

# Self-Benefit Versus Other-Benefit Marketing Appeals: Their Effectiveness in Generating Charitable Support

Despite the growing need, nonprofit organization marketers have not yet fully delineated the most effective ways to position charitable appeals. Across five experiments, the authors test the prediction that other-benefit (self-benefit) appeals generate more favorable donation support than self-benefit (other-benefit) appeals in situations that heighten (versus minimize) public self-image concerns. Public accountability, a manipulation of public self-awareness, and individual differences in public self-consciousness all moderate the effect of appeal type on donor support. In particular, self-benefit appeals are more effective when consumers' responses are private in nature; in contrast, other-benefit appeals are more effective when consumers are publicly accountable for their responses. This effect is moderated by norm salience and is related to a desire to manage impressions by behaving in a manner consistent with normative expectations. The results have important managerial implications, suggesting that rather than simply relying on one type of marketing appeal across situations, marketers should tailor their marketing message to the situation or differentially activate public self-image concerns to match the appeal type.

*Keywords:* charity, self-benefit, other-benefit, altruism, egoism, public self-image, norms

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try and help another without helping himself.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson

If we give with the underlying motive of inflating the image others have of us,... we defile the act. In this instance, what we are practicing is not generosity but self-aggrandizement.

—Dalai Lama

The self-serving benefits of helping others have long been recognized by those who promote and engage in prosocial behavior. The Emerson quotation suggests that even though people can help others, their underlying reasons for helping are often egoistic or self-serving. However, the Dalai Lama quotation suggests that people should help others for more altruistic, other-focused reasons. These different points of view highlight the two ways that marketers commonly appeal for charitable support—positioning charitable giving either egoistically (i.e., by highlighting the benefits for the donor) or altruistically (i.e., by highlighting the benefits for others). Following Fisher, Vanden-

bosch, and Antia (2008), we refer to the former as “self-benefit” appeals and define these as appeals that highlight that the main beneficiary of support is the donor. We refer to the latter as “other-benefit” appeals and define these as appeals that highlight that the main beneficiary of support is some other individual or organization.<sup>1</sup> This research investigates the conditions under which other-benefit (self-benefit) appeals are more effective than self-benefit (other-benefit) appeals in influencing donation intentions and behaviors by examining the moderating role of public self-image concerns.

Exploring the conditions under which people are inclined to donate to charity is becoming increasingly important (Bendapudi, Singh, and Bendapudi 1996; Reed, Aquino, and Levy 2007). Despite growing competition for resources, government assistance, and consumer support, charities continue to provide numerous vital services, ranging from health care to housing to disaster relief. Increased need for charitable support has necessitated that nonprofit organizations seek out the most effective ways to communicate their causes to consumers. Indeed, charities have adopted many of the sophisticated marketing techniques—

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<sup>1</sup>Self-benefit appeals can vary in terms of the types of benefits they offer. Sometimes self-benefits are tangible (e.g., a tax receipt or a gift), but sometimes they are more intangible (e.g., feeling good about oneself). We view appeals that promote any benefit to the donor as self-benefit appeals. It is also possible for charities to simultaneously highlight benefits to both the donor and the recipient. However, consistent with previous research, we separate the two appeal types to examine when each appeal is more effective than the other.

relationship marketing, branding, and the measurement of marketing return on investment—previously considered the domain of their for-profit counterparts (Burnett 2002; Ives 2004). As such, marketing researchers have recently argued that the question of how nonprofit organizations should best request donor support is of critical importance (Reed, Aquino, and Levy 2007).

This research aims to answer this question by elucidating the conditions under which other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in influencing donation intentions and behaviors. This is important because charities regularly use both appeal types. We conducted a small-scale pilot study, showing that in a random sample of 25 charities (*NonProfit Times* 2007) that presented appeals for donor support on their Web sites, both self- and other-benefit appeals were commonly used (13 charities used other-benefit appeals, 7 charities used self-benefit appeals, and 5 charities used a combination appeal). For example, Goodwill Industries provides an other-benefit appeal: “Your donations help fund job training and other career services that help people become successful at work.” In a self-benefit appeal, Big Brothers Big Sisters of America states, “Being a ‘Big Brother’ or ‘Big Sister’ is one of the most rewarding and enjoyable things you will ever do.” The American Lung Association uses a combination appeal: “Your gift sent by December 31 is tax-deductible. So please be especially generous in the spirit of the season to help fund vital research and urgently needed community programs to help fight lung disease. Thank you for giving the gift of help and hope.”

This research makes several contributions to the marketing and charitable giving literature streams. First, we extend previous research that considers the role of demographic variables, such as gender, in determining people’s inclinations to be self- or other-oriented (e.g., Brunel and Nelson 2000; Nelson et al. 2006), by demonstrating that variables that marketers can manipulate (e.g., public versus private nature of the donation setting) can influence the effectiveness of different appeals in encouraging donor support. Second, our work extends Reed, Aquino, and Levy’s (2007) research that demonstrates the importance of the self in moderating reactions to how charitable appeals are positioned. While these researchers examined the role of moral self-identity in determining donation preferences, we consider a different impact of the self on donor support—namely, whether the desire to present a normatively approved self-identity to others moderates reactions to other-benefit and self-benefit appeals.

Third, while previous research has examined the role of contextual factors, such as the identity congruence of other donors, in garnering charitable support (e.g., Shang, Reed, and Croson 2008), the current work represents the first examination of the impact of a unique contextual factor—public self-image concerns—on the efficacy of appeal type. Public self-image concerns refer to the degree to which a person is motivated to present a positive self-image to others (e.g., male consumers are more likely to avoid the negative associations of a “ladies’ cut of steak” when consumption occurs in public than when it occurs in private [White and Dahl 2006]). We test the novel prediction that the effec-

tiveness of appeal type (i.e., other-benefit versus self-benefit) is moderated by the degree to which public self-image concerns are activated. More specifically, we propose that other-benefit appeals are more effective in encouraging donor support than self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are heightened. Conversely, we expect consumers to respond more positively to self-benefit appeals than to other-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are minimized.

A fourth contribution of this research is that it extends prior work on public self-image concerns by demonstrating that such concerns do not always increase charitable support (e.g., Glazer and Konrad 1996; Satow 1975) but do so only under certain boundary conditions. Indeed, we anticipate that decreased donor support will be exhibited in response to self-benefit appeals when in public. This study also reconciles both research suggesting that consumers always donate in ways that make them appear altruistic (West 2004) and work showing that consumers uniformly react in ways that make them appear egoistic and self-interested (Holmes, Miller, and Lerner 2002). Furthermore, we test for the underlying role of public self-image concerns by examining public accountability, public self-awareness, and individual differences in public self-consciousness as moderators of the effect of appeal type on donor intentions. Finally, we elucidate the mechanism underlying our findings by examining the moderating role of norm salience and the mediational role of the desire to manage impressions by acting in a normatively approved way.

## Self-Benefit Versus Other-Benefit Appeals for Charitable Support

Although there remains heated debate regarding whether charitable giving and helping others in general is motivated purely by altruism (e.g., Batson 1990; Dovidio, Allen, and Schroeder 1990) or by more self-serving motives (Cialdini et al. 1997), both other-benefit and self-benefit appeals are commonly studied by marketing researchers and used by charitable organizations (e.g., Bendapudi, Singh, and Bendapudi 1996; Brunel and Nelson 2000; Fisher, Vandebosch, and Antia 2008). We begin by reviewing evidence for the effectiveness of both self-benefit and other-benefit appeals in encouraging positive donation intentions and behaviors.

Some research suggests that self-benefit appeals are particularly successful in encouraging positive donor support. Social exchange theory, which is commonly used to explain the efficacy of self-benefit appeals, suggests that people invest in relationships on the basis of comparative levels of costs and rewards (Blau 1964). Researchers have noted the usefulness of social exchange as a model to explain marketing in general (Bagozzi 1975; Gundlach and Murphy 1993) and charitable contributions in particular (e.g., Mathur 1996; Watters 1995; Wilson 2000). Because social exchange theory suggests that consumers donate to charitable causes when the benefits outweigh the costs, self-benefit appeals (i.e., that state the individual self-benefits to be attained through charitable giving) should be particularly

effective in increasing donation intentions because they highlight a favorable cost–benefit ratio.

Consistent with the notion that self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals in garnering donor support, Holmes, Miller, and Lerner (2002) demonstrate that contributions increase when donations of money are positioned egoistically as an exchange (versus more altruistically). They suggest that though people want to help others (e.g., by supporting charitable causes), they are often hesitant to do so unless they can justify to themselves and others that their behavior serves their own self-interest. This framework predicts that people react more positively to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals because highlighting self-benefits gives offers “psychological cover” (p. 145) for engaging in an altruistic act (i.e., people do not need to be constrained by a psychological contract that holds them to supporting all charitable groups or even the same charity in the future).

In contrast, in his seminal article on social marketing, Rothschild (1979) argues that the traditional marketing model of exchange is less relevant for noncommercial exchanges, such as donations. Other researchers further suggest that other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in garnering donor support. For example, Pessemier, Bemmaor, and Hanssens (1977) find that organ donation intentions drop significantly when a self-benefit appeal in the form of a monetary incentive is added to an other-benefit appeal, suggesting that self-benefit appeals can sometimes lead to detrimental effects compared with more traditional, other-benefit appeals. Similarly, recent research by Fisher, Vandenbosch, and Antia (2008) reveals that donations to public television station funding drives are more positive in response to other-centred appeals than to self-benefit appeals. In summary, extant research supports the efficacy of both self-benefit and other-benefit appeals in encouraging positive donor support.

## Public Self-Image Concerns

Impression management theory posits that, in general, people are motivated to make a favorable impression on others and to present themselves in a positive light (Goffman 1959; Leary and Kowalski 1990; Schlenker 1980). Indeed, consumers strategically adjust their behaviors to convey a positive public self-image by altering coupon usage decisions (Ashworth, Darke, and Schaller 2005), misrepresenting the amount paid for purchases (Sengupta, Dahl, and Gorn 2002), and avoiding products associated with dissociative out-groups (Berger and Heath 2007; White and Dahl 2006). In the domain of charitable giving, heightened public self-image concerns have been posited to lead to increased donor support (Glazer and Konrad 1996; Satow 1975).

However, we propose that heightened public self-image concerns do not uniformly increase donor support. We anticipate that consumers exhibit relatively more positive donation intentions and behaviors in response to other-benefit appeals than in response to self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are activated. We draw on Leary and Kowalski’s (1995) two-factor model of impression management to make this prediction. The model pro-

poses that impression management consists of both impression motivation (i.e., the degree to which the desire to control the self-image projected to others is activated; see also Wooten and Reed 2000) and impression construction (i.e., the selection of an appropriate impression to convey to others and how to convey that image). We suggest that factors that heighten public self-image concerns (i.e., public accountability, public self-awareness, and public self-consciousness) increase impression motivation. Furthermore, because donating for other-serving, altruistic (and not for self-serving, egoistic) reasons is normatively approved of (Berkowitz and Daniels 1964), these norms provide information regarding how the impression should be constructed. We define norms as values, attitudes, and behaviors that are approved of and expected by others (e.g., Fisher and Ackerman 1998). Thus, heightening public self-image concerns should activate impression motivation, and the relevant norm should provide information regarding how to engage in impression construction (i.e., by appearing to be more other-serving than self-serving). As a result, donor support will be more positive in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are heightened. When public self-image concerns are minimized, the focus will be on the self (rather than social norms), and donor support will be more positive in response to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals.

## Normative Expectations

Leary and Kowalski (1995) propose that a potential source of information used in impression construction is a target audience’s expectations and values (i.e., norms), though they do not directly test this within their framework. Prior research has suggested that people consensually share the normative expectation that they should help for altruistic rather than egoistic reasons (Berkowitz and Daniels 1964; White 1984). It has been suggested that societal norms are behavioral standards that develop because they are of particular importance to the societal system (Barkow 1978). That is, the norm to help others for other-serving rather than self-serving reasons may have evolved because of society’s need to balance more individual egoistic and hedonic motives with society’s need for its members to offer help and assistance to others, without necessarily any reciprocal benefit to the self (White 1984).

Furthermore, research on charitable giving has also proposed that the societal norm is that a person should give for other-serving, altruistic reasons rather than for self-serving, egoistic reasons (Fisher, Vandenbosch, and Antia 2008; West 2004). In further support of our conceptualization, we conducted a pilot study that demonstrates that people hold a normative belief that it is more appropriate to engage in charitable support for other-focused (e.g., altruistic) than self-focused (e.g., egoistic) reasons. Undergraduate students ( $n = 28$ ) responded to eight items (four on donating time and four on donating money) on a six-point continuum; higher (lower) scores indicated that donating for other-focused (self-focused) reasons was more socially approved of: “In general, others approve more of volunteering time/donating money with a charity when it is motivated by

(more egoistic [self-serving] reasons/more altruistic [other-serving] reasons”; “In general, it is considered by society to be ‘better’ when one volunteers/donates money to achieve (more self-serving benefits/more other-serving benefits)””; “In general, society sanctions volunteering to/donations of money to (help oneself/help others)””; and “In general, others approve of volunteering to/donating money to (further one’s own interests/help other people in need).” We averaged these items to create a normative belief scale ( $\alpha = .74$ ). Participants reported that it was more normatively appropriate to engage in charitable support for other-focused than self-focused reasons ( $M = 5.23$ ; one sample t-test against scale midpoint,  $t(27) = 16.21, p < .001$ ).<sup>2</sup>

## The Current Research

In summary, we predict that consumers will exhibit more positive donation intentions and behaviors in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are heightened. Conversely, consumers are expected to respond more positively to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are minimized. Although these predictions may appear to be intuitive, they are different from the predictions stemming from two conventionally held lines of wisdom. First, one widely held viewpoint suggests that helping in general is enhanced by increasing self-presentational concerns (Baumeister 1982; Glazer and Konrad 1996; Satow 1975). This view predicts that regardless of how the marketing appeal is positioned (i.e., other-benefit versus self-benefit), heightening public self-image concerns should enhance charitable giving. In contrast, the current framework anticipates increased donor support only in response to other-benefit appeals (and predicts decreased donor support in response to self-benefit appeals) when public self-image concerns are heightened. A second commonly held belief is that people should uniformly prefer self-benefit to other-benefit appeals and that this should be augmented when public self-image concerns are activated (e.g., Holmes, Miller, and Lerner 2002). Although this framework would predict a tendency to respond more positively to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals, our conceptualization predicts more positive responses to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns are activated. Such a distinction is of both practical and theoretical importance.

We examine the role of public self-image concerns in determining the effectiveness of appeal type by examining the moderating role of three variables that are novel to the domain of charitable giving. Within the context of each study, we highlight how public accountability (Studies 1 and 4), situational public self-consciousness (Study 2), and individual differences in public self-consciousness (Study

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<sup>2</sup>We wanted to examine norms among the population of interest in this pretest, but we note that norms vary across different cultures, subcultures, and so on (Jain 1989). Furthermore, following the definition of norms, we asked participants to report society’s expression of what is socially approved of, which may differ from their own attitudes *per se*.

3) are all related to the underlying construct of public self-image, and we demonstrate that heightening concern with public self-image leads to more favorable responses to other-benefit appeals than to self-benefit appeals. Finally, we provide evidence that the mechanism underlying our effects is related to the desire to manage impressions by behaving in a normatively approved way. We demonstrate this by examining the mediational role of impression management (Study 4) and the moderating role of normative expectations (Study 5).

## Study 1

People tend to be more concerned with impression management when they are in public than when they are in private settings (e.g., Leary and Kowalski 1990; Reis and Gruen 1976) and when they are made publicly accountable (i.e., when they must discuss or explain their judgments or decisions in front of others; Lerner and Tetlock 1999). The public expression of views often leads to the motivation to conform to the audience’s expectations and to manage the impressions made on others (Baumeister 1982; Leary and Kowalski 1990). Recent research suggests that consumers often are motivated to present a positive public self-image to others (Argo, White, and Dahl 2006) and that this tendency is heightened when evaluations and choices are made public (Ratner and Kahn 2002; White and Dahl 2006). Consistent with our theoretical framework, we anticipate that consumers will exhibit more positive intentions and behaviors in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals (i.e., the more normatively acceptable response) when their responses are made in a public setting. In private settings, people have more opportunity to consider the self-benefits of their donation and thus evaluate self-benefit appeals more positively than other-benefit appeals. We examine intentions to donate time (i.e., volunteer intentions) and predict that public accountability moderates the effectiveness of appeal type:

H<sub>1</sub>: Other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive donation intentions when consumers are publicly accountable. Self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals when consumers are not publicly accountable.

## Method

Participants were 144 undergraduate students (86 women and 58 men; mean age = 20.69 years) who were recruited through an undergraduate listserve and posters placed around campus to complete a paper-and-pencil questionnaire in exchange for payment. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions in a 2 (appeal type: other-benefit versus self-benefit)  $\times$  2 (accountability: public versus private) between-subjects design. They were told that the study examined consumer reactions to charitable advertising. They took part in small groups of six to ten people seated around a large table in a conference room. Participants were asked to complete consent forms, were given verbal instructions by the experimenter, and then were handed questionnaire packages to complete.

We manipulated accountability at the beginning of the session. In the public condition, the experimenter told participants that their donation intentions would be made public (i.e., discussed with others), and they were reminded on the first page of the questionnaire package that they would be asked to discuss their responses “with the experimenter and any other participants in the room today” (see Lerner and Tetlock 1999; Tetlock, Skitka, and Boettger 1989). In the private condition, the experimenter verbally informed participants that their donation intentions would be private, and they were reminded on the first page of their questionnaire package that all their responses would be “anonymous and confidential.”

Participants then viewed either the other-benefit or the self-benefit version of an advertisement requesting a donation of time for a local charity. We selected the charity, which provides food, shelter, and other services to the city’s homeless, because pretesting indicated that respondents were familiar with the charity and evaluated it fairly positively. The other-benefit condition highlighted two altruistic benefits: “help those less fortunate” and “help make the community a better place for everyone.” The self-benefit condition highlighted two egoistic benefits: “build your resume by developing and practicing job skills” and “enjoy networking opportunities and meet new people.” We designed these appeals to replicate the appeals charities commonly employ (Clary et al. 1998), and we confirmed their effectiveness in a pretest. In particular, 33 participants evaluated the other- and self-benefit appeals (“To what degree is this an altruistic appeal [i.e., focused on helping others]?” “To what degree is this appeal associated with looking out for the interests of others?” “To what degree is this an egoistic appeal [i.e., focused on helping oneself]?” and “To what degree is this appeal associated with looking out for one’s own interests?”) on seven-point scales. We created indexes of perceived self-/other-benefits by reverse scoring the first two items and averaging the items for self ( $\alpha = .85$ ) and other ( $\alpha = .70$ ) appeals. Participants evaluated the self-benefit appeal as being significantly more focused on self-benefits than the other-benefit appeal ( $M_s = 5.49$  and  $2.75$ ;  $t(32) = 15.39$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

In the study itself, participants completed a three-item measure of their intentions to donate time on seven-point scales: “How likely would you be to make a donation of time (i.e., volunteer) to The Mustard Seed?” “How inclined are you to volunteer with The Mustard Seed?” and “How willing are you to volunteer with The Mustard Seed?” ( $\alpha = .91$ ). In addition, participants completed a manipulation check for accountability, and analysis confirmed that this was successful. At the end of the study, participants completed demographic measures (e.g., gender, age), were debriefed, and were probed for suspicion. None of the participants indicated that they were aware of the hypotheses in this or any of the studies. The demographic variables did not predict significant variance in the dependent variable (or interact with any other independent variable to predict the dependent variable). This was true across all studies (for all dependent measures and manipulation checks), so we do not discuss these measures any further.

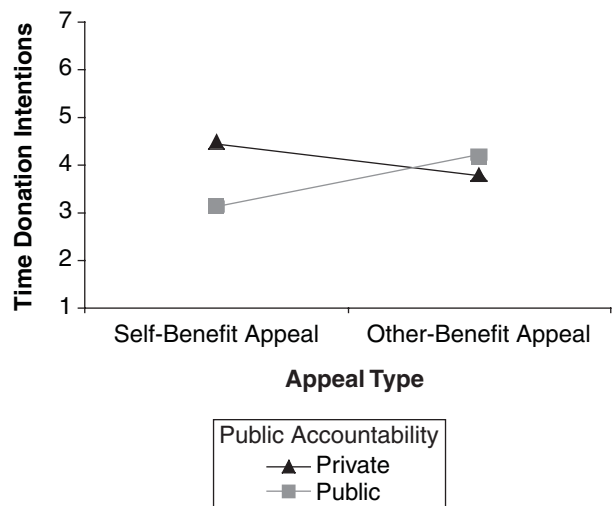
## Results and Discussion

A 2 (appeal type: other-benefit versus self-benefit)  $\times$  2 (accountability: public versus private) analysis of variance (ANOVA) on donation intentions revealed a significant interaction ( $F(1, 140) = 14.68$ ,  $p < .001$ ; see Figure 1). As we predicted, when consumers were publicly accountable, they were more inclined to volunteer in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 4.22$ ) than the self-benefit ( $M = 3.14$ ) appeal ( $t(140) = 3.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>3</sup> When intentions were private, people were more willing to donate time in response to the self-benefit ( $M = 4.45$ ) than the other-benefit ( $M = 3.77$ ) appeal ( $t(140) = 2.13$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The self-benefit appeal led to significantly fewer positive donation intentions when responses were to be public than when they were to be private ( $t(140) = 3.90$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The other-benefit appeal did not lead to significantly more negative donation intentions when respondents were privately rather than publicly accountable ( $t(140) = 1.45$ ,  $p > .15$ ). The main effects for both appeal type ( $F(1, 140) = .01$ , not significant [n.s.]) and accountability ( $F(1, 140) = 1.01$ , n.s.) did not reach significance.

As we anticipated, other-benefit appeals generated more positive donation intentions than self-benefit appeals when donation intentions were public in nature. Self-benefit

<sup>3</sup>The effects hold when we use group size as a covariate. This was true across all the studies. Although we might expect increases in group size to heighten public self-image concerns, it may be that there was not enough variance in group size to influence responses, given that group size varied only from six to ten participants in the studies.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Study 1: Other-Benefit (Self-Benefit) Appeals Are More Effective Than Self-Benefit (Other-Benefit) Appeals in Encouraging Positive Donation Intentions Under Conditions of Public (Private) Accountability**



Notes: The dependent measure was time donation intentions rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 7.

appeals led to more positive donation intentions than other-benefit appeals in private settings, in which donors' intentions were not publicly expressed. Note that using the wrong type of appeal in certain settings can impair donation intentions, particularly with self-benefit appeals. Consumers responded significantly less positively to the self-benefit appeals when their donation intentions were public than when they were private.

## Study 2

In Study 2, we demonstrate the conditions under which consumers have more positive donation intentions toward other-benefit than self-benefit appeals, even when donation intentions are private. We do so by examining the moderating role of a public self-awareness manipulation. Research argues that there are two distinct ways that self-focused attention can manifest itself—public self-awareness and private self-awareness (Buss 1980; Carver and Scheier 1981). We define public self-awareness as the tendency to become aware of the overtly observable, publicly displayed aspects of the self (i.e., a person's awareness that he or she is the object of an external observer; Orive 1984). For example, public self-awareness is often manipulated by informing participants that they will be videotaped (e.g., Hass 1984). Private self-awareness refers to the tendency to become aware of the private, internal aspects of the self (Carver and Scheier 1981). Public self-awareness manipulations lead people to be more concerned with their publicly displayed self-aspects and to conform to social expectations (Froming, Walker, and Lopyan 1982; Orive 1984; Scheier and Carver 1980).

We examine the prediction that public self-awareness moderates the effect of appeal type on donation intentions for two reasons. First, this enables us to provide a richer conceptualization of the underlying construct that public accountability presumably taps into—namely, public self-image concerns. Second, we want to examine the conditions under which consumers respond more positively to other-benefit (versus self-benefit) appeals for charitable support even when their donation intentions are private. It seems likely that even when responding in private, consumers who are publicly self-aware will respond in ways that are normatively approved of and that allow them to present themselves in a positive light. We predict the following:

H<sub>2</sub>: Under conditions in which donation intentions are private, other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive time donation intentions when consumers are high in public self-awareness, whereas self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals when consumers are low in public self-awareness.

### Method

Ninety-six undergraduate students (60 women and 36 men; mean age = 20.74 years) took part in this study in return for course credit. The study used a 2 (appeal type: other-benefit versus self-benefit) × 2 (public self-awareness: low versus high) between-subjects experimental design. Participants were recruited through their introductory marketing class

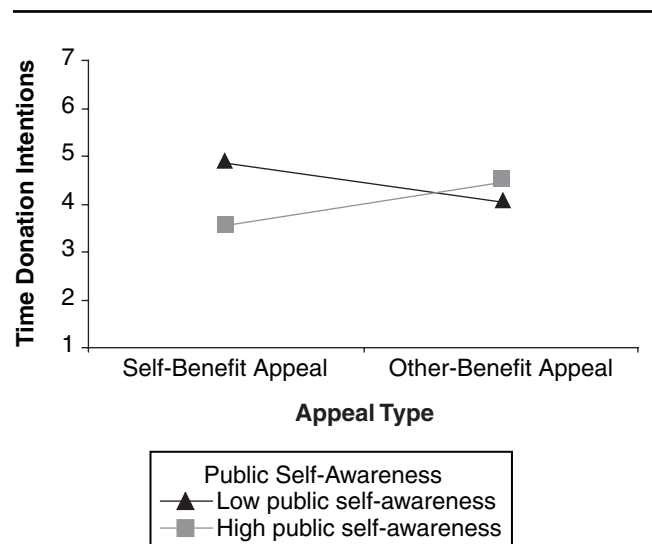
and received a bonus credit for taking part. As in Study 1, participants took part in small groups seated around a large table in a conference room.

Participants were assigned to either the low- or the high-public-self-awareness condition (see Hass 1984; Orive 1984). In both conditions, a video camera was present in the room. Participants in the high-public-self-awareness condition were told that the researcher was going to be giving a presentation and wanted to record some people taking part in the research. The research assistant pointed the camera toward the participants and then assured them that it was turned on. In the low-public-self-awareness condition, participants were told that the camera was booked for the next person who would be using the room. In this condition, participants were assured that they would not be videotaped, and the camera was turned away from them. As in Study 1, participants then viewed either the other-benefit or the self-benefit version of the charity advertisement and reported their volunteer intentions ( $\alpha = .92$ ). Participants completed manipulation checks for both appeal type and public self-awareness, and analysis showed that these were successful.

### Results and Discussion

An ANOVA revealed a significant two-way interaction between appeal type and public self-awareness predicting volunteer intentions ( $F(1, 92) = 7.53, p < .01$ ). As we predicted, participants high in public self-awareness reported significantly more positive volunteer intentions in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 4.44$ ) than the self-benefit ( $M = 3.54$ ) appeal ( $t(92) = 2.00, p < .05$ ; see Figure 2). When self-awareness was low, participants exhibited a nonsignifi-

**FIGURE 2**  
**Study 2: Other-Benefit (Self-Benefit) Appeals Are More Effective Than Self-Benefit (Other-Benefit) Appeals in Encouraging Positive Donation Intentions Among Consumers High (Low) in Situational Public Self-Awareness**



Notes: The dependent measure was time donation intentions rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 7.

cant trend toward more positive time donation intentions in response to the self-benefit ( $M = 4.85$ ) than the other-benefit ( $M = 4.05$ ) appeal ( $t(92) = 1.91, p < .06$ ). Volunteer intentions were significantly more negative in response to the self-benefit appeal when the participant was high rather than low in public self-awareness ( $t(92) = 3.13, p < .01$ ). Intentions in response to other-benefit appeals did not differ when participants were low versus high in public self-awareness. The main effects for appeal type ( $F(1, 92) = .03, n.s.$ ) and public self-awareness ( $F(1, 92) = .90, n.s.$ ) were not significant.

Study 2 found that consumers reported more positive time donation intentions in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals when public self-image concerns were heightened—in this case, when consumers were high in public self-awareness. When public self-image concerns were not heightened (i.e., consumers were low in public self-awareness), consumers demonstrated a trend toward more positive volunteer intentions in response to self-benefit appeals than to other-benefit appeals. This study also shows that even when donation intentions and behaviors are private, activating public self-image concerns can lead consumers to behave in ways that make them appear more altruistic and other-serving.

### Study 3

Study 3 further tests whether consumer reactions to other-benefit versus self-benefit appeals are influenced by public self-image concerns by examining the moderating role of public self-consciousness. Research suggests not only that situational factors can influence people's tendency to focus attention inward or outward but also that there are individual differences in the tendency to focus internally on the self or the external social environment (Scheier and Carver 1980). Scheier and Carver (1985, p. 687) refer to the propensity to focus on the public self as public self-consciousness, and they define it as the "tendency to think about those self-aspects that are matters of public display" and to be concerned with the "qualities of the self from which impressions are formed in other people's eyes." A potential alternative explanation for the results in the preceding studies is that public accountability and public self-awareness simply increased participants' focus on others (e.g., the manipulations made people more likely to empathize with others), and this external focus, rather than concerns with public self-image per se, led participants to respond more favorably to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals under these conditions. The individual difference measure of public self-consciousness more directly taps into public self-image concerns (e.g., "I usually worry about making a good impression," "I'm concerned about what other people think of me").

Prior research has found that public self-consciousness is related to the use of self-presentation tactics, such as self-handicapping (Shepperd and Arkin 1989), avoiding products associated with dissociative reference groups (White and Dahl 2006), and lying about purchases (Sengupta, Dahl, and Gorn 2002). We propose that because the tendency to respond more positively to other-benefit than self-

benefit appeals is based on public self-image concerns, people high in public self-consciousness will have more positive reactions to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals for charitable support. Based on findings from prior research, these effects should emerge only when participants' donation intentions are also public (e.g., Scheier and Carver 1980; White and Dahl 2006). Thus:

H<sub>3</sub>: Other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive time donation intentions among consumers high in public self-consciousness when they are in public (versus private), but this effect is eliminated among consumers low in public self-consciousness.

Thus, Study 3 enables us to test the conditions under which public accountability does not lead to more positive evaluations of other-benefit than self-benefit appeals. We do not predict a preference for self- versus other-benefit appeals under conditions of public accountability for consumers low in public self-consciousness. These consumers may exhibit more positive donation intentions in response to self-benefit (versus other-benefit) appeals in both public and private contexts because they are not highly concerned with public self-image. One alternative explanation for the effects is that when in public, people high in public self-consciousness find processing more fluent when the advertisement is other-serving than when it is self-serving (Lee and Aaker 2004), perhaps because there is a "match" between a public focus and an other-benefit appeal. Another possibility is that when in public, people high in public self-consciousness find other-benefit appeals to be stronger arguments. Indeed, people are more likely to be persuaded when the argument quality is strong than when it is weak (Cacioppo, Petty, and Morris 1983). Finally, it is possible that in public, people high in public self-consciousness will report higher message involvement with self-benefit than other-benefit appeals. Thus, we test for these alternatives.

### Method

One hundred sixty undergraduate students (86 women and 73 men [1 is not reported]) took part in return for course credit. This study used a 2 (appeal type: other-benefit versus self-benefit)  $\times$  2 (accountability: public versus private)  $\times$  2 (public self-consciousness: low versus high) between-subjects design. Participants received bonus credit in their introductory marketing class for taking part. They participated in small groups and were assigned to either the public or the private accountability condition following a procedure similar to what we outlined in Study 1, with the exception that they were told that the number of hours they would commit to donating would be public in the public accountability condition. Participants then viewed either the other-benefit or the self-benefit appeal (as in Study 1) and completed an alternative measure to assess their willingness to donate time to the charity—they indicated how many hours per month they would agree to donate to the charity. To test for fluency, participants completed measures of processing fluency ("difficult to process/easy to process," "difficult to understand/easy to understand," and "difficult to comprehend/easy to comprehend";  $\alpha = .85$ ), message involvement ("not at all involved/very involved," "skimmed it quickly/

read it carefully,” and “paid little attention/paid a lot of attention”;  $\alpha = .85$ ; Lee and Aaker 2004), and perceived message strength (“How strong were the arguments?” “How compelling was the information given?” and “How persuasive was the information?”; all items were assessed on seven-point scales [ $\alpha = .88$ ; see, e.g., Wheeler, Petty, and Bizer 2005]). After completing a series of filler items, participants completed the measure of public self-consciousness ( $\alpha = .81$ ; Scheier and Carver 1985). As in the previous studies, we included manipulation checks for accountability and appeal type, and they were successful.

### Results and Discussion

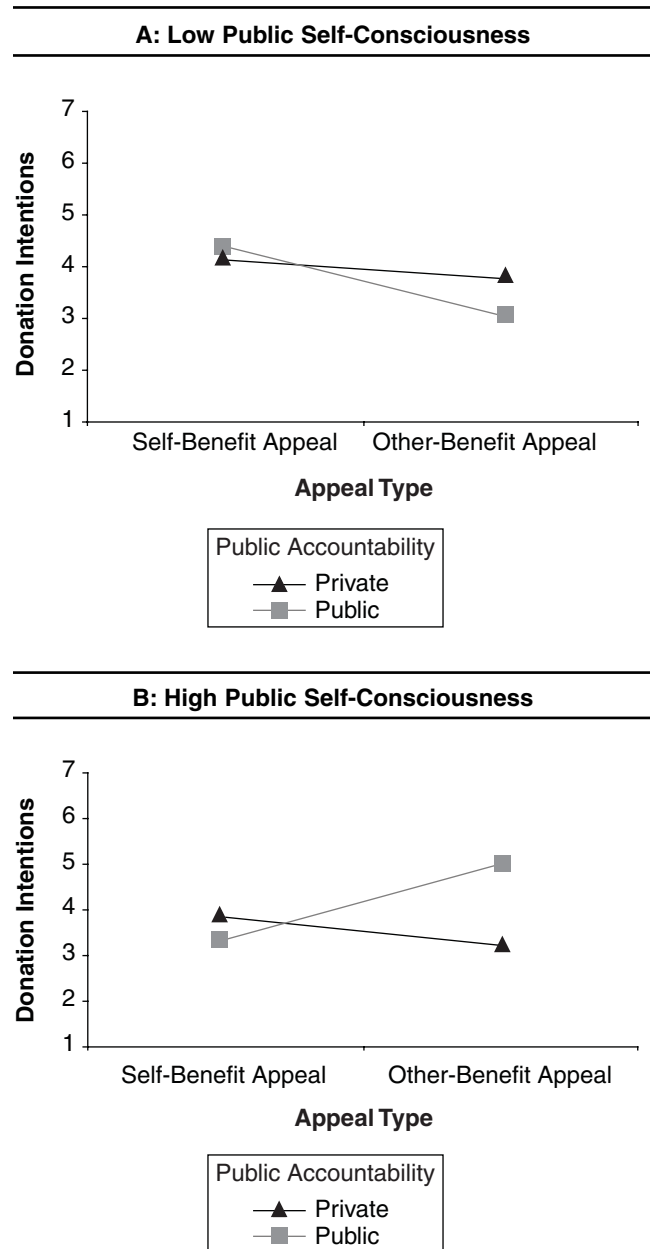
To examine the effect of the three-way interaction among appeal type, accountability, and public self-consciousness on volunteer time, we used regression analysis. When we entered the three-way interaction term, the lower-order interaction terms, and the main effects into the analysis, the three-way interaction significantly predicted volunteer time ( $t(152) = 2.06, p < .05; \beta = .18$ ). When we selected for participants who were publicly accountable, the interaction between appeal type and public self-consciousness significantly predicted volunteer time ( $t(76) = 2.34, p < .05; \beta = .27$ ). When we selected for participants who were not publicly accountable (i.e., private condition), the interaction between appeal type and public self-consciousness did not significantly predict volunteer time ( $t(76) = .42, n.s.; \beta = -.05$ ).<sup>4</sup>

To examine the effects better, we calculated a median split on the public self-consciousness index. An ANOVA also revealed a significant three-way interaction ( $F(1, 152) = 4.86, p < .05$ ). As we predicted, when participants were held publicly accountable, those high in public self-consciousness were willing to volunteer significantly more hours in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 5.00$ ) than the self-benefit ( $M = 3.35$ ) appeal ( $t(152) = 2.14, p < .05$ ; see Figure 3). When publicly accountable, participants low in public self-consciousness were willing to volunteer fewer hours in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 3.05$ ) than the self-benefit ( $M = 4.38$ ) appeal ( $t(152) = 1.99, p < .05$ ). When in private, those high in public self-consciousness did not exhibit differential willingness to volunteer in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 3.21$ ) versus self-benefit ( $M = 3.82$ ) appeal ( $t(152) = .80, n.s.$ ). In private, participants low in public self-consciousness did not exhibit differential willingness to volunteer in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 3.77$ ) versus the self-benefit ( $M = 4.14$ ) appeal ( $t(152) = .54, n.s.$ ).

To test for rival hypotheses, we conducted a series of regression analyses. When we entered the three-way interaction term (appeal type, accountability, and public self-

consciousness), the lower-order interaction terms, and the main effects into the regression predicting fluency, the three-way interaction did not significantly predict fluency ( $t(152) = 1.60, n.s.; \beta = .12$ ). Similar analyses showed that the three-way interaction did not significantly predict message involvement ( $t(152) = 1.30, n.s.; \beta = .11$ ) or argument

**FIGURE 3**  
**Study 3: Among Consumers High in Public Self-Consciousness, Other-Benefit (Self-Benefit) Appeals Are More Effective Than Self-Benefit (Other-Benefit) Appeals Under Conditions of Public (Private) Accountability**



Notes: The dependent measure was time donation intentions indexed by number of hours willing to volunteer with the charity.

<sup>4</sup>The public self-consciousness measure assesses enduring individual differences (rather than situational variation) in public self-consciousness. Although participants completed the public self-consciousness scale after the manipulations, public accountability, appeal type, and their interaction did not predict any significant variance in public self-consciousness.



strength ( $t(125) = .99$ , *n.s.*;  $\beta = .08$ ). Similar nonsignificant results emerged when we selected for participants in the publicly accountable condition and examined the interactions between appeal type and public self-consciousness. When we used a different approach to the data, the three-way interaction among appeal type, accountability, and public self-consciousness remained significant when we included fluency as a covariate ( $F(1, 151) = 5.48$ ,  $p < .05$ ), message involvement as a covariate ( $F(1, 151) = 5.59$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and argument strength as a covariate ( $F(1, 151) = 6.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Thus, these alternative constructs do not readily account for our findings.

The results of Study 3 reveal that participants reported greater willingness to volunteer time in response to the other-benefit than the self-benefit appeal when public self-image concerns were heightened (i.e., when the consumer was high in public self-consciousness and was publicly accountable). Conversely, when participants were low in public self-consciousness, they exhibited greater willingness to volunteer time in response to the self-benefit than the other-benefit appeal when publicly accountable. These differences were eliminated in the private condition. The results support the notion that the effects are related to public self-image concerns but that differences in cognitive processing do not readily account for the effects.

Note that participants low in public self-consciousness demonstrated a significant preference for the self-benefit over the other-benefit appeals when in public. Rather than being unaffected by the public accountability manipulation, participants low in public self-consciousness behaved in a manner incongruent with normative expectations. It may be that public accountability cues people to behave in certain ways. For people high in public self-consciousness, public accountability may cue them to behave in ways that are normatively approved of and that allow them to present a positive self-image to others. People low in public self-consciousness are less concerned with how their behaviors are viewed by others. For them, public accountability serves as a reminder that they do not want to behave in normatively approved ways and enhances their preference for self-benefit over other-benefit appeals.

## Study 4

Study 4 uses a sample other than undergraduate students to increase the generalizability of the findings. We also broaden our investigation by examining actual donations of money using a more involved methodology. Participants viewed two advertisements from two related charities—one that highlighted self-benefits and one that highlighted other-benefits. Participants were given the opportunity to make a donation allocation in which they could contribute to one of the charities, to both of the charities, or to neither of the charities. Consistent with  $H_1$ , we predict that monetary donations will be higher in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals when participants are publicly accountable. Conversely, monetary donations will be higher in response to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals when consumers are not publicly accountable. In addition, participants completed items to assess the proposed mechanism

underlying the effects—the desire to manage impressions by engaging in the normatively approved response. Formally, we predicted the following:

$H_4$ : The effect of public accountability on monetary donations to self-benefit versus other-benefit positioned charities is mediated, at least in part, by impression management.

## Method

Participants were 79 members of a community and recreation association who completed a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. Participants were recruited through advertising in a local community newsletter, and the sample was largely representative of the community. Participants were paid \$5 for participation in the study.

We used a 2 (appeal type: other-benefit versus self-benefit)  $\times$  2 (accountability: public versus private) mixed-model design, with appeal type as the within-subjects factor. Participants completed questionnaires in small groups of six to nine people in a community hall. We manipulated appeal type on a within-subjects basis by having participants view both an other-benefit and a self-benefit appeal. We chose two local charities working in cancer research and support because of their broad appeal and because pretesting indicated that participants had an equal likelihood to donate to either charity. The use of two related charities working in the same area allowed for consistency across the advertisements. Each advertisement promoted a new spring fundraising drive, and the peripheral arguments in the advertisements were held constant (i.e., need for support for research, patient care and education, and cancer prevention). The difference between the appeals was a summary benefit statement (other-benefit: “Just imagine how your donation will enhance the lives of those affected by cancer”; self-benefit: “Just imagine how your donation will enhance your life and make you feel”). We counterbalanced the order of appeal type and which charity was associated with which appeal. We manipulated accountability similarly to Study 1, with the exception that participants were told that their donation allocations would be made public in the public condition.

The dependent measure was donation allocation to each of the charities. Participants could use their \$5 payment to support one of the charities or to support both charities, or they could keep the money for themselves (or any combination therein). In addition, participants completed items to assess the degree to which they were motivated to manage impressions by behaving in a normatively approved way (see the Appendix). We averaged these items to create an impression management index ( $\alpha = .94$ ). Participants completed manipulation checks for accountability and appeal type, and these were successful.

## Results and Discussion

Because participants could allocate money to the charity promoted with an other-benefit appeal and to the charity promoted with a self-benefit appeal, we included appeal type as a within-subjects measure. A mixed-model ANOVA revealed the predicted appeal type  $\times$  accountability inter-

action ( $F(1, 77) = 38.85, p < .001$ ). When participants believed that their donation behavior would be public, they donated significantly more money to the charity promoted with an other-benefit ( $M = 2.60$ ) than to the charity promoted with a self-benefit ( $M = .26$ ) appeal ( $t(77) = 6.34, p < .001$ ; see Figure 4). Moreover, when participants believed that their donation allocations would be private, this finding was reversed such that more money was donated in response to the self-benefit ( $M = 1.52$ ) than the other-benefit ( $M = .59$ ) appeal ( $t(77) = 2.45, p < .001$ ). Significantly less money was donated in response to the self-benefit appeal when participants were publicly accountable than when they were privately accountable ( $t(77) = 3.35, p < .001$ ). Less money was donated in response to the other-benefit appeal when participants were privately accountable than when they were publicly accountable ( $t(77) = 5.35, p < .001$ ). A notable finding was that two respondents donated more than \$5. In support of our conceptualization, they donated more in the public condition (\$10) to the charity promoted with the altruistic appeal (and no money to the charity promoted with the egoistic appeal). When we removed these two cases from the analysis, the effects still held ( $F(1, 69) = 38.83, p < .001$ ).

Next, we examined the mediational role of impression management. Because donation allocation in response to the self-benefit versus the other-benefit was a within-subjects measure, we computed a donation allocation index by creating a difference score (i.e., the donation amount in response to the self-benefit appeal less the donation amount

in response to the other-benefit appeal, as outlined by Judd, Kenny, and McClelland [2001]; see also White and Dahl 2006). According to Judd, Kenny, and McClelland (2001), three conditions must be met to demonstrate mediation. First, the independent variable must predict the outcome variable. Second, the independent variable must also predict changes in the proposed mediator. Third, the mediator must be shown to account for a significant portion of the relationship between the treatment and the outcome. Linear regression analysis revealed that public accountability significantly predicted the donation allocation index ( $t(77) = 6.23, p < .001; \beta = .58$ ). Furthermore, public accountability significantly predicted the proposed mediator, impression management ( $t(77) = 2.96, p < .001; \beta = .32$ ). When we included the impression management index in the regression equation predicting the donation allocation index along with public accountability, impression management was a significant predictor of the donation allocation index ( $t(77) = 3.33, p < .001; \beta = .31$ ). Finally, although public accountability continued to predict the donation allocation index ( $t(77) = 5.22, p < .001; \beta = .48$ ), a Sobel's test confirmed that the indirect effect of public accountability on donation allocations through the mediator of impression management was significant ( $z = 2.97, p < .01$ ) (Baron and Kenny 1986; Sobel 1982). Thus, impression management partially mediated the relationship between public accountability and donation allocations in response to self-benefit versus other-benefit appeals. When we included counterbalancing in the regression analysis (and in the ANOVA), no significant main effects or interactions for order emerged.

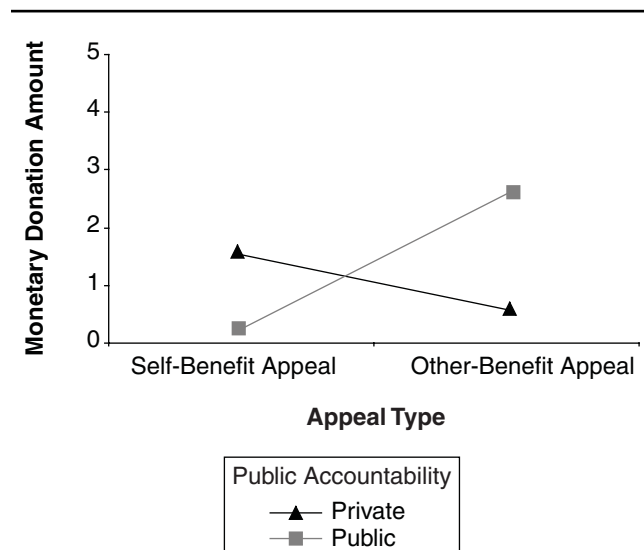
In the context of actual monetary donations, consumers allocated more to the charity promoted with an other-benefit appeal than to the charity promoted with a self-benefit appeal when donations were public. Consumers allocated more money to the charity promoted with a self-benefit appeal than to the charity promoted with an other-benefit appeal when donations were private. The results suggest that our findings are motivated, at least in part, by the desire to manage impressions by engaging in the normatively approved response.

Given that we manipulated appeal type within subjects, a potential alternative explanation for our effects might be that of a demand characteristic. That is, the nature of the experimental manipulation might have been such that participants determined what our key hypothesis was and behaved accordingly. However, we believe that this is an unlikely explanation for the findings. First, demand is unlikely to account for our effects, because the findings involve an interaction. It is difficult for participants to intuit and behave consistently with an interaction pattern (e.g., Pelham and Blanton 2003). Second, we included a post-experimental suspicion probe that confirmed that none of the participants correctly identified our hypothesis.

## Study 5

In Study 5, we attempt to further delineate the mechanism underlying our effects. Our conceptualization suggests that heightening public self-image concerns should activate

**FIGURE 4**  
**Study 4: Other-Benefit (Self-Benefit) Appeals Are More Effective Than Self-Benefit (Other-Benefit) Appeals in Encouraging Monetary Donation Under Conditions of Public (Private) Accountability**



Notes: The dependent measure was monetary donation (ranging from \$0 to \$5 between the two charities).

impression motivation, and relevant norms should provide people with information regarding how to engage in impression construction. We propose that in most situations, the accessible norm is that it is more appropriate to help others for other-focused than self-focused reasons (as our pilot study confirmed). An additional prediction that follows from our framework is that by making an alternative norm salient (e.g., Kallgren, Reno, and Cialdini 2000), our pattern of results should be reversed. That is, consumers should demonstrate more positive donation intentions in response to the self-benefit than the other-benefit appeal if the salient norm highlights that people should donate to charity for more self-serving reasons and if the appeal is made under conditions of public accountability. We manipulated which norm was salient (benefiting the self or benefiting others), manipulated public accountability, and examined volunteer intentions in response to self-benefit versus other-benefit appeals. Thus:

H<sub>5</sub>: Other-benefit appeals are more effective than self-benefit appeals in generating positive volunteerism intentions when consumers are publicly accountable and when an other-benefit norm is made salient. Conversely, self-benefit appeals are more effective than other-benefit appeals when consumers are publicly accountable and when a self-benefit norm is made salient.

In private, norm salience should not be as influential on consumer volunteer intentions, because impression motivation is low (Baumeister 1982) and people are less motivated to behave in the normatively approved way. As such, in private, participants should favor the self-benefit appeals over the other-benefit appeals, regardless of normative expectations.

## Method

One hundred forty-two undergraduate students (71 women and 69 men [2 are not reported]) took part in return for course credit. We used a 2 (appeal type: other-benefit versus self-benefit)  $\times$  2 (accountability: public versus private)  $\times$  2 (normative expectations: other-benefit norm versus self-benefit norm) between-subjects experimental design. Participants were recruited through an introductory marketing class and received a bonus mark for taking part. They took part in small groups and were assigned to the public or private accountability condition. They were told that their donation intentions would be private and confidential in the private condition and that their donation intentions would be public (i.e., discussed with the researcher and the other participants in the room) in the public condition. Participants then read a brief scenario, the goal of which was to vary the normative approval of helping for self-serving versus other-serving reasons. In the other-benefit norm condition, the socially approved norm was to volunteer to help others, whereas in the self-benefit norm condition, the socially approved norm was to volunteer to garner benefits for the self (see the Appendix). We confirmed the effectiveness of this manipulation in a pretest. Fifty participants read the self-benefit or the other-benefit norm scenario and responded to six items on seven-point scales that assessed the normative approval of helping for self-serving (e.g., “To

what degree does society expect that one volunteers to gain self-benefits?”) or other-serving (e.g., “To what degree does society expect that one volunteers to benefit others?”) reasons. We reversed-scored the other-serving items, and we averaged all items to create a normative expectation index ( $\alpha = .97$ ). Participants rated helping for self-serving reasons as more normative in the self-benefit ( $M = 5.65$ ) than the other-benefit ( $M = 2.44$ ) condition ( $t(48) = 9.09, p < .001$ ). As in Study 1, in the study itself, participants viewed the advertisement from a charity that depicted either the other-benefit appeal or the self-benefit appeal and then completed the volunteer intention items.

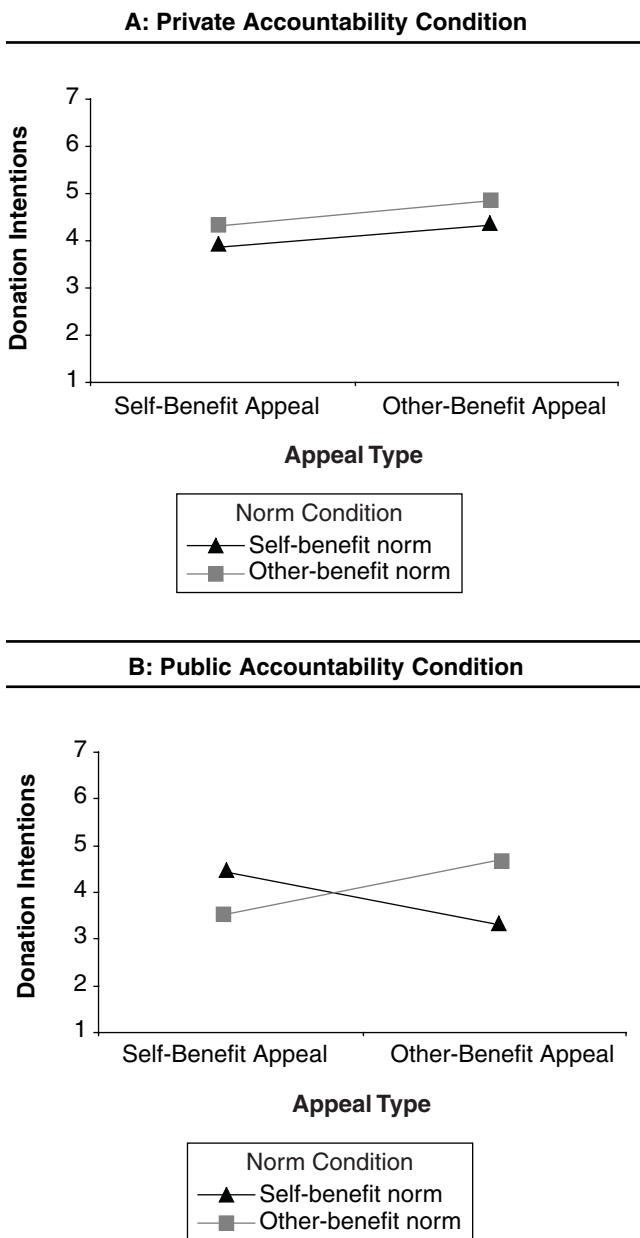
## Results and Discussion

An ANOVA on volunteer intentions revealed the predicted interaction among appeal type, accountability, and normative expectations ( $F(1, 134) = 5.34, p < .03$ ). In public, participants for whom the other-benefit norm was salient showed greater volunteer intentions in response to the other-benefit ( $M = 4.67$ ) than the self-benefit ( $M = 3.56$ ) appeal ( $t(134) = 2.52, p < .05$ ; see Figure 5). When in public, participants for whom the self-benefit norm was salient showed greater volunteer intentions in response to the self-benefit ( $M = 4.43$ ) than the other-benefit ( $M = 3.33$ ) appeal ( $t(134) = 2.62, p < .05$ ). In private, participants in the other-benefit norm condition did not show any significant differences between the other-benefit and the self-benefit appeals ( $M_s = 4.85$  and  $4.33$ ;  $t(134) = 1.02, n.s.$ ). In addition, when in private, participants in the self-benefit norm condition did not show any significant differences between the other-benefit and the self-benefit appeals ( $M_s = 4.33$  and  $3.87$ ;  $t(134) = 1.00, n.s.$ ).

The results revealed that the effectiveness of other-benefit and self-benefit appeals depends on norm salience and public accountability. Under conditions of public accountability, when the salient norm was that people should donate to charity for more self-serving (other-serving) reasons, participants exhibited more positive donation intentions in response to self-benefit (other-benefit) than other-benefit (self-benefit) appeals. This supports the notion that our effects are indeed related to a desire to manage impressions by engaging in the normatively approved response. We propose (and demonstrate in our pilot study) that it is common to hold the norm of helping for other-serving (versus self-serving) reasons. However, when helping for more self-serving reasons becomes salient, we find the reverse pattern of results.

A counterintuitive finding was that in private, participants did not demonstrate more positive donation intentions in response to the self-benefit than the other-benefit appeals. A possibility for this is that the norm manipulation influenced participants in mixed ways under private conditions. Some participants (perhaps those particularly concerned with public self-image [e.g., those high in public self-consciousness]) may have been more inclined to behave in the normatively approved way, whereas others (perhaps those who were not concerned with self-image) may have been inclined to ignore or even react in a manner opposite to the normatively approved response. As a result,

**FIGURE 5**  
**Making Self-Benefit (Other-Benefit) Norms Salient Increases the Effectiveness of Self-Benefit (Other-Benefit) Appeals in Public (but Not in Private)**



Notes: The dependent measure was time donation intentions rated on a scale ranging from 1 to 7.

when different normative expectations were made salient in private, participants did not exhibit predictable responses to other- and self-benefit appeals. It appears that though making a particular norm salient (and matching that norm with appeal type) may be effective under public conditions, doing so in private may not be efficacious.

## General Discussion

Across five studies, we provide support for the notion that the efficacy of other-benefit versus self-benefit appeals is

moderated by contextual characteristics and individual differences that heighten public self-image concerns. Other-benefit appeals were more effective than self-benefit appeals for encouraging positive volunteer intentions (Study 1) and monetary donations (Study 4) when consumers were publicly accountable for their responses. Conversely, self-benefit appeals appear to demonstrate greater effectiveness when consumers' responses are private. Study 2 shows that when participants were made publicly self-aware, they reported more positive time donation intentions in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals, even when volunteer intentions were private. Study 3 demonstrates that participants who were high in public self-consciousness and were publicly accountable exhibited greater willingness to donate time in response to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals.

Moreover, we demonstrate that the mechanism underlying our effects is related to the desire to manage impressions. Study 4 shows that our effects are due, at least in part, to a desire to manage impressions by behaving in normatively approved ways. Furthermore, Study 5 demonstrates that participants whose public self-image concerns were activated altered their donation intentions in response to other- and self-benefit appeals, depending on which norm was salient. Although participants tended to manage impressions by appearing other-serving when public self-image concerns were heightened (Studies 1–4), if they perceived behaving in a more self-serving manner as the norm, they instead managed their publicly displayed images by appearing more self-serving in public. No such differences emerged when donation intentions were private.

## Theoretical Implications

The findings suggest that existing perceptions of what type of appeals are most effective in garnering donor support may be oversimplified. While some research argues for the effectiveness of other-benefit appeals across situations, other research argues for the effectiveness of self-benefit appeals. The current findings also challenge and expand on current views of how public self-image concerns are related to charitable giving. One point of view holds that, in general, helping is enhanced by increasing self-presentational concerns, regardless of the type of appeal the marketer uses (e.g., Satow 1975). A second belief is that people respond more positively to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals and that this should be augmented in public (Holmes, Miller, and Lerner 2002). Our research demonstrates that when public self-image concerns are heightened, consumers exhibit more positive donor responses to other-benefit than self-benefit appeals. Furthermore, when public self-image concerns are minimized, consumers show more positive donation responses to self-benefit than other-benefit appeals.

A notable theoretical implication of the current research is that it appears to reveal a different type of “psychological cover” than that which Holmes, Miller, and Lerner (2002) demonstrate. Holmes, Miller, and Lerner suggest (p. 145) that “the offer of an exchange permits people to still feel good about doing their part without committing themselves to a hard-to-live-up-to psychological contract.” Thus, peo-

ple often want to use an egoistic “cover” for donation because it helps them avoid the psychological burden of being committed to helping other charitable organizations or even the same charity in the future. That is, although other-benefit appeals are more normatively approved of (as demonstrated by the pilot study in the current research), self-benefit appeals may have the desirable quality of reducing internal conflict and the pressure to help in the future. Thus, a question for further research is how people resolve the conflict between the desire to present a positive self-image to others and the desire to manage their feelings of pressure and future commitment. A possibility implicated by the current work is that in public, other-benefit appeals are more effective because the former motivation (i.e., impression management) is paramount. In contrast, in private, self-benefit appeals are more effective because they help resolve psychological conflict. Although the donation requests in Holmes, Miller, and Lerner’s research were public (each participant who was approached alone donated in front of the researcher), our manipulations arguably increased public self-image concerns to a greater extent.

Furthermore, Holmes, Miller, and Lerner (2002) find that the self-benefit appeal was more effective than the other-benefit appeal only under conditions that highlighted high need. Holmes, Miller, and Lerner’s high-need condition described the “tragedy” for the victims and the severity of the situation. Our manipulations did not highlight degree of need per se. Focusing on a high degree of tragedy for victims can often result in defensive reactions among observers (e.g., Lerner 1980), and this may have led to a desire to use the psychological cover for engaging in an altruistic act, as Holmes, Miller, and Lerner suggest. A possibility for further research would be to examine the interplay between public self-image concerns (i.e., that can encourage more positive responses to other-benefit appeals) and degree of need (i.e., that can encourage positive responses to self-benefit appeals) in determining consumer reactions to different appeals. A final difference between the current research and Holmes, Miller, and Lerner’s work is that our self-benefit appeal was made in the context of traditional charity donation, while theirs was in the context of a purchase of a good whose proceeds would be donated to charity. Positioning the appeal as a purchase may activate an exchange mind-set among consumers. Given that many charities now sell products, this type of appeal positioning warrants further research.

The results provide converging evidence that consumers show more positive donor support in response to other-benefit (self-benefit) than self-benefit (other-benefit) appeals when public self-image concerns are heightened (minimized). However, when examining the results across conditions in which a public versus private focus is activated, we find somewhat mixed results for the other-benefit appeals. For example, in Studies 1 and 2, participants responded more negatively to self-benefit appeals under conditions of public versus private accountability (and self-awareness), whereas intentions to donate in response to other-benefit appeals did not significantly differ across the private and public accountability (self-awareness) conditions. In Study 3, among participants high in public self-

consciousness, self-benefit appeals were more effective under private (versus public) conditions, whereas other-benefit appeals were more effective under public (versus private) conditions. However, these differences did not emerge for participants low in public self-consciousness. In Study 4, public accountability had a significant, negative effect on the effectiveness of self-benefit appeals and a significant, positive effect on the effectiveness of other-benefit appeals. Finally, in Study 5, public accountability decreased (increased) the effectiveness of appeals that were inconsistent (consistent) with the helping norm, which we made salient. It appears that though helping for self-serving reasons is not a socially desirable motivation for helping (and, in general, is decreased in public versus private), a comparison of the findings for helping for other-serving reasons across public and private conditions yields more mixed results. It may be that other-benefit appeals are more effective only when comparing across public versus private conditions under circumstances in which public self-image concerns are most strongly activated. For example, we uncover more positive donation intentions in response to other-benefit appeals in public than in private in Study 3, but only among participants who are also high in public self-consciousness. Presumably, these are the conditions under which public image concerns are the strongest. (Indeed, given that Studies 1 and 2 likely contained participants both low and high in self-consciousness, this may explain the lack of differences across accountability conditions in those studies.) Likewise, publicly discussing actual donation allocation (rather than simply intentions) in Study 4 could have arguably led to particularly heightened public self-image concerns and, thus, more positive donations in response to other-benefit appeals in public versus private.

### ***Implications for Practice***

A question this research invokes is how the current results change existing perceptions and managerial practice. The theoretical implications we mentioned also provide important opportunities for nonprofit organizations to increase the efficacy of their marketing initiatives. In particular, the way the donation is requested should match the degree to which public self-image concerns are activated in a given context. If the donation response is private, marketers should use appeals that highlight the benefits the potential donor will obtain. Likewise, if the donation response is more public in nature, marketers should highlight the benefits to others. Indeed, charities often engage in relatively private (e.g., direct mail solicitations, appeals for donor support over the Internet) and relatively public (e.g., special events, personal fundraising) fundraising and recruitment activities simultaneously. Our results suggest that nonprofit marketers should not uniformly use one appeal across these different execution contexts but rather should tailor the appeal to effectively match the setting.

Furthermore, charities differ in their abilities to offer donor benefits in exchange for contributions. Younger charities or those with limited marketing budgets may lack the ability to offer anything more than a tax receipt, while better funded organizations can spend on lavish donor reward programs. Thus, appeal strategies should vary depending on

the charity's capabilities—for example, charities limited to other-benefit appeals should pursue more public donation appeals rather than direct mail. Similarly, the ability to offer donor rewards varies across donation opportunities. Some volunteer positions offer more rewards for the donor than others. Volunteer positions on charity boards can offer donor skill development and networking opportunities, while activities such as envelope stuffing may hold fewer self-benefits. This research suggests that marketers should match their appeal strategies with their abilities to offer donor benefits, even when the mode of donation (e.g., volunteerism) remains constant.

Moreover, if the request is positioned as an other-benefit appeal, but must be made in private, Study 3 suggests that situational factors that increase focus on public self-image should be effective in encouraging charitable donation. For example, if a private donation is made in a larger group context (i.e., a large fundraiser), this may heighten public self-image concerns. Wooten and Reed (2000) suggest that self-presentational concerns should increase as a function of group size. Although group size did not moderate the effects in the current studies, we note that the sizes of the groups did not vary greatly and that substantially larger groups may heighten public self-image concerns, even when the donations are made in private. In addition, organizations that give consumers outwardly visible cues that signal to others that they have donated (e.g., "LIVESTRONG" wristbands for cancer support and research) might enhance this public focus and make other-benefit appeals more effective than self-benefit appeals, even if the donation occurs in private. This would be a worthwhile avenue for further research because though a gift is often viewed as being part of a self-benefit appeal, the "signaling" nature of such gifts might make consumers concerned with the image they portray to others (Berger and Heath 2007).

Given that norm salience moderates the effect of public self-image concerns on responses to self-benefit and other-benefit appeals, marketers should ensure a match between the salient norm and the appeal type in public settings. If the appeal is self-serving in nature and must be made in a public setting, marketers should activate the norm of giving for egoistic reasons. This could be done by providing background information to potential donors about what is normative (Aggarwal and Law 2005) or showing others engaging in the normatively approved behavior—in this case, helping others to get something in return (Kallgren, Reno, and Cialdini 2000). Our work, combined with other research, indicates that marketers need to be aware of the norms across a range of potential situations and target audiences and adjust appeal strategies accordingly. For example, Fisher and Dubé (2005) find that social norms of masculinity and power influence men's responses to emotional advertising when they are in the presence of other men. Thus, if the prevailing group norm is against action for other-serving reasons, marketers might want to execute public self-benefit appeals to capitalize on social desirability concerns.

## **Directions for Further Research**

The current findings may have implications for domains much broader than charitable marketing. Indeed, many consumption behaviors, such as purchasing fair-trade products, choosing items not manufactured in sweatshops, and even reducing individual energy consumption, involve a degree of consideration for others. Further research could profitably examine the comparative effectiveness of self-benefit versus other-benefit appeals in encouraging other "helpful" consumer behaviors and whether public self-image concerns moderate consumer responses to such appeals.

The results suggest that though consumers respond more positively to other-benefit appeals than self-benefit appeals under conditions that heighten public self-image concerns, they likely want to appear more other-serving under these conditions rather than truly becoming more altruistic. Although self-benefit appeals are responded to more positively when direct benefits for the self are highlighted, other-benefit appeals are responded to more positively when the indirect benefit of positive self-presentation is heightened. Although this finding is beyond the scope of the current research, it adds to the debate regarding whether helping others in general can be motivated purely by altruism or by more egoistic, self-serving motives.

As we alluded to previously, charities may sometime use other-benefit and self-benefit appeals in combination. An additional direction for further research would be to examine the consequences of such a strategy. Does combining other-benefit with self-benefit appeals in a public setting lead to a positive response because consumers focus on the other-benefit message, or does such a strategy backfire given the inclusion of the self-benefit appeal? If the latter is the case, are their ways to attenuate consumers' negative donation responses?

Donor support is critical to the functioning of nonprofit organizations. Because these organizations make important contributions to society, research into factors that enhance charitable support is an important undertaking. As the quotations at the beginning of this article suggest, there are two key motives for helping—to benefit the self and to benefit others—and marketers often appeal to donors using these two types of appeals. This research demonstrates that both other-benefit and self-benefit appeals can be successful in influencing donation intentions but that their effectiveness depends on the degree to which public self-image concerns are relevant.

## **Appendix Study Materials**

### ***Impression Management Items (Study 4)***

- Because I care about how positively others view me.
- Because I want to present myself in a positive way.
- Because I want to make a positive impression on others.
- Because I want to make myself look good to others.
- Because I want to do what is expected of me.
- Because I want to do what other people think is right in this situation.

- Because I want to do what the norm is.
- Because I want to do what society believes is the right thing.
- Because I want to do what others approve of.

### Normative Expectation Manipulation (Study 5)

*Self-benefit norm.* Imagine that you are looking for a summer volunteer position. A number of your friends also have part-time volunteer positions and the general agreement among your friends is that volunteering can help to develop some new skills to add to their resumes, as well as to make some valuable contacts. It is the consensus that volunteering is a good way to develop these much needed job skills and to meet and network with new people. Thus, the social expectation is that it is generally a good idea to volunteer to get ahead in your personal development. You start thinking about where you would like to volunteer and then

you come across an advertisement from a local charity, the Mustard Seed. You then consider whether this might be the right place for you to volunteer at.

*Other-benefit norm.* Imagine that you are looking for a summer volunteer position. A number of your friends also have part-time volunteer positions and the general agreement among your friends is that volunteering can help others and make a difference in the community. It is the consensus that volunteering is a good way to make a contribution and to help other people. Thus, the social expectation is that it is generally a good idea to volunteer as a way to make a contribution to society. You start thinking about where you would like to volunteer and then you come across an advertisement from a local charity, the Mustard Seed. You then consider whether this might be the right place for you to volunteer at.

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