Literature Review

Frances Huehls

is Associate Librarian for the Joseph and Matthew Payton Philanthropic Studies Library at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis. She holds masters' degrees in philanthropic studies and library science, as well as a PhD in higher education from Indiana University. Dr Huehls is editor of *Philanthropic Studies Index*, an online periodical literature index and *PRO: Philanthropy Resources Online*, a full-text resource for the field of philanthropic studies.

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PHYLLIS MCGILL, SHARYN RUNDLE-THIELE AND ASHLEY LYE (2009) LACK OF EARLY ENGAGEMENT: A PRE-EMINENT BARRIER TO AUSTRALIAN UNIVERSITY BEQUEST GIVING. *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF VOLUNTARY SECTOR MARKETING* 14: 271–283

Although giving in Australia is on the rise, support for higher education is low, particularly compared to the United States, and is dropping. Research on giving has focused primarily on lifetime gifts rather than bequests and has not shed much light on why people do not give. The authors' goal with this research was to examine this issue in the context of bequests to Australian universities.

McGill, Rundle-Thiele and Lye identify a lack of alumni engagement as the primary barrier to a bequest.

They propose a model showing how lack of engagement affects long-term giving and factors – during university tenure and beyond – that move alumni farther away from making a bequest.

Methodology

A qualitative multiple case study utilizing a purposive sample was utilized. The questionnaire was developed from existing bequest literature. Thirty-three semi-structured, open-ended questions were designed to explore factors that could potentially inhibit bequests to universities. The six participants represented a range of fields and all either held or were earning a post-graduate qualification. Although all had made a will, only one had made a bequest to a non-profit organization.

After transcription, the recorded interviews were analyzed on a case-by-case basis. Significant statements were grouped into categories using a constant comparative technique. Groups were then coded and sorted into units. Transcripts were then sorted by categories across cases, with

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Correspondence: Frances Huehls
IUPUI University Library, UL2112, 755 West Michigan
Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46202 IUPUI, USA
E-mail: fhuehls@iupui.edu

attention given to maintaining the integrity of the recorded material.

Barriers to bequests

The analysis 'identified the lack of active engagement by universities with their student bodies from the outset of their academic tenure as the principle, overarching factor in the dearth of subsequent bequest giving motivations' (p. 274). Four secondary barriers also emerged:

- Intergenerational wealth transfer – family was the first priority.
- Charitable social conscience – bequests to charities would be a higher priority than bequests to a university out of respect for the work that charities do.
- Confidence, trust and professionalism – concern over the lack of transparency and management of bequests by universities.
- Communication – universities had not made an effort to stay in touch.

The authors propose a hierarchical bequest barrier model placing engagement during university tenure at the top. Alumni who had not felt engaged during their undergraduate years would not consider a bequest to the university. All other factors became secondary. Previous studies show evidence that no amount of marketing compensates for a lack of engagement both during and after university tenure.

A long-term strategy to increase bequests must begin with student engagement and a positive undergraduate experience. Strategic planned giving is secondary to engagement. Other priorities including

family and charitable giving are potential barriers to ongoing alumni relations but can be managed in the long term through a better undergraduate experience and ongoing alumni communication.

RACHEL CROSON, FEMIDA HANDY AND JEN SHANG (2009) KEEPING UP WITH THE JONESES: THE RELATIONSHIP OF PERCEIVED DESCRIPTIVE SOCIAL NORMS, SOCIAL INFORMATION, AND CHARITABLE GIVING. NONPROFIT MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP 19(4): 467–489

This study focuses on one aspect of giving – 'descriptive social norms as perceived by existing donors' (p. 468), or, the donors' beliefs about what others are giving. The goal for fund raising is to increase the size of individual gifts rather than gift frequency. In addition to showing the impact of perceived descriptive social norms, the study also demonstrates the effect of social information – being told the size of others' gifts – on donors' perceptions of what others normally give. The desire to conform changes giving behavior and increases the size of gifts.

The study subjects were donors to a public radio station, a venue that is subject to free riding and where donation size does not affect the service received. Using a field study, actual giving in the prior year and gifts made the year following the survey were linked with self-reported giving. The researchers were able to see the relationship between what donors thought others gave, self-reported

giving and actual giving. An additional laboratory study looked at factors that affect the donor's beliefs about what others give and found that social information affects giving by influencing the perception of what others give. This part of the study established a causal relation between social norms and subsequent giving.

Donor survey

A survey was mailed to 7123 current and recently lapsed donors who would have received a renewal notice during the selected month. A total of 975 were returned complete (13.7 per cent). Four hundred and twenty-two subjects identified themselves, making it possible to link to their donation history; 394 of those contained complete responses.

The goal of the survey was to test how perceived descriptive social norms influence giving behavior, stated as:

Hypothesis 1: 'The higher the perceived descriptive social norms as measured in the survey, the higher are the donations received by the station' (p. 470).

Results

Using the estimated average donation of others (perceived descriptive social norms) as the independent variable and four dependent variables – self-reported contributions, the average of actual contributions in the prior year and the year following the survey, actual contributions in the prior year, and actual contributions in the year following the survey – regressions were used to create four models. The dependent variable of self-reported giving proved to be unreliable. The researchers decided to focus on the

394 respondents for which they had actual giving data. The other models supported Hypothesis 1. Overall, the more a donor perceives that others give, the more he or she will give.

Experimental study

The experimental study looked for a causal relationship between what people believe about what others give and their own giving behavior. What influences people's beliefs about what others give? Results suggest that social information provided to potential donors influences how much they give.

Although prior studies have shown that social information influences giving behavior, this study demonstrates that social norms are the driver of this behavior, stated as:

Hypothesis 2: 'The higher the social information as manipulated by the experimenter, the higher are the perceived descriptive social norms elicited from the participants' (p. 471).

The laboratory study manipulated the level of social information provided, showing its effect on the perception of what others give and subsequent giving, stated as:

Hypothesis 3: 'The positive effect that social information has on contribution behavior is fully mediated by perceived descriptive social norms' (p. 471).

One hundred forty-two undergraduates were presented with one of two versions of a scenario, one presenting a large contribution and the other a small contribution.

Questions were asked in a specific order, presenting:

Manipulated social information;
Mediating variable (how much does an average contributor give?);
How much will you contribute next year? (dependent variable)

The procedure demonstrates that the belief about what other give is responsible for the effect that the manipulated variable has on how much the subject stated they would give in the coming year. Hypotheses 2 and 3 are both supported.

Summary

Perceived descriptive social norms influence the amount of giving. Social information provided to donors influences the amount that they give by potentially changing their perception of what others give.

KATHERINE WHITE AND JOHN PELOZA (2009) SELF-BENEFIT VERSUS OTHER-BENEFIT MARKETING APPEALS: THEIR EFFECTIVENESS IN GENERATING CHARITABLE SUPPORT. *JOURNAL OF MARKETING* 73: 109–124

Charitable fund raising utilizes two types of appeals – those that emphasize benefits to the donor (self-benefit) and those that emphasize benefits to the recipient (other-benefit). White and Peloza investigate which type of appeal is most effective when the public self-image concerns of donors are manipulated:

We test the novel prediction that the effectiveness of appeal

type (i.e., other-benefit versus self-benefit) is moderated by the degree to which public self-image concerns are activated. More specifically, we propose that other-benefit appeals are more effective in encouraging donor support than self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are heightened. Conversely, we expect consumers to respond more positively to self-benefit appeals than to other-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are minimized. (p. 110)

In addition, the study demonstrates that public self-image only affects charitable intentions under certain conditions and reconciles contradictions in prior research. Components of public self-image that are examined are public accountability, self-awareness and self-consciousness. The authors also determine that norm salience and the desire of individuals to manage impressions play key roles in fund raising appeal response. Prior research indicates that there is a societal belief that giving should be for other-serving rather than self-serving reasons. Societal norms and expectations are a component of impression construction. White and Peloza conduct a pilot study that tests the normative belief that charitable giving for other-serving reasons is more valid than for self-serving reasons.

Five studies test hypotheses regarding response to other versus self-benefit appeals.

Study 1: The role of public accountability

Hypothesis 1: ‘Other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit

appeals in generating positive donation intentions when consumers are publicly accountable. Self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals when consumers are not publicly accountable' (p. 112).

One hundred forty-four students completed a print questionnaire. The study used a 2 (appeal type: public versus self-benefit) $\times$ 2 (accountability: public versus private) experimental design. In the public accountability setting, students were told that their donations would be discussed. In the private condition, intended contributions would be confidential. Results supported the hypothesis.

Study 2: The role of public self-awareness

Hypothesis 2: 'Under conditions in which donation intentions are private, other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive time donation intentions when consumers are high in public self-awareness, whereas self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals when consumers are low in public self-awareness' (p. 114).

Ninety-six undergraduates participated. Public self-awareness was manipulated by the presence of a video camera in the room. In the high public self-awareness setting, participants were told that the session would be recorded. In the low-public self-awareness situation, participants were told that the camera was there for another meeting and that it was turned off.

When public self-awareness was high, participants reacted more positively to the other-benefit appeal. In the low public self-awareness situation, participants responded with stronger intent to volunteer when presented with the self-benefit appeals. In addition, this study indicated that even if donation behaviors are private, when if public self-awareness is raised, people will position themselves to appear more altruistic.

Study 3: The moderating role of public self-consciousness

This experiment tested the moderating role of public self-consciousness, the degree to which people are concerned with public self-image, stated as:

Hypothesis 3: 'Other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive time donation intentions among consumers high in public self-consciousness when they are in public (versus private), but this effect is eliminated among consumers low in public self-consciousness' (p. 115).

One hundred sixty undergraduates participated in this phase, which used a 2 (appeal type: public versus self-benefit) $\times$ 2 (accountability: public versus private) $\times$ 2 (public self-consciousness: low versus high) design. Participants were asked to specify the number of hours they would be willing to volunteer. Accountability was manipulated by telling the 'public' group that the number of hours that had committed to volunteer would be made public.

Regression analysis showed that when public self-image concerns are

higher, willingness to volunteer increased with the other-benefit appeal was presented. When public accountability concerns were higher but public self-consciousness was low, participants were more willing to commit time in response to self-benefit appeal. When accountability was private, this difference was eliminated.

Participants low in public self-consciousness showed a distinct preference for self-benefit appeals in a public situation, which contradicts expected norms. People with high public-self-consciousness can be influenced to behave in a normative manner, while those with low public self-consciousness will react to public pressure by reacting in opposition to norms.

Study 4: The role of impression management

Hypothesis 4: ‘The effect of public accountability on monetary donations to self-benefit versus other-benefit positioned charities is mediated, at least in part, by impression management’ (p. 117).

Seventy-nine community members completed a print questionnaire. The experiment used a 2 (appeal type: public versus self-benefit) × 2 (accountability: public versus private) design. Appeal type was manipulated by showing to participants the other-benefit and self-benefit appeals. Accountability was manipulated as in Study 1, except that participants in the public scenario were told that their donations would be public. The dependent variable was donation amount to each of the two charities. The participants also answered questions about how much pressure

they felt to respond in a particular way. An impression management index was created by averaging these factors.

When actual money donations were involved, participants reacted in favor of the other-benefit appeal if their donations were public. When donations were private, participants favored the self-benefit appeal. This suggests that when people are concerned with the public impression that they are making, they will act in what they consider a normal way.

Study 5: The role of normative expectations

Hypothesis 5: ‘Other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive volunteerism intentions when consumers are publicly accountable and when an other-benefit norm is made salient. Conversely, self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals when consumers are publicly accountable and when a self-benefit norm is made salient’ (p. 119).

Impression management should be triggered by heightened concerns over self-image. Providing relevant norms guides the creation of the desired impression. When in private, the prominent norm – whether public or private – should have less influence on donor behavior.

One hundred forty-two undergraduates participated in the experiment. A 2 (appeal type: public versus self-benefit) × 2 (accountability: public versus private) × 2 (normative expectations: other-benefit norm versus self-benefit norm) design was used.

In the private condition, donations would remain private. In the public

condition, donations would be discussed with the researcher and others in the room. Participants listened to a scenario that was designed to sensitize them to the norm for helping for self-serving versus other-serving reasons. Response to the appeal type depended on the prominence of the norm and the condition of public accountability. When students were being held publicly accountable, they responded to the self-benefit appeal when self-benefit was the prominent norm presented. The desire to hold to the dominant norm overrode the otherwise general belief that helping others for altruistic reasons is superior to helping them for self-benefit. Contrary to expectations, when in private, participants did not react more favorably to the self-benefit appeal. In the private condition, responses were unpredictable.

Theoretical implications

Existing beliefs about what types of appeals motivate donors may be oversimplified. This research enhances what we know about how public self-image affects charitable behaviors. Overall, donors respond more positively to other-benefit appeals when they are concerned about their public self-image but respond more positively to self-benefit appeals when public self-image is not a significant factor. Despite the social acceptability of other-benefit appeals, donors may opt for self-benefit appeals because they reduce internal conflict about further participation. A question that future research should address is how people manage the conflict between desiring to be socially acceptable but not wanting the responsibility of further association

with a cause. Researchers also need to address the relationship between the level of need portrayed in an appeal and donor self-image.

Implications for practice

This research indicates that fundraisers should not employ one-size-fits-all methodology but rather tailor fund raising appeals to specific situations. For example, organizations without the resources to successfully use self-benefit appeals should use other-benefit appeals when the request is made in a public setting. Also, because donors respond so strongly to prominent norms, appeals made in public settings should be paired with the appropriate norm.

OTHER RECENT RESEARCH OF NOTE

Waldeck, Sarah E. (2009) The coming showdown over university endowments: Enlisting the donors. *Fordham Law Review* 77(4): 1795–1835

Waldeck offers academic insights into the public debate over university endowments. Endowment value, endowment per student and expense-endowment ratios of 60 private universities are analyzed. Although Waldeck concludes that the majority of institutions have reasonable levels of endowment, she provides a means to determine when endowment has reached a level where preferential tax treatment is questionable. The effects of large endowments on the institution and particularly on tuition are discussed. Waldeck offers critical analysis of institutional defenders of endowment and the reasons why endowments are allowed to grow

to excessive size. Finally, policy recommendations are made regarding charitable deductions for gifts to universities with excess endowment that would encourage current spending and discourage gifts that would accidentally cause tuition increases.

Weerts, David J. and Justin M. Ronca (2009) Using classification trees to predict alumni giving for higher education. *Education Economics* 17(1): 95–122

Institutions strive to maximize alumni giving to help offset declines in

support from other sources. Using data from the University of Wisconsin – Madison, this research studies characteristics of alumni donors and non-donors. The research utilizes a classification and regression tree methodology. Among the factors that were found to impact alumni giving were household income, religious background, the extent to which alumni were connected to the campus, their ongoing intra-campus affiliations and the number of other academic institutions competing for donations.