

Study reveals the power of reflecting upon legacy

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Prompting people to consider how their lives will impact future generations leads them to give more to charity and less to family members, according to new University at Buffalo School of Management research.

Forthcoming in *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, the study finds evidence for the "Andrew Carnegie Effect," a phenomenon named

after one of the wealthiest Americans in history, who donated more than 90% of his fortune to charity—about \$65 billion in total.

"Addressing socioeconomic issues like [sustainability](#) and intergenerational responsibility requires collective solutions and longer time frames," says study co-author Daniela Goya-Tocchetto, Ph.D., assistant professor of organization and human resources in the UB School of Management. "That's why it's critical to find ways to motivate people to act on behalf of [future generations](#), extending their goodwill beyond the borders of close relationships."

The researchers conducted four studies in which nearly 3,700 participants were asked to consider their legacy via a simple reflection task. Legacy motives were measured through self-reported responses to items like "I want to have a lasting impact on future generations."

Goya-Tocchetto says that while their findings show the Andrew Carnegie Effect has a small to medium impact on individual giving, it can make a big difference when magnified to the larger population.

"As Carnegie famously stated, 'The man who dies rich, dies disgraced,'" she says. "We all want to leave something behind to outlive ourselves, and by broadening our sense of sense of responsibility and beneficiaries beyond just our immediate families, we can support efforts that address broader, [global issues](#)."

Provided by University at Buffalo

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