model

The '3M' model (Figure.2.1), which emerged from thematic analysis of focus groups and interviews with members of the UK public, proposes that the public's connectedness with humanitarian issues can be sustained through appropriate emotions, understanding, and familiar practices of care. Consequently, humanitarian communications that aim to foster psychosocial connectedness should be emotionally Manageable, cognitively Meaningful, and Morally significant, or what we have called the '3M' model, which will be discussed in detail later. Conversely, the '3Ms' can also be understood as channels which can become blocked, thus preventing connectedness.

The data suggest that although physical and social distance can be an obstacle to the public's capacity to fully relate to distant sufferers, it is the psychological and emotional distance (which participants often referred to as 'human' distance) from the distant sufferer that the public resists. Importantly, and of particular relevance to humanitarian communication, monetary transactions are perceived by the public to increase the human distance between them and the sufferers.

On the whole, when talking about caring, people did not differentiate between caring for the near and caring for the distant sufferer. Rather, when imagining helping, they applied

local practices and principles of care to distant suffering and seemed to think, talk and behave as if the world were a small village. Two examples from two different focus groups exemplify this[viii].

> *Otto: [B]eing Welshmen, we were always giving, to be honest. It's like out of the garden, if we had five and we only wanted three lettuces, we'd give to the next door neighbor. And I think this is a concept with the Welsh people – no disrespect to anybody else – but I think this is the way we've, it's hereditary. It's in us. We'd rather give, you know, and I think this is the way, and it's always been with me. I used to love gardening and whatever and I would always give whatever I had over to somebody else. It's come down from my grandparents to my parents and to myself, and I've done it with my five children.*

Otto, from Wales, gives a graphic example of how altruism is deeply ingrained in people's moral principles – in particular, the principle that those who have a surplus should give to those who don't have enough. It was integrated in their everyday lives and transmitted through the generations. The second example, also of care in the community, is from Ernie, in Leeds, a city in the North of England:

> Ernie: I mean, we once saw some friends of ours, we got talking to a family and she used to use a sewing machine and her sewing machine had broken, and it was what she brought money into the family with, and she had eight kids of her own. So we went out of the way and got a new sewing machine and she was delighted with that – it was something positive. We could have given her £100 and walked away, and

that £100 may have probably been taken off her by somebody, but because we gave her ... we bought her a sewing machine and hopefully she's still happily making clothes.

This brief anecdote captures the spirit behind the famous proverb 'Give a man a fish, and you feed him for a day; show him how to catch fish, and you feed him for a lifetime', which advocates helping people to become self-sufficient and giving them the means to do so. It also resonates with a central principle of NGOs to foster the independence of aid recipients, and with some communications which reflect this trope by depicting beneficiaries empowering and helping themselves and their communities, rather than being helped by others. A critical approach means being aware that none of these messages ever remains pure. For example, the empowerment of others through fostering self-sufficiency has been incorporated into a neoliberal discourse of self-responsibility and self-efficacy in relation to international development and humanitarian aid, in which some participants differentiated between deserving and undeserving recipients of humanitarian aid (Seu, in press).

Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge the value of established practices of care, such as the care in the community described in the above extracts. Because participants drew on their own experience of lived and practiced models of care as templates for caring for distant others, these existing practices could be a valuable resource for NGOs to build on in their communication with the public.

On the one hand, our study reveals evidence of the public caring about and responding empathetically and sympathetically to distant suffering. At the same time, we have found

clear evidence of a marked and widespread fatigue in response to humanitarian communications, a sense of 'stickiness' of particular beliefs about humanitarian causes that seem to persist despite contradictory evidence. The strongest example of this, to be further discussed later in the chapter, is what participants repeatedly referred to as 'the Africa thing' – and this is literally the way people in the focus groups talked about it – coupled with a sense of cynicism and despondency about current models of humanitarian action.

This suggests that the relationships between the three actors in the humanitarian triangle are troubled (see Figure 2.2). There is trouble in the relationship between the UK public and distant sufferers, but there is also trouble between the UK public and NGOs. Although interconnected and informing each other, these two sets of troubles have to be explored independently and separately. Failing to analyze each relationship independently might lead to incorrect inferences based on ungrounded linear causal connections; for example, refusing to donate (which may indicate a problem in the NGO–public relation) does not necessarily mean that people do not care (which may reflect the public–sufferer relation).

By exploring what works and what doesn't in each of the relationships in the humanitarian triangle, we aim to contextualize responses and illustrate their complexity, thus enabling a more nuanced understanding of these relationships

Figure 2.2: The humanitarian triangle – the predominant approach as perceived by the public

Figure 2.2 shows what the public see as the predominant model of humanitarian interactions. It tends to follow the following steps: NGOs become aware of a humanitarian

crisis (caused by earthquake, flooding, famine, war, human displacement) and in turn inform the public. The standard communication in this scenario speaks to the public using the following narrative structure: 'We are telling you about these traumatic events; people are suffering; please help by donating'. NGOs then take the response from the public back to the distant sufferer. In this mode of interaction, which we call the 'hit and run' approach, NGOs' engagement with the public is minimal. Considering the urgent humanitarian crises they are attempting to respond to, this is to some extent understandable. However, in the long term, its dominance can be highly problematic and counterproductive. Furthermore, the public perceive NGOs as mediating this relationship excessively. Mediation here does not simply refer to conveying the information to the public, but rather to how NGOs offer themselves as the main conduit, the main channel leading back to the distant sufferer. This model is largely resisted and distrusted by the public, particularly when people experience NGOs as addressing them exclusively for monetary donations. The comment 'All they want is my money' was a common retort in this and other studies (Seu, 2011; 2012). For these reasons, the 'hit and run' approach appears to be detrimental both to the relationship between members of the public and their beneficiaries, and to the relationship between NGOs and their publics. In both cases, members of the public experience the 'hit and run' approach as dehumanizing. In the public–beneficiaries relationship this is because the 'hit and run' model deprives members of the public of a more direct and relational response with the beneficiaries. In the NGOs–public relationship this model makes members of the public feel dehumanized themselves as well as manipulated and exploited.

The temporal dimension of the effects of the 'hit and run' approach is terribly important. In agreement with others (e.g. Hudson *et al.* 2016 a&b; Darnton and Kirk, 2011), while

acknowledging the long-term detrimental effects, we also recognize the fundraising success of this model and the reason why NGOs use it so often. Indeed, in short-term emergencies, this model is accepted as legitimate and effective by both the public and NGOs.

The emergency model of humanitarian interaction: A fundraising success

It is important to reiterate at this point that we do not consider monetary donation as the only or the most important marker of success in humanitarian communication, or the most moral of actions. Indeed, taking monetary donations as a sign of public engagement with distant suffering can be problematic, as making a donation is often indicative of fleeting participation followed by disengagement. Equally, we should resist automatically equating not donating with not caring, as there are many reasons why people do not donate. As in other studies (e.g. Zagefka and Brown, 2008), so too in our study most participants differentiated between, and responded differently to, humanitarian emergencies and international development issues. Overall, the former seemed to be received with relatively less resistance by the public because in an emergency there is evidence of usefulness of monetary donations, clarity about what is needed, and visibility of what can be achieved through aid. Most crucially, emergencies are perceived and responded to as discrete episodes generating temporary rather than ongoing needs, and consequently making only discrete demands. These characteristics have been repeatedly documented (e.g. Dovidio *et al*., 2006*;* Zagefka and James, 2015) and were mentioned across all the focus groups in our study. Conversely, in the case of poverty and international development issues, the problem is perceived as ongoing and as not being ameliorated by monetary aid.

Unsurprisingly, one-off donations to natural disasters, particularly through telethons, were the only form of monetary donations that participants responded to positively, and telethons capture the kind of engagement most syntonic to the emergency model, as exemplified by the following extract:

> Andrew: [I] mean say there's a massive flood, people need support and money and it's a lot easier to say 'Oh well, I'll ring this number and give now'. That's going back to what I said about Comic Relief. We have one night, I know people think it goes on for months around the year, but they have one night where they go 'Give us your money now', and throughout the night they're saying 'We've got 25 million, 30 million'. It's a lot easier for people to go 'Oh, it's only a phone call' so they ring up and give their details, they pay and then they forget about it. I think a lot of people think like that and it's a weight off their mind. They think 'Oh, I should probably give', so then they do and then they think 'Oh, that's all right, they'll be fine now'.

This is very revealing as to why telethons about humanitarian natural disasters are so successful. First, there is the urgency and visibility of the sufferer's need – earthquake, flooding, tsunami. Second, there is ease of response, both in terms of what is being asked – simply to make a donation, with no signing up or setting up a direct debit – and the ease of making the donation, which is only a phone call or a 'click' away. From the same device – television set, phone, tablet – the donor can also view the impact and effectiveness of their donation: the money will provide shelter, buy tents, give food; rice will be dropped from the sky – and along with these benefits, the priceless feel-good factor.

Furthermore, as Andrew pointed out, this model offers an in-built opportunity for the viewer to forget about the suffering and to disengage as soon as s/he has donated money. The viewer can think *'They'll be fine now'*, which takes *'a weight off their mind',* and makes it possible to forget about the disaster with a ==clear conscience==.

We would like to reflect on the implications of this model for the kind of relationships fostered by telethons and one-off donations to emergency appeals, and the more problematic reasons why this model might be so popular as well as so successful, albeit only in monetary terms. In terms of ==lasting connectedness==, it is important to go beyond the immediate effectiveness of telethons as a fundraising tool.

Andrew's quote was in response to a previous comment criticizing ==direct debits== as a commitment; it highlights that it is precisely the *==lack== of ==commitment==* that makes one-off donations so attractive. Yet, commitment is key in forging relationships and being able to sustain them over time. Crucially, it is in the context of commitment *not* being required that the link between need and money is accepted by the public.

The ease of ==intervention== and ease of disconnection, which make the emergency model so attractive and successful as a fundraising tool, is also a key constituent of the ==fleeting connections== the public experience with both NGOs and distant sufferers. Importantly, this overarching ease is the result of ==parallel temporalities==. In the emergency model the immediacy of response, which enables the viewer to do something, feel good and disconnect, is in tune with the immediacy of need and the NGO response. In this model the humanitarian triangle is in harmony because all the actors are working within the same

temporality. This characteristic prevents friction and sustains the relationships for that very brief period of time.

Equally important in terms of relationships, telethons in the emergency model enable the donor to feel part of a communal effort through the ongoing monitoring of cumulative donations. Psychologically, this evokes a sense of being part of a virtual community working together, a model very familiar to people, as exemplified by Ernie's extract about the sewing machine, in which people rally round and join forces to help. Additionally, in telethons, viewers are virtually connected to the distant sufferer for the duration of the event.

The 'hit and run' approach is ideally suited for the emergency model, and it is in this particular formulation that the NGO's role as mediator of suffering and deliverer of aid is not resented, but appreciated.

However, in terms of deeper participation sustainable over time, this is exactly where the problem lies: the emergency model offers a low-maintenance relationship free from commitment. If monetary donations are all that NGOs desire, then the emergency model is unquestionably a successful means of approaching the public. Yet, as we will see in Chapter 6, NGOs desire much more than monetary donations. Thus, the emergency 'hit and run' model is highly problematic, specifically with regard to fostering lasting connectedness and to the immunity people have acquired to this model. The next section explores in more detail the negative and cumulative impact of the 'hit and run' approach on members of the public. It uses case studies to problematize the possibility of linear causal links between apparent behavior and deeper, complex attitudes enduring over time, both towards

humanitarian and international development issues, and towards principles of altruism and social responsibility in general.

The human face behind statistics: The importance of case studies

The importance of large survey studies lies in the information they provide about broad-brush attitudes and patterns of response and behavior. However, they cannot inform us about trajectories, turning points, how attitudes to humanitarian issues fit into individual participants' lives, or how these attitudes change or become fixed. Case studies can help here, by giving us a fine-grained account of how what comes from 'out there' intersects with what comes from 'inside' people.

This section focuses on two participants, Ingrid and Caroline (both are pseudonyms). If Ingrid's and Caroline's responses were studied through surveys and more deductive methods, there would be no discernible difference between them. Indeed, the two women share many characteristics. They are both single parents of grown children, both belonging to the C1 demographic group and neither being well off. Caroline is a pensioner in her late sixties; Ingrid, in her late fifties, has just been made redundant from an administrative job. Both women care and have cared about humanitarian issues over time, donate to one-off emergency appeals and telethons, and have supported NGOs through direct debits and other means, thus questioning the distinction NGOs commonly work with, between one-off givers and ongoing supporters.[ix] Both Caroline and Ingrid feel that people ought to help both in the UK and abroad whenever possible and, despite the fact that they have been regular donors over time, both dislike and resent NGOs to some extent, but for different reasons.

Behind these ostensibly similar profiles in terms of donations, the two case studies represent two very different approaches and responses to humanitarian and international development issues, and different trajectories that have led them there. They also highlight the importance of the complex interplay between socio-historical and biographical factors identified across focus groups, thus suggesting that it is not sufficient to simply identify inhibiting or facilitative factors in isolation or as a formula (as discussed in Chapter1 in relation to current analyses of bystander behavior). Rather, individual meanings and the idiosyncratic interactions between them also matter enormously. Indeed, the ways in which Ingrid and Caroline arrived at their current attitudes are very different, and these differences are terribly important in terms of fostering a sustainable connectedness between public and distant sufferers, and a longer-term commitment to NGOs. In short, if one is looking exclusively at monetary donations then their behavior is the same, but in terms of sustainable connectedness the two women require different things. The case studies illustrate that members of the public are more complicated than survey-based studies might suggest and that it is essential to know about these complexities if the relationship between the public, distant sufferers and NGOs are to be sustained and deepened over time.

Ingrid repeatedly defined herself as not particularly caring and as having been selfish when she was young, despite the many examples given in the interview of being a very caring person. This should alert us to the way the subjective nature of one's self-perception may lead to erroneous conclusions, for example when measured through self-reporting questionnaires. Emotionally she defined herself as '*a bit of a cry-baby*'[ix] who is easily and

deeply affected emotionally by others' suffering. Her overall mode of connecting to distant suffering is through ==identification==, ==empathy== and ==pity==.

Caroline was brought up and has been actively involved in caring for others from a young age. Emotionally she defines herself quite differently from Ingrid, explaining that she is '*not a particularly emotional person but I've got a very strong sense of* ==*justice*==*. I'm very concerned with* ==*social justice'*==. Her overall mode of connecting to the distant suffering is ==justice-based==, ==unemotional==, political and ==solution-oriented==.

In her childhood Ingrid was overlooked, if not neglected, and often sick. She feels she lost her father at sixteen when her parents divorced, and she attempted to find an alternative family by joining the army straight from school. She married and had children young. In the interview she gave several instances of her husband's unfaithfulness and described how she turned a blind eye to it throughout her marriage until he divorced her. She had three children with him. She gave the overall impression, particularly in the two individual interviews, that life tends to find her unprepared.

Caroline presents quite a different picture. She defines herself as having been a tomboy as a child, with a mother who was emotionally unavailable and distant but a father who was emotionally present. Unfortunately, her father died when she was fifteen so, like Ingrid but in a different way, she also lost her father in her teens. At that point her mother fell apart. Caroline exited this difficult family situation by going to university where she joined Amnesty International and became involved in various pro-social activities. After university she spent ten years working abroad.

On the whole, Ingrid's strategy has been to look for safety within close and familiar boundaries. She says

'I'm sort of very much in my shell, home, home, home. Home is where I'm safe'.

In relation to humanitarian issues she feels helpless and easily overwhelmed, and this is consistent with her overall view of the world as a dangerous and unsafe place. She says *'It's a scary old world out there isn't it?'* The reason she resents NGOs is that they distress her by bringing upset and disturbance into the safety of her world.

By contrast, Caroline sees herself as a citizen of the world and her overall strategy and completely different trajectory has been to look outside herself with curiosity and respect. That is where she has found safety and the understanding that sustains her beliefs and commitment. She feels agentic and rejects the 'victim' label, both for herself and for distant sufferers. She says *'I've travelled a lot and seen how resourceful people are and how they cope with things'*. She watches documentaries about world affairs, particularly those offering an analysis of the political situation, and she feels that humanitarian issues are always political.

These brief sketches of Ingrid's and Caroline's lives and responses highlight the complexity hidden by ostensibly similar responses by the two women.

A more detailed engagement with quotes from the two women can help flesh out the '3M' model.

> Ingrid: You hear these awful things going on in ==Africa== (.) the children might go off to school and never see their parents again (.) when you try and relate it to your family (.) it's just horrendous you just can't get your head around it so (.) you feel so helpless (.) and then you turn off the news and these things are in your house you can't, it's difficult to turn away (.) so I just have to turn it off.

> Caroline: When I feel that they (NGOs) are trying to manipulate my emotions I switch off.
>
> Bruna: Why do you think they try to manipulate people's emotions?
>
> Caroline: I suppose, I suppose they think that'll make them put their hand in the pocket, which I suppose initially it does but as I've said, later if you keep, you can't keep hitting that same note, after a bit, you get a, you know, you get a hardening of attitudes and a backlash […] that's when you want the political analysis, you know, well, you know, people can't feed themselves 'cause they can't go to the fields because you know, the snipers for example, you need to know this, you know.

The first thing that Ingrid does is to relate her response to humanitarian communications to her own ==practices of care==. Her immediate reaction is to *'relate it to your family'*, which, ==metaphorically==, brings it home emotionally. We see also the importance of ==cognition== when she says *'You can't get your head round it'*, which is a powerful ==metaphor== of her need to

understand, particularly in relation to things that are very difficult to make sense of while also being very disturbing. In terms of the '3M' model, this statement highlights the importance of enabling people to understand, make sense of and process the information. Emotionally, for Ingrid the emotions that are evoked are ==overwhelming==, so she feels ==helpless== and ==self-protectively== '*has to turn it off*'. It is striking how Ingrid graphically describes her experience of this information coming in: how she tries to keep a safe place from which to engage with the information, but can't. At the same time, on the basis of her existing practices of care, she does not want to turn away, so instead she turns it off.

Caroline is very different. She also talks about ==appropriate emotions==, but whilst for Ingrid the appropriateness is in terms of ==manageable emotion==, for Caroline the emotions evoked by the communication need to be appropriate in terms of ==integrity of purpose==. She does not mind responding emotionally but she dislikes it when she feels that emotions are evoked in a manipulative way, to make her give money. Her warning to NGOs is clear and eloquent: if they '*keep hitting the same note'*, people are going to distance themselves and respond less and less. The resulting ==hardening of attitudes== identified by Caroline points to the closing of a potentially open channel and a block to a ==proactive response==.

The cognitively meaningful aspect of the '3M' model can be identified in Caroline's expressed need to make sense and understand the context of the distant suffering. For the message to become '==cognitively meaningful'==, Caroline needs a ==political analysis== which, however, doesn't need to be complicated. Indeed, she argues: '*It's very simple isn't it? They can't feed themselves because they can't go to the fields because there are snipers'.* Thus, for communication to be cognitively meaningful it need not translate into turgid and long

analyses, but should provide basic information that enables members of the public to understand what is going on.

This suggests that ==context== is critically important for both women, although it addresses different needs and serves different functions. Without context Ingrid cannot 'get her head round' the information, leaving identification as the only open channel. But identification is treacherous because the 'safe distance' provided by context is taken away. The communication then becomes emotionally unbearable and she needs to re-establish a safe distance by 'turning off' the communication. At a different point in her biographical interview Ingrid described her experience of scrolling down on a NGO website to try to get to the point where she could donate and how, in doing that, she was confronted with many horrendous pictures. Those pictures, she said, '*are now in my head. I can't get them out of my head*'. This graphic wording suggests that ==psycho-dynamically== she experiences the information in concrete terms as ==traumatizing== objects that hurt her, become etched on her brain, and cannot be evacuated or ==processed==. Ingrid feels assaulted by such traumatic information, which penetrates the boundaries of her ==symbolic== safe space through identification. This suggests that Ingrid switches off not because she does not care but because she is torn between her moral duty not to turn away and the need to protect herself from what she experiences as an unmanageable emotional assault. She resents NGOs for presenting her with this difficult moral dilemma.

Caroline also dislikes and resents NGOs, but for different reasons, mainly that they manipulatively arouse her emotions. On the other hand, when communications provide her

with sufficient context, Caroline finds an open channel for connectedness through politics and social responsibility.

These extracts exemplify what was consistently repeated in all focus groups, leading to the formulation of the '3M' model. Connectedness has to be <mark>emotionally Manageable</mark>; emotions are vital to connectedness but they can only be sustained when they are appropriate and not overwhelming.

Connectedness also needs to be <mark>cognitively Meaningful</mark> and sustained through understanding both of the context of the suffering and the individual's potential impact on it. This speaks to people's needs to make sense, contextualize and find links between their emotional arousal and realistic and effective solutions.

Finally, connectedness needs to be <mark>Morally significant</mark> and offer the opportunity for actions that are morally resonant for members of the public. Indeed, the connectedness that the public wish for is based on practices that they value and with which they are familiar.

The danger here is of generalizing and/or turning a working model into a formula. It is important to bear in mind that the '3M' will vary between people but also for the same individual within his/her lifespan, because they depend on individual capacity for emotional management and regulation, as well as on the person's mental states, biography and many other factors. Hence the '3M' are by nature dynamic, relational and open to change over time.

Closing the '3M' channels: Blocks to responsiveness

This section further clarifies the '3M' model by applying it to blocks to connectedness. The data show that all participants had strong emotional reactions to information on humanitarian issues, and that they overwhelmingly responded sympathetically, but often did not know what to do with the information or felt dissatisfied with purely monetary donations as the indicated action. Too often assumptions are made about people no longer caring, or not caring enough. Yet we found no evidence to support these observations.

Rather, we found that unless there is a concerted effort to foster connectedness along the lines of the '3M' model, there is a closing down of these three channels into blocks, in the following ways:

Figure 2.3: Blocks to action

1. **Emotional blocks**. Participants' lived experiences and capacity for managing their own emotions notwithstanding, when the emotions evoked by the communication are unmanageable, emotional connectedness can turn into the emotional block of turning away and switching off.

2. **Cognitive blocks**. The public relate to humanitarian issues through socio-cultural scripts which may block responsiveness. These scripts are emotionally charged and, having endured over time, have congealed into commonsense beliefs, which makes them hard to shift.

3. **Moral blocks**. We found that despite the overwhelming expression of concern, the vast majority of participants did not know how to maintain a manageable connection with distant suffering. The moral blocks tended to fall into two categories. The first relates to the increased resistance to monetary donations beyond the emergency model discussed earlier in this chapter and, compared to the past, an increased unwillingness to engage in a long-term commitment to NGOs. For some this simply resulted from unwillingness to make an ongoing monetary contribution, whether because of low income (pensioners for example), recession, anxieties about the future and so on, or because, as in many cases, they found monetary donations unsatisfactory and soulless. For others this was due to the increased distrust and animosity they felt towards NGOs.

The second moral block relates to people's hierarchies of care and the powerful moral normative to 'look after your own first', with priority of such duties and obligations assigned to blood ties, an outlook sometimes referred to as parochialism (Singer, 2009).

The fourth block relates to the **troubled relationship between NGOs and their** public (for further details see Seu, 2014a). Across all focus groups, members of the public reported feeling manipulated by NGOs in order to elicit donations and expressed distrust in NGOs when they were perceived to operate as *Marketers*. Differently from the *Good Samaritan* model of NGOs, The *Marketer* model seems to have a profoundly damaging impact on trust and confidence in the agency as well as on public connectedness to humanitarian issues in general.

Block 1: Emotionally inappropriate and unmanageable emotions

In terms of emotional reactions, on the whole people expected to feel saddened and shocked by the knowledge of distant suffering, and accepted these feelings, but some, like Ingrid, found that the communications were excessively traumatic and counterproductive. Indeed, people *expect* to be upset, and there was no evidence that making people comfortable was preferable, though as we will see in Chapter 6, some NGO practitioners suggest that this is the case, and design communications based on this assumption. On the contrary, people responded with scorn and ridicule when they perceived a cognitive dissonance between the seriousness of the situation and its mode of communication. Some found that even the colors used in the communication should be chosen with care; hence pastel colors were deemed inappropriate when communicating about such suffering (Seu, 2015). In short, people completely accepted and expected that communications about traumatic experiences should be upsetting. What seemed to be at issue was the manageability and appropriateness of the emotional arousal in terms of why the emotions were aroused, that is, the intentions attributed to the communicator, and whether and how audiences were able or enabled to process and manage the emotional upset caused by the communication. These factors will be discussed in turn.

The case of communications including representations of children is a good example of participants' reflexive and critical awareness of their own emotional responses to humanitarian communications (for further discussion see Seu, 2015). The frequency with which children are depicted in humanitarian communication is evidence of the widespread belief that children are especially effective in grabbing audience attention, and initiatives like *Children in Need* and *Comic Relief* are regular fundraising successes, which suggests that children indeed have an enduring emotional hold on people. For example:

Lia: So I'll probably donate ... you know, a little kid will come on the TV and I'll go, 'Oh, that's terrible!' and probably donate to them. And it's not to say that they're any more deserving than other charities, but it's just what touches your heartstrings more I think.

The metaphorical reference to 'heartstrings' presents the response as autonomic, bypassing reason and touching directly on emotions. This suggests that the benign emotional response to suffering children and the desire to help them is so powerful, unquestioned and embedded that it occurs almost without conscious control.

However, although there was a consistent positive response towards the children depicted, the emotional responses to communications portraying children were more complex and self-reflective. For example, from three different focus groups:

Dominic: [...] children will sell, they will sell you anything, and that's why they're using (them), and it just turns me off.

Oscar: [the problem] is the organization, not the child or the woman for whatever reason they're in this. [...] We all want to help the child but [...]

Renee: I just don't appreciate being bombarded with the images of dying children. I think it's a guilt strategy more than anything else, [...] You know, it's not necessarily

going to make me pick up the phone, to be honest, it just makes me change the channel.

Some of the issues identified in these extracts (e.g. public perceptions of NGOs using advertising techniques) will be discussed further in the section on the fourth block. Here it is important to emphasize participants' self-awareness as regards their own complex emotional loops. Furthermore, in terms of the humanitarian triangle, these emotional responses illustrate the importance of distinguishing the emotional currents pertaining to two sets of relationships. When people's responses to images of children are examined within the public–sufferer–NGO triad (rather than simply as a public–sufferer dynamic), the responses are fundamentally different. On one side of the triangle we find empathy for the children and desire to help, on the other there is anger and resentment towards the NGO for being emotionally manipulative.

As already touched on above when discussing the case studies, the issue of the manageability of emotional responses is complex. In the next chapter, Paul Hoggett warns against familiar dichotomies – emotion vs. reason mapped onto an ethics of care and ethics of justice respectively – which might seem like suitable ways of understanding the emotional difference between Ingrid and Caroline. Far from considering the affective/emotional as separate from the rational/political and/or as intrinsic personality traits, the psychosocial approach applied here highlights the dynamic interchange and co-dependency of emotion and cognition. The next quote illustrates how cognition can help in managing the affective impact of humanitarian communications and, above all, how people's positions can be unstable and open to change.

60

Florence: I used to be really scared about hearing things but I don't now. I think I grew up as a person and started to embrace everything, so like if I see something on the news and I don't understand it I'll ring up my dad and he explains it to me, so I understand it, because you can only be here for a certain amount of time. You need to know what is going on in the world.

Florence gives a nice example of how knowing and understanding help to make emotions manageable. The change over time is also important. Florence attributes this to getting older and being increasingly able to take on the world, but also to the mediating influence of her father. This ostensibly ordinary vignette of a father-daughter caring relationship hides an important symbolic function performed by Florence's father. According to Bion (1962), this is a fundamental parental function, particularly in infancy, when the child is unable to understand and process the overwhelming affective impact of life. The effect of the parent's intervention is to take on overwhelming anxieties, process them and return them to the child as manageable. There are echoes of this interaction in Florence's account. What matters here is that cognitive-affective processing might, for some people, require somebody to explain things and make them meaningful and manageable. Similarly to Caroline's observation, arguably this is a function that NGOs' communications could perform successfully. Importantly, it translates into a renewed wish – Florence even speaks of a need – to know more and to maintain connectedness with the world around her.

The next extract, from Jonathan, gives another successful example of the same phenomenon, as well as of how, without contextualization, the communication can be

experienced as ==mechanistic== and ==exploitative==. Jonathan comments on a communication from Amnesty International (see Figure 2.4.):

INSERT Figure 2.4. Communication from Amnesty International[xi]

Jonathan: I saw that and I thought, I didn't particularly think that was an amazing picture, but obviously like it's okay, and then I turned over and I saw the thing on the next thing (image on the second page of the communication), that, the artillery destroyer. At first I thought it was like fireworks or something, and then I read it and I was like 'Oh my god, that's like a cluster bomb attack or something isn't it?' And then you realize these people are running for their lives, and that really hit home, and then that made me want to read all of this, and then what I realized, I realized this as I was reading it I didn't feel like when I read these things. I didn't feel like it was trying to get money out of me. I felt it was trying to ==educate== me, and so that made me want to read more. In fact, I didn't finish reading all of it because I didn't have enough time. So if you've got a spare one I'll take it away.

This insightful account is helpful in many respects. It offers a detailed, moment-by-moment, reflexive account of Jonathan's reactions when reading the communication from Amnesty International. The repeated use of 'then, and then, and then…' signposts how Jonathan is increasingly captivated by the communication. One of the key moments in the process is when he states, '*I didn't feel like when I read these things*', which hints at the expectation of a formulaic communication from NGOs – '*I didn't feel like it was trying to get money out of me*' – and Jonathan's own stock response. This recalls Caroline's words: '*You can't keep*

hitting that same note, after a bit, you get a ==hardening of attitudes== and a ==backlash=='. Equally prophetic is her recommendation: '*That's when you want the political analysis, you need to know this'.* Indeed, it is precisely Jonathan's perception that the communication was trying to educate him, rather than make him donate, that made him want to know more. At the end of the quote we have a different Jonathan; there is no sign of resistance or cynicism, but rather of openness and receptivity, as shown by his request for a spare communication to take away so he could finish reading it. Thus, the understanding gained through reading the communication strengthens and fosters the connectedness between Jonathan and the distant sufferer, and although he's emotionally aroused by the information he doesn't want to switch off. In fact, he wants to know more. In terms of blocks to action and responsiveness, however, we need to pay serious attention to the fact that this was an exception and that ordinarily Jonathan would disconnect at the mention of money.

Block 2: Cognitive barriers

The examples above are a good illustration of how cognition can facilitate deeper and sustainable connectedness. However, cognition can also have the opposite effect and operate as a block to connectedness when humanitarian communications are filtered through ==common-sense beliefs== or 'stock scripts' that are stuck and persist over time. For example, participants repeatedly referred to, using their words, '==the Africa thing==' as a shorthand for all that is wrong with humanitarianism. Here Africa was not referred to as a geo-political region but as a symbol of the ==chronic== and ==intractable== nature of developmental and humanitarian causes in ==Africa==. The following extracts from three different groups exemplify this:

Milly: I think we've got used to, you know, the Africa thing…

Hugo: They've been starving in Africa, I'm not being funny about it, since I were a kid, and like we've had Live Aid, Band Aid, whatever is it, but they are still starving in Africa',

 Imogen: 'I don't think it's going to make any difference. Well, you know, I think everybody's skirting around the issue which is, you know, chronic poverty and chronic corruption in a lot of countries'.

Humanitarian problems, automatically categorized as the 'Africa thing', are then perceived as intractable, chronic and stuck, and endemic to the country in need. Consequently, monetary or any other kind of interventions are considered futile and ill-advised, and members of the British public are not considered responsible or equipped to intervene. Such Afro-pessimism', identified as the prevalence of negative and stereotypical representations of Africa, has dominated media representations of the continent for decades and informed inter-cultural relations (Bunce *et al. 2017).* However, widespread technological innovations, a growing middle class, significant economic development (Bunce *et al.* 2017:21), as well as the reduction in infant mortality, have been reflected in a recent marked shift towards more positive media representations of Africa. Yet there was no evidence of this shift in the focus group. On the contrary, the 'Africa thing' script was strongly voiced in all focus groups and seemed impervious to alternative views. Its material impact was identifiable in how it informed participants' moral reasoning and decisions about who was deserving of help in the material context (Seu, in press). For example:

Otto: But initially they [the Japanese] refused help whereas in Africa there's been the bowl where you just can't fill it. This is the sad fact of the reality I think. Africa has had billions of pounds and they're still nowhere near, and yet in Japan, they're going forward. They're even building, you know, and you think (.) I don't know. I don't know the answer to be honest but, you know, what is it? There is something … People, a lot are willing to do that and others, as you said about India, 'No, we do it ourselves'.

In this account Africa is constructed as ==endlessly needy== (*the bowl where you just can't fill it*) and ==endlessly taking==. This is attributed to *something,* which is hard to articulate, but is treated as an intrinsic quality of Africa which renders it undeserving of further support, thus illustrating how 'wrong knowledge' functions as a cognitive block and undermines connectedness.

Block 3: ==Moral significance==

There were various moral blocks, two of which are of particular significance because they both relate to distance and the easy conflation of physical and emotional distance. The difference between the two is of key importance in sustaining connectedness.

The first example of such blocks relates to ==hierarchies of care==, within which physical proximity coincides with emotional closeness. This well-known definition of the immediate circle of care was often used to construct a ==hierarchy of moral duty==, expressed by familiar

phrases such as 'Look after your own first' or metaphorical idioms emotionally prioritizing problems that are 'on your own doorstep'. We identified 9 circles of care representing the perceived moral boundaries of duties and obligations from the most self-centered to the universalist (for more detail see Seu, 2014b).

1. 'Me and mine' – 'the closest to you'

2. One's own children and immediate family

3. Extended family

4. Local community

5. Regional community (respectively for those coming from England, Scotland and Wales)

6. Taxpayers living in Britain

7. Britain as 'my people'

8. 'Whoever is wronged inside or outside the UK'

9. Universalist (e.g. 'The world is my family', 'I'm a citizen of the world')

The majority of participants did not extend their moral boundaries of care beyond level 4. The advocated duties and obligations which prioritize blood ties, often not extended beyond the local community or national borders, are probably the best known and most discussed of the moral blocks, or what Peter Singer calls parochialism (2009). Through parochialism, moral connectedness shrinks back to home-based connections.

This would suggest that physical and social distance is a key obstacle to people's capacity to fully relate to distant sufferers. Yet the data show that it is the emotional distance from them that the public regret most. For example,

> Fasia: That's why I would rather go to different countries to help than give them money, because then I know I'm helping rather than just giving money, because the next day I've forgotten I've given them money, because I don't feel I've done much to help them.

This forgetting, as discussed previously, is crucially important as it is the opposite of holding the other in mind, which is the key to connectedness, as well as to the differentiation between short-term fleeting and lighter responses and longer-term deeper and sustainable engagement. The distinction between helping and 'just giving money' is also important in moral terms.

Purely monetary transactions, rather than donating per se, are perceived as impersonal and transient, thus as increasing the human distance between the public and the sufferer. Many participants initiated or contributed to fundraising activities, and even though these resulted in financial aid, their attraction went beyond the material outcomes of the events. The relational aspect of having the community, family and friends involved in the fundraising event while holding the distant sufferer in mind contributed to a sense of a more human relationship with the sufferer, and of a connectedness which replicated familiar forms of caring. These factors made such events particularly attractive to people.

A desire for relationality in humanitarian and charitable activities was expressed pervasively by participants, in particular through the expression of a wished-for connection with the sufferer that is embodied, close and relational. For example:

> I know other friends that have done this, that have gone to villages in Africa and like say helped build a school or something, just for a couple of months, and I really feel that something like that is good for both parties, because you're doing something, you're giving your time and your effort, and probably your sweat and your tears as well, and there is something physical that you can see that's come out of it rather than just cash into a big pot that you don't know where it's going.

Beyond the reference to proof of the impact of one's actions (*something physical that's come out of it)* and to the need for accountability in the use of donations (*cash into a big pot),* this comment is representative of many participants' comparisons of money with giving things, the latter being charged with important symbolic significance, and presented as the preferred way of responding to the suffering.

Taken in its strictest concrete meaning, giving things instead of money is a serious logistical challenge for NGOs in terms of, for example, moving cargo across war-torn or disaster-hit zones, besides the ethical drawbacks of shipping goods and personnel from the west instead of using local resources. For all these reasons, the concrete aspects of these wishes make them undesirable. Yet, the principles expressed through the imagined and wished-for relationship of care, based on what is familiar and valued, contains an important message for NGOs and an enormous resource in terms of fostering connectedness with distant

suffering. The poignant phrase *'giving your sweat and your tears'* speaks of a desire to connect with a distant sufferer at the human level through familiar modes of caring, entailing the literal and symbolic giving of parts of oneself. The shared tears, symbolic of compassion and solidarity, and the sweat, symbolic of working together towards addressing that suffering, are what people experience when they relate and care for each other. This symbolic sharing makes the boundaries between 'us and them' fluid and inclusive. Some researchers have started to recognize the affective charge and political potential for both parties referred to in the quote above in the case of micro-credit. For example, Schwittay (2015:5) talks of 'affective investments' which 'materialize in feelings of caring for strangers who are geographically and materially distant, and in practices of sharing through financial and labor contributions'.

Data from members of the public showed commonalities in the way people imagine connectedness. First, people do not use a language of giving money, but a language of care. They speak of the sufferer needing more than money, which hints at the warmth and multi-layered nature of caring relationships. Second, they imagine it as involving real, not simulated, physical proximity. Finally, and crucially, they imagine and desire connectedness that is essentially relational. They express a need to know about the other, which fosters empathy and solidarity, and appropriate and manageable emotions which can sustain the connectedness over time, like the ordinary practices of care and relating that people are familiar with. Interestingly, recent research has shown that this relational rather than purely transactional model is also wished for by beneficiaries[xii] (Little *et al.*, 2015).

Block 4: The troubled relationship between NGOs and their public

Previous sections have already illustrated aspects of the troubled relationship between NGOs and the public: showing, for example, how participants felt manipulated by NGOs whom they perceived as '*dumping'* disturbing information on them to elicit donations, as well as their increasing ==resistance== to this formula and to offering long-term support to the agency through direct debits.

This section returns to the relationship between NGOS and the public as a key ==block to public connectedness== to humanitarian issues, and identifies the two main ways in which NGOs are viewed by the public: as '*Good Samaritans*' or '*Marketers*'

> Belinda: I saw this one, Médecins Sans Frontières. I've always admired them for the same reasons that have already been discussed, that we know they're on the ground and most of them are doctors, I believe, and they're actually administering the medicines and doing the wounds and all that, so I like it.

The quote captures the key characteristics of the '*Good Samaritan'* construction of NGOs according to which NGOs work *on the ground* and in *direct contact* with sufferers. They are selfless and put themselves at risk to help others; they are visible, heroic and 'hard-core'. As in the parable of the *Good Samaritan*, these agencies could be found in any place and at any time of human suffering and need. To be seen to behave as a *Good Samaritan* engenders trust and respect in the particular NGO, generates positive feelings towards NGOs overall, and fosters commitment through the donors' continuous support of NGOs.

At the polar opposite, the construction of the agency worker as a '*Marketer*' is steeped in ==distrust== and criticism of NGOs' perceived inappropriate use of funds and the employment of marketing techniques. Although discussions around these topics took a myriad of forms, a common thread was that the participants repeatedly questioned the motives behind NGOs operations, as well as their workers' motives for joining the humanitarian field.

> Alistair: I used to work for a humanitarian aid group quite a while ago, and I think a lot of people within the humanitarian aid groups also make too much money themselves. I think most of these adverts are actually there to actually keep directors in jobs, to keep the organization going, also to, how do I say, make the organization bigger. I think too many organizations nowadays, they're competing with each other, which is wrong when it comes to charity. They should be working together and actually helping people instead of competing, 'Oh, our organization can get more funding than this one', because at the end of the day they're not reaching the target they are supposed to. While they're competing, they're spending too much money on advertising on TV or newspapers when that could have been going to whatever they are campaigning about.

> Hugh: The bigger the charity, the bigger the business, I feel like, the less actually gets to where it's intended. [...] That's all, it becomes a business venture.

> Keith: [...] when you think about it, whoever produced these [the appeals], (has) done a good job, [...] It's how they get you. I think personally, it's a form of advertising, marketing.

Bruna: What do you think they're advertising?

UM: Well, they're preying for your money, aren't they?

Keith: They're advertising to get your money. It's like a car, or something. They're advertising for you to go and buy that car. I think they're advertising for money, really. That's it.

Out of all the many hours of focus group discussion, only 8 comments, from four different groups, explicitly described NGOs as *Good Samaritan*s. This image was consistently presented and experienced, implicitly or explicitly, as the 'true spirit' of charitable work and as illustrating ways in which NGOs were perceived by audiences as 'getting it right'. On the other hand, negative views were continuously and consistently mentioned within and across different focus groups, thus highlighting the dominance of the hitherto unidentified perception of NGOs as *Marketers* and suggesting that a crucial dimension of NGOs' relations with the public has been neglected and needs further investigation.

As *Marketers*, NGOs are seen in the role of businesses employing marketing techniques aimed at expanding and beating rival NGOs, and are regarded as out of touch with both the public and beneficiaries.

Even when there was recognition of the increased complexity of humanitarian work and some degree of acceptance of NGOs' need to professionalize, the intense and often passionate criticism of the *Marketer* model, and the distrust it engenders, is widespread and expressed across all the demographic groups. By contrast, the *Good Samaritan* model

evokes positive responses, trust and public loyalty to NGOs (for a detailed discussion see Seu *et al.*, 2015).

The data suggest that, because of the expressed distrust in the agencies, and the lack of accountability and mismanagement of funds referred to by many, the damage to the NGOs' relationship with the public cannot be addressed and repaired by simple accountability for resource usage. Indeed, many participants blamed the size of the organization for an alleged NGO's disconnection from its original aims. These two kinds of disconnection – from financial investment in the beneficiaries and from principled investment in the original values and aims of the NGO – were considered among the key characteristics of the *Marketer* model. Considering the robust evidence from the literature that trust is significantly affected by the performance of the charity and is predicated on the perceived benefits supplied to beneficiaries and the manner in which the impact of these benefits is communicated back to donors (Sargeant *et al.*, 2008 and Sargeant *et al.*, 2006), the *Marketer* model seems to have a profoundly damaging impact on trust and confidence in the agency.

Additionally, although NGOs' visibility on the ground is applauded, visibility through communications to the public is viewed with suspicion and regarded overall as manipulative self-promotion, as illustrated by the public responses to communications portraying children, discussed above.

If we apply these insights to the humanitarian triangle we can see how the current predominantly transactional model, which has been already heavily criticized (Darnton and Kirk, 2011) contrasts with the public's desired model.

INSERT: Figure 2.2.: The humanitarian triangle – the predominant approach as perceived by the public

In terms of the relationship between NGOs and their audiences, the current 'hit and run' model applies a mechanistic 'stimulus-response' method, based on an over-simplified approach to members of the public that fails to take into consideration the psychosocial complexities described above. In terms of the relationship between members of the public and distant sufferers, the predominant model is perceived by the public as unidirectional, with the public being engaged by NGOs briefly and for the sole purpose of attracting donations. In this model, connections and engagements are fleeting and unsatisfactory, both between NGOs and their public and between the public and distant sufferers.

Insert: Figure 2.5.: The public's desired humanitarian triangle – the Relational model

The relationship that is wished for by the public, as depicted in Figure 2.4, envisages a different balance between the three actors and a more relational and circular relationship.

Conclusion

The case studies and examples discussed in this chapter illustrate that members of the public are more complex than they might appear from survey-based studies. If it is desirable

that the relationship between the public, the distant sufferer and the NGO be sustained and deepened over time, it is essential to be aware of these complexities.

The '3M' model, based on empirical data from members of the UK public, conceptualizes the conditions under which the public responds more positively and thus represents opportunities for a deeper and longer-lasting connectedness to humanitarian issues. This concluding section summarizes the key lessons from the audience data in relation to extant research.

1. Emotional appropriateness and manageability. There is strong consensus that emotions and affects play a key role in promoting engagement with global issues and hence a growing interest in this 'emotional turn' amongst scholars (e.g. Hutchinson, 2014, Schwittay, 2015). Much of this work focuses on the dichotomy between the use of good and bad emotions, in particular pity and guilt vs empathy and solidarity (Hudson *et al.* 2016b). The use of dehumanizing images to elicit pity and guilt in audiences has been widely criticized as a factor contributing to the decrease in public engagement with development issues (e.g. Hilary, 2014), alongside recognition that this approach continues to be effective at fundraising. Most recently, Hudson et al. (2016b) have empirically tested the impact of traditional (pity-based) and alternative (empathy-based) appeals on donations and efficacy. They found no statistically significant difference between appeal type and average donation/likelihood to donate, however, they showed that both donations and efficacy are mediated by emotions. Negative emotions resulting from the pity appeal (e.g. anger, guilt) and positive emotions from the empathy appeal (e.g. hope) motivate

respondents to donate, but negative emotions lower respondents' sense of efficacy – the feeling that they can do something to help alleviate poverty in poor countries. Consequently, there are unintended consequences or 'collateral damage' resulting from NGO's use of traditional appeals: they can help to raise donations, but they also serve to make people feel helpless.

Although agreeing on the collateral damage identified above, the *Caring in Crisis* study has identified some of the pitfalls of applying mechanistic stimulus-effect investigations into emotional responses. Not only are emotional responses not uniform, as noted above, but emotions also do not arise neatly and singularly. Indeed, affective responses are often chaotic and confusing. We experience emotions in clusters and feedback loops, and only retrospectively can we reflexively identify individual emotions. Shame and guilt, for example, are very different emotions, but are often experienced simultaneously, so that people tend to confuse them and refer to them interchangeably (Seu, 2006). Arguably, the same applies to pity and compassion. As testified by recent research (Hudson *et al.* 2016) and discussions in this volume (Chapters 4, 6 and 10), humanitarian communications that elicit pity have been criticized for not portraying beneficiaries in respectful and dignifying ways. Furthermore, as astutely illustrated by the video *Date Aid* by Bond,[xiii] lasting relationships cannot be built on pity. This shift away from pity-inducing communications is important politically and ideologically. However, it problematically rests on the assumption that pity can be experienced as a distinct emotion, and that it is easily recognizable by those experiencing it and consensually distinguished from compassion. In practice, in the often quick, fleeting and mundane encounter people have with humanitarian communications,

even a message composed with the greatest care and sophistication is unlikely to be met by viewers with such high level of clarity and self-awareness.

Furthermore, the division of emotions into good and bad can be unhelpful and misleading. Semantics and ==valency== are of great importance here. For example, anger, similarly to most emotions, is not intrinsically good or bad. What matters is its context and valency; that is, what the emotion can potentially mobilize in people and which actions it enables them to take, or prevents them from taking. As Hoggett convincingly points out in Chapter 3, anger at perceived injustice is a key emotion in solidarity.

In summary, context is of paramount importance ==intra-personally== (in the location of emotional responses to humanitarian issues within individual emotional landscapes) and ==inter-personally== (in the relational interaction with both distant sufferers and, crucially, with NGOs as key mediators). Within this layered scenario, our study suggests that manageability, rather than individual emotions, is of vital importance in facilitating or hindering connectedness. As discussed above, manageability is also multi-factorial. It depends on the individual capacity for ==emotional modulation== and tolerance, a capacity which, in turn, is influenced by and regulated through meaningful understanding. NGOs have a potentially fundamental role to play in this.

2. Meaningful understanding. Transcending a familiar dichotomy between emotions and reason, our data show that cognitive scripts are never devoid of emotion and are in mutual interaction with emotional responses; in turn they affect the processing of the emotional

content of communications. NGOs have the potential to play a particularly important role in helping the public in processing the emotional content of communications (see Yanacopulos, 2015 for a critical review) in ways that foster connectedness rather than defensive switching off (in Chapter 9 we make specific recommendations in relation to this role). Socio-cultural scripts mediate public understanding and their cognitive-emotional responses, and have a profound material impact on self–other categorizations and consequently on people's relations with others. Our research suggests the need for an ongoing and detailed mapping of these scripts, to inform a deeper and more complex understanding of the public's reactions. NGOs can also play a vital part in the process of mapping of and addressing socio-cultural scripts, as argued in Chapter 6 when discussing their role as 'moral entrepreneurs'.

3. Moral significance. In terms of morally significant actions to suggest to the public when informing them about humanitarian issues, the audience data highlight the role of temporality and relationality.

Thus, when thinking in terms of the success of a communication, it is essential to differentiate between short-term and long-term successes. Our findings further confirm both the fundraising potential of the emergency model of communication, and its longer-term collateral damage. We agree with the concerns raised in *Finding Frames* (Darnton and Kirk, 2011) about the persistence of 'charitable' frames for audience understanding, as well as the problematic knock-on effects of the 'cheque-book' transactional mentality which has generated increased revenue for NGOs in the last decade, but has kept the public at arm's

length. Concerned about the role of the latter in blocking deeper and sustainable connectedness, we recommend that NGOs remove their focus from individual emotions and reactions and redirect it towards establishing modes of connectedness that are more relational than transactional, both between public and distant sufferers and public and NGOs (e.g. '*Are you listening?*'[xiv]).

Alternative and more relational models already exist, for example with micro-finance initiatives like *KIVA* (Schwittay, 2015), the ambassadorial model discussed in Chapter3, and community-based activities like fundraising. These experiences could be studied more closely and built upon.

4. The crisis in the relationship of NGOs and their public. The data suggest that the humanitarian principle of helping distant others in need is *not* in crisis, but rather, that the relationship of NGOs with the public might be. Participants expressed deep disillusionment and disappointment derived from recognition of the *Marketer* model being applied to and employed within the realm of humanitarianism, and the pervasiveness of a transactional model in the humanitarian triangle. Extant research, particularly into the non-profit market sector, implicitly privileges and normalizes the role of NGOs as marketers. The primacy of this role, which is also recognized but is deeply resisted by the public, is in danger of reducing NGOs' relationship with the public to one between 'sellers and buyers', potentially blocking investigation into other important aspects of this complex relationship. This restrictive view may also mask the potentially corrosive impact the marketing model might have on public trust in the sector and consequent engagement with humanitarian issues, an effect which this study has clearly identified.

This is corroborated by the expressed salience for the public of NGOs' approachability, both to sufferers and supporters, and by further feedback from members of the public expressing worry about the unwelcome distancing effect of NGOs' bureaucratization, compared to the desired 'hands-on' and human touch approach.