Gift or Donation? Increase the Effectiveness of Charitable Solicitation through Framing Charitable Giving as Gift

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Abstract

The question of how to improve the effectiveness of charitable solicitation has long been a subject of investigation for charity organizations. Through six studies, including four incentive-compatible studies and a field study, the present research demonstrates an easy, actionable, and widely applicable semantic-framing strategy that can be utilized to promote charitable giving. Semantically framing charitable giving as gift (rather than donation) increases not only donors' intention to contribute but also their actual amount of contribution (Studies 1–3). Both mediation (Study 4) and moderation (Study 5) approaches provide convergent evidence that the effect of framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation on contribution is driven by donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries. The authors further find that this framing effect is weakened when soliciting contributions from donors who see social distance as desirable (e.g., those with a high need for status; Study 6). The current work contributes to the literatures on charitable giving, social exchange, and semantic framing, and provides strong managerial implications for charity organizations.

Keywords: charitable giving, semantic framing, social distance, social exchange

Statement of Intended Contribution

Charity organizations carry out an essential function in promoting rights and well-being for all in today's world. Ironically, charitable solicitation is a costly activity, and charities must put considerable efforts into it. Both marketing scholars and practitioners are motivated to develop tactics that can be used to increase solicitation efficiency for worthy causes. The current research identifies an easy, actionable, and widely applicable strategy that can be utilized in charitable advertisements to increase the effectiveness of a solicitation campaign: semantically framing charitable giving as gift. Six studies, including a field study, demonstrate that semantically framing charitable giving as gift (rather than donation) decreases donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries and increases their contribution.

This work augments the marketing literature in several ways. First, we contribute to research on charitable giving by demonstrating a simple strategy for boosting charitable contribution, namely, framing charitable giving as gift. Second, previous literature on semantic framing examined its influence on persuasion, coupon-redemption behavior, goal-directed behavior, desire for postponed temptation, and service-failure recovery. We complement this line of research by investigating the implications of gift framing (vs. donation framing) on relationship closeness, and exploring the potential of relationship closeness in the prosocial context. Third, this research offers insight into the role of social exchange in charitable giving by systematically examining the perception of interpersonal exchange in charitable giving.

Importantly, the current work provides substantive practical implications for charities by identifying a simple strategy to increase individuals' charitable contribution, and presenting a discussion of circumstances under which gift framing is more effective than donation framing.

Specifically, marketers can benefit from framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) when using gift framing exclusively (i.e., not combining with donation framing), when soliciting contributions for general or distant beneficiaries, or when approaching donors with a low need for status. But this strategy may be less effective when used jointly with donation framing, when soliciting contributions for beneficiaries who are physically or psychologically close to donors (e.g., local beneficiaries), or when approaching donors who see social distance as desirable (e.g., those with a high need for status).

Charitable organizations aim to pursue prosocial goals and create public benefits, playing a critical role in promoting everyone's rights and well-being. According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (2020), there are about 1.54 million non-profit organizations registered in the United States. These charitable organizations received a total of $450 billion in 2019 (Giving USA 2020), accounting for about 2% of the United States' gross domestic product. More importantly, they have made significant and far-reaching impacts on key sectors of society. For example, the education sector received more than $60 billion in 2019, and the health sector around $40 billion.

Individual giving is the biggest part of giving in the U.S., making up 69% of the total giving in 2019 (Giving USA 2020). However, charitable organizations worldwide are regularly challenged by the task of effectively enticing individuals to contribute to their campaigns. Many groups have to devote considerable resources to increasing their solicitation effectiveness. For example, according to the Charity Financials Top 100 Fundraisers Spotlight Report (2018), the UK's 100 largest charities spent 17% of their income on public fundraising. Similarly, the top 100 charities in the United States ranked by Forbes spent 11 cents on average to raise one dollar (Barrett 2016).

How to increase the effectiveness of solicitation campaigns of charity organizations has long been an important subject in marketing research. Prior work in this area identifies many visual and verbal factors that could impact consumers' donation decisions significantly. Within this research area, a considerable amount of past work has examined the influence of message framing on charitable giving. This stream of research focused centrally on valence or construal framing, in which different messages communicate the same critical information but with different valences or varying construals (e.g., Chang and Lee 2010; Chien and Chang 2015; Grau

and Folse 2007; Rudd, Aaker, and Norton 2014). However, not every charitable advertisement can adopt these framing strategies, which largely depend on the specific visual or verbal content that charities want to include. Extending this stream of research, the current paper proposes a widely applicable strategy that can increase the effectiveness of charitable solicitation: semantically framing charitable giving as gift.

Charitable giving is traditionally termed "donation." However, an increasing number of charity organizations have recently started to frame the contribution semantically as "gift." We analyzed the wording of charitable appeals that appeared on the solicitation page of the 100 largest U.S. charities (based on the 2019 Forbes ranking) and found that donation framing (i.e., "donation," "donations") and gift framing (i.e., "gift," "gifts") are indeed the two most common semantic framings used by charities (see Table 1 for a list of the top-ten framing terms used). Yet the decision to use donation framing or gift framing appears quite random, as if the two are interchangeable. For instance, *Feeding America* and *Food for the Poor* require donors to indicate their gift amount, while *Feed the Children* and *Good 360* ask donors to indicate their donation amount. Apparently the strategists of charity organizations have not fully grasped the impact of framing charitable giving as gift or donation on the effectiveness of their solicitation campaigns. To fill this knowledge gap, the current research investigates whether semantically framing charitable giving as gift leads to more charitable contributions than the traditional donation framing; and if so, what is the underlying mechanism and under which circumstances is gift framing more effective than donation framing?

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insert table 1 about here

In the current research, we focus on comparing the consequences of using these two semantic framings for the following reasons. First, these two are the most commonly used framings in contemporary charity solicitation; thus it is important for charity organizations to understand which one is more effective in promoting charitable contribution. Second, gift framing and donation framing are often used interchangeably by charities, but it is difficult for other words to replace these two words completely in charitable solicitation. For example, the amount of money donors are required to indicate is usually called either "donation amount" or "gift amount," rather than "help amount" or "support amount." Thus it makes sense to focus on these two framings. And third, different from other framings, gift framing applies social-exchange principles to the arena of charitable giving, potentially shaping the perceived social relationship between the donor and the beneficiary, a situation that motivates our research in the current paper.

We argue that donation framing and gift framing will serve to signal different relationships between the giver and the receiver, whether or not the creators of an appeal are aware of this or have a particular intention. Donation framing signals a relatively distant relationship between the donor and the beneficiary, and gift framing, in contrast, suggests that the giver and the receiver are close. Because previous research has found that donors' perception of social distance from beneficiaries decreases their charitable contribution (e.g., Flippen et al. 1996; Galak, Small, and Stephen 2011; Small and Simonsohn 2008), we predict and find in the current research that semantically framing charitable giving as gift (rather than donation) decreases donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries and increases their charitable contribution significantly. We further show that this framing effect is weakened when gift framing is used jointly with donation framing, when soliciting contributions for beneficiaries

who are physically or psychologically close to donors (e.g., local beneficiaries), or when approaching donors who see social distance as desirable (e.g., those with a high need for status).

The present research makes several contributions. First, we contribute to the charitable-giving literature by demonstrating a subtle, actionable, and widely applicable strategy that can be easily utilized in charitable advertisements to increase the effectiveness of solicitation campaigns. Second, we add to the ongoing conversation about semantic framing by examining its potential in charitable giving. Third, the current research complements the social-exchange literature by systematically investigating the concept of gift in the context of charitable giving and showing that framing charitable giving as gift can have a significant and positive impact on donors' charitable contribution. Fourth, and most importantly, the present research has strong managerial implications for charity organizations.

Theoretical Framework

Semantic Framing

According to the hypothesis of linguistic relativity, widely known as the Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis (Sapir 1921; Whorf 1956), our daily thoughts and decisions are determined by how the language is communicated. People in their daily life often use different words interchangeably while largely underestimating their effects and influences. Research has suggested that these interchangeably used words "may not always be psychologically interchangeable" (LeBoeuf 2006, p. 60). Minor wording changes can make a surprisingly big difference in people's perceptions, judgments, and behaviors. This observation stimulated a stream of research on semantic framing, which refers to "the use of objectively similar but not

equivalent words" (Patrick and Hagtvedt 2012a, p. 373). For instance, Mayer and Tormala (2010) differentiated framing effects of "think" (i.e., "I think…") versus "feel" (i.e., "I feel…") on persuasion and suggested that this semantic framing should be congruent with a target's cognitive or affective orientation in order to increase persuasion effectiveness due to considerations of processing fluency. Patrick and Hagtvedt (2012a) examined the function of semantic framing in goal motivation and found that "I don't" versus "I can't" can help one resist temptation and motivate goal-directed behavior because of enhanced psychological empowerment. Furthermore, a recent study (You et al. 2020) showed that saying "thank you" after a service failure is a more effective recovery strategy for service providers than saying "sorry," because it can increase consumers' self-esteem. In view of such power of semantic framing and the fact that charities employ donation framing and gift framing interchangeably with little thought as to how they might differ, the current research applies semantic framing to the context of charitable giving—specifically, framing charitable giving as "gift."

Framing Charitable Giving as Gift

Charitable giving is the act of giving money or goods to help others or organizations (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011). As noted above, charity organizations traditionally tended to semantically frame people's charitable giving as donation. Typically, donors donate to others with whom donors have no relationship, and donors and beneficiaries are usually anonymous to each other (Small 2011). Thus traditional donation framing connotes high social distance between the donor and the recipient. Consistent with this notion, past research has found that donors usually stand in a higher position in a social hierarchy than beneficiaries do (Goffman 1971), and sometimes donors use their donations to signal their (high) social status (e.g., Glazer

and Konrad 1996). In the current research, we explore the consequence of framing charitable giving as gift and theorize that such semantic framing will decrease donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries.

Gift giving is typically a form of social exchange in which resources are transferred to confirm social relationships (Belk 1976). As a unique and widespread phenomenon in human society, gift giving occurs in various situations such as economic exchange and daily ritual (e.g., Caplow 1982; Cheal 1987). Why might framing charitable giving as gift impact donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries? First, a gift carries and conveys multiple symbolic meanings (e.g., Camerer 1988; Larsen and Watson 2001; Pillai and Krishnakumar 2019). For example, gifting involves themes of love, caring, connection, and social interaction (Belk 1976, 1982; Belk and Coon 1993). Similarly, Fischer and Arnold (1990) argued that gifting serves to convey messages of love, affection, and esteem to the recipients. These symbolic values can be paired with a gift function to signal that the gift giver and the gift receiver are close (Belk and Coon 1993). In contrast, donation is more associated with utilitarian values, which reflects a distant relationship between the donor and the beneficiary (Fisher, Nadler, and Whitcher-Alagna 1982). Following this logic, these hedonic values added to gift framing serve to reduce donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries.

Second, a gift is a part of the giver's extended self (e.g., Paolacci, Straeter, and Hooge 2015; Sherry Jr 1983; Ward and Broniarczyk 2011). Hence, giving a gift is indeed giving a part of oneself; and similarly, receiving a gift is receiving a part of someone else. During the process of passing on "self" from the gift giver to the gift receiver through gift giving, a close social relationship is formed and promoted (Belk and Coon 1993). When charitable giving is framed as gift, donors may feel that they are giving an element of self-identity to beneficiaries rather than

simply giving goods or money (Koo and Fishbach 2016), which also makes the donor feel socially close to the beneficiary.

Third, gift giving is associated with specific social and relational contexts (Pillai and Krishnakumar 2019; Ward and Broniarczyk 2016). For example, gift exchange usually happens on calendrical occasions such as birthday, anniversary, and festivals (Caplow 1982; Ruth, Otnes, and Brunel 1999) between close people such as romantic partners, family members, and friends (Caplow 1982; Komiya et al. 2019). Framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation thus puts donors in these social and relational contexts, which further promote a close relationship between donors and beneficiaries.

Social Distance and Charitable Giving

Social distance is the subjective feeling or experience of distance from another person or group (Liberman, Trope, and Stephan 2007). The distinctions between self and other, familiar and unfamiliar others, in-group and out-group members, similar and dissimilar others, close and distant others can be considered as instances of social distance (Liberman, Trope, and Stephan 2007). Social distance between the donor and the beneficiary varies greatly (Small 2011). Past research has documented that people are more likely to help others who are close to them and less likely to care about people who are far away (e.g., Flippen et al. 1996; Galak, Small, and Stephen 2011; Small and Simonsohn 2008). For example, Galak, Small, and Stephen (2011) found that in the context of microfinance, lenders preferred borrowers who shared personal or professional characteristics (e.g., gender, occupation, and first-name initial). Similarly, donors' close relationship with a victim will decrease social distance between donors and other victims suffering from the same misfortune and further increase donors' prosocial behaviors toward them

(Small and Simonsohn 2008). The connection between the social distance between donor and beneficiary and donor's contribution is further supported by Touré-Tillery and Fishbach (2017)'s work, which shows that people are more willing to help nearby beneficiaries than faraway beneficiaries since they expect their contributions to have a greater impact on those nearby (vs. faraway) beneficiaries.

Putting the above observations together, we predict that framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) will likely lead to decreased perception of social distance between the donor and the beneficiary, which in turn increases the donor's charitable contribution. Stating this formally:

H1: Framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) increases donors' contribution.

H2: Perceived social distance between the donors and the beneficiaries mediates the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) on donors' contribution.

Framing charitable giving as gift may not always increase donors' contribution. Since we predict that this effect is driven by perceived social distance between the donors and the beneficiaries, factors influencing people's favorability toward social distance could potentially moderate this effect. We propose one such moderator that may weaken our hypothesized effect: donors' need for status. This is the motive to seek a higher rank in the social hierarchy (Magee and Galinsky 2008; Ridgeway and Correll 2006), and it has been shown to motivate a series of status-signalling behaviors such as status consumption (Dubois, Rucker, and Galinsky 2012; Han, Nunes, and Drèze 2010) and helping behavior (Flynn et al. 2006). Status is conceptualized as a typical form of social distance that serves to differentiate between self and others (Liberman, Trope, and Stephan 2007). People with a high need for status tend to be different and separate

from others and therefore endorse high social distance from others (Hogg and Reid 2001; Lee and Tiedens 2001; Smith and Trope 2006).

If people with a high need for status generally prefer a high level of social distance between themselves and others, in a charitable-giving context it is likely that this general preference for social distance may influence their preference on the social distance between them and the beneficiaries of their giving. Moreover, if donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries indeed drives the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) on donors' charitable contribution, this effect is likely to be weakened when perceived social distance from beneficiaries is desirable for donors. Putting these influences together, we hypothesize:

H3: The proposed effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) on donors' charitable contribution is weakened for donors who have a high need for status.

Overview of Studies

We test the above hypotheses with six studies, including four incentive-compatible studies (Studies 2, 4, 5, and 6) and a field study (Study 3). Study 1 provides initial evidence for the basic effect of framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation on donors' charitable contribution (H1) and shows that the effectiveness of gift framing in increasing donors' charitable contribution is attenuated by the joint use of donation framing. Studies 2 and 3 replicate this finding in a lab setting and a field setting, respectively. Studies 4 and 5 confirm our H2 by demonstrating the mediational role of donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries, through both mediation (Study 4) and moderation (Study 5) methods. Finally,

testing our H3, Study 6 reveals that the effect of framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation on donors' charitable contribution is weakened when donors see social distance as desirable (i.e., such donors have a high need for status).

The target sample size in these studies was conservatively selected based on previous findings of research on donations (e.g., Gershon and Cryder 2018; Simpson, White, and Laran 2018). Power analyses through G*Power confirmed that our target sample sizes in all studies are sufficient to provide adequate power to detect moderate effects (e.g., Faul et al. 2009). In all studies, we include all collected data in the final analyses and do not exclude any participant. We report all manipulations, and all hypothesis-related measures. Basic demographic measurements (such as gender and age) were collected at the end of each experiment, but since they did not have a systematic impact on our results, we do not discuss them further. The detailed stimuli used can be found in the Web Appendix.

Study 1

Study 1 tests our hypothesis that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation increases donors' intention to contribute. According to the social exchange theory, gift giving is a self-perpetuating system of reciprocity, composed of the obligation to give, receive, and repay between givers and recipients (Gouldner 1960). After a gift is sent by givers and then received by recipients, in turn recipients have the obligation to repay. Thus it is possible that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation increases donors' charitable contribution because donors believe that the charity or the beneficiary will pay them back in the future (e.g., in terms of a thank-you gift). To test this alternative explanation, we measured donors' expected

reciprocity in Study 1. In addition, many charities use both donation framing and gift framing simultaneously. For example, on the solicitation page of the 100 largest U.S. charities (based on the 2019 Forbes ranking), we found that 69% of the charities mentioned both the words "donation" and "gift". How does the simultaneous usage of both gift and donation framings influence consumers' reaction to the charitable appeal? Study 1 also looked at this issue.

Method

Four hundred and fifty-six European residents (180 female; $M_{age} = 26.38$) were recruited from the online research panel Prolific to participate in this study. They were randomly assigned to one of the three (gift framing vs. donation framing vs. donation–gift framing) between-subjects conditions.

Participants were presented with a print advertisement for a charity campaign to send clothes to women in Sub-Saharan Africa (see Web Appendix). In the donation-framing condition, the ad used donation-related words to describe this campaign, whereas in the gift-framing condition, gift-related words were used in the ad. Both donation-related words and gift-related words were used in the donation–gift-framing condition.

After viewing the ad, participants indicated their intention to contribute to this charity campaign on three items ($\alpha = .93$; see Web Appendix), all on 7-point scales (1 = "not at all," 7 = "very much"). We also measured participants' expected reciprocity with two items (i.e., "I think those women in Sub-Saharan Africa will give me something back," "I expect return from those women in Sub-Saharan Africa in the future"; 1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree"; r = .56, $p < .001$; adapted from Belmi and Pfeffer 2015).

Results

The overall effect of message framing on participants' intention to contribute to the advertised charity campaign is significant (F(2, 453) = 3.43, p = .033, η_p^2 = .02). Specifically, participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 4.76, SD = 1.65) indicated a higher intention to contribute than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = 4.33, SD = 1.64, t(453) = 2.35, p = .019, d = .26). Participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 4.76, SD = 1.65) also indicated a higher intention to contribute compared to those in the joint donation–gift-framing condition (M = 4.36, SD = 1.46, t(453) = 2.18, p = .030, d = .26). However, there was no difference between the donation-framing condition and the donation–gift-framing condition (p = .874). Furthermore, across conditions, no difference in expected reciprocity was found (F(2, 453) = .72, p = .485).

Discussion

Study 1 provides initial evidence for our basic hypothesis that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation increases a donor's intention to contribute. Interestingly, however, in this study we also find that the simultaneous usage of both gift and donation framings leads to a worse solicitation performance than using gift framing alone. In fact, the effectiveness of such a combined framing is similar to that of the more traditional donation framing. One possible explanation for this data pattern is that the perceived distance from a stimulus with both a high-distance component (i.e., donation framing) and a low-distance component (i.e., gift framing) is similar to the perceived distance from a high-distance stimulus (i.e., donation framing). This is in line with Kim, Zhang, and Li (2008)'s findings such that when either of two different dimensions of psychological distance involved in an event is distant, the whole event will be perceived as

distant. Although the current research examined two entries of social distance rather than two different dimensions of psychological distance, suggested by Kim, Zhang, and Li (2008)'s findings, we speculate that the resultant social distance of jointly using gift framing and donation framing is likely to be distal, leading to the observed data pattern.

Study 1 also tests the alternative hypothesis that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation increases donors' charitable contribution because donors expect future pay-back from the beneficiaries or the charity. We found that the expected reciprocity in the gift-framing condition did not differ from that in the donation-framing condition, suggesting that this alternative explanation cannot account for the observed effect.

Study 2

With incentive-compatible data, Study 2 tests our hypothesis that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation increases donors' charitable contribution. To examine the proposed effect, Study 2 employs a one-factor, two-level (gift framing vs. donation framing) between-subjects design.

Method

One hundred and sixty-one Hong Kong undergraduates participated in this study (104 female; $M_{age} = 20.67$). After completing a short unrelated filler task, participants received HK\$15 (about US\$2) as their compensation (in the form of five HK\$2 coins and five HK\$1 coins). Then they were informed that the research team is collaborating with the charity organization *For Children*, which is dedicated to improving the lives of children living in

poverty, to collect contributions. Participants in the gift-framing (donation-framing) condition were told that they could freely decide how many dollars in the HK$15 they received to give as a gift (donation) to the needy children (see Web Appendix). Each participant was given one envelope labeled either "Donation" (the donation-framing condition) or "Gift" (the gift-framing condition), and they were instructed to put their contribution (if any) in the envelope before they left.

Results

We calculated the amount of money each participant left in the envelope as contribution (and we donated all the money to UNICEF afterwards). As predicted, participants in the gift-framing condition gave significantly more money to the charity (M = HK$8.38, SD = 5.14) than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = HK$6.70, SD = 4.86, t(159) = 2.13, *p* = .035, d = .34), a 25.1% increase in contribution amount.

Discussion

Study 2 provides behavioral evidence for our basic hypothesis that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation increases a donor's charitable contribution. Consistent with our hypothesis, in this study participants donated a substantially higher amount of money (i.e., 25.1% more) to the charity when we framed the contribution as gift rather than donation.

Study 3

To provide stronger ecological validity to our findings, Study 3 aimed to replicate the

findings of Study 2 in a field setting. Specifically, in collaboration with a company, we organized a charitable event and measured company employees' actual charitable contribution. Study 3 employs a similar one-factor, two-level (gift framing vs. donation framing) between-subjects design.

Method

We collaborated with a medium-sized Chinese company to conduct this study. All non-management employees of this company (N = 202, 95 female; M_{age} = 39.12) were randomly assigned to either the gift-framing or the donation-framing condition. They all received an internal email introducing a new charitable campaign of the company to help poor village students living in a rural area. Specifically, employees were told that the company encourages them to contribute their used books, which will be sent to the students in need. In the gift-framing condition, the email is titled "A gift to village students" and consists of gift-framed appeals; whereas in the donation-framing condition, the email is titled "A donation to village students" and consists of donation-framed appeals (see Web Appendix for the emails used).

A QR code was attached at the end of the email, and employees were asked to register by scanning the code if they want to participate in this campaign. Employees who participated handed in their used books within a week; and later we, together with company representatives, delivered all collected books to a rural primary school.

Results

Given that some participants registered for the campaign but did not eventually contribute, we separately coded participants' intention to contribute and their actual book

contribution. We first coded participants' intention to contribute by counting the number of

company employees who scanned the QR code and registered for the campaign. As predicted,

we found that more participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 55.4%) showed an intention

to contribute to the charitable campaign than in the donation-framing condition (M = 36.6%,

$\chi^2(1)$ = 7.19, p = .007, OR = 2.15). We then coded participants' actual contribution by counting

the number of company employees who actually contributed used books. Again, we found that

more participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 53.5%) carried through with their

contribution to the charitable campaign than in the donation-framing condition (M = 31.7%,

$\chi^2(1)$ = 9.80, p = .002, OR = 2.48).

Finally, we compared the average number of books that participants contributed in the

two conditions in two ways. First, an independent T-test (i.e., dividing the number of books

contributed in each condition by the number of participants in each condition) showed that

participants in the gift-framing condition gave more books (M = 2.59, SD = 5.04) than did those

in the donation-framing condition (M = .79, SD = 1.40, t(200) = 3.46, p = .001, d = .49), with a

228% increase. We then calculated the average number of books in each condition conditional

on participants' decision to contribute (i.e., dividing the number of books contributed in each

condition by the number of participants in each condition who actually contributed), and we

found a similar result: participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 4.85, SD = 6.07) gave

more books than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = 2.50, SD = 1.37, t(84) = 2.16,

p = .034, d = .53), with a 94% increase.

To mitigate the influence of data outliers (for the frequency distributions of the number of

books contributed in each condition, see Web Appendix), we also log-transformed the number of

books participants contributed, and the results remain significant. When dividing the log-

transformed number of books contributed in each condition by the number of participants in each condition, participants in the gift-framing condition (M = .80, SD = .90) contributed more books than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = .38, SD = .58, t(200) = 3.92, $p < .001$, d = .55). Similarly, when dividing the log-transformed number of books contributed in each condition by the number of participants in each condition who actually contributed, participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 1.50, SD = .68) gave more books than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = 1.21, SD = .27, t(84) = 2.30, $p = .024$, d = .56).

Discussion

Replicating our findings in a field setting, in Study 3 we find that framing charitable giving as gift rather than donation not only increased donors' intention to contribute but also increased their actual likelihood of contribution and their amount of contribution. In addition, different from Study 2 in which participants contributed money, in this study our participants contributed used books. Thus, findings of this study suggest that the effect we observed can be generalized to goods donation as well.

Study 4

In Study 4 we directly examine the potential mediating role of perceived social distance underlying our effect. Study 4 adopts a one-factor, two-level (gift framing vs. donation framing) between-subjects design.

Method

Two hundred and ninety-nine U.S. residents (155 female; $M_{age} = 37.27$) participated in Study 4 via Amazon's Mechanical Turk for a nominal payment. They were randomly assigned to the gift-framing condition or the donation-framing condition.

Participants were presented with a print advertisement for a charity campaign about patients with breast cancer (see Web Appendix). In the donation-framing condition, donation-related words were used in the ad, whereas in the gift-framing condition, gift-related words were used in the ad. After viewing the ad, participants were informed that they will receive $0.20 as a bonus in addition to their payment. Then participants in the donation-framing (gift-framing) condition indicated how much they want to give as a donation (gift) to breast cancer patients among five choices (i.e., $0, $0.05, $0.1, $0.15, $0.20), and they then received the rest of their bonus payment. (We donated all participants' contribution to UNICEF afterwards.)

After they indicated the amount of money they would give to breast cancer patients, we measured participants' perceived social distance from the breast cancer patients based on measures established in prior psychological-distance literature (e.g., Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008). Specifically, participants indicated to what extent they agree with three items on a 7-point scale (adapted from Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008; $\alpha = .91$; see Web Appendix). Finally, as the manipulation check, participants indicated whether they perceived their contribution to the charity as a donation or a gift, on an 8-point scale (1 = "giving a donation," 8 = "giving a gift").

Results

As expected, participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 4.71, SD = 2.60) perceived their contribution to the charity as a gift (rather than a donation) more than those in the donation-framing condition did (M = 3.03, SD = 2.13, t(297) = 6.12, $p < .001$, d = .71).

Replicating findings in previous studies, we found that participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 11.66¢, SD = 7.68) gave more money (i.e., a 22.9% increase) to breast cancer patients than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = 9.49¢, SD = 7.86, t(297) = 2.41, *p* = .017, d = .28). Participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 3.90, SD = 1.81) also perceived lower social distance from breast cancer patients than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = 4.68, SD = 1.53, t(297) = -3.99, *p* < .001, d = -.47). Mediation analyses with 5,000 bootstrapping resamples (Hayes and Preacher 2014; model 4) confirmed that the effect of framing on contribution was mediated by perceived social distance from charity beneficiaries (b = 1.04, SE = .33; 95% CI: [.50 to 1.83]; see Figure 1).

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insert figure 1 about here

Discussion

Similar to results in our previous studies, in Study 4 we find again that framing charitable giving as gift (vs. as donation) increases donors' contribution. In addition, we show that this observed effect is mediated by donors' perceived social distance from charity beneficiaries, which confirms our proposed underlying mechanism.

Given that the context used in this study is about breast cancer patients, it is likely that the donation appeal is more relevant to female donors than male donors. However, we did not find an interaction effect of donors' gender and message framing on donors' contribution (*p* = .143). Moreover, the observed effect remains significant when donors' gender was controlled

(p = .016). We speculate that this is probably because breast cancer is particularly threatening to females, preventing them from feeling very close to breast cancer patients.

Study 5

Psychological distance is defined as "a subjective experience that something is close or far away from the self, here, and now"; it has four dimensions including spatial distance, temporal distance, social distance, and hypothetical distance (Trope and Liberman 2010). Each dimension of psychological distance can affect the others (e.g., Fiedler et al. 2012; Wakslak 2012; Yan 2014). For example, prior literature has clearly demonstrated that people feel psychologically closer to spatially close others than spatially distant others (e.g., Casasanto 2008; Williams and Bargh 2008; Zhang and Wang 2009).

In Study 5, we used a process-by-moderation approach (e.g., Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005) and directly manipulated donors' perceived social distance from the charity beneficiaries to provide further support for the proposed social-distance mechanism underlying our effect. If the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. as donation) on charitable contribution is indeed driven by donors' reduced perception of social distance from charity beneficiaries, we anticipate that this effect will be weakened or dismissed when soliciting contributions for beneficiaries who are psychologically close to donors (i.e., when donors already feel very close to beneficiaries). Following previous charitable-giving literature (Duclos and Barasch 2014; Winterich, Mittal, and Ross Jr 2009), in Study 5 we operationalized social distance through the manipulation of spatial distance.

Method

Six hundred and six U.S. residents (353 female; M_{age} = 36.32) from Amazon's Mechanical Turk participated in Study 5 for a nominal payment. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions in a 2 (distance: baseline vs. close) × 2 (framing: gift framing vs. donation framing) between-subjects design.

Participants first indicated which state they currently reside in. They were then presented with a print advertisement used by the Alzheimer's Association to solicit contributions for patients with Alzheimer's disease (see Web Appendix). Following previous charitable-giving literature (Duclos and Barasch 2014; Winterich, Mittal, and Ross 2009), we manipulated social distance by telling participants that the beneficiaries are either nationwide patients with Alzheimer's disease (the baseline-distance condition) or local patients with Alzheimer's disease in the participant's state of residence (the close-distance condition). For example, in the close-distance condition, if a participant indicated in the demographic survey that he/she currently lives in California, that participant would see an ad asking for a contribution to local patients with Alzheimer's disease in California. A pretest showed that our manipulation of psychological distance by focusing on either nationwide patients or local patients did not impact participants' involvement in reading this ad or their trust in this charity (see Web Appendix).

Similar to our previous studies, in the donation-framing condition, the ad used donation-related words to describe this campaign, whereas in the gift-framing condition, gift-related words were used in the ad. Similar to Study 4, after viewing the ad, participants were informed that they will receive $0.20 as a bonus in addition to their payment. Participants in the donation-framing (gift-framing) condition then indicated how much they want to give as a donation (gift) to patients with Alzheimer's disease among five choices (i.e., $0, $0.05, $0.1, $0.15, $0.20) and

received the rest of their bonus payment. (We donated all participants' contributions to UNICEF afterwards.)

After participants indicated the amount of money they would give to patients with Alzheimer's disease, similar to Study 4, they reported their perceived social distance from those patients by indicating to what extent they agree with three items on a 7-point scale (adapted from Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008; α = .87; see Web Appendix).

Results

A two-way ANOVA on the amount of contribution revealed a significant main effect of distance ($F(1, 602)$ = 4.94, p = .027, η_p^2 = .01), qualified by a significant framing × distance interaction effect ($F(1, 602)$ = 4.24, p = .040, η_p^2 = .01; see Figure 2). Planned contrasts showed that in the baseline-distance condition, consistent with our previous studies, participants in the gift-framing condition contributed significantly more (M = 9.70¢, SD = 7.29) than those in the donation-framing condition (M = 7.50¢, SD = 7.55, $F(1, 602)$ = 6.42, p = .012, η_p^2 = .01), with a 29.3% increase. In contrast, no difference was found in the amount of contribution between the gift-framing condition (M = 9.80¢, SD = 7.79) and the donation-framing condition (M = 10.13¢, SD = 7.63, $F(1, 602)$ = .14, p = .704) in the close-distance condition.

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insert figure 2 about here

A two-way ANOVA on perceived social distance demonstrated significant main effects of distance ($F(1, 602)$ = 16.14, p < .001, η_p^2 = .03) and of framing ($F(1, 602)$ = 5.15, p = .024, η_p^2 = .01), qualified by a significant framing × distance interaction effect ($F(1, 602)$ = 5.64, p = .018,

$\eta_p^2 = .01$; see Figure 3). Planned contrasts showed that in the baseline-distance condition,

framing charitable giving as a gift reduced donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries

($M_{donation} = 4.67$, SD = 1.47 vs. $M_{gift} = 4.12$, SD = 1.39; $F(1, 602) = 10.79$, $p = .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .02$).

On the contrary, in the close-distance condition, framing charitable giving as a gift did not make

a difference in donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries ($M_{donation} = 3.92$, SD = 1.42

vs. $M_{gift} = 3.93$, SD = 1.54, $F(1, 602) = .01$, $p = .940$).

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insert figure 3 about here

A moderated mediation (Hayes and Preacher 2014; model 7) with donors' perceived

social distance from beneficiaries as the mediator and manipulated distance as the moderator was

significant (b = -.48, SE = .24, 95% CI: [-1.07, -.09]). Specifically, in the baseline-distance

condition, perceived social distance mediated the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs.

as donation) on the amount of contribution (b = .47, SE = .19, 95% CI: [.18, .98]), whereas there

was no mediation in the close-distance condition (b = -.01, SE = .15, 95% CI: [-.30, .30]).

Discussion

Following a process-by-moderation approach (e.g., Spencer, Zanna, and Fong 2005), we

directly manipulated donors' perceived social distance to the charity beneficiaries in this study

through changing donors perceived spatial distance from beneficiaries and found that, consistent

with our expectation, our observed effect was diminished when donors already feel very close to

beneficiaries. On one hand, study 5 replicates our previous findings such that gift framing

increases donors' contribution when beneficiaries are spatially distant, which demonstrates the

effectiveness of gift framing when soliciting contributions for geographically remote

beneficiaries; one the other hand, we did not observe a similar effect of gift framing when

beneficiaries are spatially close, which provides further support to our proposed social distance

underlying mechanism and suggests gift framing's ineffectiveness when soliciting contributions

for geographically close beneficiaries.

Study 6

Study 6 aimed to demonstrate the moderating role of need for status. People who seek

high status usually have a need to be distinct and separate from others and thus will endorse

social distance from others, especially from those who have a relatively low status (e.g., Hogg

and Reid 2001; Lee and Tiedens 2001; Smith and Trope 2006). Following this logic, we expect

that framing charitable giving as gift has a stronger impact on donors with relatively low need for

status. For donors with high need for status, the shortened social distance resulting from the gift

framing will not induce them to give more. To test this prediction, in Study 6 we manipulated

charity-appeal framing (gift framing vs. donation framing), as well as measured participants'

need for status.

Method

Six hundred and one U.S. residents (304 female; $M_{age} = 36.75$) from Amazon's

Mechanical Turk participated in Study 6 for a small payment. They were randomly assigned to

the gift-framing condition or the donation-framing condition.

Participants were presented with a print advertisement for a charity campaign soliciting

contributions to Sub-Saharan Africans. In the donation-framing condition, the ad used donation-related words to describe the campaign, whereas in the gift-framing condition, the ad used gift-related words. Similar to Studies 4 and 5, after viewing the ad, participants were informed that they will receive a $0.20 bonus in addition to their payment. Participants in the donation-framing (gift-framing) condition then indicated how much they want to give as a donation (gift) to Sub-Saharan Africans among five choices (i.e., $0, $0.05, $0.1, $0.15, $0.20) and received the rest of their bonus payment. (We donated all participants' contribution to UNICEF afterwards.)

After participants indicated the amount of money they would give to Sub-Saharan Africans, they completed a six-item scale measuring need for status (e.g., "It's important to me that others respect my rank or position"; adapted from Neel et al. 2016; 1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree"; α = .84; see Web Appendix). At the end, participants completed the same manipulation check as was used in Study 4.

Results

Participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 4.45, SD = 2.35) more strongly perceived their contribution to the charity as a gift (rather than a donation) compared to those in the donation-framing condition (M = 3.35, SD = 2.32, t(599) = 5.77, p < .001, d = .47).

Replicating results of previous studies, we found that participants in the gift-framing condition (M = 10.33¢, SD = 8.09) gave more money (i.e., a 23.9% increase) to Sub-Saharan Africans than did those in the donation-framing condition (M = 8.34¢, SD = 7.89, t(599) = 3.06, p = .002, d = .25). We then conducted a regression on the amount of contribution with framing (1 = gift framing, 0 = donation framing), the continuous measure of need for status, and their interaction. There was a significant effect of framing (b = 6.87, t(597) = 2.78, p = .006), a

marginally significant effect of need for status (b = .77, t(597) = 1.87, p = .062), and more importantly a significant interaction effect of framing and need for status (b = -1.14, t(597) = -2.05, p = .041). A floodlight analysis (i.e., the Johnson-Neyman technique; e.g., Hayes and Preacher 2014; Johnson and Neyman 1936) showed that a Johnson-Neyman point for need for status appeared at the value of 4.80 (see Figure 4). Specifically, the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. as donation) occurs for donors with a need-for-status score below 4.80 (64% of our participants).

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insert figure 4 about here

Discussion

In our last study, we found that framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) made a difference in the amount of contribution among donors with a relatively low need for status but not among those with a high need for status. This study not only provides support for our proposed social-distance mechanism, it also suggests need for status as an important individual difference in donors' responses to charity-appeal framings—a substantial practical insight for charities.

General Discussion

Marketing is not only about encouraging consumer purchase and maintaining customer relationships in business sectors. Broadly, it is also practiced when inviting desirable responses in non-profit domains and public sectors, such as increasing the effectiveness of charitable

solicitation. How to frame charitable messages to maximize individual contribution is an important marketing question. Providing a simple and actionable solution, the current research proposes that framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) can substantially increase the effectiveness of charitable solicitation. Through six studies, including four incentive-compatible studies (Studies 2, 4, 5, and 6) and a field study (Study 3), convergent evidence is obtained for our premise. Studies 1–3 supply initial evidence for the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) on donors' charitable contribution and exclude a potential explanation. Our proposed underlying mechanism was supported with mediation and moderation approaches in Studies 4–6. Specifically, Study 4 shows that donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries mediated the effect of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) on donors' charitable contribution, and Study 5 finds that framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) did not increase donors' charitable contribution when soliciting contributions for beneficiaries who are psychologically close to donors (e.g., local beneficiaries). Finally, Study 6 demonstrates that the proposed effect was attenuated for donors with a high need for status, since social distance with others is desirable for them.

Theoretical Implications

The present research contributes to existing literature in several ways. Previous literature on charitable giving has identified multiple factors that can impact charitable giving. For example, one stream of research focuses on the impact of individual characteristics on charitable giving, such as self-construal (Duclos and Barasch 2014), self-control (Fennis, Janssen, and Vohs 2009), and moral identity (Winterich, Mittal, and Ross Jr 2009). Charitable contribution is also sensitive to situational factors, such as specific emotions (Small and Verrochi 2009),

engaging in creative activities (Xu, Mehta, and Dahl 2021), and exposure to price promotion (Zhang, Cai, and Shi 2021). A third line of research investigates factors related to how charities convey messages to donors, such as identifying the specific victim (Kogut and Ritov 2005), the aesthetic design of charity advertisements (Townsend 2017), and the focus of charitable messages (Hung and Wyer 2009). We complement prosocial literature by demonstrating an easy and widely applicable strategy and showing that framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) can increase contributions.

Past research has examined construal framing in the context of prosocial giving (e.g., Ein-Gar and Levontin 2013; Macdonnell and White 2015; Rudd, Aaker, and Norton 2014). For example, framing a prosocial goal in a concrete (vs. abstract) way has been shown to increase a giver's happiness because it reduces the gap between the giver's expectation and reality (Rudd, Aaker, and Norton 2014). The current work adds to this stream of research in two ways. First, the targets of framing are different. Past work in this domain focused on the framing of a prosocial goal and a charitable cause (in a concrete vs. abstract way), while the focus in our research is how to frame the solicitation itself. Second, construal framing refers to framing something on different construal levels; in contrast, semantic framing mainly focuses on two interchangeably used words, but these two words may not necessarily differ in their construal level. On this front, the framing approach in the current research is different from prior work. We hope this research can stimulate more work on how message framing influences the effectiveness of charitable solicitation.

The current research also adds to the ongoing scientific conversation about semantic framing. As suggested by Sapir and Whorf in their pioneering theory (Sapir 1921; Whorf 1956), there is no thought without language. Not surprisingly, our judgments and perceptions about the

world depend on how we use language. Compared to other types of message framing, there is a lack of attention to semantic framing. Reflecting this relatively recent awareness, a growing literature has examined the influences of semantic framing on persuasion (Mayer and Tormala 2010), coupon-redemption behavior (Cheema and Patrick 2008), goal-directed behavior (Patrick and Hagtvedt 2012a, 2012b), desire for postponed temptation (Mead and Patrick 2016), and service-failure recovery (You et al. 2020). Extending this stream of literature, we examine semantic framing in the domain of charitable giving and show the effects of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) on increasing charitable contribution. In addition, the present research broadens the current knowledge of closeness-implying language. Prior work in this area has mainly focused on pronoun use to show that using "we" versus "I and [a name]" can reflect closeness in individual relationship with either a person (Fitzsimons and Kay 2004; Simmons, Gordon, and Chambless 2005) or a brand (Sela, Wheeler, and Sarial-Abi 2012). More importantly, such pronoun use can promote interpersonal closeness in the real interaction: For example, Fitzsimons and Kay (2004) found that participants indeed felt closer to a stranger after using "we." The current research contributes to the existing literature by proposing gift-framing's implications for interpersonal relationship and further examining its influences in the context of charitable giving.

The current research provides further insight into the role of social exchange in charitable giving. It has been argued in the literature that the notion of the gift can be seen as a way of conceptualizing the donation of body tissues, such that organ donation can be spoken of as a gift of life (Gerrand 1994). This is consistent with our argument that donation, in general, can be transformed into a gift. Admittedly, donation is not a social exchange. Yet, framing donation as gift does not change the donation process to a real social-exchange process in which donors and

beneficiaries exchange their gifts. What really happens is that the symbolic meanings embedded in the gift framing signal a different relationship between donors and recipients, which can impact donors' decision. As far as we know, empirical research has not examined systematically the framing of social exchange in the domain of charitable giving. The only exception is Study 4 of Gershon and Cryder (2018), in which researchers found that framing a monetary donation as communal (i.e., a gift to the beneficiary) increases observers' perceived charitable credit of donors, but only for low-warmth donors. This finding is in line with our proposition that gift framing decreases donors' perceived social distance to beneficiaries. However, whereas Gershon and Cryder (2018) focused on how framing a monetary donation as communal influences observers' perception of donors, our work shifts the focus to how gift framing affects donors' own perception of their relationship with beneficiaries, which enables us to further demonstrate its consequential behavioral implications on increased effectiveness of charitable solicitation.

Managerial Implications

The current research offers substantive practical implications to policy makers, marketers, and charity organizations by identifying a simple and actionable strategy to promote charitable giving. Charity marketers often use donation framing and gift framing interchangeably in their advertisements in an apparent underestimation of their differences. Our findings suggest that gift framing versus donation framing leads to very different results in soliciting donations. Across six studies, we find that semantically framing charitable giving as gift (rather than donation) decreases donors' perceived social distance from beneficiaries and increases their charitable contribution. Considering the low cost to operationalize this change, gift framing seems to be a more effective strategy to be used in future charity campaigns.

Although more and more charities have started to notice the potential benefits of framing charitable giving as gift and have begun to use this framing in their daily practice, the best way to employ this strategy remains largely opaque to them. In the current research, we found in Study 1 that using both donation and gift framings simultaneously weakened the effectiveness of gift framing in promoting charitable giving. Therefore, we suggest that when charities use gift framing in their appeals, they should avoid the use of donation-related words.

In addition, charitable marketers should be cognizant that the effectiveness of framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) varies across beneficiaries and donors. Specifically, marketers can benefit from framing charitable giving as gift (vs. donation) when soliciting contribution for general or distant beneficiaries, or from donors with a low need for status, but this strategy may be less effective when soliciting contributions for beneficiaries who are physically or psychologically close to donors (e.g., local beneficiaries), or from donors who see social distance as desirable (e.g., those with a high need for status).

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Our findings suggest several directions for future research. First, while in the current research we compared only donation framing with gift framing due to practical and theoretical considerations (as mentioned before), it is important to recognize that other framings (e.g., help and giving) are also used by charities. We believe that using these other framings may not have the same impact as the use of gift framing, since in comparison, they lack the symbolic values embedded in gift framing, have a weaker association with givers' self-concept compared to gift framing, and usually are not associated with a social and relational context. Future research can further examine the influences of other semantic framings on charitable giving.

Second, although Studies 4-6 provided convergent evidence for the social distance mechanism, our proposed effect could be multiply-determined. Since gift framing is embedded with a lot of hedonic values such as love and affection, it is possible that gift framing evokes donors' positive feelings which in turn may influence donors' contribution, despite that our additional data shows no difference in donors' positive feelings between the two conditions. More systematic investigations on the role of emotion in these semantic framings are needed in future work. In addition, we argued previously that several different theoretical routes could potentially connect semantic framing to social distance, such as embedded symbolic values in the gift framing, the associated relational context, and the gift's extended self. Future research is needed to test which path has a stronger impact on the observed framing effect.

Third, in Study 1, we found that the joint use of gift framing and donation framing weakened the positive effect of gift framing on solicitation. We speculate that this occurs because the perceived distance from a stimulus with both a high-distance component (i.e., donation framing) and a low-distance component (i.e., gift framing) is similar to the perceived distance from a high-distance stimulus (i.e., donation framing). This is consistent with past research showing that when either of two different dimensions of psychological distance involved in an event is distant, the whole event will be perceived as distant (Kim, Zhang, and Li 2008). It will be interesting for future research to further investigate the exact underlying mechanism of this data pattern.

In addition, we observed a stronger effect of gift framing for in-kind solicitation (e.g., Study 3) than monetary solicitation (e.g., Study 2). Based on the social exchange norm, a monetary exchange, relatively lacking in symbolic and communal values, is less appropriate than goods exchange within those close social relationships (Webley and Wilson 1989). We thus

speculated that the difference in effect size between in-kind contribution and monetary contribution emerges possibly because of the inappropriateness of money in gift giving. Future research is needed to delve into the difference between these two types of charitable giving.

Fourth, in the current research we manipulated semantic framing in a holistic way. That is, in our studies we used gift-related (donation-related) words consistently in multiple places within our stimuli (the headline, the charity description, etc.). However, in real life, semantic framing can be used differently in specific locations in the solicitation appeal. For example, we found that 65% (70%) of the top 100 U.S. charities used gift (donation) framing when asking for contribution (e.g., indicating contribution amount), and 54% (43%) of them used gift (donation) framing when describing their charitable activities. It's possible that the effectiveness of semantic framing differs, depending on where it is used. Future research is needed to examine how the location of semantic framing influences its effectiveness.

Fifth, since gift giving is interpreted as an expression of symbolic meaning in both Eastern and Western cultures (Shen, Wan, and Wyer 2011), we have replicated the effect of framing charitable giving as gift on charitable contribution across samples from different cultures and societies, such as the United States, European countries, Hong Kong, and mainland China. Each society, however, may have specific social norms about gift giving (e.g., Joy 2001; Shen, Wan, and Wyer 2011), that may affect the magnitude and underlying mechanism of our effect. For instance, western people place less value on reciprocity norms in gift exchange than eastern people do (Shen, Wan, and Wyer 2011). Future research could investigate how culturally specific social norms related to gift giving (e.g., reciprocity norms) influence the observed effect.

A sixth limitation of the current research is that we examine only one-time effectiveness of framing charitable giving as gift, so it is unclear whether such an effect could persist over

repeated solicitations. Given that today more and more charities have started to use gift framing in their contribution solicitation, it's possible our observed effect will be weakened over time, when "gift" becomes the most common terminology for charitable giving. This warrants future research as well.

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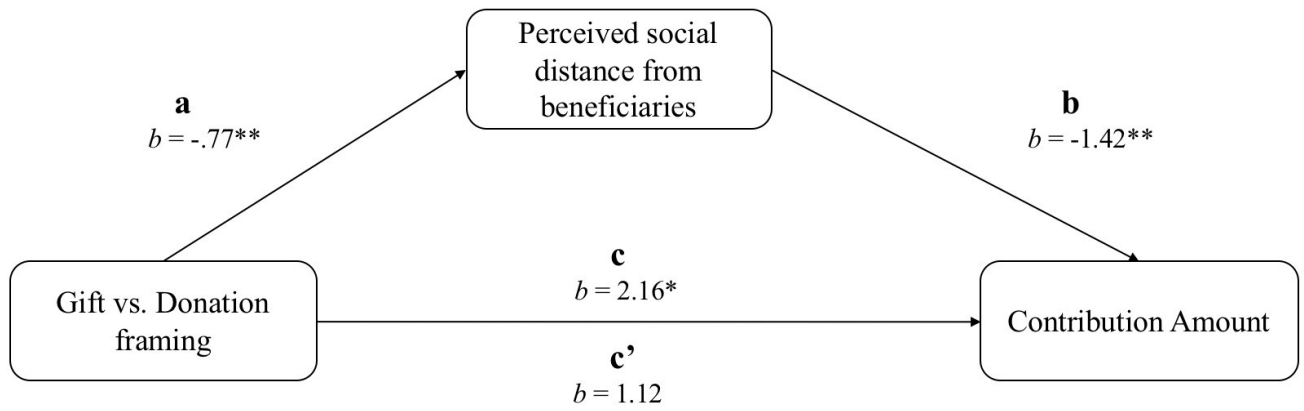
TABLE 1. THE TEN MOST FREQUENTLY USED SEMANTIC FRAMING ON THE

DONATION PAGES OF THE TOP 100 U.S. CHARITIES

Rank	Framing	Number of mentions	Percentage of charities using the framing
1	Gift	314	83%
2	Donation	268	83%
3	Support	38	30%
4	Contribution	31	24%
5	Care	26	20%
6	Giving	25	19%
7	Generosity	12	11%
8	Help	11	11%
9	Assistance	7	4%
10	Love	3	3%

FIGURE 1

MEDIATION ANALYSIS IN STUDY 4


```
                        ┌─────────────────┐
                        │ Perceived social│
                        │  distance from  │
        a               │  beneficiaries  │              b
   b = -.77**           └─────────────────┘         b = -1.42**

┌──────────────────┐              c                ┌──────────────────┐
│ Gift vs. Donation│           b = 2.16*           │Contribution Amount│
│     framing      │ ──────────────────────────────│                  │
└──────────────────┘              c'               └──────────────────┘
                              b = 1.12
```

Note: *p < .05, **p < .01

FIGURE 2

THE INTERACTION EFFECT OF FRAMING AND THE DEFAULT RELATIONSHIP

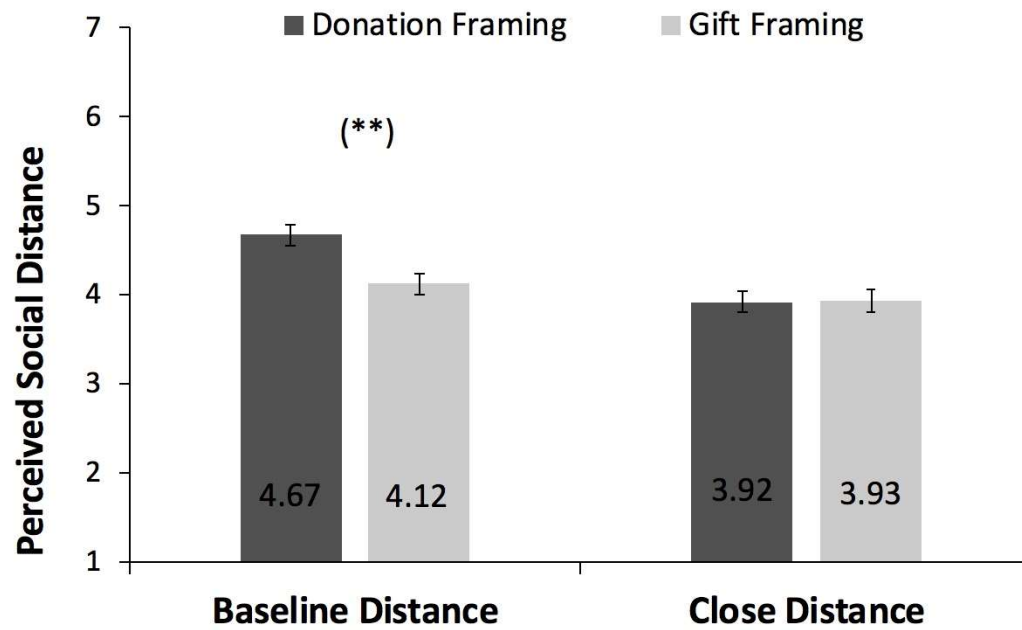BETWEEN DONORS AND BENEFICIARIES ON DONATION AMOUNT IN STUDY 5
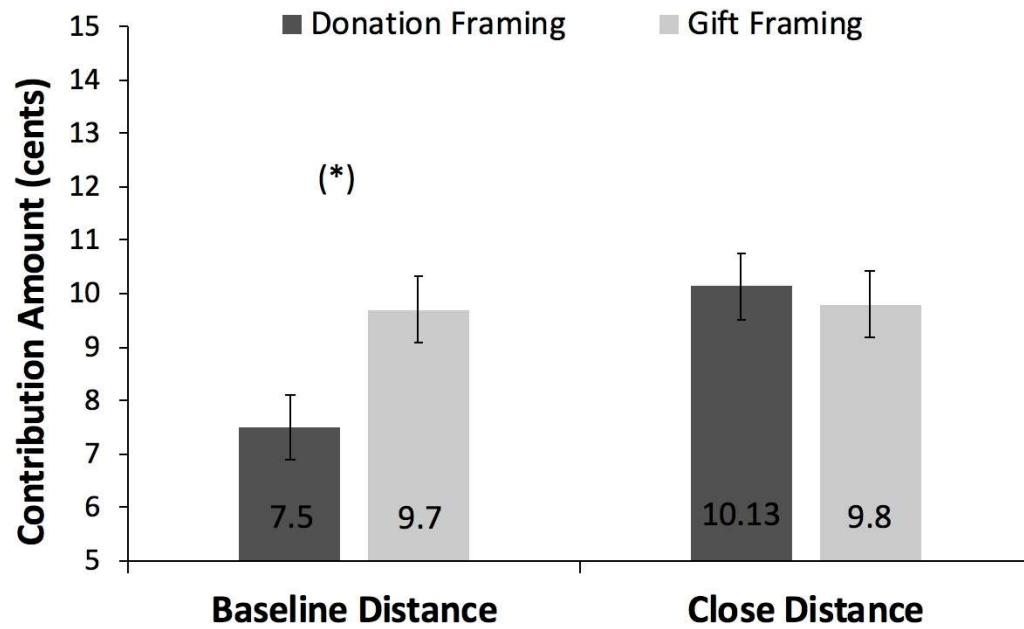
Note: Error bars represent standard errors (±SE around the mean).

*p < .05, **p < .01.

FIGURE 3

THE INTERACTION EFFECT OF FRAMING AND THE DEFAULT RELATIONSHIP

BETWEEN DONORS AND BENEFICIARIES ON PERCEIVED SOCIAL DISTANCE IN

STUDY 5

Note: Error bars represent standard errors (±SE around the mean).

*p < .05, **p < .01.

FIGURE 4

THE INTERACTION EFFECT OF FRAMING AND NEED FOR STATUS ON DONATION

AMOUNT IN STUDY 6