

# **“How we can help” rather than “Give us your money.” Some implications of psychological research for increasing charitable giving**

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## **Introduction (and Executive Summary)**

Although many motives for giving have been identified, motives may differ across people, across situations, and across time. To increase giving by catering to specific motives, it is therefore necessary to establish which relatively common and enduring motives are (or could be) operating in specific contexts. To simplify the vast array of motivations for giving, such motives can be thought of as being either exclusively egoistic (i.e., essentially directed only at benefiting the self) or at least partially altruistic (i.e., essentially directed at benefiting someone or something other than the self). People with each of these motives tend to respond favourably to one type of approach from charities and also tend to respond negatively to the alternative type of approach.

When egoistically motivated, people are likely to respond favourably to exchange opportunities that they think work in their favour. To increase ‘giving’ from people with egoistic motives requires promising to give them more of what they want in return for their greater level of investment. They are likely to respond unfavourably to requests or demands for help that do not seem to work in their favour.

When altruistically motivated, people are likely to respond favourably to communal opportunities, i.e., opportunities to work co-operatively with others who share their altruistic motives. To increase giving from altruistically motivated people requires promising that their extra help will be necessary and sufficient to improve the welfare of those they are altruistically motivated to help (but without involving ‘excessive’ costs to them or to others they care about). Altruistically motivated people *want to*

*help*. They are likely to resent suggestions that they will ‘help’ only when it is in their own self-interest to do so. Unless they can clearly see potential benefits for those they care about, people with altruistic motives are likely to respond unfavourably to suggestions that their help can or needs to be ‘bought.’ People with genuinely altruistic motives will help as much as they can, whenever they see an opportunity to do so, and they will do so gladly.

To the extent that contexts support such activities, charities and the organisations that support them (e.g., governments, umbrella organisations, etc.) can attempt to increase giving by more effectively exploiting markets *or* by fostering and supporting altruism and cooperation. Attempts to do both are likely to be unsuccessful. In this paper, I suggest that it is in charities’ interests to do more to foster people’s altruistic motives. In great part, this requires leading by example and looking to see how the charities themselves can change, which may be contrasted to the marketing approach which asks how better to ‘exploit’ donors and prevent them from ‘escaping’ charities’ sometimes unwelcome advances. As suggested by the title of this paper, charities could arguably increase *giving* by enhancing *opportunities* to *give*.

### **What motivates donors?**

Countless factors have been identified that motivate donations of time, money, and other goods (e.g., Batson, 1991, 1998; Bryan et al., 2000; Dovidio et al., 1991; Lee et al., 1999; Mowen and Sujan, 2005; Okun et al., 1998; Okun & Schultz, 2003; Piliavin et al., 1981; Radley & Kennedy, 1995; Rioux & Penner, 2001; Yeung, 2004; See also Berry, 1999). Clary et al. (1998) provide one of the best taxonomies to reduce this morass of donation motives into a manageable number of individually distinct and jointly comprehensive categories, namely: *career* motives (e.g., to satisfy training requirements); *enhancement* motives (e.g., to experience positive emotions such as pride); *protective* motives (e.g., to counter or avoid feelings of guilt); *social* motives (e.g., to comply with wishes of people one cares about); *understanding* motives (e.g., to use or obtain knowledge or skills); and *values* motives (e.g., to address moral concerns). In addition, Omoto and Snyder (1995) identify *community-serving* motives, while Feeney and Collins (2003) identify seven motives for providing care, the most distinct of which from those already mentioned is feelings of *love, concern, and interdependence*. However, just as in other areas of human action (Pervin, 2001), motives for the same donation behaviour may differ across individuals and a single person may perform the same donation behaviour for different reasons on different occasions (e.g., Clary et al., 1998; Farsides, 1999; Gergen et al., 1972; Hibbert et al., 2003; Omoto & Snyder, 1995; Penner, 2002; Penner & Finkelstein, 2002; Penner et al., 2005). Attempts to identify *the* key motivation for donation behaviour are therefore unlikely to succeed. Thus, to the extent it is thought desirable for an individual organisation to know about donors’ motives, it will be in that organisation’s interests to consider the specific motivations of its *own* donors – actual *and* potential - whilst recognizing that these motives are likely to differ across individuals, across situations, and across time. To the extent that relatively stable and widespread motives are identified among existing donors, benefits of donation may be tailored to those needs in an attempt to enhance the donors’ motivation to maintain or extend their donation activities. To the extent that relatively stable and widespread motives for donating can be identified among potential donors, recruitment and

induction packages can be tailored to try and satisfy those motives and thereby attract and retain new donors. Finally, to the extent that motives can be identified to change in particular ways with the passage of time or experience, procedures can potentially be tailored to track those changes and keep donors satisfied throughout their donation careers.

### **What satisfies donor motivation?**

To attempt an answer to this question, it will be helpful to reduce the pantheon of possible donor motivations to only two types. Taking a deep breath, let us call these two types of motivation ‘altruistic’ and ‘egoistic.’<sup>1</sup> As with Feeney and Collins’s (2003) *love, concern, and interdependence* motive, an altruistic motive *essentially* ‘aims at’ bringing about improved welfare for someone or something other than the donor (Batson, 1987, 1990). For satisfaction of an altruistic motive, other-benefit is *necessary*: satisfaction of an altruistic motive cannot happen without other-benefit occurring. Helping ensure other-benefit is what brings satisfaction of an altruistic motive and therefore satisfaction to an altruistically motivated person (Batson et al., 1995; Batson & Moran, 1999; Eisenberg et al., 1989; Simon et al., 2000; Wallach & Wallach, 1991). An egoistic motive, by contrast, has as its only *essential* aim the achievement or protection of the donor’s welfare. Bringing about other-benefit may sometimes be situationally required to satisfy egoistic goals, but such requirement is only ever *contingent*: to be abandoned without regret if a more convenient method of obtaining self-satisfaction becomes available. Unless strategically required on a given occasion, other-satisfaction forms no necessary part of satisfying an egoistic goal.

To illustrate, two women may want to buy a copy of *The Big Issue*. One is altruistically motivated to give money to improve the welfare of homeless people. The other is egoistically motivated by a desire to read an article headlining the front-page. At this stage, each needs to give money to a *Big Issue* vendor. However, each comes across a copy of the latest *Big Issue* discarded on the bus. The motive of the former woman is not satisfied; the motive of the latter woman is. Giving money to help the homeless was *necessary* to satisfy the first woman’s motive, but only *contingent* (i.e., situationally) required for satisfying the motive of the second woman. Similar scenarios can be painted for any pair of motives, e.g., being egoistically motivated to preserve a sense of ‘being a good person’ by insisting on ‘helping’ no matter what the circumstances, versus being altruistically motivated to genuinely improve another’s welfare, which sometimes requires *not* intervening (Sibicky et al., 1995).

### **What can charities offer?<sup>2</sup>**

Charities can offer satisfaction of egoistic goals, altruistic goals, or both.

Attempting to satisfy donors’ egoistic goals requires negotiating an exchange relationship: “You give us what we want (i.e., your money, time, blood, etc.) and we’ll give you what you want (e.g., a trek to Peru, a clean conscience, to be left alone, etc.)” In these circumstances, charities treat their potential benefactors as consumers or customers. For charities in an exchange relationship with their donors, the nature of each party’s ‘essential’ goals is of relevance only insofar as (i) each party needs to

know what the other wants and how much (or how little) they wish to receive in order to make trade possible, and (ii) joint satisfaction of each party's 'true' goals must be possible. In such circumstances, charities and their customers each try to 'make a profit' by 'buying low and selling high,' especially when dealing with commodities valued by both parties, e.g., money or material goods. Charities adopting an exchange relationship are likely also to adopt marketing strategies, such as consumer research ("What can we sell to whom at what profit?"); market segmentation ("How can we best sell to different groups of customers?"); balancing the costs of keeping existing donors with those of attracting new donors ("Should we focus on fostering client loyalty or extending our client base?"); and a range of measures to improve the distinctiveness and attractiveness of the charity and what it does relative to the nature and activities of other charities ("How can we brand our products to increase our visibility and take some of the market share from our main competitors?"). To the extent that charities offer exchange relationships with their customers, they are likely to treat themselves as businesses, hire expensive staff if 'the bottom line' justifies it, and design revenue-attracting strategies on much the same basis.

It is possible to try and satisfy donors' altruistic goals via exchange relationships. Here, what is on sale is a particular result, i.e., improvements in the welfare of whomever or whatever donors wish to see helped. Organisations offering exchange 'deals' to bring such results about need *not* be perceived to share the donors' altruistic goals. Donors may suspect that charities' professional fundraisers are more concerned with meeting targets than they are about trying to improve the welfare of the charities' supposed beneficiaries, or that the C.E.O.s care only about getting on the Honours List. Nevertheless, if a charity offering an exchange relationship promises the best possible 'return on their investment' (i.e., by most effectively improving *other*-welfare with the resources to hand), altruists may voluntarily support such a charity. Even when they know this is practically the best thing to do for those they care about, however, altruistically motivated donors are likely to be disappointed that the charity does not seem to share their view about what matters *most*.

It is also possible for charities to attempt satisfaction of donors' altruistic motives within communal relationships. Each party in a communal relationship wants for the other parties what those other parties want for themselves. This can happen because a communal relationship stemmed initially from shared goals, or because a communal relationship emerged for other reasons and, over time, parties within the relationship adopted each other's goals as their own. With respect to altruistic charitable giving, the former is more common. To the extent that people *want* to help others, they tend to seek communal relationships with charities that share their aims and who make achievement of their common goals possible. For charities in communal relationships with their donors, the goals of their supporters are of paramount importance, as the charities' *raison d'être* are identical with those goals. "Supporters" is a much better word than "customers" for donors in communal relationships with charities. Supporters believe that the charities they support share their ambitions and the donors wish to literally support the charity in furthering their common aims. Rather than marketing, the model or metaphor for charities in communal relationships with their donors is one of facilitation, either by leadership, by service, or both. Donors are a resource to be nurtured and made best use of rather than 'exploited:' colleagues rather than customers.

The importance of the distinction being made is that it presents charities with a choice. To the extent that the nature of the charity and the field in which it operates are such that the endeavour is supported, charities can offer and accept exchange relationships with donors. In such a situation, standard techniques of marketing can be employed to improve the recruitment, retention, and effectiveness of donors, just as in any commercial enterprise. To the extent that the nature of the charity or the field in which it operates are such that an endeavour of this type is not supported (or cannot be sustained), charities can offer and accept communal relationships with their supporters. Conditions unsupportive of 'standard' business practices might come about if a particular charity did not feel a marketing approach was consistent with its stated aims or code of practice, or if supporters of the charity would not respond well to such an approach, or if the context in which the charity operated was such that 'free market economics' was inappropriate or ineffective relative to an available alternative strategy.

### **Charities offering exchange relationships**

Donors' egoistic motives can be a powerful source of capital - social or material (Batson, 1994; Batson, Ahmad, & Tsang, 2002). To the extent that charities offer deals to customers that satisfy the customers' desires and make a profit for the charities, business will boom and everyone will be happy.

However, there are several limitations potentially associated with charities offering exchange relationships.

*It's a buyers' market.* There is a finite pool of potential donors to charity, but there are many, many places for them to 'shop.' Whether a charity is offering a t-shirt, a place in the New York marathon, an outside chance of winning a lottery, or a way of feeling good about oneself for 'doing one's bit,' it is likely that there are at least several other charities offering very similar deal – or perhaps more attractive ones.

*Donors' motives can be fickle.* In a buyers' market, donors hold all of the 'purchasing power.' To the extent that people donate to charity only when it is in their own perceived best interest to do so, they can stop 'buying' from a particular source at will, for any reason and at any time. Maybe they get bored of their current 'shopping' patterns. Maybe their desires change. Maybe they take offence at the perceived attitude or conduct of the people they are 'buying' from. Maybe they get carried away with a new fashion that encourages 'shopping' elsewhere, or on something else. And so on. If any of these things happen, donors have almost complete freedom to 'buy' from a different charitable 'supplier' or to simply stop 'shopping' in the charitable market altogether.

*Exchange relationships are often cold and competitive.* As mentioned above, in exchange relationships, both charities and customers will be tempted constantly to try and maximize their yield-to-investment ratio. If charities can get the same 'return' on lower investments, or can get a better return for the same resources invested elsewhere, customers expecting continuation of the 'good deals' they previously received from their favourite charities had better watch out. Will the charities care about costs of altered business practices for their existing 'regular customers'? The

answer is that they will care only to the extent that they worry about long-term or unpredicted effects on their 'profit' margin. Fair's fair, though. If donors can alter 'transactions' to improve their own yield-to-investment ratio, they will be similarly tempted to care little about the effects of this on their erstwhile 'business partners.' Moreover, both charities and donors know it is a buyers' market, so charities are under pressure to invest in customer loyalty, while donors can walk away at any time. Even when they stay, donors are likely to remain suspicious and constantly on the alert for evidence that charities are 'taking advantage' of them or inappropriately 'neglecting' their needs.

*Donors can be intolerant.* Given that it is a buyers' market, donors can afford to have high expectations of the charities they 'trade' with. Any sign that they are 'buying' a shoddy 'product' or are 'buying' from a disreputable (e.g., inefficient, dishonest, etc.) 'dealer' and they can terminate the 'business agreement' in an instant.

*Aggressive sales techniques can backfire.* In a buyers' market, buyers not only want the freedom to make their own choice of 'purchases,' they demand it. High-pressure 'sales' techniques may be effective for as long as it is in the buyers' interests to pay to be left alone, but often not for much longer. Thus, donors may pay 'protection money' to escape from the street-collector and the doorstep campaigner, just as they may buy temporary freedom from the sense of guilt or duty elicited by the poignant begging letter or poster, but they are unlikely to do so graciously or happily. As soon as the immediate pressure is off, donors are likely to try and escape from such personally distressing situations and prevent their recurrence. Even when donors think of themselves as manipulated into binding long-term donation schemes and lack the wherewithal to stop them, their evaluation of the 'successful' charity (and perhaps of "charity" itself) is likely to have become somewhat more jaded - perhaps from an already unenviable baseline.

*Donors can be evasive.* Donors seeking exchange relationships are happy as long as the exchange is working in their favour. If the cost of 'giving' appears too high, however, donors have a range of effective strategies at their disposal that they can use to avoid or disengage from unattractive commitments. Shaw et al. (1994), for example, demonstrate how people will avoid feeling empathy for a needy other in order to avoid consequent engagement in high-cost helping. If people cannot escape noticing a seemingly 'high-cost' deal, though, Bandura (1991, 1999; Bandura et al., 1996, 2001) provides a long list of strategies that people can use to downplay or eliminate commitment to it (see also Anderson, 2003; Bersoff, 1999; Epley & Dunning, 2000; Garcia et al., 2002; Schwartz & Howard, 1981; Simon, Greenberg, & Brehm, 1995; Yun, 1998).<sup>3</sup> These strategies include *moral justification* (e.g., "One should not encourage begging"), *euphemistic language* (e.g., "I am encouraging self-sufficiency"), *advantageous comparison* (e.g., "I do more than most people"), *displacement of responsibility* (e.g., "This sort of thing it the government's responsibility"), *diffusion of responsibility* (e.g., "The responsibility is not mine alone"), *disregarding the consequences of (in)action* (e.g., "So the charity will have to make do with a smaller entertainment budget"), *dehumanisation* (e.g., "These sorts of people are beyond help"), and *victim blaming* (e.g., "If they didn't keep having civil wars, they wouldn't need help"). Bringing some order to this sprawl of strategies, Bandura helpfully organises them into categories according to whether cognitive reconstrual is focused on the avoidant donor's behaviour, the avoidant donor's

relationship with the needy other, the consequences of the avoidant donor's action (or inaction), or the characteristics of the needy other. Dr. Sally Hibbert's paper discusses in detail the use of similar strategies in coping with the self-esteem threat that may accompany reluctant givers' evasiveness (see also Newby-Clark et al., 2002).

To summarise this section, charities offering exchange relationships are likely to struggle to the extent that they are dealing in a harshly competitive market with potentially unpredictable customers who have little reason to develop brand loyalty. In these circumstances, charities may be tempted to engage potential donors with 'aggressive' marketing tactics that, although possibly successful in the short term, tend to be self-defeating in the longer term, not least because of damage to trust in the marketplace as a whole. Further, unless ways can be found to open new 'markets,' recruitment and retention of donors is likely to be a zero-sum game, such that one charity can obtain enhanced support only if a 'rival' charity loses an equivalent amount of support. This may lead to competition for 'business' between 'rival' charities that, in addition to doing nothing to extend the pool from which to recruit, is again likely to be self-defeating in undermining the attractiveness to donors of the 'market' itself and of all the players within it.

### **Charities offering communal relationships**

As well as or instead of exchanging goods with charities, donors can actively wish to support charities and the causes they promote. To the extent that donors feel themselves to be in communal relationships with charities, their gifts will be sincere. Because the focus of such donors is upon the goals they share with the charities they support, these donors will give in proportion to the importance they attribute to the shared goals and the perceived likelihood that their assistance is necessary and sufficient to satisfy those goals. Whereas the motives of people entering exchange relationships tend to be egoistic, the motives of people within communal relationships tend to be altruistic: other-benefit is essential for their satisfaction as opposed to being something to be wary about.

As long as communal relationships and altruistic motives stay strong, donors within these relationships are considerably less susceptible to the market forces described above. These donors are committed to the goals of the organisations they support and will tend to remain loyal as long as satisfactory progress towards shared goals continues, even at some cost to themselves (Clark & Grote, 1998; Fishbach et al., 2003; Snyder et al., 1999). Because they are satisfied and committed to those they are in communal relationships with, these donors will not easily be enticed away by other organisations claiming to offer bigger rewards *for them*. As importantly, people committed to benefiting others will often do so spontaneously and privately, as opposed to acting only when forced or enticed to do so (Moretti, & Higgins, 1999).

*Because* they care, committed donors may be critical of any seeming errors and transgressions made by charities and their officials, especially when those actions impact negatively on those all parties are attempting to assist. However, also because they care, they will be relatively unlikely to abandon their support of an organisation that is 'doing its best' when that best is good enough to make progress towards

satisfaction of the charity's and the donors' common principal goals (Sullivan, & Transue, 1999).

Donors in communal relationships are likely to be alert to aggressive marketing strategies employed by the charities they support. However, whereas donors in exchange relationships will worry about the possibility that such tactics may indicate that they are 'getting a raw deal,' donors in communal relationships are likely to worry about aggressive techniques because the use of such methods may act as a warning that either the charity-donor relationship or the charity-donor goals may not be as communal as the donors previously thought (Skitka et al., 2002). Specifically, communal donors may worry that aggressive tactics by charities indicate that the charity is in fact offering an exchange relationship and is trying to exploit its supporters to its own ends which may *not* be focused primarily on improving the welfare of the charity's stated intended beneficiaries (Camacho et al., 2003; Freedman et al., 1992; Reeder et al., 2002). However, to the extent that charities can 'justify' such strategies to their supporters as compatible with both communal relationships and communal goals, fears will be allayed and support will continue unabated (Finkel et al., 2002; Shaw et al., 2003).

Related to all the above, mechanisms of avoidance and disengagement are likely to be used less readily and less often by donors committed to their charities' aims than they are by donors committed solely to improving their own welfare. In general, people tend to be suspicious of claims of altruism and are constantly on the look out for indications that supposedly other-serving behaviour is simply egoism in disguise. In certain circumstances, people are ready to attribute egoistic reasons; particularly for others' prosocial behaviour, but also even for their own genuinely altruistic actions (Batson et al., 1987; Batson & Thomas, 1981; Miller, 1999; Miller & Ratner, 1998; Ratner & Miller, 2001). Altruists are likely to constantly self-monitor their motives and be suspicious of any supposed 'rationale' for non-helping. They will tend *not* to accept the first excuse for non-donation they can think of, but will deliberate on the pros and cons for all interested parties of both donation and non-donation. For the altruistically motivated, pros and cons for those whose welfare they value are factored into their own cost-benefit analysis (Cialdini et al., 1997; Clark & Mills, 1993; Clark et al., 1986; Davies et al., 1996; Feeney & Collins, 2001; Keller et al., 1998; Perugini & Galluci, 2001; Romer et al., 1986; Schoenrade et al., 1986; Smith & Henry, 1996; Van Lange & Semin-Goossens, 1998; Williamson & Clark, 1989; Williamson et al., 1996; Wit & Kerr, 2002). People committed to exchange relationships, however, will tend to use *any* excuse to back out of relationships in which the personal costs to them increase: indeed, the cost to them will *be* the 'excuse' (Saucier et al., 2005).

Not only will altruistically motivated donors be less susceptible to withdrawal when help is needed, they are also relatively likely to be eager to notice occasions when helping is a possibility. Because they think of helping as an *opportunity* to further their essential goal of improving others' welfare, as opposed to thinking of it as an *inconvenience* that is necessary on occasion to improve their own welfare, the altruistically inclined will be 'primed' to spot and to exploit helping possibilities rather than 'primed' to avoid the inconvenience of potentially having to 'pay more' for their happiness.

### Fostering altruistic motives

From an individual charity's point of view, offering exchange relationships with donors will be an effective strategy when they have something with high market value that they can sell at a profit; when there is a sufficient customer base to sell to; and when these conditions seem likely to stay stable into the future. This will be easier to achieve for some charities than it is for others, but may in any case be detrimental to the sector as a whole if donors come to view charities *generally* as dealing primarily in exchange relationships, especially if the public finds such a view distasteful (cf. Wright, 2002).

Arguably, individual charities and the charitable sector as a whole would benefit from fostering both altruistic motives among their donors and communal relationships with them. Not only would this promote more committed and resilient donors, the sector as a whole would be less likely to be thought of as full of self-interested, rather grubby, businesses, operating in the interests of their 'shareholders' rather than those of their supporters or supposed intended beneficiaries.

The main step involved in fostering donors' altruistic motives is to encourage a connection between their own psychological wellbeing and the perceived welfare of others. Rather than donors' satisfaction being dependent solely on their own experiences and outcomes (as in exchange relationships), donors' self-satisfaction needs to become (or remain) dependent on perceptions of *others'* experiences and outcomes. Three methods of fostering such connections can briefly be described for illustration: empathy, commonality, and responsibility.

Although intense arguments rage about the exact process by which it happens, no one doubts that feeling empathy for another person fosters a sense of caring about their fate which, in turn, fosters an inclination to provide help under certain conditions. There are several techniques by which empathy may be manufactured or enhanced. One of the most reliable is perspective taking. If one imagines how someone else feels in the situation they are in, this will tend to evoke empathy. Although imagining how you would feel in their circumstances may be important in enabling you to imagine how they feel, it is imagining how *they* feel that is the crucial step (Batson et al., 1997, 2003). When Warren and Walker (1991) attempted to increase charitable giving by manipulating empathy with needy others, their failure to do so may well have been due in part to the fact that they encouraged potential donors to imagine themselves in the needy other's situation – rather than imagining how the needy other felt. Nevertheless, if a person can be encouraged to take the perspective of another in need and that person is in a position to help, they are likely to do so – even at considerable costs to themselves. This is one of the most robust findings in experimental social psychology (Batson, 1991, 1998).

Fostering commonality between people can lead each to want to improve the welfare of the others. Again, several mechanisms may be used to achieve this, although in general terms most of these can be explained in terms of fostering a 'social identity.' Once again leaving to one side intense debates and a few complicating factors, the idea here is that people can come to think of themselves as members of a common group and care about each other *because* they each care about the common group

(Cialdini et al., 1997; Cole & Stewart, 1996; Hirt et al., 1992; Levine et al., 2005; Platow et al., 1999; Simon et al., 1998, 2000; Witt & Kerr, 2002).

A sense of responsibility can also form the sort of connection with another that will lead to helping in certain situations. Such a sense of responsibility may operate interpersonally, where one individual feels directly responsible for another individual, e.g., because of a relationship between them, but it may also occur indirectly. In the latter case, people feel psychologically invested in groups, organisations or abstract ideals (e.g., moral, political, or religious ones) that in turn prescribe responsibility towards particular others (Britt, 1999; Boninger et al., 1995; Schlenker et al., 1994).

It should be explicitly noted that from an individual charity's point of view, it matters little whether its donors feel connected directly to the charity (such as can happen when people feel grateful for past assistance received from the charity) or directly with the intended beneficiary of the charity. As long as the charity's actions are commensurate with its donors' altruistic motives, each form of connection will tend to promote and reinforce the other.

### **Fostering altruistic donors**

Everyone feels altruistic sometimes. However, the occasional altruistic impulse in reaction to strong situational demands is of limited use (Farsides, 1999). Charities will benefit in direct proportion to how often donors feel altruistic (towards them or those they serve), how strongly they feel it, and how effectively they turn altruistic inclinations into altruistic actions.

Perhaps the best way to foster altruistic donors - people with enduring and generalised altruistic inclinations – is to foster altruistic identities (Froming et al., 1998). The basic idea is to encourage people to think of themselves as 'the sort of people who care about the welfare of others and who will help them in given circumstances.'<sup>4</sup> Although particular charities might think it in their own best interest to foster caring about a particular recipient (i.e., themselves or the specific others they serve), development of an altruistic personality usually develops most naturally and most effectively with an ever-expanding circle of moral regard, such that people help an increasing number of others with a decreasing amount of discrimination amongst them on morally-irrelevant criteria (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Batson, Chang, et al., 2002; Batson, Polycarpou, et al., 1997; Dovidio et al., 1997; Grube & Piliavin, 2002; Hart & Fegley, 1995; Levy et al., 2002; Monroe, 1998; Reed & Aquino, 2003). As people's altruistic identities become more deeply integrated into their sense of self and increasingly less discriminatory in promoting other-help in appropriate circumstances, they become increasingly likely to perceive situations as ones in which helping is appropriate and increasingly less willing to avoid helping when helping is relatively costly and excuses to avoid helping appear readily available (Colby & Damon, 1992; Son Hing et al., 2002; Verplanken & Holland, 2002).

In brief, altruistic identities may be fostered via exposure to positive role models, having respected others express demanding but realistic prosocial expectations for one's treatment of others, being treated fairly and appreciatively by others, feeling that one is able to pursue one's goals successfully, and by engaging in helping

behaviour that one comes to think of as altruistically motivated (Bandura, 1991; Berkowitz, & Grych, 1998; Lee et al., 1999). As one receives increasing amounts of factors such as these, altruistic identities become increasingly central, accessible and valued, and altruistic behaviour becomes increasingly automatic or habitual (Wood et al., 2002). By contrast, the absence or inverse of factors such as these can undermine altruistic identities. Readers are invited at this point to consider how well exchange and communal relations each are at providing the conditions listed at the start of this paragraph.

When altruistic identities are beginning to be formed or are still immature, the attributions one makes for one's own behaviour and for the behaviour of others can be crucial (Deci & Ryan, 1987; Albarracín & Wyer, 2000). When one is unsure why an action has occurred, one looks for 'clues.' An important clue is information from other people. Miller et al. (1975) found that children who were frequently told they were tidy became and stayed tidier – even when the children themselves initially – and accurately – argued that they were *not*, in fact, always tidy. By contrast, students who were encouraged to be tidy via a threats-and-rewards system did not become any tidier than before. Batson et al. (1978) found 'buying kindness' to be just as ineffective in trying to promote altruistic behaviour. Similarly, Batson et al. (1979) found that people encouraged to attribute their helping behaviour to compliance with external demands were subsequently much less helpful than people encouraged to attribute identical behaviour to internal altruistic tendencies. This is not to say that compliance is always detrimental to developing altruism. Research into 'mandatory volunteering' suggests that what matters is whether people feel *forced* into helping others or whether they feel they have been given an *opportunity* to help others. In the former case, altruism is likely to decrease *except* for those people already strongly motivated to bring about improved welfare for others (i.e., 'by any means'). In the latter case, altruism is likely to increase *except* among those people who almost certainly would not have helped anyway (Kochanska, 2002; Mewtz & Youniss, 2003; Pratt et al., 2003; Stukas et al., 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1999).

Not everyone who espouses the virtues of altruism has a firmly established altruistic identity and having an altruistic identity does not guarantee especially altruistic behaviour. Some people, however unknowingly and unintentionally, are simply hypocrites: preaching the virtues of altruism but helping others only when they perceive it to be in their own best interest to do so (Batson et al., 1997; Batson Thompson, & Chen, 2002; Batson, Thompson, et al., 1999).<sup>5</sup> For other people, altruistic attitudes are genuinely present but have not yet been internalised as part of the self-concept. People in this situation may have their altruistic identities strengthened by being encouraged to examine and deliberate upon the reasons they have for those attitudes, particularly when they have lots of evidence at their disposal that they have genuinely acted altruistically, i.e., have not been helping others merely because of oppressive outside influence. When done successfully, this will help 'protect' altruistic identities against future challenges (e.g., accusations of selfishness, pressures to act non-altruistically, etc.; Baron & Spranca, 1997; Maio & Olson, 1998; Maio et al., 2001; Schlenker et al., 2001; see also Aronson et al., 1991; Stone et al., 1994, 1997).

### Implications for charities

Charities have a choice of fostering exchange or communal relationships with their donors. Although there are exceptions, it seems broadly true that these forms of relationship are mutually exclusive. Requests for communal treatment from someone with an exchange mentality will probably be met with suspicion and potentially will be met with offence. “What’s in it for me?” is the most likely response. Offers of exchange with someone who has a communal orientation will probably be met by offence and potentially will be met with suspicion. Here, the most likely response is something like, “I thought we were working together on this.” Using one ‘language’ with someone with the alternative orientation will make that person worry about hidden agendas and fear that the other party is trying to take advantage of them.

For reasons outlined in or derivable from the points above, it seems probable that charities would do well to foster altruistic identities among and communal relations with their supporters. There are three related practical implications. First, charities would do well not to *assume* that their supporters are essentially egoistic (see Ames et al., 2004). Second, charities should do all they can to encourage their supporters to explain those supporters’ actions in altruistic terms. Third, charities should do all they can to avoid undermining supporters explaining their own actions in altruistic terms. This does not mean a total expulsion of all ‘exchange talk.’ Charities can acknowledge that people have many reasons for doing what they do and that reasons change over time, place, situation, etc. They can also point out the many benefits to donors of their donations (e.g., Brown et al., 2003). Nevertheless, charities should take every opportunity they can to indicate that at least part of the reason their supporters do what they do is that they genuinely want to help others (Kiviniemi et al., 2002). Similarly, charities do not have to stop giving things of value to their supporters, either material (e.g., free parachute jumps) or psychological (e.g., praise and esteem). Again, all that is required is that charities make clear that these are not provided as bribes offered to motivate exchange. Instead, they are provided as gifts: expressions of thanks and acknowledgements of selflessness on the part of donors – actions entirely compatible with a communal relationship in which one regularly enjoys the freely given gifts of others (Deci et al., 1999).

Charities also need to be perceived to exemplify the characteristics they find attractive in their supports. They need to be clear that helping their intended beneficiaries is their primary goal and that everything they do is intended to further this aim. When this seems to necessitate actions that might be perceived in another light, charities need to convey the truth as they see it to all interested parties (Folkes & Whang, 2003). Many actions that seem to some to be inappropriate for charities can be easily and honestly justified in altruistic terms. That said, other activities may not be so easily explained away. In particular, being perceived as coercing donors is likely to be seen as indicating both a lack of altruistic intent and the antithesis of a communal relationship. Appearing to treat people *solely* as a means to an end - however worthy that end - may seem to many to be indicative of an exclusive focus on charities’ own (i.e., egoistic) goals and a disregard for others’ needs (i.e., it may be perceived as non-altruistic and non-communal). Aggressively competing with other charities for support is likely to be perceived in a similar way. Charities that present themselves as communal and altruistic and then become perceived as egoistic and duplicitous are likely to seriously undermine altruism and commitment to charities generally.

Most people want to help others and charities might be well advised to offer them that opportunity – and to present it as such.

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<sup>1</sup> More accurately, the main distinction drawn is between motives that are at least *partially* altruistic and motives that are *wholly* egoistic. A person with an altruistic motive is motivated to bring about other-benefit. If that goal is achieved, the person will experience satisfaction, and it is the anticipation of such satisfaction that motivates the behaviour. The latter fact compels some thinkers to say that such partially altruistic acts are 'ultimately' egoistic. So they are. Crucially, though, satisfaction of altruistic motives *necessarily* requires perceived other-benefit: the former could not happen without the latter. The main contrast drawn here is between such motives and *wholly* egoistic ones, for which other-welfare is only ever – at best – *contingently* required for satisfaction. A person with wholly egoistic goals is truly motivated only to bring about self-benefit. Even if this requires that another must be helped to make such self-benefit possible in the circumstances, other-benefit will only ever be properly understood as instrumental to self-benefit.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term "charities" here extremely broadly, to include all organisations attempting to either receive donations from or to deal at a profit with other people.

<sup>3</sup> Strictly speaking, potential customers in an exchange relationship should have no need to engage in rationalisation strategies such as those listed here. In a completely free market, potential customers can refuse any deal they find unattractive without any need to justify themselves to themselves or to other people. However, one of the things charities offer is relief from the guilt that many potential customers may be prone to (where their goal is to have their guilt relieved, not *necessarily* because of an improved situation for anyone else). Again, Sally Hibbert deals with such issues in more detail in her paper.

<sup>4</sup> Note that what altruists care about is the welfare of others, not (directly) the judged adequacy of their own private or public 'altruistic identity.' Although they will usually care about their altruistic identity as well (as a means of monitoring and regulating other-service), it is other-welfare that most directly motivates them and brings them pleasure.

<sup>5</sup> This is consonant with the common finding that people often have positive general attitudes towards helping others but do little or nothing themselves to provide help (e.g., Farsides, 2000).