Understanding Solicitation:
beyond the binary variable of solicited/unsolicited

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Abstract (as submitted to conference organisers)
This paper presents findings gathered by the authors in two separate studies – one in the UK and one in Canada – sharing a common assumption that it is not possible to understand philanthropy without understanding fundraising.

The identity, motivation and experiences of philanthropists have become increasingly popular topics of study in a wide range of disciplines, yet no equivalent attention has been paid to the 'askers', despite research showing that almost all donations are solicited in some way (Bryant et al 2003; Bekkers 2005). The propensity to be asked for contributions has been found to be positively related to the propensity to give (Bekkers and Wiepking 2007:24) but despite the usefulness of this finding, it maintains the suggestion (often also found in experimental settings) that solicitation is a binary variable such that people are either asked or they are not asked. Our paper argues that is insufficient to considering the 'demand side' of philanthropy and that a more in-depth exploration of the nature of the askers and the ask is needed to understand what comprises successful solicitation.

Our methodology comprises in-depth interviews with 73 successful fundraisers – 56 in the UK and 17 in Canada. We find that, despite the apparently self-explanatory job title, most fundraisers do not see 'raising funds' as a stand-alone task, but as a body of work that, done well, spans the range of:
1.   What is involved in solicitation?
2.   Who succeeds, and who does not succeed, in solicitation?
3.   How is successful solicitation achieved?

We conclude that the job of fundraising has a far wider remit than simply 'raising funds'; that much of the work undertaken by fundraisers is not well understood or easily visible; and that solicitation is a continuous, not a categorical, variable. Indeed, fundraisers focus their time on educating, inspiring, organizing both colleagues and donors in a performance that sets the stage for effective giving.

Fundraising is now widely acknowledged as a profession (Bloland 2002), but clearly involves more than the marshaling of a body of professional knowledge and techniques. This paper presents original data and develops existing theoretical ideas in a new realm to further our understanding of solicitation.

Keywords: Fundraising, solicitation, gift giving, donor relations

"Fundraising is the noble art of teaching people the pleasure of giving"
(from front inset of EC report 'Engaging Philanthropy for University Research')

Introduction
Fundraised income is of great importance to most nonprofit organisations and good causes, and whatever the economic climate, fundraising is a tough job.

In the UK, a third (32%) of charity income is raised from individual donations - £10.8 billion from living donors and £2 billion from legacies. The reliance on donated income is even higher amongst the vast majority of smaller charities that receive no public funding and have no mechanism for earning income. In Canada, 14% of income in the non-profit sector (excluding hospitals, universities and colleges) comes from donations, compared with 19.5% from public funding and 66.5% from earnt income (Statistics Canada 2007).

Yet despite its importance, our awareness and understanding of the role that fundraisers play in securing donations is low.

The past decade has seen a rapid growth in studies seeking to understand why, how and under what conditions private wealth is given to promote the public good. Research into philanthropic behaviour has primarily focused on the donors, regardless of the disciplinary setting of the studies: economists have studied the impact of adjusting the price of giving and sought to identify the benefits that the donor is 'buying'; historians have excavated the extent and purpose of philanthropy in previous centuries; psychologists have explored inter-relations between personal traits and altruistic behaviour; and sociologists have identified social structures that trigger philanthropic acts. These studies amount to a substantive body of understanding and yet they are deficient in one crucial regard: they are focused on the supply-side (those who make donations) and overlook almost entirely the demand-side (those who solicit donations).

We know that almost every donation is prompted (Bryant et al 2003,112005), confirming the truth in the adage: "if you don't ask, you don't get". And yet our awareness that philanthropy does not happen in a vacuum is overlooked time and again in studies that manipulate only supply-side variables, for example altering the price of giving, or the size of audience observing an altruistic act, and then having examined donors in splendid isolation, conclusions are drawn as to what prompts philanthropic behaviour. The importance of asking has not, of course, been entirely overlooked. In Bekkers and Wiepking's seminal literature review (2007) solicitation is identified as one of the eight mechanisms that drives giving, however the studies discussed under that heading are focused on whether or not a donor was asked, and how many solicitations they encountered; the only paper that does not focus on simply the existence and quantity of asks, is instead focused on how much fundraisers are paid. This paper argues that viewing solicitation as a binary variable – that either occurs or does not occur – is to fail to appreciate the qualitative aspects

of asking and to overlook the fact that fundraising is a professional skill that can be done well or less well.

After reviewing the definition of fundraising and noting that the task involves far more than the name implies (i.e. more than simply raising funds), the next section demonstrates that the extant literature has overlooked the supply-side of philanthropy and in particular the quality of the ask. We then seek to rectify that situation by presenting findings of a study exploring what major gift fundraisers do to successfully secure large donations. After discussing the findings, we end with conclusions and highlight the need for further studies to better understand how solicitation occurs, and how the quality of asking relates to the quantum of philanthropy.

The dictionary definition of a 'fundraiser' is remarkably concise:

> *"a person whose job or task is to seek financial support for a charity, cause, or other enterprise"* (Oxford Dictionary 2013)

and echoes the professional definition:

> *"Fundraising is the act of raising resources (especially, but not only money) by asking for it, to fund the work your organisation carries out, including the front-line activity and the overheads."* (Institute of Fundraising, UK).

Yet these simple statements conceal both the complexity of the task and the onerous responsibility held by those securing the financing that keeps good causes in business so they can fulfill their mission.

Understanding what fundraisers do beyond raising funds is a central focus of this paper, and noting that these tasks can be achieved with varying degrees of skill and success, is the reason we argue that fundraising is not a binary variable that either happens or does not happen, like a light switch being on or off. Rather, success in securing voluntary income is related to the quality of asking, not just its presence or its quantity.

This should be a self-evident statement. Philanthropy and fundraising are everyday activities in which the majority of the public engages. We have all been on the receiving end of requests for donations, whether made in person, via printed literature, on the telephone or online, and those experiences demonstrate that some requests are better formulated and presented than others. Understanding 'better asking' – by which we mean the quality, not quantity of solicitation - is the focus of the research presented in this paper.

Research Context

Understanding donor motivation – why people choose to spend some of their private wealth to achieve public good – has grown in interest as a research question in recent decades, and has significantly advanced our empirical and theoretical understanding of charitable giving and philanthropy (Lindahl & Conley 2002:92).

As Table 1 shows, the number of academic articles on the topic of 'philanthropy' has roughly doubled over each of the past three decades, with almost the same number of articles in the most recent year of 2014-15 (226) than in a whole decade from 1984-1994 (280). The same growth in academic interest is also evident for the topic of 'fundraising', although the numbers involved are much lower: there are roughly the same number of articles on 'fundraising' over the past three decades (824) than there are on 'philanthropy' in just the last five years (805).

Search term on *Web of Knowledge*	1985-1994	1995-2004	2005-2015 (so far)	2014/15	2010-2015
Philanthropy	280	576	1,293	226	805
Fundraising	47	160	617	127	409

Table 1: The number of articles in which 'philanthropy' and 'fundraising' are identified in a 'topic search' by 'Web of Knowledge' during different time periods

The greater attention paid to 'philanthropy' means that the identity, motivation and experiences of philanthropists are somewhat understood, whereas the role of the fundraiser, the 'asker', is relatively under-explored. This unequal situation was first noted fifteen years ago by a leading economist of our sector,

> *"Economic research on altruism, public goods, and charitable giving has flourished over the past decade. The analysis to date has focused almost exclusively on donors—the supply side of charity—and has left unexplored the role played by fund-raisers—the demand side. Yet fund-raising is a vibrant, innovative, and highly professional industry."* (Andreoni 1998: 1186)

Further, what studies of fundraising do exist are biased towards certain topics and settings. For example, there are more studies of fundraising in higher education institutions and hospitals than other cause areas (Lindahl & Conley 2002:91), and there are more studies of mass solicitation (Bekkers & Wiepking 2007) that make use of transactional marketing techniques than there are studies of major donor fundraising that is based on relationships (Burke 2003, Burnett 2002). The bias towards studying mass fundraising is likely due to it being more amenable to both field and laboratory experiments, as well as due to issues regarding access to samples.

The substantially greater interest in philanthropy over fundraising is normative. Donors – especially wealthy donors – are of general public interest and attention, both historically and contemporaneously whereas those asking for donations have not breached the public consciousness. The names of leading philanthropists, such as Andrew Carnegie, John D Rockefeller, Bill Gates and Warren Buffett, are well known, but no fundraiser shares a similar high profile.

The recent flourishing of research on philanthropy is also driven by a practical goal: to identify the factors that encourage people to give, in order to encourage more people to become givers, and to encourage those who are already donors to give more. Whilst understandable, given the increasing expectations of philanthropically-funded goods and services, this creates an expectation that there is a 'donor type' or a set of socio-demographic characteristics and personal motivations that are allegedly typical of those most likely to give. Chasing this elusive donor profile has absorbed much intellectual and practical energy (see for example Prince & File 1994, Rooney & Frederick 2007) and yet, given the global variation in levels of giving, and the fact that people can move from being non-donors to donors whilst retaining all other personal characteristics, it is clear that people are not born as fully formed givers.

Philanthropic behaviour is a habit, and like any other habit it is formed as a result of life-long processes of socialisation. Yet an interesting study of those in the unique altruistic situation of helping to rescue Jews during the Holocaust finds that 'being asked' was the most important explanatory factor, leading the authors to conclude that situational factors (in this case receiving a direct appeal for help), triggers the underlying motivations that lead to altruistic action (Yaish & Vaese 2001). Transferring this 'integrative view' – that situational factors activate motivational factors – to understanding the donation of money, means studies need to focus on the context within which people make decisions to donate. The context includes factors such as a conducive fiscal framework (i.e. tax reliefs for donations), high levels of confidence in charities as a result of robust regulation, as well as structures within which potential donors encounter frequent, plausible and attractive requests for support. As Smith notes:

> *"There are no 'social laws' that explain who is generous and why. There is no simple list of variables that 'produce' or 'predict' generosity… [P]ossessing the natural general power for some given practice like generosity does not guarantee that it will be activated and exercised in any given case. Not all human capacities are triggered, cultivated, and expressed. Some, perhaps especially virtues like generosity, need to be actively prompted and tutored in order to become regular practices. That shifts our analytic attention from deep human neurology to more proximate triggering and routinizing factors promoting generosity"* (Smith 2014).

Despite being normative, greater academic study of fundraising is necessary to make sense of the supply of philanthropy to pay for goods and services that are delivered in what is variously known as the 'nonprofit', 'independent', 'social' or 'third' sector.

The allocation of resources by the market is primarily controlled by customers responding to prices; the allocation of resources by the state is primarily controlled by voters responding to policy proposals at the ballot box; and the allocation of philanthropic resources is primarily controlled by donors responding to requests from fundraisers.

Yet despite the primary function of solicitation in the nonprofit sector, fundraising as an activity is not granted the legitimacy enjoyed by its equivalents in the other sectors. Indeed, research shows that people try to avoid being solicited (Pancer et al 1979) because despite the many proven personal benefits of giving, including increased happiness, life satisfaction, sense of purpose (Smith & Davidson 2014) there is a paradox that people do not enjoy being asked to give (Andreoni et al 2011). However, whilst Andreoni et al's study found *"dramatic avoidance"* of solicitors in a natural field experiment of the annual Salvation Army Red Kettle fundraising campaign, it also highlights the importance of *how* the ask is conducted:

> *"adding the simple verbal request of 'please give', is about as effective as adding an additional silent solicitor at the store"* (ibid:11).

This example underlines the error in simply asking whether a potential donor was solicited or not solicited, as those who were solicited with a pleasant message responded significantly more generously than those faced with a silent solicitation. Whilst this example occurs in the realm of mass solicitation, the variable quality of 'the ask' and the consequent differential in response, is the subject of our paper.

This review has noted that the identity, motivation and experiences of philanthropists have become increasingly popular topics of study in a wide range of disciplines, yet no equivalent attention has been paid to the 'askers', despite research showing that almost all donations are solicited in some way (Bryant et al 2003; Bekkers 2005). The propensity to be asked for contributions has been found to be positively related to the propensity to give (Bekkers and Wiepking 2007:24) but despite the usefulness of this finding, it maintains the suggestion (often also found in experimental settings) that solicitation is a binary variable such that people are either asked or they are not asked.

Our three-fold research question is therefore: (1) what do we know about the 'demand side' of philanthropy; (2) what are the characteristics of effective askers and (3) how is successful solicitation achieved?

Methodology
As noted in the section above, our current understanding of the nature and impact of solicitation is hampered by a lack of studies focused on this topic, as well as the dominance of quantitative approaches, for example asking whether or not a solicitation occurred, or counting the number of 'asks' that donors encounter.

While these studies are useful in highlighting the existence and impact of solicitation, they cannot provide insight into questions about the context, nature or quality of asking. As Halfpenny has noted, descriptive statistical exercises reveal little

about the *"social reality behind the figures"* (1999:208). Qualitative approaches to data collection offer a better chance of comprehending behaviours because this methodology seeks to understand, rather than simply count, phenomena. This is therefore the approach taken in this paper.

The chosen qualitative method for this study was semi-structured interviews with current major donor fundraisers to discuss their views on the nature, characteristics and qualities of fundraisers and fundraising. In-depth interviews were chosen as the research instrument as we wanted to explore and probe the topic extensively, seeking rich data that would yield new insights.

The aim of the interviews was to gain access to solicitor's interpretative understanding of the nature of the task of fundraising, the qualities required to succeed in asking, barriers to success and examples of 'best practice' in solicitation.

A total of 73 interviews were conducted; 56 in the UK and 17 in Canada. Interviewees all had experience as major donor fundraisers and were in mid-to-late career with extensive experience in working in the not-for-profit sector and with philanthropists. Participants were drawn from the membership of established professional associations, attendees at professional association conferences, and/or were part of the researchers' network of fundraising professionals. Underlying the sample selection were the following three criteria:
-    Holding a leadership role in a fundraising department in a major nonprofit/charity
-    Being recognised by peers, such as receiving an industry award
-    Having a high profile within major donor fundraising, such as being a keynote speaker at a national event.

The sample differs only slightly from the normative social background of fundraisers [Institute of Fundraising 2013), being predominantly female, middle-aged and lacking in diversity in terms of ethnicity and disability. Of the 73 interviewees, 35 were women and 38 were men; the age range was from 30s to 60s, with people in their forties being the most highly represented. The roughly even gender split of interviewees is likely reflective of senior level of those interviewed.

The interviews were conducted over an extensive 26 month period between March 2013 and April 2015, reflecting the time involved in recruiting and interviewing the sample, who come from a fairly small pool (More Partnership/Richmond Associates 2014) and have pressurized jobs that are not necessarily conducive to engaging with academic research. Interview lengths ranged from 30 minutes to three hours, with most lasting around an hour.

The research interviews were approached as 'a conversation with a purpose' (Robson 1993:228). A semi-structured format was used, which combined specified questions with the freedom to *"probe beyond the answers … [to] seek both clarification and elaboration on the answers given"* (May 1997:111). The interviews comprised six open-ended questions on interrelated topics relating to the source

and nature of the personal and social characteristics of major donor fundraisers, and how these characteristics relate to fundraising success. The full interview schedule is presented in Table 2.

1. Do you believe that fundraisers are born or made?
2. How can you tell that someone is a good fundraiser?
3. How can you tell someone hasn't 'got it'?
4. What distinctive qualities do good fundraisers *tend* to have?
5. Are there any essential qualities that fundraisers *must* have?
6. Who is the best fundraiser you know? Why?

Table 2: Interview schedule

The interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone. The UK-based researcher conducted all the UK interviews, and the Canadian-based researcher conducted all the Canadian interviews. The interviews were transcribed and coded using Nvivo software (the UK data) and by hand (the Canadian data). An 'open coding' approach was taken, which involved reading and re-reading the transcripts to inductively identify the key themes in the data. To minimise the risk that data collected using this methodology was affected by any personal bias or selective perception of the interviewers, two measures were taken. Firstly, a research assistant who did not participate in data collection was recruited to assist with the coding process; this 'third party' review of the transcripts helped introduce an objective perspective on the data. Secondly, an extensive period of joint, in-person data analysis was conducted by the authors, during which iterative process the findings were reviewed, challenged and refined.

However, we remain cognizant that our chosen methodology of in-depth interviews generates 'manufactured data' that risks generating socially desirable and pre-scripted (albeit unintentionally so) responses (Silverman 2007). Distortions in manufactured data are a result of over-scrutiny of the topic and over-reflection by the people being questioned and are likely to reflect norms about what people living in any society are expected to think. We took steps to avoid stimulating formulaic comments, notably by making our questions intentionally repetitive to 'flush out' any perceived 'right answers' and create space for respondents to express more deeply held views. However, the possibility remains that some of our data reflects the 'appropriate script' expected of people occupying the role of a paid, professional fundraiser. This risk can only be substantially tackled by future studies using a range of methodologies, as recommended in the concluding section of this paper.

The remainder of this paper presents and illustrates our findings, discusses the data, and ends with some concluding thoughts and implications for future research and practice.

Findings
The fundraisers interviewed in this study said repeatedly that successful fundraising requires more than a stand-alone 'ask' and pointed to relationships as the essential underlying element to successful solicitation: *"just doing the activity doesn't necessarily mean you are going to get the result if, in fact, you are not engaging in donor relationships effectively"*, says one interviewee (Canada 7). This is primarily the relationship between the fundraiser and the donor; but the relationships the fundraiser has within their own organisation are important as well.

This exploratory research points to who successful fundraisers are and the attributes, attitudes and motivations commonly found in those who are effective in developing and sustaining donor relationships. Further, the research suggests that fundraisers organise and orchestrate the various elements of donor relations like a staged performance.

<u>What does solicitation involve?</u>
Many of the fundraisers interviewed noted a recent shift in donor relations from the transactional to the relational, and described donor relationships as essential to establishing the life-long, legacy giving that can advance a cause.

In discussing relationships with donors, the fundraisers interviewed consistently pointed to the need for the relationship to be grounded in trust, and compared it to the relationship one would have with the executor of one's estate. One interviewee said, *"They want to know they're in a safe pair of hands"* (UK 55).

Fundraisers indicated that donors often have *"a very simple concept of what their money will do"* (Canada 3). In a relationship of trust, the fundraiser builds the donor's awareness for the needs of the cause and the organisation. As well, the fundraiser seeks to understand the philanthropic aspirations of the donor; the affinity they feel to the cause and the organisation; and their propensity and capacity to give. This understanding is essential to finding the common ground, the convergences, between the donor's aspirations and the organisation's needs. A number of interviewees described this role as that of 'honest broker'; others likened it to a 'double agent'.

The fundraiser's understanding of the donor is also essential to the value exchange with the donor. For some donors, altruism is the driver thus being assured of the 'good works' of their giving is key. Other donors are looking for access to people and ideas in worlds that interest them (art, science, medical research, social issues); for others recognition among their peers is important.

Many fundraisers referred to fundraising as a 'team sport' including, not only their colleagues in the fundraising office, but also the organisation's administrators, practitioners, researchers, executives and volunteers. The role of the fundraiser in these internal relationships is reported to include informing, educating, and inspiring their colleagues so they understand philanthropy as a means to advancing the mission of the organisation over the long term, not just providing one-off solutions

to stand-alone issues or challenges. This is essential to the collaboration between the fundraiser and his or her colleagues, and necessary to crafting inspiring solicitations. As well, fundraisers rely heavily on their colleagues to use the donor's gift well, delivering on and being accountable for the impact the donor expects.

<u>Who succeeds, and who does not succeed, in solicitation?</u>
Interviewees consistently referred to a range of attributes, attitudes and motivations evident in fundraisers who are successful in building and sustaining relationships with donors and, ultimately, advancing and securing gifts.

Attributes and Attitudes
Those interviewed were clear that building relationships is something that has to come naturally to fundraisers – they genuinely like, are interested in, and have empathy for people, and they blend these characteristics with a passion for their organisation and its cause. Fundraisers reported a need to be authentic in presenting themselves as donors will sense when these elements are contrived.

There are frequent references in the data to the need for fundraisers to be engaging individuals with whom the donor wants to spend time: good conversationalists with a range of experiences and interests; urbane; intellectually curious; enthusiastic, positive, optimistic; charming; warm; open. Some interviewees referred to the need for the fundraiser *"to be a chameleon"* (UK 15) and to have the emotional intelligence to know when to *"dial up or dial down"* (UK 16) their personality to compliment that of the donor.

One interviewee observed that fundraisers have to be Janus-faced: *"charming, laid back and fun, whilst being ruthlessly well-organized"* (UK 8). This is supported in the data with numerous references to the need to have an eye for detail, to be process driven, and to be well-prepared.

Fundraisers also pointed to the need to be emotionally resilient to sustain relationships over the long haul. Fundraisers found it essential to be thick skinned, to bounce back, to adapt, and to just keep going in the face of setbacks.

Motivation
The fundraisers interviewed agreed that they are not motivated by external factors like compensation or public recognition, rather they are intrinsically motivated. They have a passion for the cause; they believe in their organisation as an agent of good works; and they have a sense of purpose about the impact their work can have.

One interviewee said: *"What makes a fundraiser a fundraiser is the mission. It is the belief in what you are doing and that what the institution, the people, the researchers, the volunteers, are doing, is going to make a difference for the world"* (Canada 10).

Different forms of self-regulation are factors mentioned by interviewees. *"You have to be an independent operator in many ways because you have to be highly self-*

motivated" (Canada 15). Fundraisers recognize that reaching out to donors and getting out of the office to meet with them, tasks essential to fundraising, are not easy because there is always the prospect of rejection, of the donor saying 'no'. Only those who are self-directed will be able to consistently extend themselves to repeatedly take the steps necessary to building the relationship, making the 'ask' and securing the gift.

Interviewees talked also of the importance of being motivated by the end result of getting 'dollars in the door'. For successful fundraisers, this is aligned with their passion for the cause; their desire to provide the resources to make things happen in their organization; and with their desire to see the donor pleased and excited in making their gift. One interviewee talked of 'the thrill of the kill', others referred to 'fire in the belly', all agreed that successful fundraisers derive great satisfaction from being able to ask for and 'close' gifts.

How successful solicitation is achieved
Many interviewees saw the fundraiser's role as the conductor of a performance where the fundraiser might *"direct from behind"* (UK 32), coordinating the prospecting, the cultivation of the relationship, the engagement of the CEO and/or a lead volunteer, the events, the communications, always *"putting the donor center-stage"* (UK 32).

In this role, interviewees talked of the need to 'have no ego', to subjugate their personality in favour of both the organisation and the donor. *"They [the fundraiser] have a personality, but they are able to subjugate it and focus on the people they are working with – whether it is a donor, or the President, or the Dean"* (Canada 14).

This 'scene setting' was frequently referred to as 'the art of fundraising' and to execute it with finesse, fundraisers need a high level of emotional intelligence to sense when to continue building the relationship, introducing new characters and events, and when it is time to make a clear 'ask' for a gift. Interviewee UK 52 said, *"you have to set the scene and then you have to kind of puppet master everybody."*

Many interviewees expressed concern that fundraising and fundraisers are still not well perceived – that their motivation is thought to be solely about the money: *"And that is why I don't even like the name fundraiser because it feels 'money' and we do so much more than raise money"* (Canada 10).

Ultimately, the interviewees believed fundraising to be a higher calling and saw it as noble work. The successful fundraisers interviewed believe, because they have a deep rooted and genuine passion for the cause, their ambition to raise money is not for themselves or for any personal benefit or gratification; it is, instead, for the cause and the organisation which they work to advance.

Discussion

In this exploratory research, it appears that the quality of a solicitation needs to be understood in the context of the relationships the fundraiser has both with the donor and within the beneficiary organization. These relationships involve more than just asking; they involve this tripartite body of work:

1. **Making the case** by raising awareness of the cause and what can be done to advance it, making action seem practically possible and morally right
2. **Making the match** between the donor and organisation – building relationships both with donors and within the beneficiary organization; playing the role of honest broker/double agent; working out who, when, how much and for what to ask; and either asking or supporting the asker
3. **Making the experience** as rich as possible so the donor gives again – validating the gift decision, celebrating and demonstrating recognition and appreciation, and being accountable for the impact of the gift.

Given this body of work, the word 'fundraiser' is essentially misleading – they do not just raise funds! Fundraisers might more accurately be described as 'mindset changers': often they cannot raise funds unless people – both donors and those in the recipient organization – have a different mindset about philanthropy and fundraising. Fundraisers advocate for their organizations, educating about the existence and extent of need; they promote fundraising within their own organizations; they innovate new methods for asking and giving; they enable people to act on things that matter to them and maximise their generosity; they thank, elevate, steward and advocate for donors.

Clearly, the findings in this study support Breeze and Scaife's position that:

> *"Fundraising is a dynamic profession that will carry an ever-increasing responsibility during the coming decades for communicating the existence of need and the opportunity to make the world a better place. The job of a fundraiser is only superficially about 'raising funds'. In fact, it is a far more complex and meaningful job that is focused on encouraging generosity and creating opportunities for ordinary people to do something extraordinary."* (2015:xx)

Conclusion

This study set out to better understand fundraising solicitation. It is grounded in the assumption that the quality of solicitation is a neglected variable and requires better understanding in order to better understand both philanthropy and fundraising. We accept the eight mechanisms of charitable giving established by Bekkers and Wiepking (2011), but hypothesise that 'solicitation' is not a stand-alone variable, rather an underlying variable on which the others are dependent to different degrees.

To test this hypothesis, we undertook a content analysis of 'How to' fundraising books, utilized the data of an extensive online survey of 1,200+ UK fundraisers, and interviewed 73 major donor fundraisers – 56 in the UK and 17 in Canada.

While this qualitative research does not provide a definitive understanding of solicitation, it does point to these useful findings:

1. That the job of a fundraiser has a far wider remit that simply 'raising funds' and that successful fundraising is the result of an on-going relationship the fundraiser develops and sustains with a donor
2. That there is a set of attitudes, attributes and motivations common among effective fundraisers; and
3. That fundraisers deploy these characteristics to organize and orchestrate the various donor relations elements like a performance that is delivered to meet the needs, aspirations and expectations of the donor.

While further research is needed in the understanding of solicitation, we would argue strongly that solicitation is, indeed, beyond the binary variable of solicited/unsolicited and that the quality of an 'ask' does have a bearing on the outcome of the solicitation.

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