

Papers and abstracts are listed alphabetically by presenter's last name.

Billur Aksoy (Texas A&M University)

“Donors' Response to News: When Does Less Information Translate into More Giving?”

We investigate theoretically and experimentally the impact of information on charitable giving and cooperation. The theoretical model treats information about the value of a public good as exogenous and studies whether providing information about the project's value increases expected giving. The model predicts that the altruism level of donors plays an important role in the way donors respond to information. While information has the potential of increasing average giving for less altruistic population, it reduces average giving when the donor population is more altruistic. This is because less altruistic donors use information to increase giving when they obtain good news about the project's value. In contrast, more altruistic donors use information to withhold giving upon obtaining bad news. The experimental results confirm these equilibrium predictions. Our findings suggest that targeted information exposure to less generous donors is desirable.

Sule Alan (University of Essex)

“Belief in Hard Work and Altruism: Evidence from a Randomized Field Experiment”

We provide causal evidence that optimistic beliefs regarding the role of hard work in success, while leading to success, diminish the individual's sympathy toward the unsuccessful. We generate random variation in the degree of optimism in beliefs via an effective educational intervention implemented in a sample of primary schools. To evaluate the impact of the intervention we create an experimental setting where both control and treatment students are given the opportunity to accumulate ability in a real effort task and earn rewards upon success. We then implement an altruism experiment where we manipulate the donation context in terms of the potential reasons for the anonymous recipient's poorness. We find that while treated children are no less likely than control to give to recipients who are poor because of bad luck, they are significantly less likely to give to those who failed. The more optimistic the beliefs, the less altruistic the children become toward the unsuccessful.

Mackenzie Alston (Texas A&M University)

“High-Income Donors' Preferences for Charitable Giving”

In conjunction with one of Texas A&M's nonprofit fundraising organizations, we conducted a field experiment to study first whether high-income donors respond to non-personal communications and second whether they donate more when given the option to direct their giving to specific causes. We also examined whether high-income donors had any interest in supporting overhead costs. We found that high-income donors are not responsive to letters or e-mails. Additionally, the option to direct giving had no effect on the probability of donating or the amount donated (conditional on donating). Regarding overhead costs, we found that total donations were the lowest in treatments where donors had the option to give to overhead. Our results suggest that motivating

high-income donors may require more personal communication and a focus on causes that directly help those in need.

Co-authors: Catherine Eckel, Jonathan Meer, and Wei Zhan

Avner Ben-Ner (University of Minnesota)

“Charitable giving in variants of dictator game experiments: Probing the effects of framing and choice sets”

We study how tensions between altruistic sentiments and selfishness may be affected by the framing of the charitable “ask.” We vary the detachment of the donor, Adam Smith’s “judge,” from the targets of her generosity. We design modified dictator game experiments with seven charities. In a conventional model an individual will make equivalent choices of donations but if moral sentiments are activated by framing, the choices will differ. We advance two related bases for differentiation between different ways of framing charitable solicitations: the salience of donors’ self-interest (increasing it acts like an increase in the price of giving), and the judging perspective (putting the donor in a judge-like position induces substitution in giving away from ordinary charities towards deserving one, akin to substitution induced by changing the price of giving). In experiments with a mixed within and between subjects with 157 participants, we find empirical support for these conjectures.

Robin Bergh (Harvard University)

“Doing the Most Good – How and When to Reason about Charity Efficiency”

Correlational data suggests that people donate more to charities believed to be efficient. Yet, such effects could be due to post-hoc justifications and compliance pressure on dedicated donors. Also, deliberate thinking has been shown to decrease generosity. So does efficiency information make people donate more? These experiments examined if efficiency deliberation would disrupt sympathy-induced giving, and if the effects depend on when appeals to emotions and efficiency are presented. Results showed that efficiency information had little or no positive impact on donations. More important, emotional giving was disrupted when efficiency information was presented right after a sympathy-inducing image. However, there was no such disruption when the image was directly followed by a preliminary yes/no commitment to donate, and the efficiency information came later. Thus, efficiency information is best to introduce, if at all, once a commitment has already been made on emotional grounds.

Abhishek Bhati (1986)

“Is poverty color Blind? Implications of Imagery on Implicit Association Test (IAT)”

International Nongovernmental organizations often use images and videos to raise awareness and donations from donors and the general public. Often the selection of the imagery of poor is based on ‘media logics’ of selecting the most ‘typical victim’ such as a widow or faces of children to gather sympathy from Western donors to generate more donations. This study seeks to empirically understand if there is underlying biasness among donors that is created when they see the poor as vulnerable and weak and fostered by colonial discourse of seeing people of colors as ‘Other’, The study answers two research questions - how are people from developing countries represented in fundraising imagery in the US and if such representation leads to stereotyping and racial biases

against people of color. I will answer these two questions by conducting the content analysis of the images and then feed the representative category to conduct Race Implicit Association Test (IAT) among 400 participants.

Lance Bush (Cornell University)

“Does maximizing good make people look bad? Reputational concerns in effective charitable donations”

Many people do not donate to charities based on cost-effectiveness even when this information is readily available (Baron & Szymanska, 2011). Across five studies we found that people perceive choosing a charity based on cost-effectiveness to signal a lack of empathy. While people described as deliberating about the cost-effectiveness of charities were judged as more pragmatic, they were also judged as less moral and less desirable as social partners. We used both between-subjects (Study 1) and within-subjects designs (Study 2), and used hypothetical (Studies 1-2, 4-5) as well as incentivized measures (Study 3). We also manipulated the gender of the person being evaluated (Study 4) and ruled out an alternative account of our findings (Study 5). Finally, we conducted a single-paper meta-analysis to collectively evaluate our results. Our findings suggest that when their reputation is at stake, people prefer their charitable donations to signal empathy at the expense of cost-effectiveness.

Jeffrey Butler (University of California, Merced)

“The Causal Impact of Cultural Identity on Cooperation”

A recent literature in economics suggests that preferences are context-dependent and may be influenced by an individual’s social identity. Individuals typically hold multiple identities while research in psychology indicates that the salience of a particular identity varies with situational cues. The salience of a particular identity may lead individuals to adopt the specific norms and values associated with that temporarily salient identity category. In this study we use a priming methodology to investigate how cultural identity shapes preferences for cooperation and honesty, focusing on two distinct cultures at the opposite end of the individualism-collectivism scale: US and Chinese culture. We run experiments using Chinese subjects at a large public university in the US. We find robust evidence that priming a US cultural identity increases cooperativeness and decreases dishonest behavior. Our results suggest that priming works by affecting beliefs rather than preferences directly.

James Cox (Georgia State University)

“Moral Costs and Rational Choice: Theory and Experimental Evidence”

The literature exploring other regarding behavior sheds important light on interesting social phenomena, yet less attention has been given to how the received results speak to foundational assumptions within economics. Our study synthesizes the empirical evidence, showing that recent work challenges convex preference theory but is largely consistent with rational choice theory. Guided by this understanding, we design a new, more demanding test of a central tenet of economics—the contraction axiom—within a sharing framework. Making use of more than 325 dictators participating in a series of allocation games, we show that sharing choices violate the contraction axiom. We advance a new theory that augments standard models with moral reference

points to explain our experimental data. Our theory also organizes the broader sharing patterns in the received literature.

Eugen Dimant (University of Pennsylvania)

“On Peer Effects: Contagion of Pro- and Anti-Social Behavior and the Role of Social Cohesion”

Most existing studies have focused on analyzing peer effects in pro-social or anti-social behavior in isolation. Our principal contribution is the use of a novel experimental approach that enables us to analyze the contagion of behavior under varying levels of social cohesion to peers and differences in the contagion of pro- and anti-social behavior. Anti-social behavior is found to be more contagious and social cohesion particularly drives the contagion of anti-social but not pro-social behavior. The results yield policy implications with regards to designing effective nudges and interventions to facilitate (reduce) pro- (anti-)social behavior, in both social and economic environments.

Noah D. Drezner (Associate Professor, Teachers College, Columbia University)

“Philanthropic Mirroring: Exploring Identity-Based Fundraising in Higher Education”

Scholars have long documented the intersection between social identity and experiences within higher education. However, we know very little about the role of social identity in shaping alumni engagement, specifically through philanthropy. Building upon social identity and social distance theories and the identity-based motivation model, I develop a philanthropic mirroring framework that posits that alumni engagement increases when alumni social identity is mirrored in solicitation efforts. Using my own population-based survey experiment, collected via a crowdsourcing platform, the National Alumni Giving Experiment (n=1,621), I found that respondents who share at least one marginalized social identity with students profiled in a solicitation are more likely to assign more importance to the cause and to give greater amounts. Implications for research and practice, as well as the benefits and cautions of using crowdsourcing platforms in experimental research design, are discussed.

Christine Exley (Harvard University)

“Better is the enemy of the good”

Information often fails to encourage costly actions with larger social or future benefits, such as wiser financial decisions, better health decisions, or more prosocial behavior. This paper proposes a potentially far-reaching reason: the better is the enemy of the good. That is, even the most compelling set of benefits from a costly action is limited, and a focus on what is not achieved may prove detrimental. In an online experiment on charitable giving, this paper documents evidence in support of this possibility. Individuals are provided with complete information on the benefits arising from a charitable donation. Making salient which benefits are not achieved -- even when it provides no new information -- discourages giving. This discouragement is substantially more pronounced when one's own money is at stake versus when one's own money is not at stake. In other words, the better prevents the good, particularly when avoidance of the good is self-serving.

Joshua Foster (University of Wisconsin - Oshkosh)

“The Effects of Loss Aversion and Sunk Cost Sensitivity in All-pay Auctions for Charity: Experimental Evidence”

All-pay auctions have demonstrated an extraordinary ability at raising money for charity. One mechanism in particular is the war of attrition, which frequently generates revenue well beyond what is theoretically predicted with rational bidders. However, what motivates the behavioral response in bidders remains unclear. By imposing charity auction incentives in the laboratory, this paper uses controlled experiments to consider the effects of loss aversion and sunk cost sensitivity on bidders' willingness to contribute. The results indicate that revenues in incremental bidding mechanisms, such as the war of attrition, rely heavily on bidders who are sunk cost sensitive. It is shown this behavioral response can be easily curbed with a commitment device which drastically lowers contributions below theoretical predictions. A separate behavioral response due to loss aversion is found in the sealed-bid first-price all-pay auction, which reduces bidders' willingness to contribute.

Brian Galle (Georgetown University)

“Objectives of Charitable Foundation Donors and Managers: Evidence from Effects of Changes to State Laws”

We examine the impact of the adoption of a set of three model state laws governing the spending and investment rules for U.S. foundations. Two of these reforms enlarged foundations' spending freedom, while the third one increased foundations' investing freedom. We study the effects on key financial variables in foundations' balance sheets as well as on revenue composition and investment returns. Identification is obtained from within-foundation changes at enactment dates that vary across states and differential application of these laws to foundations organized as trusts or corporations. We find that state laws have little effect on foundations' average annual spending and investment. However, the state laws significantly affect the behavior of foundations' donors and managers along the business cycle. We show that our empirical findings are consistent with a theoretical framework in which foundations' managers are characterized by high aversion to financial risk.

Sandra Goff (Skidmore College)

“The Effects of Ecosystem Services Valuation Information on Donations to Natural Resource Organizations”

Ecosystem services valuation (ESV) assigns monetary value to the benefits provided by the natural world. The intention of ESV is to translate the benefits of natural resources into units that can be compared with the traditional costs and benefits considered in decision-making processes. However, through the use of an online survey-based experiment we have found that exposure to ESV information can reduce donations to natural resource organizations (Goff, Waring, & Noblet, 2017). In two follow-up studies, we further explore this finding. Using two survey experiments we examine whether people react differently to the valuation of use value than they do the valuation of non-use value. In a natural field experiment conducted in partnership with the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM) we seek to determine whether including valuation information in fundraising materials affects fundraising success.

Pavitra Govindan (Brown University)

“Are moderate rules more effective than strict ones in changing individual giving behavior and norms?”

We are currently conducting an artefactual experiment in India to investigate if milder rules are more likely than stricter ones to change giving behavior and norms. We focus particularly on the altruistic behavior of high caste individuals towards low caste individuals in India. Groups of high-caste individuals play the role of dictators in dictator games with low-caste individuals as their recipients. We then impose rules of giving within the experiment and study the subjects' response to different rules. This study will provide a first causal analysis of how collective giving behaviors and norms change when a rule is introduced in the presence of a conflicting social norm.

Philip Grossman (Monash University)

“Good news, bad news and giving: Impact of recipient characteristics”

How do donors weigh information about recipients in their donation decisions? Do people use negative information as an excuse not to give as predicted by theories of reluctant altruism? Or can positive information, even when accompanied by negative information, still promote more giving? Subjects in our experiment decide how much to donate through the Salvation Army to unemployed recipients who have different characteristics. Recipients differ on three characteristics: presenting with alcoholism and/or drug abuse, taking courses to improve job prospects, and facing disability. We find that positive information trumps negative information; subjects give more to recipients who have the same amount of positive and negative information compared with when there is no information about the recipients. Information effects do not vary depending on whether donations are given as cash or in kind. This finding is in contrast with the results of reluctant altruism.

Job Harms (Erasmus Univerisity)

“Free to help? An experiment on free will belief and altruism”

Does belief in free will influence donation behavior?

In this experiment we manipulate belief in free will through a priming task. Subjects subsequently conduct a series of binary dictator games in which they can distribute money between themselves and a charity that supports low-income people in developing countries. In contrast to previous experiments we find an insignificant average treatment effect. However, when considering subjects' religiosity we find that free will belief does influence giving among the non-religious, but not among the religious. Our results suggest this difference may be explained by a religion-based social norm that prescribes helping the poor. Taken together, these findings indicate that the effect of free will belief on pro-social behaviors is more nuanced than previously suggested.

Dan Heist (University of Pennsylvania)

“Price and Agency Effect on Charitable Giving”

Three online experiments were conducted using Amazon's Mechanical Turk to test price and agency effects on charitable giving. A strategy method was used to induce realistic giving scenarios in which participants could make a donation to charity out of their own income. Respondents were randomly assigned to various price conditions using immediate rebates. Participants were also

randomly assigned various agency treatments allowing them to pick charities from drop down lists, write in their own charity, or delay the choice of a charity. The results build the empirical evidence for price effects on giving and support certain economic models of charitable giving. Findings advance a nuanced understanding of the role of agency in giving decisions and fundraising techniques. The study develops economic and behavioral theory of charitable giving. Perhaps more importantly, the novel method of inducing realistic giving scenarios with M Turk workers has many potential applications for the field.

Daniel Hungerman (Notre Dame)

“Comparing Rebates and Matches for Charitable Giving: A Few Theory-Based Observations”

This paper, joint with Mark Wilhelm, uses estimates from prior work on how different financial incentives matter for giving, and combines these different estimates with predictions from economic theory to refine our understanding of how different behaviors affect warm-glow incentives. We find that ostensibly similar looking price mechanisms can lead to different donor responses, even in the canonical model, and show how these different responses can be brought to the data.

Tanushree Jhunjunwala (The Ohio State University)

“Feedback in Charitable Giving”

While there has been drastic growth in donations, past research on donor behavior reports that few donors claim to do any research on charities prior to donating. Motivated by these findings, I develop an experiment to investigate if ex-post donation feedback on charity performance can nudge donors towards more efficient charities. The design allows individuals to search for detailed charity information prior to donating. In the treatment group, subjects are provided feedback on charity quality after their initial donation while the control group receives no such information. Overall, I find that treatment subjects search for more information on charities—before and after receiving feedback. However, only after receiving feedback, treatment subjects choose the most efficient charity to donate to. This provides evidence that donors can be coaxed to search and donate to charities that create most impact.

Jennifer Jones (University of Florida)

“For Research and Practice: Using A Developmental Interview to Increase Donor Engagement”

Nonprofit researchers have looked at variation in giving through many lenses; but we do not yet understand the influence of what developmental theorists call “action-logics”. Over the course of a lifetime, adults develop an increasingly complex mental map (i.e., action-logic) that influences thoughts, behaviors, and attitudes, including philanthropic choices. The Subject-Object interview process, developed by theorist Robert Kegan and associate Lisa Lahey, is one way to empirically assess such thought processes. This protocol generates data about the donor’s mental map and, at the same time, data about how that map manifests in philanthropy. These data, when properly analyzed, can lead to innovative and effective donor engagement strategies. In this paper, we draw from three studies to identify the methodological benefits and challenges of this interview in research and, also, describe how a modified version is being applied in a large capital campaign.

Daniel Jones (University of South Carolina)

“Incentive and Sorting Effects of Incentive Pay When Workers are Intrinsically Motivated”

How does performance pay (P4P impact productivity (on incentivized and unincentivized dimensions) when workers may be intrinsically motivated by their job (e.g., nonprofit sector)? How does P4P impact the composition of workers in such jobs? We conduct a real-effort laboratory experiment, manipulating compensation and motivation, to answer these questions. We find that P4P has positive effects on productivity on the incentivized dimension (quantity) and negative effects on the unincentivized dimension (quality) for non-motivated workers. For motivated workers, P4P does not lead to a statistically significant change on either dimension. Finally, when workers can choose to remain in the experimentally-assigned payment scheme, or opt for an outside option with flat payment, but also no opportunity to be intrinsically motivated, we find that non-motivated workers sort on ability (higher ability workers opting into the P4P scheme) while motivated workers do not.

Haesung (Annie) Jung (The University of Texas at Austin)

“When Feasibility Benefits the Charity: Desirability/Feasibility Focus and Charitable Gift Restrictions”

Giving donors a choice of designating their donations to particular causes that they wish to support has been shown to be effective in increasing charitable contributions. Such giving option allows donors to be more directly involved as well as maximizes the expression of donor intent in the charitable giving process. The present research examines how donors’ focus on desirability vs. feasibility concerns influences their preferences to make a restricted gift to a charity. Specifically, when donors are led to adopt an outcome-oriented thinking (desirability focus), they are more likely to contribute to particular programs of a charity that they consider worthy of supporting. Whereas when donors are led to adopt a process-oriented thinking (feasibility focus), they exhibit greater preference for unrestricted giving. We further show that although donors perceive making a restricted gift to a charity as desirable, the process of choosing a specific initiative that best matches their will requires greater cognitive effort, thus is perceived as less feasible.

Alina Kasulke (RWTH Aachen University)

“Does Virtual Reality Increase Charitable Giving? An Experimental Study”

Currently, United Nations and some other major non-profit organizations use virtual reality (VR) for fundraising. It is assumed that 360 degree videos experienced through VR devices create empathy and understanding, which may increase charitable giving. In this study, we test this new technique in a controlled lab experiment. Participants first perform a real effort task to earn money. After that, subjects experience a 360 degree video of the destroyed city of Aleppo in VR. Finally, the participants are given the possibility to donate to a local organization helping refugees. We find, compared to a written ask treatment, VR increases both the rate of givers by 15 percent pts, and the amount of donations (40 percent more). A control treatment showing the same video on a 2D monitor does not induce higher donations than the written ask. The observed differences between the VR and the written ask are driven by women's donations which reflect a well documented gender difference in empathy.

Gordon Kraft-Todd (Yale University)

“Setting a Price for Charitable Giving Increases Donations through Self-Concept Maintenance”

Many people give to charity, but they typically give small amounts. We propose that this behavior can be explained by self-concept maintenance (SCM) motivation. Drawing on the SCM theoretical framework, we propose a new method for increasing charitable donations: setting a price for giving. If donors’ options are limited to giving nothing or giving a relatively large amount, many may choose to give even when the donation amount is substantially larger than what they would have given, in order to maintain a positive self-concept as a giver. In a series of online experiments (N~4000) and a large field experiment (N~3000), we provide evidence of charitable giving patterns consistent with this SCM account – such that restricting donors’ options to a binary all-or-none donation choice raises substantially more money (meta-analysis reveals an increase of 21%) compared to an unconstrained donation choice. Further, we provide evidence that SCM serves as a mechanism underlying this effect.

Silvana Krasteva (Texas A&M University)

“Informative fundraising: The signalling value of seed money and matching gifts”

While existing theory predicts that a matching leadership gift raises more donations than seed money, recent experiments find otherwise. We aim to reconcile the two by studying a model, in which both the lead donor’s gift and the charity’s fundraising scheme may inform donors about the charity’s quality. The charity decides whether to solicit for a leadership gift. Donors observe the leadership gift before donating. We find that with exogenously informed lead donor each charity type relies solely on the leader to reveal its quality through the donation size. Thus, it chooses the matching gift scheme since it raises more money. With costly information acquisition, however, a high quality charity may choose seed money as the lead donor is less reliable in conveying information. Thus, the charity engages in costly quality signaling by opting for seed money. Consistent with experimental data, seed money becomes a signal of high quality and raises more donations relative to a matching gift.

Jamie Levine Daniel (SPEA IUPUI)

“Competitive Giving: Identity, Sports and Philanthropy”

Studies of donation or philanthropy often focus socio-demographic characteristics (individually or as they interact with each other to influence donation behaviors). The rise of innovative fundraising mechanisms, particularly crowdfunding, demonstrates some changes to both donor behaviors and the landscape of outlets for donations. The element of competition adds an additional layer to the picture of philanthropy. We build from literature on philanthropy, crowdfunding, and gamification to present a definition of competitive giving. To illustrate competitive giving in practice, we use the context of Brackets for Good, a nonprofit that places other nonprofit organizations in head-to-head competition in a tournament that mirrors the NCAA March Madness bracket format. We draw from multiple sources, including data from in-class experiments and social media, to explore the intersection of competitive giving, identity, and philanthropy.

Wendy Liu (UC San Deigo)

“Charitable and Influential: The Effect of Pro-Social Actions on Opinion Influence”

Recent literature suggests in addition to benefiting the receiver of help, pro-social behavior may also have positive (or negative) implications for the giver (Grant, 2013). In a pilot study using a field dataset (General Social Survey), we found after controlling for income, whether a person is in a supervising position at work is correlated with the person’s frequency of donations and volunteering, suggesting a relationship between giving and influence. However, the ways in which pro-social behavior may benefit the giver, and the underlying mechanisms are not well understood. We propose pro-social acts (when known to the audience) can make an individual’s opinion more influential. Across five studies, we found evidence for this prediction. Further, one significant driver is that the giver’s opinion is perceived as being more representative of others’ interests. A boundary condition was found – the effect did not hold when the giving was perceived to be motivated by strategic reasons.

Jiahuan Lu (Rutgers University-Newark)

“Government Funding and Private Donations: Crowding-in Versus Crowding-out in the Context of a Big Data Experiment”

The paper explores whether government funding of nonprofit organizations crowds in/out private donations using a large-scale, big data field experiment. Despite considerable evidence from extant literature supporting both crowding-in and crowding-out effects, little causal evidence from naturalistic settings exists. To address this shortcoming, we bought advertisements on Facebook to solicit donations from 500,000 Facebook users. Users were randomized to advertisements from real food banks in NYC that are either government funded, donation funded, or without funder information. As outcome measures, we monitored people’s interest in the advertisements by their actual click-through-rates, and used behavioral measures such as website visits and time spent on individual websites. Initial results indicate no substantial differences in peoples’ willingness to donate to food banks across experimental conditions; interestingly, we neither find evidence of a crowding-out, nor crowding-in effect.

Benjamin Marx (U. of I at Urbana-Champaign)

“Motives for Giving after a Transaction”

Solicitations of charitable donations frequently occur immediately following an economic transaction. In such settings, donations are generally small but potentially frequent, and they may be driven by different motives than gifts solicited in fundraising drives. To study determinants of such gifts we pay subjects for performance in three tasks and then allow them to donate to a charity in a combined within- and between-subject experimental design. Financial bonuses increase giving, but randomly-induced differences in earned income do not. The majority of subjects increase their donations when informed that donations from concurrent or past subjects are larger. Holding constant the donations of concurrent subjects, past subjects’ donation amount has little effect, and an anonymous donation has none. Results are consistent across subject nationalities and suggest a

model in which subjects base their donation on the more salient of their unearned income or their closest peers' example.

Lauren Ministero (The University at Buffalo)

“Empathic concern and the desire to help as separable components of compassionate responding”

Two studies (Ns = 236, 155) investigated whether compassion (as measured by Cameron & Payne, 2011) can be broken down into two distinct components—empathic concern and the desire to help—and their different predictors and effects. A factor analysis supported this hypothesized structure. In addition, empathic concern, but not desire to help, decreased when participants saw many victims versus one among high (but not low) self-regulators. Desire to help, but not empathic concern, decreased in the presence of many victims versus one, but only after a self-affirmation (but not control) condition. Finally, only desire to help (not empathic concern) predicted donating across studies, and seeing multiple victims versus one only suppressed donations among those in a self-affirmation (but not control) condition. Empathic concern and the desire to help are strongly related, but separable, and have distinct predictors and outcomes, with only the desire to help predicting actual helping behavior.

Carrie Morrison (University at Buffalo, Social-Personality Ph.D. Program)

“Awe interacts with self-construal, self-esteem, to predict proenvironmental philanthropic behavior”

Nature induced awe predicts broad social self-construal and prosocial behavior. The present study tested whether awe also predicts proenvironmental behavior, especially for persons with broad self-construal. Further, awe induces feelings of self-insignificance relative to nature, which may distress low self-esteem persons, who are especially sensitive to self threats, leading to less proenvironmental action. To test these hypotheses, participants (N = 345) watched an awe-inducing, or amusing, nature video. The awe video predicted more proenvironmental willingness, and more donations to National Geographic, but only for persons high in broad self-construal. Additionally, feelings of self-insignificance predicted less donating for persons low, but not high, in self-esteem. These findings add to existing philanthropic literature by suggesting that awe inductions can engender proenvironmental behavior, and that aspects of the self should be considered when measuring awe's effects.

Vittorio Pelligra (University of Cagliari)

“Information, Belief Elicitation and Threshold Effects in the 5X1000 Tax Scheme: A Framed Field Experiment”

In this paper we study by means of a framed field experiment on a representative sample of the population the effect on people's charitable giving of three, substantial and procedural, elements: information provision, belief elicitation and threshold on distribution. We frame this investigation within the 5X1000 tax scheme, a mechanism through which Italian taxpayers may choose to give a small proportion (0.5%) of their income tax to a voluntary organization to fund its activities. We find two main results: Providing information or eliciting beliefs about previous donations increases the likelihood of a donation, while thresholds have no effect. Second, information increases

donations to organizations that received fewer donations in the past, while belief elicitation also increases donations to organizations that received most donations in the past (since individuals are more likely to donate to the organizations they rank first).

Julie Perry (Givelify)

“Title: Think You Know Church Donors? Think Again. Subtitle: What over two million transactions tell us about generosity in the church today.”

Gain powerful insight into church and nonprofit giving from Walle Mafolasire, CEO and Co-Founder of Givelify—the world’s fastest-growing mobile and online donation app. Walle shares a deep look into digital-donation patterns revealed over four years and from more than two million transactions totaling nearly 200 million dollars made to over 10,000 churches and nonprofits. Based on Givelify users' donation histories, we managed to answer questions such as:

- Do women donors tend to give more than men?
- Will older generations use mobile giving apps?
- Who gives more frequently: Android or iPhone users?
- Is website giving enough to satisfy e-giving needs?
- What days of the week and time of day do people give to churches?
- How can fundraising institutions use data to optimize timing for electronic communications?

Givelify analysts have answered these and other crucial questions, allowing us to acquire a new understanding of fundamental elements of successful fundraising programs.

Ethan Pew (Stony Brook University)

“The Begging Game: On the Power of the Ask in Charitable Exchange”

Much of charitable giving involves formal solicitations. However, asking has largely been ignored within the economic literature on altruism. That is, we know little about asking behavior. To address this, we introduce the Begging Game (a variant of the Dictator Game) to investigate asking strategies and extend prior work on the role asking plays in charitable exchange. Across four studies, we find that most asking reflects norms of fairness. However, we also observe “unreasonable” asking behavior. In one version of the Begging Game, we observe that 25% of players receiving \$0 ask the other player to transfer the full \$10 she received in the game. While punishment or spite might be expected, unreasonable requests result in surprisingly high transfer rates, suggesting that at least some asks serve as signals. In sum, we introduce the Begging Game, situate findings within prior work on altruism and economic games involving communication, and discuss insights for philanthropic science.

Gert Pönitzsch (University of Heidelberg)

“Pro-social Behavior by Groups and Individuals: Evidence from Contributions to a Global Public Good”

Decisions affecting the well-being of others are often made by groups rather than individuals. For example, management boards decide about mitigating emissions, political representatives decide on environmental policies, and voters cast their ballot on the participation in international treaties. I analyze group decisions on contributions to a global public good and contrast them to individual

decisions using a large online experiment. Participants decide about contributions to climate change mitigation - either individually or in groups. Groups use majority voting or a random dictator mechanism to determine the contributions of their members. I find that contributions are higher if choices are made in groups. In addition, subjects tend to less extreme choices in group decisions: they take the preferences of group members into account - even if individual preferences are aggregated via voting.

Michael Poulin (University at Buffalo)

“Cool Head, Cold Heart? Thinking Rationally Undermines the Effect of Perspective Taking on Philanthropy”

Taking the perspective of someone in need can promote other-focused behavior, including philanthropic giving, possibly because perspective taking increases the goal salience of such behavior. This study tested the prediction that rational deliberation, which tends to inhibit goal pursuit, could undermine the effects of perspective taking on philanthropic giving. Participants (N = 240) were randomly assigned to a rational deliberation mindset or to a neutral control condition. Next, participants read and viewed images about suffering children in Darfur, either with or without perspective-taking instructions, and had the opportunity to make a donation to the Red Cross. Perspective taking led to increased donations in the neutral condition, but not in the rational mindset condition. This finding adds context to prior research on deliberation and prosocial behavior and suggests the utility of understanding philanthropic giving through the lens of goal pursuit.

Laura Razzolini (University of Alabama)

“Feelings of ownership in Public Good and Tragedy of Commons games”

We study giving and taking in two strategically equivalent games - a public good and a common resource game - to determine how cooperation – giving to a public good or not taking from a common resource – varies with the framing and with feelings of ownership. We manipulate feelings of ownership by having subjects earn the endowment individually, as a group or bestowing it on individuals or groups.

Andreoni (1995) reports higher cooperation in the giving frame compared to taking frame; Korenok et al (2014, 2016a, b) report the opposite. We expect stronger feeling of ownership to create larger distance between the two frames. Stronger feelings of ownership over the private endowment lead to reduced giving and stronger feelings over the group endowment lead to reduced taking.

Our analysis will improve the understanding of cooperation when goods are public and resources are common and help promote cooperation and donations by manipulating feelings of ownership or frames of giving.

Tommaso Reggiani (Masaryk University)

“Organ Donation: The (neutral) effect of transparency on information disclosure nudge”

link:

<https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/8796618/NUDGINGtransparency.pdf>

David Reinstein (University of Exeter)

“Conditional generosity and uncertain income: Field and lab evidence”

We study how other-regarding behavior extends to environments with income uncertainty and conditional commitments. Should fundraisers ask a banker to donate “if he earns a bonus” or wait and ask after the bonus is known? Standard EU theory predicts these are equivalent; loss-aversion and signaling models predict a larger commitment before the bonus is known; theories of affect predict the reverse. In three field experiments and a lab experiment (N=1068), we solicited charitable donations from lottery winnings, varying the timing and conditionality. Overall, conditional donations (“if you win”) were 14% higher than ex-post donations. This difference was concentrated among male participants, which is consistent with prior work finding gender differences in signaling motives. Our findings have implications for experimental methodology, for fundraisers, for effective-altruism giving pledges, and for our understanding of pro-social behavior.

Lauri Saaksvuori (National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland)

“Normative Conflict and Cooperation in Sequential Voluntary Contribution Mechanisms”

We investigate how conflicting normative views of fair contribution rules can be used to design sequential contribution mechanisms to foster cooperation. We show, using survey and experimental data, that individuals hold well-defined yet widely diverse normative views of fair contribution rules. Our model predicts that a sequential mechanism which solicits contributions first from wealthy actors generates greater public good provision and narrows wealth inequality more than any alternative sequential mechanism. Our experimental data show that the mechanism with wealthy first-movers generates greater contributions and narrows wealth inequality more than the alternative mechanisms, as predicted. Our results suggest how altering the sequential order of contributions in heterogeneous populations may affect public good provision and help organizations to increase the total value of solicited contributions.

Anya Samek (University of Southern California)

“The Effect of Recipient Contribution on Support for Social Programs”

Whether government and non-profit aid programs should require recipients to contribute their own resources to receive benefits is widely debated, but little is known about individual-level preferences regarding these requirements. We examine experimentally whether recipient contribution requirements affect support for a food aid program. We find that relative to no recipient contribution, small recipient monetary contributions increase program support but large recipient monetary contributions do not. Both small and large recipient time contributions increase support. We examine mechanisms for these results and conclude that individuals screen recipients to target those who need and value the good. We find suggestive evidence that this effect is stronger among conservatives versus liberals.

Juliana Schroeder (University of California, Berkeley)

“Making a difference in the life of one or many: A preference for distributed helping”

When providing aid to groups of individuals, people face a choice for how to help: Should they concentrate their aid on one person in the group or try to distribute it across the group? We test preferences for distributing or concentrating aid in four experiments. In Experiment 1 participants

made symmetric trade-offs between concentrated and distributed aid (e.g., Would you prefer to give \$90 to 1 person or \$10 each to 9 people?) Participants were consistently more likely to prefer to distribute the money. In Experiment 2, participants who imagined distributing money believed their donation had more impact and was fairer, but only perceived fairness mediated the effect of distributing aid. Two final experiments reveal a consequence: Participants donated more money to a small group than a single individual because they distributed the money equally across the group. Recognizing this preference for distribution may pay off for charitable organizations.

Avner Shlain (University of California at Berkeley and DIW Berlin)

“High demand for redistribution but low voluntary giving: Evidence from small and large groups”

Voluntary giving in the real world involves giving to a few out of many, or little to each of many. In contrast, giving in lab experiments typically involves giving to just one or a few select partners. We present a new experimental paradigm that studies how giving and preferences for redistribution vary by group size, and find that voluntary giving decreases as group size increases. This suggests that group size may be a key factor for why generous voluntary giving is so common in the lab. Preferences for redistribution, measured by the propensity to vote for mandatory transfers, are however invariant to group size, suggesting that redistributive government policy may be vital for implementing societal preferences– including the preferences of those taxed. Perceptions of relevant groups are not immutable: assigning a potential donor to a partner increases voluntary giving, more so in large groups. Our results are consistent with a simple model of scale-free distributional preferences.

Sarah Smith (University of Bristol)

“Lift or Shift: Do fundraising interventions increase voluntary contributions to public goods?”

Fundraising interventions may lift donations or shift their composition and timing, making it important to study their effect across both charity space and time. This paper addresses the “lift or shift question” using data on donations to charity uniquely rich in these two dimensions. The data include donations to a comprehensive set of charities and are at a high enough frequency, and over a sufficiently long duration, to capture shift behaviour. We show that large-scale disaster appeals increase donations to disaster relief, but cause time-shifting in other donations, which are brought forward in response to the appeal. We present qualitatively similar results for major telethons. Our results provide evidence that fundraising interventions increase the overall level of donations, at least major fundraising appeals. Second, we show that response patterns depend not only on warm glow substitution/ complementarity in the charity-space dimension but also on intertemporal substitution.

Joseph Stinn (Florida State University)

“Overhead Aversion: Do some types of overhead matter more than others?”

Overhead aversion is an issue of great importance to nonprofit organizations. On one hand, overhead (non-program expenses) is vital to the operational abilities of a nonprofit; on the other hand, there is evidence that donors dislike paying for overhead costs. In this paper, we use an

experiment to study overhead from the perspective of donors. First, we replicate the prior finding establishing the existence of overhead aversion. Then we extend this line of research, examining whether donors have an aversion to specific types of overhead (specifically, salaries and fundraising). Subjects appear to prefer overhead-free donations when presented with one overhead-free option and one option with overhead, regardless of the level or type of overhead associated with the second option. When forced to choose an option with overhead, subjects have a preference to contribute to fundraising over salaries.

Florian Stolley (University of Potsdam)

“Getting a Yes. An Experiment on the Power of Asking”

This paper studies how the request for a favor has to be devised in order to maximize its chance of success. We present results from a mini-dictator game laboratory experiment in which giving entails an efficiency gain. Before the dictator decides, the recipient can send a free-form text message to the dictator. We find that the content of a message and its form do matter in the decision to give. Putting effort into the message by writing in a humorous and creative way pays off. We argue that this can be interpreted in terms of reciprocity. Mentioning reasons why the money is needed increases the generosity of dictators as well. Additionally, we find differences in the behavior of male and female dictators. Only men react positively to efficiency arguments, while only women react to messages that emphasize the specific power and responsibility of the dictator.

Anirudh Tagat (Department of Economics, Monk Prayogshala, Mumbai, India)

“Giving Charity and Receiving Social Credit: A Two-Player Game to Study Individual Level Charitable Giving through Gambling”

This study aims to examine individual charitable giving in a ‘market’ context (Wu, 2014; Schwer & Daneshvary, 1999) where donors and beneficiaries are participants. In this experiment, a ‘donor’ participant is randomly assigned to any one of three experimental treatments: a luck/lottery game, a skill-based game, or a control condition. This helps examine different conditions under which donor participants receive endowments, thereby helping the study of subsequent charitable behaviour toward ‘beneficiary’ participants. That is, whether the donation amount differs according to how the endowment was received: by winning (through a lottery game), or by earning the money (through a skill-based game). Beneficiaries will be provided with five conditions to request for donation, providing context within which donations can be made. Once the donation is received, beneficiaries will be able to reciprocate with a social credit at a constant fraction of the cost of the donation received.

Yuan Tian (Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy)

“How are giving behaviors affected by other givers?-A lab experiment testing Self-Other Oversimilarity theory”

How are giving behaviors affected by other givers? Do people always give more when they find that similar others give more? Theoretical frameworks from both psychology and economics predict contradictory outcomes to this question. This lab experimental study adopts a between-subjects design to examine how people’s donation behaviors are affected by another donor at different degrees of perceived similarity. This study tests Self-Other Oversimilarity Theory (SOOT), which

hypothesizes that people will give more when they observe similar others giving more. However, when the similarity between themselves and others becomes too high, people start to give less. The preliminary results from our lab experiment indicate this predicted curvilinear relationship between participants' donation amount and manipulated similarity levels with another donor. The average donation amount is highest in the moderate similarity group, and lowest when similarity is low or high.

Danielle Vance-McMullen (University of Memphis)

“Better Together? Experimental Evidence Regarding the Impact of Simultaneous Solicitations on Charitable Giving”

Online, collaborative giving days, such as Giving Tuesday, are becoming an important part of the philanthropic landscape in the United States. These time-limited giving opportunities often involve a list of approved charities, and are arguably akin to other types of federated giving programs, such as workplace giving campaigns. Research has not explored how donor decisionmaking regarding lists of charities differs from their decisionmaking regarding a series of single-organization solicitations. This paper presents evidence from an online survey experiment on simultaneous (list) vs. sequential (one-by-one) solicitation decisionmaking. In the pilot, respondents gave less when presented with a list of nonprofit choices than they did when presented with choices one at a time (significant at the 0.1 level despite the small sample). Respondents also answered questions about their decisionmaking, which provide suggestive evidence on mechanisms (mental budgeting) underlying this difference.

Richard D. Waters (University of San Francisco)

“Corporate Social Responsibility and the Nonprofit Sector: A Field Experiment Involving Fundraising Direct Mail Pieces”

Although ample research documenting the benefits of corporate social responsibility (CSR) exists for for-profits, little scholarly attention has been paid to how CSR strategies (e.g., environmental footprint, workplace diversity and equity, safety, community connectivity) impact nonprofits. Research has shown that nonprofit management was skeptical of CSR strategy because they felt stakeholders would perceive a shift to a CSR focus from its mission and programs/services. However, experimental results found stakeholders appreciated CSR messaging in appropriate communication channels.

This project reports on a field experiment involving two nonprofits that tested the response from their donors to their Fall 2016 solicitations. There were statistically higher response rates among experimental groups which had CSR messaging as part of the solicitation for both organizations, and higher amounts were raised with the experimental letter compared to the standard solicitation letter.

Ashley Whillans (Harvard Business School)

“Harnessing “Teachable Moments” to Encourage Charitable Giving”

What is the impact of conversations around giving, for the discussant? In this paper, we examine whether and how framing charitable giving as a “teachable moment” can impact parents' donation

decisions. Across three studies (N=709), we find that parents intend to donate significantly more money to charity when they make this decision together with their children as compared to when they make this decision on their own. These effects are explained in part by changes in parents' self-perceptions. Parents who make donation decisions together with their children also allocate more money to pro-environmental causes. These findings provide initial evidence that asking parents to employ charitable giving as a "teachable moment" can not only benefit children but also encourage charitable contributions from parents.

Xiaogeng Xu (Norwegian School of Economics)

"Giving When Responsible For Others' Risks - A Experimental Study on Givers' Other-regarding Risky Behavior"

Givers are not always sure whether the beneficiaries would benefit as much as their intended impacts. Sometimes givers are responsible for the uncertainties borne by the recipients (E.g., cash transfers or education investments). Would this responsibility influence the givers' risk taking for others? Would they behave differently when taking risks for the beneficiaries than for someone else in general? And, would they take different amount of risks for others than for themselves? This study answers these questions with an experiment and has the following findings.

First, willingness to give significantly decreases risk taking for others. Second, due to warm glow of giving, givers take more risks for the beneficiaries than for others in general. Yet, the difference is not significant. Third, when taking risks for others, givers show a cautious shift while non-givers show a risky shift from self-regarding risk taking. The difference between the risky and cautious shifts is significant.

Xuan Zhao (Brown University (starting this fall: Booth Business School, the University of Chicago))

"A Heart for Cooperation: Feeling Another Human's Heartbeat Promotes Prosocial and Cooperative Behaviors"

Can feeling another human's beating heart increase prosocial and cooperative behaviors? In the current study, participants held a novel device that vibrated rhythmically to imitate the human heartbeat while playing a series of behavioral economic games. Compared to those who believed that they were feeling their own heartbeat, those who believed feeling their partner's heartbeat increased their altruistic giving in the Dictator Game by 20%, increased the money they sent to their partner in the Trust Game by 33%, and decreased their self-interested deceptive behavior in the Deception Game (Gneezy, 2005) by 28%. Enabled by recent technological advances, our novel manipulation highlights how a simple belief of feeling another's heartbeat can have powerful and broad effects on promoting prosociality and cooperation.