The Effects of Various Message Strategies on Fund Raising Effectiveness for Charitable Organizations

Fall 1980

Bonnie Jo Buck

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THE EFFECTS OF VARIOUS MESSAGE STRATEGIES
ON FUND RAISING EFFECTIVENESS
FOR CHARITABLE ORGANIZATIONS

BY

BONNIE JO BUCK
B.A., University of Central Florida, 1979

THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts: Communication
in the Graduate Studies Program
of the College of Arts and Sciences
of the University of Central Florida at Orlando, Florida

Fall Quarter
1980
TO MOTHER AND DADDY
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to acknowledge the assistance of my parents, James J. and Eleanor C. Buck, and express my deepest appreciation for their love, companionship, guidance and encouragement which made the preparation of this thesis possible.

I would also like to thank my son, J. Cuthbertson Buck, who accompanied me during countless hours of research and displayed wisdom far exceeding a three-year old, in understanding why "Mother" had to study.

I wish to express my appreciation to the members of my committee, Dr. Albert Pryor, Dr. Raymond Buchanon, and Dr. Edgar Wycoff. I express my gratitude not only for assistance in this project, but also for their kindness to me throughout my years at the University of Central Florida. I wish to give special thanks to Dr. Pryor, as committee chairman, he has been a source of continual guidance, insight, and encouragement.

Finally, I wish to thank John Lander, Rita Rehm, Bonnie Van Wagner and Sam Lawrence who served as confederates. Without their assistance the experiment would not have been possible.
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CHAPTER I

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Some organizations are totally dependent upon fund raising for survival. While fund raising success is at least partially dependent on effective communication, little research is available on the communication factors which affect charity giving. Benson and Catt (1978, p. 85) pointed out the unique aspects of charity giving.

"It involves a solicitor who serves as an intermediary between benefactor and beneficiary, the help is channeled through a bureaucratic organization to which the helper may have a variety of well-formed attitudes, and it requires sharing money rather than time or energy."

The problem of fund raising is a task that should concern communication scholars because one goal of communication research has been to isolate variables which can account for the acceptance or rejection of persuasive communication. Numerous verbal message variables have been investigated and experimental research has provided generalizations which are helpful when structuring a persuasive message. The application of persuasion theories to fund raising problems could prove to be beneficial both to fund raisers and to communication researchers. The major purpose of this study was to test applications of communication theory by investigating the effects of two verbally-mediated variables, evidence and
type of request, and the effects of a third variable, sex of solicitor, on financial contributions in a door-to-door charity campaign.

Review of Related Research

Fund raising is of major importance to thousands of charitable organizations dependent on contributions. Benson and Catt (1978, p. 85) stated that "one area that has received no research attention is what the solicitor says to the potential giver." The purpose of their study was to investigate the influence of three message variables in a door-to-door charity campaign. The variables were (1) the dependency of the recipient (2) the cause of the recipient's plight and (3) the expressed reason that the contributor gave to the charity. High dependency was manipulated by describing recipients as those "really in need" of help and low dependency was manipulated by describing recipients as those who "could use" your support. The recipients' plight was described as externally caused if factors were beyond his or her control, such as environment, heredity, or disease. Their plight was described as internally caused if factors were allegedly within the recipients control, such as moral weakness, lack of motivation, or personal choice. Reason for Giving was expressed as either "social responsibility" or "to feel good." These three variables were
operationalized by eight basic types of verbal appeals in a 2 x 2 x 2 design. Results indicated that donations were greater when the solicitor defined the recipients plight as externally caused, and presented the "you'll feel good" justification for giving. These two variables also interacted, producing considerably more donations than the other three combinations. After completing their study, Benson and Catt concluded: "These findings indicate that adult donation behavior can be significantly affected by relatively complex verbal appeals alone" (p. 90).

Language researchers have also investigated forms of request and their typical uses and connotations of pressure. Ervin-Tripp (1976) stated that a polite imperative, such as, "please contribute to our fund" is the most direct and most obvious way of making a request. It is also the most coercive of the forms, leaving the fewest options open to the respondent. According to Ervin-Tripp, the addition of the word "please" does not change the grammatical constraints on the response. Implied pressure to comply would seem to enhance charity giving.

Another form of request is labeled the agreement question because the form seems to imply that the speaker
expects agreement. An example of an agreement question is "won't you contribute to our fund". Ericson and Rogers (1973) refer to this as a question seeking support. Folger and Puck (1976) refer to it as a feeding question because it appears to feed the hoped-for answer to the respondent. Ervin-Tripp (1976) calls this form an embedded imperative because, she says, it is normally interpreted as a command if the action is physically possible at the time of utterance. She asserts that noncompliance with this form requires some sort of explanation and thereby exerts a good deal of pressure.

In investigating a form of request labeled the information question (would you like to contribute to our fund?), language researchers concluded that it appears to exert far less pressure than the forms already discussed. Ervin-Tripp (1976) points out that it is polite because it allows the noncompliant hearer to interpret the question as a request for information and decline more gracefully.

Cantor (1979), also dealt with the way a persuasion attempt is phrased when he tested the effects of grammatical form variations in door-to-door solicitations for a charitable organization. Cantor assessed the comparative effectiveness of the four forms of request (polite imperative, agreement question, information
question and statement) and found that the polite imperative, which was predicted to exert the most pressure, was the most effective in soliciting funds. In the context in which persuasion was studied, the polite imperative was a direct request for compliance.

Social psychologists and communication researchers have been conducting empirical investigations of persuasion for several decades. The work of Hovland and Mandell (1952) is closely related to Cantor's (1979) and Ervin-Tripp's research on type of request. Hovland and Mandell tested the relative persuasive effects of letting the audience draw its own conclusions versus making a direct conclusion statement. Hovland and Mandell pointed out that greater effectiveness of the former might be predicted from the frequently cited axiom of the nondirective school of psychotherapy that decisions are more likely to produce behavior change when reached independently by the client than when suggested by the therapist. However, the opposite prediction can also be made, according to Hovland and Mandell, on the grounds that for many members of the audience it would be necessary for the conclusion to be explicitly stated to insure its being clearly perceived. The results of the Hovland and Mandell (1952) study showed that over twice as many subjects changed their opinions in the direction
advocated when the speaker stated the specific conclusion than when he did not.

An additional message factor which is potentially relevant to charity soliciting is evidence. McCroskey, Young and Scott (1972) found that when evidence was provided in a persuasive message, that message was perceived to be more clear and better supported than a no evidence message. McCroskey (1969) reported on some twenty-two studies concerned with the functioning of evidence in persuasive communication. In examining these studies, McCroskey determined that the following tentative generalizations would be of value to the practicing communicator or communication researcher:

1. Including good evidence has little if any, impact on immediate audience attitude change or source credibility if the source of the message is initially perceived to be high-credible.

2. Including good evidence has little, if any, impact on immediate audience attitude change if the message is delivered poorly.

3. Including good evidence has little, if any, impact on immediate audience attitude change or source credibility if the audience is familiar with the source's message.

4. Including good evidence may significantly increase immediate audience attitude change and source credibility when the source is initially perceived to be moderate-to-low-credible, when the message is well delivered, and when the audience has little or no prior familiarity with the evidence included or similar evidence.
(5) Including good evidence may significantly increase sustained audience attitude change regardless of the source's initial credibility, the quality of the delivery of the message, or the medium by which the message is transmitted.

McCroskey (1969) noted that one of the questions that remains to be answered regards the effect of evidence on overt behavior change. None of the 22 studies covered in McCroskey's report employed overt behavior change as a dependent measure.

The research pertaining to the third variable, sex, has been inconclusive. Benson and Catt (1978) found that males as compared to females were more generous. Cantor (1979) found that females collected significantly more money than did males. Scheidel (1963, p. 354), in an experimental study of the effects of sex upon attitude shift and retention showed that "women, as compared with men, are significantly more persuasible, significantly more inclined to transfer the persuasive appeal, and significantly less retentive." Considerable interest has been expressed in the transfer effect, or the tendency of an individual who has been persuaded on one issue to transfer that persuasive effect to other issues. Bettinghaus (1968, p. 40) summarized the previous research pertaining to the sex variable in this way: "A number of studies suggest differences between men and women in the ways in which they react to persuasive messages. In
general, these studies tend to show that women are more persuasible than men, although the finding is not as clear as some researchers suggest."

In the present experiment, development of message strategies to test the effects of direct request and use of evidence were based on past research. The results of the Hovland and Mandell study (1952), showed that when the speaker drew the appropriate conclusion for the audience he was more effective than when the drawing of the conclusion was left to the audience. Hovland and Mandell explained this by saying direct suggestion (operationalized in the present study as direct request) is more effective for many members of an audience because it is necessary for the conclusion to be explicitly stated to insure its being clearly perceived. Cantor (1979) found that the polite imperative (operationalized in the present study as direct request) was the most effective in soliciting funds. Based upon this research, direct request was expected to be a very persuasive message strategy in door-to-door solicitation for charitable organizations.

The credibility of door-to-door solicitors in charity campaigns is unlikely to be extremely positive or negative. The perception that door-to-door solicitations are a form of begging mediates against
the development of high credibility. Assuming that initial credibility is not high, the use of evidence should enhance solicitor credibility. This may also enhance the effectiveness of the door-to-door solicitations. The present study answers McCroskey's call for research on the effects of evidence on overt behavior. The predictions are stated formally below.

Hypothesis 1:

Subjects who receive a message with evidence will contribute more money to the charity than subjects who receive a message without evidence.

Hypothesis 2:

Subjects who receive a direct request message will contribute more money to the charity than subjects who receive an indirect request message.

Hypothesis 3:

Subjects who receive a direct request message with evidence, will contribute more money to the charity than subjects who receive any of the three remaining messages.

Hypothesis 4:

Subjects who receive an indirect request message without evidence will contribute less money to the charity than subjects who receive any of the remaining messages.
Due to the ambiguity of previous results on sex and persuasibility, formal predictions were not attempted.
Design and Subjects

Each of 192 subjects who were residents of four subdivisions in Seminole County, Florida, were randomly assigned to one of the four experimental treatments. The areas canvassed were relatively affluent suburban neighborhoods. Home values ranged upward from approximately $60,000. Figure 1 displays the 2 (type of request) x 2 (evidence) x 2 (sex of solicitor) factorial design.

Figure 1
Experimental Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MALE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>FEMALE</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>No Evidence</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>No Evidence</td>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td>No Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Request</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Request</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The two dependent variables were the amount of money contributed to the charity, and the number of people who made a contribution.
Confederates

The solicitors were graduate students in the Communication department at the University of Central Florida. There were a total of four solicitors, two males and two females.

The Charity Organization

The Seminole County Humane Society was selected because of their lack of exposure through fund raising campaigns. Many charitable organizations receive so much exposure through the media and are so well known that it was felt this would be a contamination.

Materials and Instrumentation

Each solicitor received a Message Data Form containing columns in which to record the amount of money collected, sex of contributor, estimated age category of contributor, and additional comments (see Appendix A). The Message Data Form also contained a column with pre recorded house numbers and a column with pre recorded message numbers. The order of presentation for messages had been assigned through randomization and each Message Data Form reflected a different order in the message number column. The four messages (treatments) were printed on the back of each
Message Data Form with their respective number.

**Messages**

The message variables were operationalized as follows:

"Hello, I am from the Seminole County Humane Society. We are supported solely by donations -

Message 1 - We really need your help to continue our efforts. Please give whatever you can. Thank you. (Direct Request)

Message 2 - Last year we cared for 750 animals and placed 700 of them in homes. We really need your help to continue our efforts. Please give whatever you can. Thank you. (Direct Request with Evidence)

Message 3 - We really need your help to continue our efforts. Thank you. (Indirect Request without Evidence)

Message 4 - Last year we cared for 750 animals and placed 700 of them in homes. We really need your help to continue our efforts. Thank you. (Evidence)

Each solicitor also received a name badge from the Humane Society, and a container in which to deposit money collected. Solicitors were instructed to make contact with 192 subjects (48 subjects each; 12 subjects in each condition for each solicitor). For purposes of statistical analysis, solicitors were treated as "subjects", that is, the measure of success each solicitor had using each of the message strategies was entered into the analysis.
Procedure

The Seminole County Humane Society was contacted and asked to participate in the experiment. Following two planning and briefing sessions with Humane Society officials, the Seminole County Sheriff's department was apprised of the purpose, date, and time of the solicitation so as to conform to county laws.

The experiment was conducted on Saturday, May 10, 1980. The solicitors were randomly assigned to blocks of housing units. Each solicitor delivered the messages in the order indicated on the Message Data Form. After delivering the prescribed message, the solicitor waited for the contributors response. Whether or not money was donated, the solicitor thanked the subject and gave him a Humane Society newsletter. The money was then counted and recorded on the Message Data Form, then emptied into the container.
CHAPTER III
RESULTS

Tests of Hypotheses

A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance was performed to test for the main and interaction effects of evidence, type of request, and sex of solicitor. Tables 1 and 2 summarize the data and analysis.

TABLE 1
MEAN AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTIONS AS A FUNCTION OF SEX OF SOLICITOR, EVIDENCE, AND REQUEST TYPE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>No Evidence</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Request</td>
<td>$1.10</td>
<td>$.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Request</td>
<td>$1.11</td>
<td>$1.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>$2.21</td>
<td>$2.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first hypothesis predicted that subjects who received a message with evidence would contribute more money to the charity than subjects who received a message
TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF THE EFFECTS
OF EVIDENCE, TYPE OF REQUEST, AND
SEX OF SOLICITOR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Evidence)</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Request)</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>0.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C (Sex of Solicitor)</td>
<td>15.62</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.62</td>
<td>6.82*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.10</td>
<td>4.41**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BC</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABC</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.55</td>
<td>1.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>421.80</td>
<td>184</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>456.42</td>
<td>191</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .01.
** p < .05.
F.99 (1-184) = 4.61
F.95 (1-184) = 3.04

without evidence. Although more money was collected in
the conditions when evidence was included (Table 1), the
main effect for evidence (Table 2) was nonsignificant
(F = .56).
The second hypothesis, which predicted that subjects who received a direct request message would contribute more money to the charity than subjects who received an indirect request message was also not supported (F = .54). Again the results were in the expected direction (Direct request $\bar{x} = \$1.18$; Indirect request $\bar{x} = \$1.02$).

Hypothesis three predicted that subjects who received a direct request message with evidence would contribute more money to the charity than subjects who received any of the three remaining messages. Since this interaction prediction involves only two of the independent variables, the sex factor is deleted in Table 3, below.

**TABLE 3**

**MEAN AMOUNT OF CONTRIBUTIONS**

**AS A FUNCTION OF EVIDENCE AND REQUEST TYPE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Evidence</th>
<th>No Evidence</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct Request</td>
<td>$1.02</td>
<td>$1.32</td>
<td>$2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect Request</td>
<td>$1.32</td>
<td>$.70</td>
<td>$2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>$2.34</td>
<td>$2.02</td>
<td>$4.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The request/evidence interaction is significant \( (F = 4.41, p < .05) \). However, the interaction is not in the predicted direction since the evidence plus direct request condition failed to produce the highest mean contribution.

A final hypothesis predicted that subjects who received an indirect request message without evidence would contribute significantly less money to the charity than subjects who received any of the three remaining messages. The request/evidence interaction (Table 1) and the order of the means (Table 3) indicates at least partial support for the prediction. In raw numbers, the no evidence/indirect request treatment did yield the smallest mean contribution. A Newuman Keuls analysis of individual cell comparisons showed the no evidence/indirect request message to be less effective than evidence/direct request (ns), evidence/indirect request \( (p > .10 < .15) \) and no evidence/direct request \( (p > .10 < .15) \).

The findings also revealed a sex main effect such that male solicitors collected significantly more money than female solicitors.
Additional Findings

A 2 x 2 analysis of variance was performed to test for the main and interaction effects of sex of the contributors and solicitors. The means and analysis of variance are summarized in Tables 4 and 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Solicitors</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>$1.66</td>
<td>$1.15</td>
<td>$2.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>$0.56</td>
<td>$0.98</td>
<td>$1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>$2.22</td>
<td>$2.13</td>
<td>$4.35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The significant AB interaction is best explained as follows: Females contributed about equally to male ($1.15) and female ($0.98) solicitors. However, males contributed larger amounts to male ($1.66) than to female ($0.56) solicitors. Females were extremely ineffective when collecting from males.
TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF SEX
OF SOLICITORS AND CONTRIBUTORS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variation</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A (Solicitor's Sex)</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11.63</td>
<td>3.21*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B (Contributor's Sex)</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AB</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.07</td>
<td>4.72**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>679.88</td>
<td>188</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>691.49</td>
<td>191</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .10
F.90 (1-188) = 2.73
** p < .05
F.95 (1-188) = 3.89

As shown in Table 5, the main effect for contributor sex was non-significant. The solicitor sex main effect approached significance (F = 3.21, p < .10), with males collecting more money than females.

An interesting additional result was that male solicitors collected the most money when using a direct request without evidence, while females were quite
ineffective unless they provided evidence. The implications of this finding will be addressed in the discussion section.

From the estimates, seven of the subjects fell into the 65 and Over category and they contributed a mean amount of $.57. Forty-three of the subjects fell into the 50-65 age category and gave a mean amount of $1.42. Twenty-eight of the subjects were in the 18-30 age category and contributed a mean amount of $.85. By far the largest number of subjects were in the 30-50 age category. 114 subjects in this category gave a mean amount of $1.06.

The second dependent measure involved the number of subjects who actually contributed. A Chi Square test was conducted to compare the number of contributors across message strategies. Table 6 displays the relevant data.

In raw numbers, Message 1 (Direct request/no evidence) was most effective, with 75% of the subjects actually contributing. Message 3 (Indirect request/no evidence) was least effective, with 60% of subjects contributing. The $X^2$ approached significance ($X^2 = 3.15$, $p < .10$).
**TABLE 6**

NUMBER OF SUBJECTS WHO CONTRIBUTED MONEY ACROSS MESSAGE TREATMENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Messages</th>
<th>1(DR-NE)</th>
<th>2(DR-E)</th>
<th>3(IR-NE)</th>
<th>4(IR-E)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number Giving</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number Refusing</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DISCUSSION

Findings on Predictions

The findings on fund raising success were only partially in accord with the predictions. Hypothesis 1, which predicted that subjects who received a message with evidence would contribute more money to the charity than subjects who received a message without evidence, was not supported although the evidence effects were in the predicted direction. Except for comparisons involving the indirect request/no evidence condition, none of the treatments differed appreciably from the others. It appears that use of either evidence or direct request heightens the solicitor's success, while employment of both strategies provides no additional increment. In fact, use of both strategies nonsignificantly reduced the level of contribution.

Perhaps the length of the message can partially explain the latter. It is possible that giving to "get rid of" a solicitor increases as the solicitor's message increases in length. If this were true, the number of contributors should be at least as great in the direct request/evidence condition as in the evidence only or
direct request only conditions, but the individual contributions should be smaller. An inspection of the data shows that this is the case. In the direct request and evidence condition, 35 people contributed an average of $1.40, compared with $1.79 in the direct request/no evidence condition, and $2.05 in the indirect request/evidence condition. One additional possibility is that the longer message sounded more stilted and rehearsed and was therefore less effective than the briefer versions which used either evidence or direct request.

Hypothesis 2 received only directional support. It was predicted that subjects who received a direct request message would contribute more money to the charity than subjects who received an indirect request message. The means in Table 1 and the AB interaction shown in Table 2 indicates that this was true only in the absence of evidence. Again, this suggests that the effects of evidence and direct request are not additive.

Hypothesis 3 specifically predicted that the direct request/evidence condition would produce the
highest return. As noted, two other treatments produced nonsignificantly greater mean contributions.

Hypothesis 4 predicted that subjects who received an indirect request message without evidence would contribute significantly less money to the charity than subjects in any other condition. This prediction received some support as shown by the evidence and request interaction displayed in Tables 1 and 2. The rationale behind this prediction was based on previous research by Ervin-Tripp (1976), and Cantor (1979). Ervin-Tripp pointed out that a direct request is the most coercive way of making a request. Cantor assessed the comparative effectiveness of four forms of request and found that the direct request (polite imperative) was the most effective in soliciting funds. Therefore, in the present study, the message containing only an indirect request for funds was not expected to be as effective as any of the three remaining messages.

**Findings on Sex variable**

Although the solicitor sex/evidence interaction (Table 2) is nonsignificant, an interesting trend
developed which seems to support one of McCroskey's (1969) conclusions. McCroskey has shown that evidence enhances credibility and immediate persuasion when the source has low to moderate credibility. In the present study, female's collected an average of $1.27 when using evidence, and only $0.96 without evidence. The success of male solicitors seemed less contingent upon use of evidence ($\bar{x} = $1.11 with evidence; $1.13 without evidence). Stone (1973) and others have suggested that females are perceived generally as less credible than males. If this were the case in the current study, McCroskey's contribution might explain why evidence seemed to enhance the success of female solicitors more than male solicitors.

Tables 4 and 5 summarize the means and analysis of variance of sex of solicitors and contributors. There was a significant AB interaction. Also, the solicitor sex main effect approached significance, with males collecting more money than females. The AB interaction shows that males' contributions were more influenced by the sex of the solicitor than were females' contributions, with males contributing greater
amounts to male solicitors. Any attempt at an explanation for the current result would be extremely speculative, especially in light of previous research findings on charity-giving. For example, Cantor (1979) showed that females collected significantly more money than did males. Using only female solicitors, Benson and Catt (1978) reported that males contributed greater amounts than females. It seems clear that factors other than sex of solicitor are at work. One can only conclude that sex of solicitor is not a reliable predictor of success in door-to-door charity collecting.

**Generalizability**

There are several factors which must be noted concerning generalizability. For example, it could be argued that the findings may not generalize beyond relatively affluent neighborhoods. Would people of middle or lower class neighborhoods respond similarly to the messages? While the mean contributions might be less in such areas, there is no basis on which to predict differential message
effects across levels of affluence. Future research using a lower to middle class neighborhood is needed to determine whether socioeconomic or other social status differences would produce different results.

It could also be argued that since the solicitors' were all graduate students in communication, they may have perceived the predictions of the study thereby unconsciously biasing the outcome. Such biasing could occur, for example, through the solicitors' nonverbal behavior. In light of the lack of support for three of the four predictions, it seems unlikely that unconscious biasing worked to produce support for the predictions.

Another limitation may have been the lack of control for solicitor's experience. One of the male solicitors' had several years experience as a successful salesman. His experience may have produced a professional manner which is not representative of other solicitors. While this potential bias does not affect the internal validity of findings on the four appeals, it did contribute disproportionately to the finding that males collected more money than females.
Another factor that could affect generalizability is the way in which the independent variables were operationalized. In this study, the messages were very short. Most research has been confined to pen and paper tests which allow for more lengthy messages. However, door-to-door solicitation for fund raising purposes is more dynamic and requires instant commitment. Such messages have to be very brief. Fund raising situations which lend themselves to more lengthy messages could potentially reap greater benefits from applying communication theory.

Finally, the topic itself may be considered a limitation. The fact that it was a charitable organization for animals rather than for humans, or even that it was a charitable organization rather than a profit making organization, might affect generalizability. For example, use of evidence that charity contributions have directly benefited people might be more persuasive than use of evidence that previous contributions have benefited dogs and cats.

The results of the current experiment show that
(1) solicitors should definitely avoid no evidence/indirect request messages, (2) use of either evidence or direct request tends to enhance charity giving, and (3) use of evidence seems more crucial to the success of female solicitors' than to male solicitors'.

Future Research: Problems and Directions

There were several procedural hurdles involved in accomplishing the current study. A brief discussion of procedural problems will be useful to prospective replicators.

In selecting a Charity, time constraints must be considered. Some Organizations allow solicitation only during annual campaigns, and written permission from the Charity must be obtained to legitimize charity collections. During planning and briefing sessions with the Charity, all officials should be advised to avoid notifying local media of the research until after the solicitation. This prevents contamination of the experiment. The city police department or county sheriff's department must be contacted and apprised of the purpose, date, and time
of the solicitation so as to conform to county laws. Solicitation during certain hours or certain days may not be permitted, and solicitation in some neighborhoods is illegal. Also, information including the total number of solicitors, name, sex, and birth date is required and must be provided to the proper authorities approximately 24 hours prior to conducting the solicitation.

In the present experiment, each solicitor spent approximately six hours in actual door-to-door solicitation. This was conducted during extremely warm weather conditions and required walking on a hilly terrain. The fact that many people were not at home contributed heavily to the number of hours required to contact 192 subjects (48 per solicitor). It may be best not to conduct the research during weekend hours. Solicitors selected to be confederates must be trained well in advance of the experiment to insure that the messages are accurately memorized. Yet, the delivery of the messages should not sound rehearsed. Nonverbal behavior and type of dress should be controlled as much as possible. Knowledge of the predictions of the study should not be revealed
to the solicitors as this may bias the outcome.

There are several research directions that would enhance understanding of the external validity of the current findings. Research is needed in the following contexts:

(1) Fund raising situations which lend themselves to more lengthy messages such as letters, lectures or audio/visual presentations.

(2) Fund raising situations utilizing different message variables such as fear appeals or intensity.

(3) Fund raising situations utilizing message variables that could be anchored to values.

(4) Fund raising situations utilizing the same variables operationalized in different ways. For example, evidence might be operationalized as quotations from highly credible sources.

(5) Fund raising solicitation in a lower to middle class neighborhood to help determine whether socioeconomic or other social status differences would produce different results.

(6) Fund raising situations using a different topic to determine whether the variables might have a more persuasive effect when benefits are attributed to other sources.

(7) Finally, future studies should control for, or systematically manipulate the level of sales experience and expertise of the solicitors.
SUMMARY

The purpose of the current study was to test the effects of various message strategies on charity giving in door-to-door solicitations. The three independent variables, solicitor sex, type of request and use of evidence, produced a $2 \times 2 \times 2$ design. The two dependent measures were amount and frequency of contributions across conditions.

Use of evidence and direct requests for contributions were both expected to enhance charity giving. However, the findings were only partially in accord with the predictions. Except for comparisons involving the indirect request/no evidence condition, none of the treatments differed appreciably from the others. There was a solicitor sex main effect, with males collecting more money than females. A significant interaction was obtained between solicitor sex and contributor sex which showed that females were extremely ineffective when collecting from males.
A trend in the data suggested that female success at fund raising was contingent upon use of evidence. This trend may reflect previous findings that females are perceived generally as less credible than males (Stone, 1973). According to McCroskey (1969), evidence enhances credibility for low to moderately credible sources. This might explain why evidence enhanced the success of female solicitors.

Several recommendations for charity collecting strategies are suggested in the data. These include (1) solicitors should definitely avoid no evidence/indirect request messages, (2) use of either evidence or direct request tends to enhance charity giving, and (3) use of evidence seems more crucial to the success of female solicitors than to male solicitors.
APPENDIX A

Message Data Form
**MESSAGE DATA FORM**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HOUSE</th>
<th>MESSAGE</th>
<th>$ AMT</th>
<th>SEX</th>
<th>ESTIMATED AGE</th>
<th>COMMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18-30</td>
<td>30-50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- There are 48 rows in the table.
References


McCroskey, James C., Young, Thomas J., & Scott, Michael D. The effects of message sidedness and evidence on inoculation against counterpersuasion in small group communication. Speech Monographs, 1972, 39, 205-212.
