

ABSTRACT

European Research Network On Philanthropy
8th International Conference Copenhagen, July 13-14, 2017

Gender, marriage, and donor promotion

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 Keywords: philanthropy, gender, marriage
 Topic: Strategies for philanthropy
 Research method: Qualitative
 Geographical focus: Single country (Other countries)
 Type of article: Research article

Abstract:

Increasingly, fundraisers and researchers are recognizing that gender, the dynamics of communication between spouses, and the promotion and retention of donors are important factors in charitable giving. However, donor retention and the dynamics of spousal communication over charitable giving are poorly studied (Beldad, Snip, and Van Hoof, 2014; Einolf, Darville, & Brown 2013). This proposal examines how these factors interact through interviews with 20 married donors to human services agencies in Chicago. Donors were selected because they had increased their donations over the previous five years, going from being low-level donors to mid-level or high-level donors. This increase in donation generally requires communication with and permission from one's spouse.

This paper will report on the results of interviews with married donors to find out how and why they decided to increase donations to a human services nonprofit, and how the nonprofit's efforts encouraged or discouraged the donation decision. It has three research questions:

1. What messages, words, and communications styles are most effective in getting current donors to increase their donations, and how do these differ by gender?
2. How does one spouse involve the other in deciding to increase donations to a charity, and does this process of involvement vary by gender?
3. How can fundraisers influence the process of spousal communication to encourage larger donations?

Drawing from the literature on gender, marriage, and giving, the paper uses seven hypotheses to guide the qualitative analysis of the interviews:

H1: Women are more responsive to communications involving empathy and emotion (Brunel & Nelson 2000; Kemp, Kennett-Hensel, & Kees, 2013; Willer, Wimer, & Owens, 2015).

H2: Men are more responsive to communications involving a) personal benefits, b) prestige and pride, and c) social norms (Brunel & Nelson, 2000; Croson, Handy, & Shang, 2010).

H3: Women prefer more personal communication and cultivation (Kaplan & Hayes, 1993).

H4: Married donors consult with a spouse before making a substantial increase in gifts (Einolf, Darville, & Brown, 2013).

H5: Married donors who increase their giving over time have support from their spouse in this decision (Einolf, Darville, & Brown, 2013).

Data collection and analysis is ongoing at this time so the results of the study are not ready, but we expect to have fully analyzed interview data with at least 20 respondents to present in July.

Most important references:

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Kemp, E., Kennett-Hensel, P.A., & Kees, J. (2013). Pulling on the heartstrings: Examining the effects of emotions and gender in persuasive appeals. *Journal of Advertising*, 42(1), 69-79.

Willer, R., Wimer, C., & Owens, L. A. (2015). What drives the gender gap in charitable giving? Lower empathy leads men to give less to poverty relief. *Social Science Research*, 52, 83