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The Effect of Message Framing and Gender on the Likelihood of Donating Money to the
John Carroll University 'Carroll Fund'

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Abstract

Message framing is a strategy many campaign marketers use to make their donating recruitment more effective, and there is a growing interest in research regarding their effectiveness (Buda & Zhang, 2000; Chang 2007; Chang & Lee, 2009, 2010; Das et al., 2008). Several different types of message framing have been investigated in prior research on charitable giving including positive versus negative message-framing and egoistic versus altruistic message-framing. Prior research on applying Kahneman and Tversky's Prospect Theory (1981) on positive and negative message framing to charitable donations has indicated negative message-framing is more effective than positive message-framing for securing donations (Chang & Lee, 2009). Additionally, research on the egoistic versus altruistic framing effects has focused on gender differences, and has found that men respond more favorably egoistic message-appeals, whereas women respond more favorably to altruistic message-appeals (Hall, 2004; Shelley & Polonsky, 2002; as cited by Chang & Lee, 2011). Overall, altruistic appeals have been found to be more effective than egoistic appeals. This experiment attempted to replicate these findings and utilized a positive/negative frame manipulation and an altruistic/egoistic manipulation to test whether prior research for charitable giving is applicable to current undergraduate students' probability of donating to their university's scholarship fund. Contrary to previous research, the results found a significant effect for positive message-framing, as well as, a significant interaction between gender and altruistic framing with females being more likely to give than males when presented with an altruistic message-frame.

Keywords: Message-framing, positive, negative, altruistic, egoistic, gender, donation, charitable giving

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Non-profit organizations (NPOs) rely on charitable giving from individuals to stay afloat, and thus they use significant resources to advertise their organization’s mission statement and attempt to convince individuals to support their organization with a financial contribution or gift. In recent years, however, significant growth in the charity sector and decreasing amount of financial support for the sector has made fundraising and advertising to potential donors increasingly challenging (Bendapudi, Singh, & Bendapudi, 1996; NCVO, 1999; Pharoah & Tanner, 1997; as cited by Kottasz, 2004). Prior research on advertising for NPOs fundraising has often pertained to persuasive techniques such as research on the foot-in-the door-phenomenon (Chartrand, Pinckert, & Burger, 1999), or the effect of request characteristics such as donation amount size (Weyant & Smith, 1987). Additionally, a majority of research on fundraising messages has focused “mainly on convincing the public that the charity strives for a worthy and important cause (p.170)” (e.g., Burt & Strongman, 2004; Kopfman, Smith, Ah Yun, & Hodges, 1998; as cited by Das, Kerkhof, & Kuiper, 2008) More recently, however, research has begun to shift towards understanding the motivations for charitable giving, and how this knowledge can be incorporated into donation requests. One of the primary forms of this research is related to investigating how a donation request is presented and framed to a targeted individual, and how it may influence the individual’s likelihood of donating. For my project, I plan to contribute to this existing body of research on message framing, and investigate the effect that two different types of message frames and various participant characteristics have on an individual’s likelihood to make a financial donation to a NPO. More specifically, my project will investigate the likelihood

of a John Carroll University undergraduate student to make a future financial donation to the institution's scholarship fund.

Message framing refers to the concept of influencing an individual's thoughts or emotions about a given issue by encouraging or forcing the individual to view or think about the issues in a certain way (Chang & Lee, 2010). One form of message framing consists of framing the appeal in either a negative or a positive way. In the context of supporting John Carroll's scholarship fund, an appeal for a donation could be presented in a gain-frame scenario that highlights the benefits gained by giving. For example, a positively framed appeal would highlight the opportunity to receive benefits such as feeling better about oneself, or enhancing one's degree. However, an appeal for supporting the fund could also take a negative frame, which would highlight the opportunities lost by not donating. For example, a negative message-framing appeal would focus on losing the opportunity to help a student in need or losing the opportunity to be recognized by the school. Research on gain-versus-loss message framing has been ongoing for several decades, with some of the most notable research conducted within the framework of Prospect Theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1981).

Kahneman & Tversky investigated the effects of gain and loss message-framing, and how two equivalent statements can produce two different interpretations and reactions based upon their presentation. For example, in his book *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Kahneman (2011) discusses an experiment illustrating the effects of message framing on participants' decision making. The participants were told to imagine that they received 50 Euro. They were then told to choose between a sure outcome of keeping a certain portion of the 50 Euro, or to agree to a gamble that gave the participant equal odds of either keeping the full 50 Euro or losing it all (Kahneman, 2011). The 'sure outcome' option was framed to each participant in one of two

equivalent frames. The participant was either told they had a sure outcome of ‘keeping’ 20 of the 50 Euro or ‘losing’ 30 of the 50 Euro. In this experiment and many other replications, the participants consistently chose the sure outcome when presented with a ‘keep’ message frame, and chose to gamble when presented with the ‘lose’ message framing. This outlines the basic tenant of the prospect theory that states “decision makers tend to prefer the sure thing of the gamble (they are risk averse) when the outcomes are good, and they tend to reject the sure thing and accept the gamble (they are risk seeking) when both outcomes are negative” (p. 369, Kahneman & Tversky, 1981). The current project will investigate whether Prospect Theory is applicable to the realm of charitable giving, by studying whether a gain-frame (positive-frame) or a loss-frame (negative-frame) donation request has a significant impact on an individual’s likelihood to donate. In regards to gift solicitation, giving to the scholarship fund in the pursuit of either helping oneself or helping others would be conceptually analogous to the ‘risky behavior’ in this scenario, and according to Prospect Theory, a negative message framing typically encourages risk-taking behaviors more than positive message framing.

Further research on gain-framing and loss-framing in relation to charitable giving has produced interesting results that not only support Prospect Theory, but also investigated moderating factors that may affect the effectiveness of the request. For example, Burnkrant & Sawyer (1983) claimed negatively framed messages encouraged more elaborate processing of the appeal as the consumer is confronted with the potential for negative consequences which are highlighted by the negative appeal. This increased the consumers’ state of arousal and processing as they attempt to think of what actions are necessary to avoid these negative consequences. Research by Shiv, Edell, & Payne (1997), however, supported the notion that negatively framed appeals were more effective if the information presented was not elaborately processed, but

found that positively framed appeals were more effective when the participants elaborately processed the appeal. These findings seem to indicate that although positive message-frames are more effective than negative frames when the information presented is processed elaborately, negative message-frames are more effective at triggering that extensive processing. Additionally, research by Das, Kerkhof, & Kuiper (2008) found that an individual's perception of how valuable their contribution is to the charity is also an important factor that can alter the likelihood of an individual to give, and it is possible that positively and negatively framed requests alter this perception. Despite the apparent impact that outside factors such as the level of processing can have on an individual's reception of a donation request, Prospect Theory has been consistently supported in research regarding everything from charitable giving to health-behavior change requests. Therefore, my hypothesis is that negative message framing will be more effective than positive message framing in regards to gift solicitation. It is possible that the positive or negative frame may have an interaction with one of the other independent variables such as gender, or framing conditions (discussed below), which could produce results contrary to the hypothesis.

The second type of message-framing that my project will investigate is a framing distinction often associated with charitable giving, as it deals with the altruistic motivations behind making a donation versus the egoistic motivations behind making a donation. In the context of supporting the John Carroll alumni fund, a donation request could have an altruistic frame that focuses on the communal benefits of giving, and how and the community will be strengthened by students receiving the support they need. On the other hand, the message could also have an egoistic frame, which would center on direct benefits to the person donating such as gaining recognition from the school and community, or potentially raising the value of their own college degree.

Research on this type of message framing has been inconclusive as well. According to the research, “although altruistic appeals are in general more effective than egoistic appeals (Brunel & Nelson, 2000; Fisher, Vandenbosch, & Antia, 2008), their relative effects may differ depending on individual (Brunel & Nelson, 2000), cultural (Nelson et al., 2006), and situational (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998; White & Peloza, 2009) characteristics” (p. 212, Chang 2014). For example, research by Chang (2014) found that the effectiveness of an altruistic or egoistic request depends upon the level of guilt and association that the individual feels towards the situation. The results indicated that individuals were more likely to respond to an egoistic appeal if their level of guilt in relation to the charity or organization was high. Additionally, researchers found that the presentation of both an altruistic and an egoistic appeal was less effective than providing either an altruistic appeal or a egoistic appeal separately, given that it made the participant more aware of a persuasion attempt (Feiler, Tost, & Grant, 2012). Given the research on the relation to guilt and the effectiveness of an egoistic appeal, I hypothesize that an altruistic donation request will be more likely to influence participants to donate, as their guilt towards the donation fund would be low. Additionally, prior research discussed above supports altruistic appeals as more effective than egoistic appeals, although it may also depend upon the participants’ gender (discussed below).

The final independent variable of primary interest for investigating how message-framing may influence an individual’s likelihood to donate is the gender of the participant. Prior research indicates that in developing countries women are more likely to donate money than men with 43.7% of women donating vs. 36.7% of men donating (World Giving Index, 2014). Additionally, research has investigated how males and females respond differently to altruistic and egoistic appeals. As stated in a study investigating gender roles with charitable appeals, “men tend to

have an egoistic disposition, which is characterized by personality traits such as independence and autonomy; they tend to give in order to enhance their own standing or maintain the status quo”, whereas “women, on the other hand, tend to show altruism, which is characterized by sympathy, understanding and sensitivity to others’ needs (Hall, 2004; Shelley & Polonsky, 2002; as cited by Chang & Lee, 2011). Further research by Lee and Chang (2007) in regard to monetary donations concluded that women are more likely to donate than men in situations where a monetary donation is requested. The prior research supports the notion that men are more likely to respond to egoistic appeals that target their agentic nature, whereas women are more likely to respond to altruistic appeals that target their communal nature. Given the prior research, my hypothesis is that women will be more likely to give than men, but that the egoistic appeals will influence more men to donate than women.

Although the previously mentioned study investigates the influence of gender roles on an individual’s likelihood to donate, the study investigated the interaction between message-framing and gender, as well as the level of self-referencing each participant undergoes. Instead of focusing on the self-reference effect as another independent variable, my project will investigate the interaction and potential influence of both egoistic and altruistic framing, as well as gain and loss framing on an individual’s likelihood to donate to the John Carroll scholarship fund. In addition to investigating participant characteristic effects, this study will investigate the interaction between gender roles and Prospect Theory on persuasive appeals for charitable donations.

It is especially important to investigate these framing effects on undergraduate students in relation to their own institution, as the individual’s relationship to the institution would simulate a more authentic environment. Research focused on the subjects’ own institution will hopefully

yield findings that can be considered by universities when targeting their own alumni network, rather than focus on the message-framing effects with a neutral non-profit organization.

While it is hypothesized that negatively framed egoistic messages will be most effective for men and that negatively framed altruistic messages will be most effective for women, there are several participant demographics and characteristics that will be investigated to understand any effect they may have on an individual's likelihood to donate. One such characteristic that could influence a participant's likelihood to donate has to do with to what extent the individual identifies as a member of the university's community, as well as the amount of self-referencing taking place. The concept of self-referencing refers to how individuals process information by relating it to the self-concept and making a personal connection to the information, which may influence an individual's likelihood to donate to that charity (Hupfer, 2006). While this project will not be manipulating a self-referencing variable in the various persuasive appeals, the level of self-referencing taking place with each participant with the school in general will be an important factor to consider and record. In order to investigate the impact of these other participant demographics and characteristics on an individual's likelihood to donate to the John Carroll Scholarship Fund, the participants of this study will be asked to complete a questionnaire which will illuminate various participant characteristics, as well as measure participants' level of identification with the university and likelihood to donate. Given prior research suggesting the effectiveness of egoistic frames with securing blood donations and the prior research on positive and negative framing with health related behaviors, I hypothesize that the most effective message frame for securing a donation to the John Carroll scholarship fund would be a negative altruistic frame that highlights the potential benefits that the participant will lose if he or she chooses not to donate to the scholarship fund. A summary of my hypotheses follows:

H1) Participants who receive the negative message-framing condition will be more likely to donate than participants who receive the positive message-framing condition

H2) Participants who receive the altruistic message-framing condition will be more likely to donate than participants who receive the egoistic message-framing condition

H3) Male participants who receive the egoistic message-framing condition will be more likely to donate than male participants who receive the altruistic message-framing condition

H4) Female participants who receive the altruistic message-framing condition will be more likely to donate than female participants who receive the egoistic message-framing condition

H5) Female participants will be more likely to donate than male participants

H6) Participants who receive the negative-altruistic appeal will be more likely to give than participants in any other message-framing condition.

Method

Participants

The participants for this study were undergraduate students recruited from John Carroll University. There were 92 participants in total (53 females, 39 males), aged 18 years or older and recruited from the Introductory Psychology experiment pool. Participants were informed they would be taking a short questionnaire titled “Supporting Scholarship”, and were compensated with experiment credit.

Measures

There were four measures. First, the principle dependent measure addressed the participants’ likelihood to donate to the Carroll Fund 10 years after graduation. The measure asked participants to rate the probability (0%-100%) that he or she will donate various dollar

amounts of \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, \$250, \$500, \$1000, \$2500, \$5000, and \$10000 (Appendix D). A frequency analysis on the total sum of these probabilities was used to analyze each individual's self-reported probability of donating in the future. Higher numbers indicate a higher likelihood of donating in the future. Second, a 7-point scale questionnaire item ranging from 1 (*not important*) to 7 (*very important*) measured the participant's self-rated level of identification with the university with the question, "how important is being a John Carroll student to you?" (Appendix E). The third measure was a questionnaire item asking the participant to predict the amount of debt they perceive to have upon graduation, and asked participants to choose between eight different estimated dollar ranges: \$0-\$4,999, \$5,000-\$9,999, \$10,000-\$14,999, \$15,000-\$19,999, \$20,000-\$29,999, \$30,000-\$39,999, \$40,000-\$49,999, and \$50,000 or more (Appendix F). The fourth measure was a questionnaire item asking the participant to indicate their gender as male or female. All four of these measures were created specifically for this experiment.

Procedure

After first reading detailed instructions about the task they would be completing (Appendix A), every participant was presented an image of John Carroll University with a brief statement describing the Carroll Fund's role in supporting scholarship and stressing the importance of financial contributions from alumni (Appendix B). The participant was then randomly assigned to one of four message framing conditions: (a) a positive egoistic frame, (b) a negative egoistic frame, (c) a positive altruistic frame, (d) or a negative altruistic frame (Appendix C). The altruistic conditions emphasize communal benefits of donating, whereas the egoistic conditions emphasize individual benefits of donating. The positive message framing conditions use a gain-frame approach and highlight the benefits and opportunities a person has to

choosing to donate, whereas the negative loss-frame condition emphasizes the opportunities an individual may lose or miss out on by choosing not to donate. For the positive egoistic condition, the participant would see an appeal stating, “If you choose to donate to Carroll Fund you *gain* the opportunity to raise the value of your degree, gain recognition amongst your peers, and feel good about yourself“, while the participant in the negative egoistic condition see an appeal stating, “If you choose to not donate to Carroll Fund you *lose* the opportunity to raise the value of your degree, gain recognition amongst your peers, and feel good about yourself”. For the positive altruistic condition, the participant would see an appeal stating, “If you choose to donate to Carroll Fund you *gain* the opportunity to help students in need, strengthen the John Carroll community, and invest in the next generation’s future” while those in the negative altruistic condition would see an appeal stating, “If you choose to not donate to the Carroll Fund you *lose* the opportunity to help students in need, strengthen the John Carroll community, and invest in the next generation’s future”.

After the participant acknowledges having read the message appeals, the program will proceed to a 16-item questionnaire which included questions on participant demographics such as gender and age, as well as the experimental dependent measure on probability of donating. The questionnaire also included the 7-point scale on self-identification with the university, and the item asking the participant his or her perceived debt upon graduation. Following the questionnaire, the participants will be presented an informational debriefing message explaining the study and thanking them for their participation (Appendix G).

Results

The frequency analysis on probability of giving various dollar amounts indicated a substantial change in frequency of giving after the \$100 amount levels, in which participants indicated very little to no probability that he or she would give \$250 or more to the Carroll Fund. Therefore, the analysis focused on the total sum of probabilities that a participant would give at least \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100. A 2 (Message Framing: positive, negative) x 2 (Framing: altruistic, egoistic) x 2 (Gender: male, female) Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted on the sum of individuals' probability of donating any amount between \$5 and \$100 dollars to the Carroll Fund. This analysis revealed a Message-Framing main effect, $F(1, 83) = 5.45, p = 0.02, \eta_p^2 = 0.06$. Contrary to the expectations of hypothesis 1, participants who read a positive message-frame were significantly more likely ($M = 402.77, SD = 20.69$) to donate to the Carroll Fund than participants who read a negative message frame ($M = 330.60, SD = 23.10$).

In regard to the second message-framing manipulation, the analysis revealed no main effect for altruistic and egoistic message framing, $F(1, 83) = 0.25, p = 0.62, \eta_p^2 = 0.003$. Contrary to the expectations of the hypothesis 2, participants who read an altruistic message-frame were not significantly more likely ($M = 358.90, SD = 21.73$) to donate to the Carroll Fund than participants who read an egoistic message-frame ($M = 374.46, SD = 22.12$).

For the variable of Gender, the analysis revealed a trend for gender main effect predicted in the hypothesis 5, $F(1, 83) = 2.74, p = 0.10, \eta_p^2 = 0.32$, suggesting that female participants were on average, ($M = 392.35, SD = 18.94$) substantially more likely to donate to the Carroll Fund than male participants ($M = 341.01, SD = 24.553$). Additionally, the analysis revealed an interaction between altruistic and egoistic message-framing and gender, $F(1, 83) = 4.05, p < 0.05, \eta_p^2 = 0.05$. In the egoistic message-frame condition, females did not have significantly

different probabilities ($M = 368.91$, $SD = 27.63$) of donating to the Carroll Fund than males ($M = 380.01$, $SD = 34.56$). However, as predicted in the hypothesis 4, when presented with an altruistic message-frame, females were significantly more likely ($M = 415.79$, $SD = 25.92$) than men ($M = 302.02$, $SD = 34.890$) to donate to the Carroll Fund (*See Figure 1*).

There was no evidence of an interaction between the positive/negative message framing and altruistic/egoistic message framing, $F(1, 83) = 1.10$, $p = 0.30$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.01$, and no evidence of any three way interaction between both framing conditions and gender, $F(1, 83) = 1.95$, $p = 0.17$, $\eta_p^2 = 0.02$. No other effects were significant.

A Pearson correlation analysis was performed on both the 7-point self-identification scale and the perceived debt upon graduation item with the dependent variable of the participants' likelihood to give at least \$5, \$10, \$25, \$50, or \$100. The analysis yielded a strong significant correlation between the participant's level of identification with the university, and the likelihood of giving to the Carroll Fund ($r = 0.44$, $p < 0.01$). No significant correlation was found between the participants' perceived debt upon graduation, and the likelihood of giving ($r = -0.13$, $p = 0.23$).

Discussion

This experiment was designed to study the effects of message framing (positive/negative and altruistic/egoistic) and gender on the likelihood to donate money to the John Carroll 'Carroll Fund'. Contrary to predictions, participants were significantly more likely to give when presented with the positive message frame than the negative message-frame, and that female participants were more likely to give when presented with the altruistic message-frame than the egoistic message-frame. It was also found that participants who strongly identified with the university were significantly more likely to give than participants who did not.

Hypothesis 1, which predicted negative message-framing would be more effective than positive message-framing based for soliciting donations, was not supported. This hypothesis was based on Kahneman & Tversky's Prospect Theory which states that individuals tend to be risk averse in response to positively framed messages and risk seeking in response to negatively framed messages (Kahneman & Tversky, 1981). One study supporting this theory and one of the primary models for this experiment was Chang & Lee's (2009) research on framing charity advertisements and Prospect Theory, where the experimenters created donation appeals for a charity focused on raising money to help reduce the issue of children's poverty. These researchers believed that "presenting outcomes that emphasize negative consequences, mistakes, or inertia may increase donors' sense of confronting guilt and responsibility, and may cause donors to be more concerned about loss aversion (p. 2913)", and thus more likely to donate in order to prevent these negative consequences (Chang & Lee, 2009). In other words, the researchers believed negative message framing would encourage the participant to make a donation in order to confront their guilt and prevent negative consequences.

In this experiment, it was expected that the prospective donation would be perceived as conceptually analogous to the risk, and thus the negative message-frame was predicted to encourage participants to seek the risk and increase their likelihood of donating. Additionally, it was expected that negative consequences described within donation appeals would encourage an individual to take the risk in order to prevent said consequences. The opposite effect occurred, however, as participants were significantly more likely to donate to the Carroll Fund when presented with a positive message frame than a negative message frame. It is possible that a donation to the Carroll Fund is not conceptually analogous to a risk.

One possible alternative for why this study did not replicate the results from Chang & Lee's (2009) experiment is that it is possible participants perceive the goals of the two different types of charities (UNICEF and the Carroll Fund) in different ways. For example, the Chang & Lee (2009) study had a positive versus negative message-framing design with an appeal framed around a donation to end fatal and famine stricken living conditions for children. Therefore, the negative message frames used in their experiments highlighted how a participant failing to donate would result in children continuing to live in hazardous conditions. The implications and consequences for failing to donate in this scenario are perceived as substantially more detrimental than the consequences of not donating to the Carroll Fund, with potential negative consequences such as 'prospective donor failing to gain recognition' from their peers or 'failing to invest in the next generation's future'. It is possible that participants in the current study did not perceive the negatively framed messages as having serious consequences, and therefore, did not feel the urge to prevent these negative consequences by taking the risk of donating. Without the guilt associated with failing to prevent seemingly detrimental consequences, the negative message-frame failed to influence participants' likelihood to donate.

A possible explanation for why positive message framing led to significantly higher probabilities of donating to the Carroll Fund is that the motivations for donating to a scholarship fund are drastically different than motivations for giving to prevent the death of impoverished children. If motivations for giving to two types of organizations are different, then participants may respond differently to varying types of appeals. It appears that the inherent nature of a scholarship fund compared to a poverty fund led participants to react differently than expected to the gain-frame and loss-frame scenarios. Participants may have responded more favorably to the positively framed appeal given the implications that a donation to the Carroll Fund is a proactive

and preemptive move, rather than reactive and responsive one. In other words, prospective donors were motivated by the opportunity to make a positive contribution or difference by donating, rather than simply the opportunity to prevent or avoid a negative consequence.

This may indicate that participants did not perceive the outcomes equally, and that the perceived positive impact of a potential donation to the Carroll Fund greatly outweighed the perceived negative impact of no donation at all. When considering the charity for the Chang & Lee (2009), participants responded favorably to the negative message-frame because of the implication that failure to donate would result in children continuing to live in impoverished and potentially fatal living conditions. This appeal invoked guilt from the participant and implied a responsibility to help prevent those negative consequences. The positive message-frame however, implied that donating would help to alleviate impoverished and potentially fatal living conditions that already exist. Generally speaking, people believe that safe living conditions and proper nourishment for children should be a standard, not a luxury. With this perspective in mind, a positively framed donation appeal to this charity offers the opportunity to give children these basic standards of living that were not already present. This appeal suggests that a donation to the charity will bring the benefit of helping children with absolutely nothing obtain the bare minimum that is necessary for survival and growth.

Given the nature of the Carroll Fund as focusing on offering scholarships, the perceived outcome of a donation is very different. For the Carroll Fund, some of the implications for failing to donate are that the participant may not receive praise from their peers, and that a student in need may not have the opportunity to receive an advanced education. This appeal failed to invoke the same type of guilt, extensive processing, and sense of responsibility for stopping these negative outcomes as the UNICEF appeal. The positive message-frame however, implied that

donating to the Carroll Fund could potentially result in praise and recognition from the school, as well as a bright student in need of financial support being given the opportunity for a quality education. Receiving praise from an individual's peer group and an individual receiving a college education are not necessarily considered a basic 'standard', but failing to attain these things is certainly not considered to be below basic standards of living. Thus, the positive message appeals for donations to the Carroll Fund succeeded in conveying potential benefits of donating, whereas the negative message appeals failed to convey or be perceived as legitimate negative outcomes worth taking action to avoid.

In the positive message-framing conditions, the UNICEF appeal offered the opportunity to help alleviate child poverty by helping to provide basic necessities to children far below the status quo for living standards within society. The nature of the charity combined with the positive message frame suggest that donating to this fund is helping to 'right' a social 'wrong' by giving poverty stricken children what all children need to survive. This appeal essentially offered the chance to help children living in unacceptable conditions a chance of leveling an already uneven playing field, and giving children the chances to live a normal life that they should have already been given. In the positive message-framing condition for the Carroll Fund however, the appeal offered the opportunity to make a difference or receive a benefit that was not already an expectation by society, but rather was an added bonus. As opposed to offering the chance to 'right' a social 'wrong' or achieving social normalcy through a donation, it is possible the positively framed appeal for the Carroll Fund offers a more concrete sense of positive impact or influence. Although participants may not have responded favorably to negative message frames due to a lack of perceived negative consequences or risk, it appears they may have responded favorably to the positive message-frames partly due to the opportunity to make a tangible and

concrete impact, and yield benefits for both the donor and charity that are not already fixed or expected. Another factor that could have affected the participants' interpretation and perception of the appeal was the second-message framing manipulation relating more to the motivations behind giving.

The second message-framing manipulation consisted of altruistic message-framing versus egoistic message-framing. It has generally been thought that individuals are motivated to donate to various organizations for the opportunity to accomplish two primary objectives: either benefit others, benefit themselves, or a mix of both. In order to investigate the motivations for a John Carroll undergraduate student to give ten years in the future, a message-framing manipulation was employed in which participants received a message-frame highlighting either egoistic benefits or altruistic benefits. For this message-framing manipulation, it was hypothesized that, in line with prior research on giving, an altruistic appeal would influence participants to be more likely to donate to the Carroll Fund than an egoistic appeal. This hypothesis was not supported by the data. It is likely that other situational factors or participant characteristics such as perceived guilt towards the fund, self-identification with the school or fund, psychological distance of the donation. Additionally, as a similar study that found egoistic message-frames just as effective as altruistic message frames notes, "Although evidence that egoistic messages for giving can succeed is not unprecedented in the literature (Clary, Haugen, Miene, Ridge, & Snyder, 1994; Pelozo & White, 2009), future studies are necessary to unpack when egoistic reasons can motivate prosocial behaviors as effectively as altruistic reasons" (p. 1326, Feiler, et al., 2012).

In regard to the third variable of interest, as hypothesized, there was a trend for a gender main effect indicating that females were, on average, more likely to give than men in all message

framing conditions. There was an interaction between gender of the participant and altruistic message-framing such that females presented with an altruistic appeal were more likely to give than females presented with an egoistic appeal. It was hypothesized that given the ‘agentive’ nature of males and ‘communal’ nature of females, that males would respond more favorably to an egoistic message-frame, while females would respond more favorably to an altruistic message-frame. This hypothesis was intended to replicate past studies supporting these claims, in which males were more likely to favor a “help-self” egoistic appeal over a “help-others” altruistic appeal for charitable contributions to both cancer research and blood donation foundations, whereas females favored the communal “help-others” altruistic appeal (Hupfer, 2006). These dispositional characteristics about males and females and their donation patterns for cancer research and blood donations were projected to carry over into the realm of scholarship funding for an individual’s alma mater. Although the egoistic message frame seemed to have no significant difference between males and females, when presented with the altruistic message-frame, males were significantly more likely to donate than. It is possible that, similarly to the second-message framing condition as a whole, moderating factors prevented the expected results of males responding more favorably to egoistic message-frames.

One of the possible confounding variables in this study could be the mixed message-frames using both a positive or negative message framing condition, in addition to an altruistic or egoistic message framing condition. Even though individuals are more likely to comply with requests when they are given a reason (Blank, Chanowitz, & Langer, 1978), Feiler, Grant, & Tost, (2012) found that mixing multiple reasons for charitable giving within one donation appeal could negatively impact the likelihood that an individual will donate. Through a study investigating the effects of blending egoistic messages and altruistic appeals together in one

message, the researchers found that it raised the persuasion knowledge in the individual, and made them less likely to give than if either an altruistic appeal or egoistic appeal was used alone (Feiler, et al., 2012).

Given the prior research on blending donation appeals, it was thought possible that the blending two different types of message-framing manipulations may have raised persuasion knowledge in the individual, and thus impacted the way the participant perceived the different appeals. The analysis of the data yielded no significant interaction between the two message-framing manipulations, but perhaps the combined message-frames still affected how the individual processed the appeals, and thus their likelihood to donate. If participants felt as though there was a persuasion attempt was present, this awareness could have caused a negative impression of the donation appeal and led individuals to be less likely to donate.

Additionally, moderating factors of identification level and level of guilt invoked by the appeal could have affected the participants' interpretation of the appeals. For example, when an individual is familiar with an organization and identifies with it, self-referencing takes place. The extent to which a donation appeal invokes self-referencing can have an impact on how individuals interpret different message frames. Prior studies have indicated "when an advertising message elicits attention by suggesting a negative outcome, it appears that evaluations and recall are more favorable when self-referencing is at a moderate rather than low or high level. When ads feature a positive outcome, self-referencing appears to have little effect on response" (Hupfer, 2006). Perhaps negative message-frames failed to invoke a moderate level of self-referencing, and this low or high level of self-referencing in combination with high persuasion knowledge and low levels of guilt cause the negative message-frames to be less effective than the positive-message frames.

The correlational analysis completed on the 7-point self-identification item indicated a significant correlation between individuals who identify closely with the university and their likelihood to donate to the Carroll Fund. This finding is in line with expectations that high self-referencing with an organization in general. Further research on self-referencing in combination with both types of message framing would yield more information about the possible effects. Another possible confounding variable for the message-framing effect is the level of guilt invoked by the various appeals. Earlier in the discussion, it was speculated that amount of guilt instilled by the donation appeals was low, given that the negative message-frame was significantly less effective than the positive message frame. This level of guilt may also play a role in how failing to produce significant effects for altruistic message-framing in general.

Despite the hypothesis that the negative-altruistic message-frame would be the most effective message frame overall, the positive-egoistic message framed proved to be most effective frame with the highest mean probability of participants giving overall. A possible explanation for why this experiment failed to support prior research on both types of message-frames is that most existing prior research on message framing and charitable giving primarily concerns third-party non-profit organizations or charities with which the participants have no affiliation. For example, one of the main models for this experiment used the UNICEF foundation as their foundation on which to base their donation appeals. The relationship that the undergraduate participants have with their university is inherently different than the type of relationship or identification than any given individual has for a more broad and national organization. One of the main objectives of this experiment was to see if prior research on message framing for Non-Profit charities is applicable to fundraising for university scholarships, and the experiment seems to indicate that it may not be. The types of feelings and emotions

invoked by other charities focused on concepts such as child poverty and blood donations seem to differ than those invoked by the issue of paying for advanced education.

Another important factor that could be influencing the results is the participant demographics. Most of the participants were undergraduates from the introductory psychology pool, which means that many of the students have not paid four years of tuition at John Carroll University, which could have a great impact on an individual's likelihood to donate. An individual's perception of a donation appeal may be altered if that individual is currently paying tuition to the institution appealing for support, and has yet to gain the benefit of a degree. In addition to the participant demographics, the psychological distance of the prospective donations may have impacted an individual's responses of whether they plan to give or not. The questionnaire asked participants to consider the probability that they would make various donations 10 years in the future. The psychological distance and time in between now and the time of donation may have affected an individual's self-evaluated probability of giving a specified dollar amount. Further research would be required in order to evaluate the impact of these various factors and other questions, such as whether individuals who pledge to donate in their undergraduate years continue on to actually donate that amount of more ten years after graduation.

One final variable of interest in this experiment is the correlational analysis on participants' perceived debt upon graduation. Surprisingly, there was no correlation at all between a participants' perceived debt upon graduation, and the participant's likelihood to donate in the future. Current leaders in the field of development and fundraising are under the impression that, in addition to the Great Recession in the late 2000s, rising student debt and education costs are a large contributor to the declining rates of alumni giving participation

(Chang, 2014). The lack of correlation implies that, contrary to popular belief, students with a high amount of perceived debt upon graduation are not necessarily less likely to give than individuals with no debt, and vice versa. This finding is particularly interesting, and may be of some use to the development community. It is possible, however, that perceived debt amongst undergraduate students is not analogous to real debt being paid by alumni.

If given the opportunity to continue research on this topic, I would investigate the moderating factors of self-reference effect, psychological distance, guilt level, and perceived debt upon graduation. Overall, this experiment can possibly contribute to the body of research in a relatively substantial way, in that it revealed prior research on Prospect Theory message-frames may not be applicable to donation appeals for a university scholarship fund direct at current undergraduate students.

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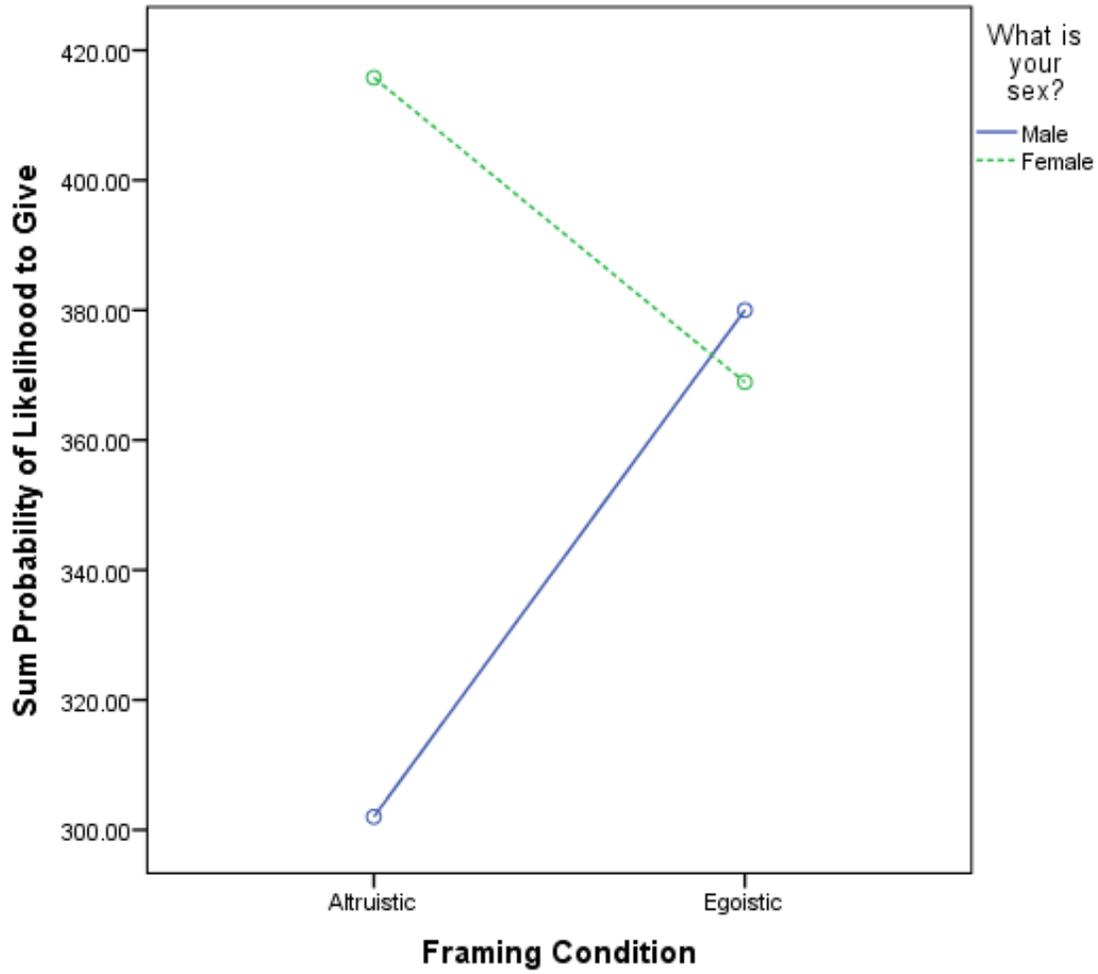


Figure 1. The probability of giving as a function of altruistic/egoistic message-framing and gender

Appendix A

Thank you for your help with this study. In this experiment you will be asked to read a short statement about the John Carroll University Carroll Fund, and then complete a questionnaire related to student scholarship donations. The duration of the experiment will be approximately 12 to 15 minutes.

Your participation is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study without penalty at any time. You may also skip any questions you do not wish to answer. All data will be treated in a confidential manner and no identifying information about you will appear in any publications or presentations that may arise from this research. If you have any questions about the study, feel free to ask the researcher John Fissinger (jfissinger15@jcu.edu). If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please call the JCU Institutional Review Board Administrator at 216-397-1527. By continuing the experiment, you are giving your consent to participate in this study. You must be 18 years of age to participate.

Appendix B

**The Carroll Fund**

The Carroll Fund is the University's annual fund that directly benefits students and helps advance the institution every year. Contributions to the Carroll Fund from alumni, friends, parents, faculty, and staff enhance a number of key aspects of John Carroll—but the Carroll Fund's impact on scholarships and financial aid has never been more important. A significant portion of John Carroll students receive a scholarship, and the Carroll Fund is crucial in funding those scholarships for bright and talented students.

Every Gift Matters

It will take the power of many to help us achieve our Carroll Fund goals. Your participation, no matter the amount, is critical. Most gifts to the Carroll Fund are under \$250, and they add up to make John Carroll a better place in several ways.

*Source is John Carroll website: <http://sites.jcu.edu/supportingjcu/pages/annual-giving/>

Appendix C

Positive Egoistic: If you choose to donate to Carroll Fund you *gain* the opportunity to raise the value of your degree, gain recognition amongst your peers, and feel good about yourself

Negative Egoistic: If you choose to not donate to Carroll Fund you *lose* the opportunity to raise the value of your degree, gain recognition amongst your peers, and feel good about yourself

Positive Altruistic: If you choose to donate to Carroll Fund you *gain* the opportunity to help students in need, strengthen the John Carroll community, and invest in the next generation's future

Negative Altruistic: If you choose to not donate to the Carroll Fund you *lose* the opportunity to help students in need, strengthen the John Carroll community, and invest in the next generation's future

Appendix D

For the following questions, please indicate the probability (0-100%) for dollar amount. For example, if you are absolutely certain that you will donate at least 5 dollars, write 100%. If you are 90% sure, write 90%. This should be considered to be a donation that will be made **10 years after graduation**.

What is the probability that you will donate at least **5 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **10 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **25 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **50 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **100 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **250 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **500 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **1,000 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **2,500 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **5,000 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

What is the probability that you will donate at least **10,000 dollars** to the Carroll Fund? _____%

Appendix F

How much debt do you perceive to have upon graduation?

\$0-\$4,999	\$5,000-\$9,999	\$10,000-\$14,999	\$15,000-\$19,999
\$20,000-\$29,999	\$30,000-\$39,999	\$40,000-\$49,999	\$50,000 +

Appendix G

Thank you for participating in this study. The purpose of this study you have just completed was to investigate the influence of gender and message framing on an individual's likelihood to donate to the John Carroll Scholarship Fund. In other words, this study is attempting to understand how phrasing a donation request in different ways to can result in more or less donations. In this instance, positive and negative frames would have been a request that highlights what an individual can *gain* by donating (positive) or *lose* by choosing not to donate (negative). Additionally, altruistic and egoistic frames were utilized. In this instance, an altruistic frame would highlight how a donation could positively impact other people, such as students in need of financial support. An egoistic frame however, would highlight how a donation would benefit the donor, such as raising the value of their own degree or receiving recognition from the school. Finally, the gender of each participant was recorded in order to investigate any differences between genders in their relation to message framing and the likelihood to donate.

If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact: John Fissinger (jfissinger15@jcu.edu)

If you have questions about the rights and welfare of research participants, please contact the John Carroll University Institutional Review Board Administrator at 216-397-1527.