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Bekkers, René; Wiepking, Pamala

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# Understanding Philanthropy

## A Review of 50 Years of Theories and Research

René Bekkers

*ICS/Department of Sociology, Utrecht University  
Department of Philanthropic Studies,  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

Pamala Wiepking

*Department of Philanthropic Studies,  
Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*

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### **Abstract**

We present an overview of theories and research on charitable giving in economics, sociology, social psychology, and marketing from the past 50 years (1955-2005). We identify seven mechanisms as the most important forces that drive giving. The seven principles of philanthropy are: (1) solicitation; (2) awareness of need; (3) costs; (4) reputation; (5) psychological benefits; (6) changing the world; (7) confidence. We discuss each of these mechanisms and show how they are related to the findings of survey and experimental studies on philanthropy, and how practitioners can use them.

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This is definitely work in progress and far from complete. The current version refers to about 265 research papers. We have identified about 350 more papers that still need to be covered. We welcome any comments, including suggestions on papers not mentioned yet. An updated version of this paper can be found at:

<http://www.fss.uu.nl/soc/homes/bekkers/understanding>

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## **Introduction**

An overwhelming body of knowledge is available on philanthropy in the social sciences. Research on philanthropy appears in journals of very different disciplines, including marketing, economics, social psychology, sociology, political science, anthropology, biology, and evolutionary psychology. Scholars as well as practitioners educated in these disciplines could benefit from a systematic survey of the mechanisms studied in the academic literature. We present an overview of research on determinants of giving from all disciplines from the past fifty years (1955-2005). Some 30 years ago, David Horton Smith wrote that ‘scholars concerned about voluntary action research should consciously seek out cross-disciplinary inputs’ (Smith, 1975). However, a strong tendency in the past 30 years towards specialization among scientists in different disciplines has created the undesirable situation that scholars usually know little about the insights gathered in other disciplines. In addition, few of the insights from the academic literature have found their way in handbooks on fundraising. For instance, Warwick’s (2001) guide to successful fundraising letters contains literally zero references to scientific research. This paper aims to guide scholars as well as practitioners in the third sector through the available knowledge on determinants of giving.

To our knowledge, our review of the literature on philanthropy is the first of its sort. Previous reviews in social psychology have dealt with helping behaviour in general (Batson, 1991; Piliavin and Charng, 1990; Schroeder, Penner, Dovidio and Piliavin, 1996; Schwarz, 1975). Helping behaviour is a very broad category of actions, ranging from assisting a stranger in an emergency (e.g., saving somebody from a fire, Latané and Darley, 1970) to donating a piece of one’s body to a relative (e.g., bone marrow donation; Schwarz and Howard, 1980). Charitable giving is also studied as an example of helping behaviour in the social psychological literature: The subject gained popularity in mainstream social psychology towards the end of the 1970s, and continued to be studied in applied social psychology in the 1980s. However, charitable giving is likely to be different from many other forms of helping behaviour. One crucial difference is that the recipient of charitable donations is usually absent from the context in which a donation is made, while the beneficiary is present in the helping situation investigated in most studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s.

This review differs from that by Piliavin and Charng (1990) in that we are not concerned primarily with the question to what extent prosocial behavior can be called altruistic. Our review also differs from that of the overview of economic theories of giving by Vesterlund (2006). Economists are increasingly trying to incorporate basic insights from sociology and social psychology into their models. However, many classical studies that provided these insights are unknown or not cited in present day economics. Our review may serve as a reference resource for classical intuitions. In addition, we present studies in disciplines like marketing, geography and biology that are not well known.

We hope that our review will not only be useful for an academic audience, but also for practitioners. We translate the knowledge gained in experimental studies and survey studies into practical advice for fundraisers. Experimental studies often shed light upon why some people are more likely to give and some give more generously than others. Fundraisers can take advantage of the insights gained in these studies because the position of the experimenter is similar to the position of the fundraiser. Within certain limits, fundraisers can change the situations in which people decide about giving to nonprofit organizations, like academics conducting experiments. For each of the mechanisms we identified, we present practical implications for the design of fundraising campaigns.

## **Who tells us what?**

This paper is based on an extensive literature search that we conducted using five types of sources. We searched (1) Google Scholar; (2) online full text collections of publishers (Wiley Interscience, Emerald Insight, SpringerLink; Sage Journals Online; Elsevier's Scirus); (3) academic databases (PsychInfo, Sociological Abstracts, PubMed, EconLit); (4) the authors' own literature databases; (5) the references cited in the articles we found. We used the following keywords: donations, philanthropy, charitable giving, charitable behavior, altruism, helping, prosocial behavior. We restricted our search to papers that contained empirical analyses of charitable giving by adult individuals or households. Theoretical papers, studies using children as participants, studies on charitable behaviour of organizations, and studies in languages other than English were disregarded. Our search yielded only a few publications in languages other than English. We found only a handful of studies published in Italian, Spanish, Polish, and Dutch. This is a definite source of bias; although it is unclear to what extent the bias is systematic. Unless otherwise noted, 'giving' refers to charitable donations as reported in questionnaires or observed in experiments.

To bring order in the enormous amount of studies that give insight into determinants of philanthropy, we distinguish two types of knowledge on giving. The first type of knowledge is knowledge on 'who gives what': what are the characteristics of individuals and households that engage in philanthropy, and which characteristics are related to the amount of money donated? The second type of knowledge is knowledge on 'why people give'. For what reasons do people engage in philanthropy? Which types of cues, situations and circumstances motivate people to give? The distinction between these two types of knowledge is based on a methodological argument. Studies using cross-sectional data are categorized as 'Type 1'-knowledge, because strictly speaking they do not allow for causal inferences. Studies using experimental data are categorized as 'Type 2'-knowledge because they do allow for causal inferences. We will discuss some cross-sectional studies under 'Type 2'-knowledge because they also try to shed light on possible reasons why specific groups give more or less. Using more advanced statistical models, even cross-sectional data can be used to test hypotheses on causes of philanthropy. Conversely, papers that provide 'Type 2'-knowledge may also shed light on what kind of groups give more or less.

## **Type 1 Knowledge: Who gives what?**

Studies in sociology and economics that rely on archival data and survey questionnaires have provided detailed knowledge on who gives what. We present preliminary results of a systematic and comprehensive review of this literature. Knowledge on who gives what is useful for fundraising professionals and policy makers. Fundraisers can use this type of knowledge to identify the profile of their donors, in order to target their fundraising campaigns at those who are most likely to give and will be most generous. Fundraisers and policy makers can also use this type of knowledge to understand trends and predict future changes in the size and nature of philanthropy.

### *Religion*

There is a rich literature in the sociology of religion on the relationship between religious involvement and giving (e.g., Wuthnow, 1991; Jackson, Bachmeier, Wood and Craft, 1995). Also outside this specific academic field the role of religion is often studied (e.g., Hodgkinson and Wuthnow, 1996). Positive relations of frequency of church attendance with philanthropy appear in almost any article in which this relation was studied, except in Eckel & Grossman (2004), Anderson, Mellor and Milyo (2005), Bekkers (2006a) and Bekkers (2006c). These studies are all (quasi-) experiments, in which the participants had an opportunity to donate in a non-religious context. The fact that no relationship between giving and church attendance was found in these studies may indicate that either the religious context is crucial, or that the likelihood being asked is the reason for heightened generosity of the religious, or both. Bekkers and Schuyt (2005) find that both explanations are true to some extent.

Church attendance is a choice that may also depend on the willingness to contribute to charities. Adequate models of the effect of church attendance on giving should control for this self-selection. At the aggregate level, there appears to be a negative effect of active involvement on monetary donations (Gruber, 2004). However, Heller Clain and Zech (1999) find no such trade off between individual attendance and religious or secular giving. Bekkers (2006c) found that empathy and verbal proficiency affects giving partly through church attendance.

With respect to religious denomination, Protestants are often found to give more than Catholics in the US, Canada, and the Netherlands (Chaves, 2002; Reed & Selbee, 2001; Hoge, 1994; Forbes and Zampelli, 1997; Bekkers and Schuyt, 2005).

### *Education*

Positive relations of philanthropy with the level of education are found in most empirical studies including education (see for example Bekkers, 2004; Brown, 2001; 2005; Brown and Ferris, 2004). Two exceptions are the study by Regnerus, Smith, Sikkink (1998) who found that education did not correlate with the likelihood of donating to the poor and Wu, Huang and Kao (2004) on the likelihood of giving in Taiwan (the amount donated was positively related to education).

While giving increases with education, graduates in specific fields of education may be more generous than others. Bekkers and De Graaf (2006) find that graduates in social work and the social sciences, in agriculture and security are more generous, controlling for a large number of variables. The finding on social sciences is in line with Hillygus' (2005) finding that graduates in the social sciences are more likely to volunteer than other graduates and results of a study of alumni giving to a small liberal arts college, reported by Wunnava and Lauze (2001), who find that majors in social sciences give more.

University students and professors in economics are often found to be more self-interested than students in other social sciences (Frank, Gilovich and Regan, 1993, 1996;

Frank and Schulze, 2000). However, some studies do not find such differences (Yezer, Goldfarb and Poppen, 1995). Bekkers and De Graaf (2006) find that economics graduates do not differ from other graduates in their donations to charities. Blumenfeld and Sartain (1974) even find that business school students and economics graduates are even more likely to donate to their alma mater than other students. In a study among young graduates of a selective group of private universities in the USA, Monks (2003) finds that graduates with an MBA or law degree gave more to their alma mater than those without an advanced degree, controlling for income. Monks also found that graduates with a major in fine arts or nursing give significantly less, while history majors give significantly more than humanities majors. Graduates with other majors (including business and management and social sciences) did not differ from humanities majors. In a study of giving to social funds of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, Frey and Meier (2004) find lower giving among current students in economics, computer science, theology, law and natural science.

### *Income*

Obviously, higher income households donate higher amounts than lower income households. In the USA, the effect of income appears to be stronger than in the UK and in the Netherlands. Steinberg (1990) reviewed the literature and found that the income elasticity of philanthropy in the USA ranges between 0.60 and 0.80. Using a more advanced specification, Auten, Sieg and Clotfelter (2002) find persistent income effects between 0.40 and 0.87, and transitory income effects between 0.29 and 0.45. Banks and Tanner (1999) find an income elasticity of .37 for the UK; Bekkers (2004) finds an elasticity of .19 for the Netherlands. Brooks (2002) finds that the level of income received from welfare has a negative effect on the level of charitable giving.

However, an increase in discretionary income does not necessarily increase the proportion of income donated (McClelland and Brooks, 2004; Schervish and Havens, 1995; Wiepking, 2005). Some studies found a U-shaped curve, such that giving as a share of income was highest among the poor and the very rich (Schervish and Havens, 1995; Hodgkinson and Weitzman, 1996). However, other studies show that there is a linear downward trend for proportion of income donated for the US, the UK and the Netherlands (McClelland and Brooks, 2004; Breeze, 2004; Wiepking, 2005).

### *Age*

The typical finding on the relationship of age with philanthropy in the literature is that it is positive, but at a decreasing rate (e.g., Clotfelter, 1980; Putnam, 2000). Andreoni (2001) and Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1996) find a positive effect of until age 75, after which a decrease is observed. Landry, Lange, Price and Rupp (2006), Midlarsky and Hannah (1989) and Wu, Huang and Kao (2004) find a decrease from the age of 65. In contrast to these results, Randolph (1995) and Auten and Joulfaian (1996) find that giving increases with age, at an increasing rate for those over 40. Rooney, Steinberg, and Schervish (2001) do not find a significant effect of age on charitable giving.

### *Family situation*

Marriage is mostly found to increase donations (see for example Jencks, 1987; Rooney, Steinberg, and Schervish, 2001; Chang, 2005; Randolph, 1995; Van Slyke and Brooks, 2005). No effect of marital status is found in Clotfelter (1980), Brooks (2002), Schiff (1990) and Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1996). The latter also find that there are no differences between married, divorced, widowed, and single people in the percentage of income donated. Duncan (1999) and Monks (2003) find a negative effect of marriage on charitable giving.

The number of children in a household is positively related to philanthropy in Jencks (1987) and Carroll, McCarthy and Newman (2006). Wiepking (2006) finds that there is a positive effect of having children on making donations to organizations that support children. In Taiwan, the number of household members over 15 has a negative effect on charitable giving (Chang, 2005). Smith, Kehoe and Cremer (1995) find the same negative effect for the number of household members 18 years and older in the US.

Relations of divorce and widowhood with philanthropy have rarely been studied thus far. Bryant et al. (2003) find no effect of being divorced or bewidowed compared to being married on the probability of giving.

#### *Work*

The employed donate more than the unemployed (Chang, 2005). Brooks (2004) find that the nonworking poor give less to charities, controlling for income. This result contrasts with that of Hodgkinson and Weitzman (1996), who found that unemployed people donate a larger percentage of their income than employed people. This result can be explained by the relatively large donations of those who are retired. The self-employed are found to be less generous in Carroll, McCarthy and Newman (2006).

Veterans give more, says John Havens.

#### *Place of residence*

Town size is negatively related to giving in Putnam (2000), Bekkers (2006d), Wu, Huang and Kao (2004), and Reed and Selbee (2002). The negative effect of town size seems to be limited to the likelihood of giving (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2006). The background of this effect may be an enhanced perceived risk of crime in urban areas (House and Wolf, 1978) or a higher level of community stability in rural areas, which promotes giving (Schiff, 1990). However, this result stands in contrast to findings of Regnerus, Smith, and Sikking (1998) who find that people living in larger communities more often donate towards the poor. Also, Duncan (1999) finds a negative effect of living in small cities or on a farm on charitable giving. Bryant et al. (2003) find that people living in a city have a higher probability of donating when they are solicited for a donation, but a lower probability when they did not receive a request. No relationship (Amato, 1993; Korte, Ypma and Toppen, 1975), or even the reverse may be found for interpersonal helping behaviour (Weiner, 1976; Bekkers et al. 2005).

#### *Home ownership*

The few studies that have looked at home ownership have found this variable to be strongly correlated with giving (Bekkers and Wiepking, 2006; Carroll, McCarthy and Newman, 2006, Todd and Lawson, 1999).

#### *Gender*

Some studies find that males give more, while females are more likely to give (Bekkers, 2004; CAF/NCVO, 2005; Jackson & Latané, 1981; Weyant, 1984; Andreoni, Brown, and Rischall, 2003). A recent experiment suggests that males are more likely to donate when solicited by attractive females (Landry et al., 2006). However, other studies have failed to find such effects (Weyant, 1984). Most studies, however, do not find gender differences in giving (e.g., Monks, 2003; Frey and Meier, 2004; Jencks, 1987).

#### *Ethnicity*

A common finding in the literature is that Caucasians are more likely to give than people of other races (Bielefeld, Rooney and Steinberg, 2005; Fairfax, 1995; Jencks, 1987;

Van Slyke and Brooks, 2005). However, Brooks (2005) finds that both Caucasians and African Americans are larger religious donors than other ethnic groups.

Rooney, Mesch, Chin and Steinberg (2004) found that part of the gap between Caucasians and people of other races is due to method-effects. Caucasians appear to be more likely to understand what counts as giving in brief measures of philanthropy.

#### *Immigration and citizenship status*

Osili and Du (2005) found that immigrants in the United States are less likely to give to charitable organizations and also give less, but that these differences are due to differences in racial background, lower levels of income, and education. Wong, Lien and Conway (2005) find that immigrants (especially foreign-born non US citizens) are less likely to donate money to political parties than US born citizens. Osili and Du (2005) find that the gap between immigrants and native citizens closes as time spent in the US increases. They also find that immigrants spend more on informal donations to family members – often in their country of origin (remittances) – than native Americans.

#### *Parental background*

While relatively few studies have looked at the influence of parental background on giving, it is likely that parental background affects giving by their children. Giving is a form of prosocial behavior that is encouraged by parents. Wilhelm et al. (2005) find that concurrent giving by parents and children are significantly correlated. Higher levels of parental education, parental religious involvement, and parental volunteering in the past promote giving by children (Bekkers, 2005b).

#### *Youth participation*

A report by the Independent Sector (2000) reveals that individuals who were active in voluntary associations in their youth are more generous as adults. Bekkers (2005b) finds that this bivariate association holds when numerous controls are included. The study also reveals that youth participation is one of the channels through which parental background affects giving by children. Children of higher educated parents, children of parents who are more strongly involved in religion and children of parents who volunteered themselves when their children were young are more generous as adults because these children are more likely to be engaged in voluntary associations in their youth. Youth participation strengthens the social bonds of children in the community, and makes them accessible for nonprofit organizations.

#### *Volunteering*

In a simple bivariate analysis, volunteers donate more to charitable causes than non-volunteers (Putnam, 2000; Independent Sector, 2000; Reed and Selbee, 2001), but these differences vanish in multiple regression analyses controlling for joint determinants of giving and volunteering (Bekkers, 2002). Schiff (1990) finds negative cross-price elasticities for giving time and money, meaning that an increase in the price of giving leads to a decrease in volunteering.

#### *Personality*

Donations to charitable causes are related to individual differences in personality characteristics (Bekkers, 2006c). In terms of the Five Factor Model of personality (the ‘Big Five’), donations increase with emotional stability, and extraversion. Mood effects (see below) may be one reason why neurotic persons are less generous than emotionally stable persons. Another reason may be that neurotic persons are less trusting of others. Extraverted persons may be more likely to give because they are more likely to be asked for donations



(Bekkers, 2004). Other personality characteristics that are related to philanthropy are empathy (Bekkers, 2006c), and trust (Bekkers, 2003; Uslaner, 2002).

*Limits of Type 1 Knowledge*

Knowledge on who gives what is of limited value to scholars who want to test theories on philanthropy and to fundraisers who wonder how they should design fundraising campaigns. The problem is that knowledge on who gives what is descriptive in nature. It reveals relations between philanthropy and all kinds of characteristics of households and individuals, but it is difficult to show why these relations exist. There may be numerous reasons why characteristics like education or religion are related to philanthropy. Without further information on respondents and advanced statistical methods, it is rarely clear why the observed relations exist.

## **Type 2: Why do people give?**

Experiments in behavioural economics, social psychological and marketing studies have shown how situations can be created that encourage giving. The situations in these experiments are created by researchers, which allows for causal inferences about determinants of giving. From these experiments, we can draw conclusions about why people give. We reviewed this literature and identify seven mechanisms as the most important factors that drive giving. They are: (1) solicitation; (2) awareness of need; (3) costs; (4) reputation; (5) psychological benefits; (6) changing the world; (7) confidence.

We discuss each of these mechanisms and show how they are related to the findings of survey and experimental studies on philanthropy. The order in which the seven mechanisms are presented below corresponds to the chronological order in which they affect giving in the typical act of donation. In doing so, we follow previous reviews of social psychological studies on helping and altruism (Schroeder et al., 1996; Schwarz, 1975), in which helping others has also been conceptualized as a series of consecutive decisions.

### **1. Solicitation**

A first prerequisite for giving is to be asked. Only a small minority of all donation acts occurs without prior solicitation: almost all donations are made in response to some form of solicitation (Bekkers, 2005; Bryant, et al., 2003). Actively soliciting contributions rather than passively presenting an opportunity to give increases the likelihood that people donate (Lindskold et al., 1977). The implication is that the more opportunities to give people encounter, the more likely they are to give. On the other hand, responding to solicitations for contributions also attracts more solicitations: ‘Once on the list of usual suspects, I’m likely to stay there’ (Putnam, 2000). Due to increasing numbers of solicitations for charitable contributions, the standard response is to reject an appeal (Diamond and Noble, 2001). As a result, it is not surprising that small modifications of direct mail appeals do not easily affect giving (Katzev, 1995). Even in single encounters that are unlikely to result in a long term involvement with a charity, people try to avoid being solicited for contributions (Pancer et al., 1979).

Increasing the amount requested may increase the amount donated if the amount requested is not perceived as excessive (Doob and McLaughlin, 1989). However, asking for a ‘generous contribution’ rather than a specific amount decreases the likelihood that a gift will be made in door-to-door solicitations (Weyant and Smith, 1978).

### **2. Awareness of Need**

When people become aware of another person in need, they are more likely to help. The effects of need have been documented in field experiments from the mid 1960s onwards, most prominently by Leonard Berkowitz, Shalom Schwartz and colleagues (Berkowitz & Daniels, 1964; Berkowitz, 1968; Schwartz, 1970, 1975). It should be noted that in these experiments a variety of helping behaviors were studied, including practical assistance, blood donation, organ donation, as well as donating money. Generally speaking, the degree of need for help is positively related to the likelihood that help will be given (Cheung and Chan, 2000; 1976; Diamond and Kashyap, 1997; Komter, 1996; Levitt and Kornhaber, 1977; Schwartz, 1970, 1974; Staub and Baer, 1974; Wagner & Wheeler, 1969). Survey studies reveal that awareness of need is increased when people know potential beneficiaries of a charitable organization. For instance, people who have relatives suffering from a specific illness are more likely to give to charities fighting those illnesses (Wiepking, 2006; Burgoyne, Young and Walker, 2005).

However, the effect of need is often diminished by other factors. Berkowitz (1968) found that need produces helping only when the beneficiary is dependent on help from the

donor. In addition, social class differences were found. Working class boys tended to react to need only when they had received help earlier, especially from the same person. Middle class boys were not affected by help received. Thus, when victims are dependent upon potential helpers and these helpers adhere to a moral principle of care, need produces helping.

Other moderators of the effect of need are whether beneficiaries are perceived as deserving (Miller, 1977). When victims are perceived as causes of their own misfortune, potential donors may deny their responsibility for relieving the needs of the victim (Furnham, 1995). Refusals to give to the homeless are often explained in these terms (Radley and Kennedy, 1990), as are refusals to give to poverty relief in developing countries (Taormina, Messick, Iwawaki and Wilke, 1988; Bennett and Kottasz, 2000). Denial of responsibility is also likely to occur when the fate of victims is perceived as beyond people's control (Lerner and Simmons, 1966). Awareness of need is not associated with giving when potential donors attribute responsibility to government (Radley and Kennedy, 1990).

It should be noted that denial of responsibility is sometimes a consequence of not helping, rather than a cause. Studies have found that people are very creative in finding post hoc excuses for not giving (Farsides, 2005). Ascription of responsibility is also a dispositional variable that determines people's motivation to engage in helping behaviour (Schwartz, 1974; Furnham, 1995). Finally, when a larger need implies a higher cost, it does not increase helping behaviour (Piliavin and Piliavin, 1972).

Econometric studies suggest that donors weigh the needs of distant others against the future needs of their own children. Parents give more to charities when their children are economically better off (Auten and Joulfaian, 1996; Joulfaian, 2004). They reduce giving to charities and increase bequests when their children's income is lower.

The display of need may backfire when the need is perceived as impossible to solve (Warren and Walker, 1991) or when the display of need depresses the potential helper (Isen & Noonberg, 1979). In face-to-face solicitations, a picture to illustrate need may make no difference at all (Thornton, Kirchner, and Jacobs, 1991). Finally, West and Brown (1975) found that severity of need did result in more giving when the victim was more attractive.

The result of these moderating factors is that the overall effect of need on giving is small. As Milofsky and Blades (1991) point out, the largest health charities in the US include organizations for rare diseases like muscular dystrophy (affecting only 6 children in 100,000) and cystic fibrosis (affecting 20 in 100,000). A study on international relief giving (Ribar & Wilhelm, 2003) also reaches the conclusion that altruistic concern for the needs of recipients is only a minor force in philanthropy. Need also interacts with efficacy and altruism, as will be shown below when we discuss efficacy.

### **3. (a) Costs**

Engaging in philanthropy requires effort. Obviously, giving money costs money. When the costs of a donation are lowered, for instance through tax deductions, or a matching scheme, giving increases. Economists have studied the empirical effects of changes in the price of giving on philanthropy in many papers since the 1970s. Estimates of the price effect vary widely between studies, depending on the scope of the sample and the statistical methods used (Peloza and Steel 2005). A recent study using advanced models reached the conclusion that changes in the tax deduction for charitable contributions have a large, persistent price effect between -0.79 and -1.26 and a smaller transitory price effect between -0.40 and -0.61 (Auten, Sieg, Clotfelter 2002). Tax benefits appear to be the most important motive for payroll giving in the UK (Romney-Alexander, 2002).

Between countries there are significant differences in the price of giving. Wong, Chua and Vassoo (1998) find much stronger price effects for donations in Singapore (varying from -2.0 to -5.5); Wu, Huang and Kao (2004) find price effects ranging from -2.2 to -3.3 in

Taiwan. In addition, there are also large differences in the extent that people choose to itemize their gifts. For example, in the Netherlands, religious groups use tax deductions extensively (Wiepking, 2005). But those religiously affiliated in Canada itemize rarely (Kitchen, 1992).

Matching schemes increase giving (Bekkers, 2005; Eckel and Grossman, 2003; but see Fraser and Hite, 1989 for a negative finding and Davis, Millner and Reilly (2005) for a methodological explanation) and price reductions also increase giving (Andreoni and Miller, 2002; Karlan & List, 2005; Bekkers, 2005c). It makes a difference how price reductions are framed: when price reductions are presented as rebates ('when you give €1, you pay only €0.50') they are less effective than when presented as matches ('when you give €1, we'll add another €1'; Eckel and Grossman, 2003; Bekkers, 2005).

Philanthropy may also require other resources, such as health, cognitive ability and communicative skills. Knowing about the work of nonprofit organizations, understanding fundraising appeals and the complexity of social problems addressed by charities may be facilitated by cognitive ability. Persons with higher scores on a vocabulary test donate more (Bekkers, 2006c; Bekkers and De Graaf, 2006). Awareness of need and confidence may mediate these effects (Bekkers, 2006c). People in better health donate more (Bekkers and De Graaf, 2006).

### **3. (b) ...and benefits**

Occasionally, donations to charitable organizations buy services. For instance, when donors to universities, museums or symphony orchestras get access to exclusive dinners, meetings or special concerts. These donations may be characterized as exchange, when they are rooted in part in consumption motives. Offering access to exclusive services in exchange for contributions brings giving closer to buying. Such fringe benefits increase contributions (Buraschi and Cornelli, 2003)<sup>1</sup>. When these fringe benefits are matched to selected categories of gifts, giving is pushed up even more (Harbough, 1998). Lotteries constitute another type of material benefits for donations, which increase the number of donors (but not the amount donated per donor) in fundraising campaigns (Landry, Lange, List, Price and Rupp, 2006). Offering material benefits may also provide donors with an excuse for a donation in cases where they are withheld by a norm of self-interest (Miller, 1999).

There is a danger in offering material benefits for charitable contributions. When people receive material benefits for helpfulness, they tend to undermine self-attributions of helpfulness (Zuckerman, Lazzaro and Waldgeir, 1979), which reduces the effect of prosocial self-attributions on future helpfulness. Fringe benefits change the decision into an exchange (do I get value for money?).

In many cases, charitable donations do not provide immediate material benefits to oneself, but do provide benefits to a group of which the individual is a member. Examples are donations to the local hospital and one's church. Individuals may perceive their donations to these groups as fair contributions to maintain services that they may use at some later point in time. For instance, donors may perceive donations to medical research as a means of relieving their own future health needs (Burgoyne, Young and Walker, 2005).

### **4. Reputation**

Reputation refers to one's social standing. Giving is viewed as a positive thing to do (CAF/NCVO, 2005), especially when giving reduces inequality (Brickman and Bryan, 1975). Thus, people who give to charitable causes are held in high regard by their peers. They receive recognition and approval from others. Conversely, not giving damages ones

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<sup>1</sup> Benefits of donations may also accrue to close others, bystanders or have a social character (e.g., approval from others). Such benefits will be discussed below under reputation. In these cases, it is more difficult to argue that giving is a form of exchange.

reputation. This is especially true when donations are announced in public or when they are directly observable (Barclay, 2004; Hoffman, McCabe & Smith, 1996; Long, 1976; Satow, 1975). When giving can be observed by others, people are more likely to donate as a result of social pressure. Thus, the presence of another person who may approve of giving increases the likelihood of a donation (Harris, Benson, and Hall, 1975). Also, when people know they will have discussions with others about contributions (Swingle and Santi, 1972) or discuss contributions to collective goods with others before actually deciding on contributions they contribute more (Dawes, McTavish, and Shaklee, 1977).

Social pressure has a more pronounced effect when giving can be observed by third parties with whom the potential donor has a stronger social bond (a 'strong tie'). When a complete stranger can observe giving, there is less social pressure than when a friend or family member is present. Social pressure is especially strong when a strong tie makes a request for a donation. Solicitations by persons at a closer social distance are more likely to be honoured (Bekkers, 2004). Schevish and Havens (1997) find that people who are asked to give by a relative or a friend donate a larger percentage of their income. Booth, Higgins and Cornelius find that per capita United Way contributions are higher in communities with stable populations and higher voter turnout. Not giving in social contexts where peers value giving and are important in daily life would not only endanger one's reputation, but also the relationship with these peers.

The effect of approval on giving increases with the value of that approval. One factor that increases the value of approval is the perceived desirability of giving among one's peers. Religious persons are expected to be more generous than the non-religious. A failure to give has a more negative effect on the reputation of religious persons than on that of non-religious persons (Bailey and Young, 1986). Another variable that increases the value of approval is the social status of the solicitor. When people are solicited for a donation by a person of higher social status, they are more likely to give (Pandey, 1979; Vriens, Van der Scheer, Hoekstra and Bult, 1998).

Another reason beyond approval why giving increases in public conditions is that third parties confer personal benefits on those who give to others (Hardy and Van Vugt, 2006; Milinski, Semmann and Krambeck (2002).

Another factor that enhances social pressure is social status. When the potential donor has a higher social status, the norm to give is especially strong. The expression 'noblesse oblige' represents this observation. The elite is given a special obligation to look after those lower on the status rank of society. Not giving would endanger one's elite position (Odendahl, 1990; Ostrower, 1997).

Publicly observable donations may not only yield a benefit in terms of recognition or a positive reputation, but also in a material form (Wedekind & Braithwaite, 2002). The reason is that generous individuals are more attractive interaction partners.

Glazer and Konrad (1996) have modelled the reputation mechanism in a mathematical form. They call their model a signalling explanation for charity. By giving, people signal to others that they are concerned about others (prosocial type); and that they have wealth (ability to give; conspicuous consumption; Frank, 1996). The prestige motive (Harbaugh, 1998).

Some individuals may be more sensitive to social approval for helping, and react more strongly to the observability of a donation (Satow, 1975). Such individuals are likely to have an altruistic self-image, which will be discussed below (mechanism 6).

Reputation may overpower other factors; when asked for a contribution to a charitable cause by one's spouse, the amount requested does not matter (Bekkers, 2004). Spouses also draw each other into volunteering (Rotolo & Wilson, 2006).

The effect of reputation in face-to-face solicitations, even by unknown solicitors, is so strong that it takes away the effect of a picture of beneficiaries that does increase donations in a direct-mail campaign (Thornton, Kirchner and Jacobs, 1991).

Observing (Lincoln, 1977) or learning (Reingen, 1982) that other people donated as well increases donations. People adapt their giving to what others in their environment are giving (Carman, 2003; Wu, Huang and Kao, 2004). A study on helping behaviour found such peer effects to be enhanced by attitudinal similarity (Smith, Smythe, and Lien, 1972). In a study on social influences in workplace giving, Carman (2003) finds that charitable giving is especially influenced by behaviour of co-workers in the same salary quartile. One interpretation of this effect involves reputation. People do not want to stand out as a person who failed to give among their co-workers. A different interpretation of this effect involves confidence (see below).

## **5. Psychological benefits**

Giving not only yields social benefits, but also psychological benefits. Giving may contribute to one's self-image as an altruistic, empathic, socially responsible, agreeable, or influential person. In addition, giving may also produce a positive mood, alleviate guilt, reduce aversive arousal, satisfy a desire to show gratitude (Schervish), or be a morally just person.

### *Self-image*

When giving entails positive psychological benefits, people are said to have positive personal norms (Schwartz, 1970). Personal norms strengthen the effect of social norms. When the social norm is to give, those who feel bad about themselves for violating the norm are more likely to give. Not giving would entail feelings of guilt, shame, or dissonance with one's self-image. Assisting others may also be an effective way of repairing one's self-image after one has harmed another (Carlsmith and Gross, 1969; Konečki, 1972; Regan, Williams, and Sparling, 1972). Thus, people entering a church during confession hours are more likely to donate money than people leaving church after confession, when their guilt had been reduced (Harris, Benson, and Hall, 1975).

Survey studies have also provided evidence of a link between an altruistic self-image and philanthropy. Many studies find that dispositional empathy (measured with items like "I am a soft-hearted person") is positively related to charitable giving (Bekkers, 2006c; Bekkers and Wilhelm, 2006; Davis, 1983). However, giving is not only the result of an altruistic self-image, but also reinforces such an image. Piliavin and Callero (1991) found that blood donors develop an altruistic self-identity as a result of continued blood donation. It is likely that such a reciprocal relationship between giving and altruistic self-image also exists for traditional philanthropy.

The self-image mechanism can be used by charities in fundraising campaigns. Experimental field studies with adults have found that labelling potential helpers as 'helpers' promotes helping behaviour. Kraut (1973) found that if a canvasser labelled donors to one charity as "charitable" but did not make such a comment to other donors, a consecutive fundraising campaign was more successful among those who had been labelled. Swinyard and Ray (1979) also found a positive labelling effect. A self-image of being helpful can also be created by the 'foot-in-the-door technique' that will be discussed below. The technique includes making a small request before a larger request is made. Compliance with the first request makes people feel helpful, which creates a pressure to comply with the second, larger request (Freedman and Fraser, 1966; Rittle, 1981).

The promise elicitation technique (Cialdini, 2001, p.62) is another method to take advantage of the desire of people to behave in a manner consistent with their self-image.

People tend to overestimate their generosity in hypothetical (Bekkers, 2006a) and real life situations (Komter 1996). When they are first asked their intentions to give, they are more likely to give in real life because people want to live up to their self-image. Sherman (1980) found that asking for intentions to volunteer increased actual volunteering.

Kerr et al. (1997) found that commitment to a promise made to unknown others motivated contributions in an experimental game situation. Not contributing would create cognitive dissonance, feelings of guilt.

While the majority of studies on self-image have focused on altruism or helpfulness, other types of self-images may promote giving as well. For instance, giving enhances one's self esteem (Ickes, Kidd and Berkowitz, 1976).

### *Mood*

People's moods are also related to giving, but in a complicated way. Positive moods facilitate giving, but negative moods may also facilitate giving in specific circumstances. The positive mood effect was discovered in experiments on helping behaviour. Isen & Levin (1972) showed that unexpectedly receiving cookies from a stranger or finding change in a phone booth increased the willingness to help another person. In a study on philanthropy, a picture of a needy, handicapped child was found to depress giving in a door-to-door fundraising campaign presumably because it depressed the mood of potential donors (Isen & Noonberg, 1979). Fried and Berkowitz (1979) showed that soothing music (Mendelssohn) can be used to induce a positive mood that facilitates helping. The advice to fundraisers is to test fundraising materials for their mood effects, and to avoid the use of materials that bring about a negative mood. Simply telling prospective donors that donating will bring them in a good mood increases giving, especially when victims are depicted as innocent (Benson and Catt, 1978). Donors also self-report 'feeling good' as a motive for donating to charitable causes (57% of a sample of Dutch citizens in Wunderink, 2000).

Negative moods can also encourage giving, but only in specific circumstances. Weyant (1978) found that negative moods did not decrease helping when doing so was relatively easy and still yielded benefits for a charity. Cunningham et al. (1980) show that people in a good mood respond better to rewards associated with giving (a warm-glow feeling, or a present), and that people in a bad mood are more responsive towards avoiding punishments that come with not giving (for example the phrase: "Image how you would feel not helping").

## **6. World View**

In the eyes of donors, the works of nonprofit organizations may make the world a better place. People who have altruistic values (Bekkers and Schuyt, 2005), who have prosocial values (Van Lange et al., 1997), who endorse postmaterialistic goals (Inglehart, 1997), who endorse a principle of care (Bekkers and Wilhelm, 2006), or who feel socially responsible for society as a whole (Schuyt, Smit and Bekkers, 2004) are more likely to give because they are motivated to make the world a better place.

Philanthropy is a means to reach a desired state of affairs that is closer to one's view of the 'ideal' world. What that ideal world looks like depends on one's value system. Through giving, donors may wish to make the distribution of wealth and health more equal; they may wish to reduce poverty, empower women, safeguard human rights, to protect animals, wildlife, or the ozone layer. Donors may also have objectives that are partisan or even terrorist. Supporting a cause that changes the world in a desired direction is a key motive for giving that has received very little attention in the literature. The desire for social justice is most often studied in relation to philanthropy (Furnham, 1995; Todd and Lawson, 1999). As a result, values also determine what kind of organizations people donate to. Bennett (2003)

studied the relationship between personal values and the choice of charitable organizations and found that a similarity between personal values and organizational values increases the probability that a donation to that particular organization is made.

Branding of charities: people pick charities that match their own personality.

## **7. Efficacy**

Efficacy refers to the perception of donors that their contribution makes a difference to the cause they are supporting. When people perceive that their contribution does not make a difference, they are less likely to give (Arumi et al., 2005; Diamond and Kashyap, 1997; Radley and Kennedy, 1990). Experiments in social psychology have found that contributions to public goods increase with the perceived efficacy of contributions (Sweeney, 1973). People generally overestimate the effectiveness of their own contributions (Kerr, 1989). Buraschi and Cornelli (2003) found that this holds especially for low-income donors. There appear to be individual differences in the tendency to view contributing to public goods in a rational manner. People who do so follow the free rider-reasoning (Olson, 1965): an additional dollar does not solve the problem; not giving does not make things worse. A more coldly rational approach to life reduces giving (Todd and Lawson, 1999; Bekkers, 2006c).

Perceptions of efficacy are related to charitable confidence and perceptions of overhead and fundraising costs. Donors who have more confidence in charitable organizations think their contributions are less likely to be spent on fundraising costs and overhead (Bekkers, 2006b). Such beliefs about the efficacy of charitable organizations are likely to promote giving (Parsons, 2003).

When donors receive and process information about the effectiveness of contributions, they are more likely to give and give more (Jackson and Mathews, 1995; Parsons, 2003). However, Berman and Davidson (2003) found no effect of the accountability of charitable organizations on the level of donations received by these organizations.

Perceived efficacy is a likely explanation for the effects of leadership donations and seed money that have been studied extensively by economists (Andreoni, 2006; Andreoni and Petrie (2004); Bac and Bag, (2003); Landry, Lange, List, Price and Rupp, 2006; List and Lucking-Reiley (2002); List and Rondeau (2003); Potters, Sefton and Vesterlund, 2005). When people see that others give to a charity, they can take this as a signal that others have confidence in the organization. The leadership effect was described earlier by social psychologists as a 'modeling effect' (Bryan and Test, 1967; Lincoln, 1977; Reingen, 1982). Lincoln (1977) found that observing another person make a donation increased subsequent donations, especially if the model was a male. Jiobu and Knowles (1974) however, found no modelling effect. A matching offer by a third party (e.g., one's employer) can also have a legitimizing effect: people will think that the third party had enough confidence in the organization to offer the matching contribution. Endorsement of a charity by a high status person is also likely to generate higher donations through a legitimisation effect. One field experiment with a health charity (Vriens, Van der Scheer, Hoekstra and Bult, 1998) found that a signature by a professor in health care research raised donations with 2.4%.

Donors have an aversion against expensive fundraising methods (Arumi et al., 2005) and react less positively to 'flashy' fundraising materials (Bekkers and Crutzen, 2007). Low perceived efficacy decreases giving more strongly among altruistically motivated donors (Bekkers, 2006b).

## **Other mechanisms**

The literature offers a multitude of other mechanisms that affect helping behaviour and may also affect giving. Most of these mechanisms can be explained in terms of the mechanisms that we discussed above.



### *The Foot-in-the-door Effect*

The Foot-in-the-door effect refers to the observation that “once an individual has complied with a small request for help, that individual will be more likely to comply with a larger request in the future” (Freedman and Fraser, 1966). Many studies have documented this effect (DeJong, 1981; Guégen and Fisher-Lokou, 1999; Pliner, Hart, Kohl, and Saari, 1974; Rittle, 1981; Seligman, Bush and Kirsch; 1976; Williams and Williams, 1989). It is believed that the initial small request creates or activates a self-image of helpfulness, which creates pressure to behave in a helpful manner on a subsequent occasion (see, however, Kilbourne and Kilbourne (1984) for an alternative explanation). The effect of an initial request is reduced when pay is offered in return for compliance with the initial request (Zuckerman, Lazzaro, and Waldgeir, 1979). When the first request is too small to activate a helpful self-image, it does not increase compliance with the second request (Seligman, Bush and Kirsch, 1976).

### *The Door-in-the-face Effect*

The Door-in-the-face effect refers to the observation that people are more likely to comply with a request after they received a more sizeable request that they find unacceptable. Compared to the first, excessive request, the second appears as a small concession (Cialdini, Vincent, Lewis, Catalan, Wheeler, and Darby, 1975; Abrahams and Bell, 1994). In one study, visitors to a museum were asked to donate \$1 ‘to cover reduced funding’. In a control group, 73% did so; in an experimental group that first received a request to donate \$5, 87% did so. Fundraisers who want to use this technique should be aware that the first request should be perceived as legitimate. If not, a boomerang effect may occur (Schwarzwald, Rax and Zvibet, 1979). The Door-in-the-face effect can be enhanced by having a person make the request whose approval the potential donor finds more important (Williams and Williams, 1989).

### *The Low Ball Technique*

The low ball technique refers to the practice of increasing the request after people have expressed willingness to comply (Brownstein and Katzev, 1985). For instance, people are first asked to donate a small amount, and after they have agreed to do so, a larger amount is requested. The low ball technique is different from the foot-in-the-door technique because the larger request in the low ball technique is made on the same occasion as the initial request. The foot-in-the-door technique is used on two separate, seemingly unrelated, occasions.

### *The Foot-in-the-mouth Effect*

The foot-in-the-mouth effect refers to the observation that people are more likely to comply with a request after they have answered the question how they feel. The question may bring about a pressure to behave in a manner consistent with the answer (‘I’m fine, thank you’), or the question may create relational obligations (Howard, 1990).

### *The ‘Even a penny helps’ Technique*

Many people have developed cognitive strategies to reject responsibility for the welfare of others. One such strategy is the argument that one ‘cannot afford a donation’. Legitimizing paltry contributions by adding the phrase ‘Even a penny helps’ in a solicitation for contributions may neutralize these strategies (Brockner et al., 1984; Cialdini and Schroeder, 1976; Reingen, 1978). When even a penny helps, one easily appears to be an unhelpful person if one does not donate, which makes it difficult to say no.

Limitations to the legitimization of paltry contributions effect concern amount donated, the base rate and the face-to-face context. First of all, none of the studies cited above

has found that the ‘even a penny helps’ technique increases the amount donated; only the likelihood of giving is increased. Mark and Shotland (1983) found that legitimization of paltry contributions in a door-to-door fundraising campaign for the American Cancer Society lowered the likelihood of giving, and reasoned that this was due to the relatively high base rate (60%). Another limitation of the technique is that it only works when donations are publicly observable. When donations are anonymous, the phrase does not increase contributions (Reeves, Macolini and Martin, 1987; Perrine and Heather, 2000). When used in a direct mail context, the phrase may even decrease the amount donated, exactly because it legitimizes paltry contributions (DeJong and Oopik, 1992). Two final limitations of the technique are that it does not seem to work with high-income donors (Weyant and Smith, 1987) or when the suggested contribution is not viewed as a small amount but as an average donation (Weyant, 1996).

### *Social Information Effects*

Social information effects refer to the observation that people are more likely to give and also give more to a charitable cause when they receive information that other people have donated as well. Catt and Benson (1977), Cialdini and Schroeder (1976), Jones and McKee (2004), Reeves, Macolini and Martin (1987) and Reingen (1982) all found that announcement of prior contributions by others increases donations.

Several mechanisms may account for social information effects. Contribution by others may set the group standard and create pressure to conform (Blake, Rosenbaum, and Duryea, 1955); it may signal to consecutive decision makers that the charity is trustworthy (Andreoni, 2006); or it may create social comparison processes, such that people give in order to be better than others (McNeel, 1973). Social comparison affects behavior most strongly when people feel uncertain about themselves (Gerard, 1963). Reingen (1982) shows that social information should not violate expectations. When others are described as overly generous, this description does not promote giving. Social information should lead to the expectation that others will donate. While Comer, Kardes and Sullivan (1992) and Sweeney (1973) did not obtain an effect of expectations about the behaviour of others on own giving, Offerman, Sonnemans and Schram (1996) and Frey and Meier (2004) conclude that the effect does exist, but is weak when justification effects are taken into account. People adapt their expectations about other people’s behavior to their own behavior (Dawes, McTavish, and Shaklee, 1977). Finally, one study that simply suggested contribution levels found that such suggestions have little effect unless they are accompanied by information about the average behavior of others (Jones and McKee, 2004).

### *The Effect of Being Watched*

People are more likely to donate money when they know they are being watched (Bateson, Nettle and Roberts 2006). Thus, face-to-face solicitations are more effective than solicitations made over the telephone (Brockner, Guzzi, Kane, Levine, and Shaplen, 1984), and giving people the option of donating money in an envelope reduces donations (Thornton, Kirchner and Jacobs, 1991; Hoffman, McCabe and Smith, 1996). Part of the effect of being watched may be physical in nature. Bull and Gibson-Robinson (1981) found that solicitors in a door-to-door fundraising campaign who looked potential donors in the eye raised more money than solicitors who looked at the collecting tin. Cues of being watched need not even be consciously perceived: stylized eyes spots also have a positive effect on donations (Haley & Fessler, 2005).

### *Similarity Effects*

The similarity effect refers to the observation that people are more likely to comply with requests from people who are similar to themselves. This is because ‘similarity breeds liking’ (Byrne, 1971). Requests by similar persons are more likely to be honoured because we like them better. Similarity effects have been reported for religion (Yinon and Sharon, 1985), race (Bryan and Test, 1967; Gaertner and Dovidio, 1977), gender (Bryan and Test, 1967; Lindsfold, Forte, Haake, and Schmidt, 1977), social attitudes (Sole, Marton, and Hornstein, 1975), and personal characteristics such as sharing a birthday or name (Burger et al., 2004).  
Attire.

### *The Effect of a Gift*

A popular belief among fundraisers is that including a gift in a direct-mail package increases donations. However, there is no solid foundation for this belief in the empirical studies we reviewed. Only one paper tested whether a gift increases donations (Harris, Liguori, and Stack, 1973), but the results reported in this paper are weak. In a series of three experiments offering a cookie to prospective donors, only one found a positive effect of a gift; the other two did not.

### *Design of fundraising materials*

While attractive design of fundraising materials is often believed to attract the attention of donors (Diamond and Gooding-Williams, 2002), field experiments tell a different story. Warwick (2001) reports 23 tests of design elements on outer envelopes used in donor acquisition mailings, and found no effect in 19 cases, a negative effect in three cases, and a positive effect in only one case. In a field experiment with direct-mail letters for a health charity, Vriens, Van der Scheer, Hoekstra and Bult (1998) found that the optimal fundraising letter contains no ‘amplifiers’ (like bold printing), and no illustration. In a field experiment with donations in a campaign for refugees in Ruanda, Bekkers and Crutzen (2007) found that a plain envelope raised more money than an envelope including a picture of the beneficiaries.

### *Benign Thoughts*

People are more generous after they have spent some time thinking about their own death (Jonas et al., 2002) or about an act of forgiveness (Karremans, Van Lange, and Holland, 2005).

### *Attire*

Well-dressed solicitors raised more money in one study, (Levine, Bluni and Hochman, 1998), but not in others (McElroy and Morrow, 1994; Bull and Gibson-Robinson, 1981).

### *Good news*

Hornstein, LaKind, Frankel, and Manne (1975) found that news radio broadcasts reporting ‘good news’ produced increased generosity towards total strangers, in part because of a more positive outlook on human nature. Mood effects were tested as well, but were not found to be significant. Holloway, Tucker and Hornstein (1977) replicated these findings, and also found that only social information affects generosity. Reports about exceptional helping behavior promoted generosity, and reports about a murder decreased generosity. Nonsocial information (on how unusual weather saved or destroyed a family’s life) did not affect generosity.

### *The Weather*

When given the opportunity to give, people are more likely to donate money to a charity when the weather is better. One study found a sizeable positive effect of temperature

on giving to the Salvation Army in the period between Thanksgiving and Christmas (Jobu and Knowles, 1974).

#### *Beauty Matters*

Some studies find that people are more likely to give to physically attractive people (Landry, Lange, List, Price, and Rupp, 2006). This may be a reason why female solicitors are sometimes more successful than male solicitors (e.g., Lindskold, Forte, Haake, and Schmidt, 1977). However, the majority of studies do not find an effect of female solicitors on giving.

#### *The Bystander Effect*

A well known empirical regularity in the emergency helping literature is the ‘bystander effect’. The ‘bystander effect’ refers to the regularity that a higher number of potential helpers in an emergency, the less likely that help will be given (Latané and Darley, 1970). When other potential helpers are around, diffusion of responsibility occurs. The bystander effect has not been reported in studies of charitable giving. In contrast, charitable giving is enhanced by the presence of others. One study found that people give more when accompanied by others, especially by females (Jobu and Knowles, 1974). Another study we found tested the effect of multiple solicitors. When requests for donations are made by two solicitors, people are more likely to give – though less than twice (Jackson & Latané, 1981).

#### *The Familiarity Effect*

Macaulay (1975) found that a brief but apparently unrelated conversation with a stranger increased the likelihood of complying with a request for a donation from that stranger.

#### *The Problem of Reactance*

Fundraising organizations trying to increase the effectiveness of their fundraising strategies should be careful not to give potential donors the feeling they are ‘forced’ into giving. When people’s freedom is restricted, for instance by social pressure, strongly emotional appeals, or the foresight of future dependency (e.g., more solicitations), people feel that their freedom to act is restricted. In many cases, the result is ‘reactance’ (Brehm, 1966), a motivational state that lowers compliance with requests. Many donors mention fundraising strategies designed to maximize to increase donations through social influence techniques as a threat to their freedom that put them off (Burgoyne, Young and Walker, 2005).

### **The Possibility of A General Theory of Philanthropy**

There is no generally accepted theory of philanthropy. Would it be possible to construct a general theory of philanthropy that incorporates the seven principles of philanthropy? We think not. Previous attempts have focused on a limited number of specific conditions or motives that affect giving.

Public good model (but no or little crowd out); impure altruism models (too general); impact theory (too specific); signalling theory (too specific).

An additional problem is that philanthropy is often a consequence of more than one principle. Philanthropic acts are commonly the result of multiple principles working at once.

While a general theory is impossible, our review may inform the endless debate on altruistic motivation in prosocial behavior. Altruism as defined in the psychological literature (Batson) is the same as in economic models, the desire to help others from a genuine other-oriented concern for their wellbeing. Altruism is not one of the seven principles. Altruism and egoism are motivational states that can lead an individual to help others. An altruistic motivation to give can be activated by awareness of need.

Prevalence; validity; effect size.

### **A Case for Progress?**

If the studies discussed above are viewed in a chronological order, do we then see any evidence for progress in the study of philanthropy? Based on Karl Popper's philosophy of science, Ultee (1980) formulated criteria for an assessment of progress in social sciences. Progress can be made in four respects: in the research questions, the theories, the data and methods, and the relation with policy. Progress in research questions is made if they are increasingly based on true assumptions, and research questions are enriched. Progress in theory is made if theories are made more informative and are generalized. Progress in data and methods is made if more adequate measures are developed for the objects under study, data are used covering a higher number of actors from a higher number of periods and areas. Progress is made in the relation with policy when available knowledge more fully informs policy measures. We conclude our paper with an assessment of the pace of progress in research on philanthropy in the past 50 years.

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