

# US donors offer more aid in hopes of equality

June 23 2014, by Victoria Fryer

---

(Phys.org)—In a forthcoming *Journal of Consumer Research* article, Penn State Smeal College of Business' Karen Winterich, assistant professor of marketing, and coauthor Yinlong Zhang of the University of Texas-San Antonio find that people who live in countries that promote equality in power and wealth are more likely to open their wallets for philanthropic causes than their counterparts in countries that expect and accept inequality.

Across several studies, the authors looked at how a country's overall power distance—the extent to which a society expects and accepts inequality in power or wealth—impacts prosocial behaviors like donating money, volunteering time or helping a stranger.

"In a [high power](#) distance society, inequality is seen as the basis of societal order," wrote the authors.

Therefore, individuals with a high power distance belief are less likely to feel responsible for offering charitable behavior that would reduce inequality.

However, Winterich and Zhang noted that power distance only had a negative effect on charitable behavior when the need was controllable. For instance, even in high power distance societies, people tended to be willing to provide assistance for victims of natural disasters. They were less likely to give in situations that were perceived as "controllable" needs or those where the person who stands to benefit could be interpreted as being "at fault" for his or her situation. In such situations,

potential donors in countries with high power distance belief tend to perceive this person's need as a natural and necessary part of social order.

"Uncontrollable need increases feelings of responsibility to offer aid among those who otherwise would not feel responsible to offer aid for a need that is controllable and may simply be part of the accepted inequality in society," the authors wrote.

Takeaways for nonprofit organizations include considering the power distance beliefs of the target audience when creating donation appeals. By emphasizing concepts of equality as well as minimizing the idea of social hierarchy, donation appeals may temporarily lower power distance belief, they find. This decrease in power distance should increase donations.

In addition, "seeking to increase perceptions of responsibility to offer aid can overcome the negative effect of (power distance belief) on charitable giving," the authors wrote.

"Accepting Inequality Deters Responsibility: How Power Distance Decreases Charitable Behavior," is forthcoming in the *Journal of Consumer Research* this August. Winterich is an assistant professor of marketing at the Penn State Smeal College of Business. Zhang is an associate professor of marketing at the University of Texas San Antonio.

**More information:** Winterich, Karen Page and Zhang, Yinlong, "Accepting Inequality Deters Responsibility: How Power Distance Decreases Charitable Behavior" (January 17, 2014). *Journal of Consumer Research*, Forthcoming. Available at SSRN: [ssrn.com/abstract=2438280](http://ssrn.com/abstract=2438280)

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

Citation: US donors offer more aid in hopes of equality (2014, June 23) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-06-donors-aid-equality.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.