The Mind of Philanthropy:
Sources of Theory and Practice

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August 25, 2003

Abstract

This research is about a vast theory conspiracy. It describes the state of *the mind of philanthropy*—the discipline's body of knowledge. It is argued that because of the continuing dominance of logical positivism and the restrictive influence of those who set the research agenda for philanthropy, the contributions of the field's practitioners are undervalued and often demeaned as second-class knowledge. The knowledge of neighboring academic disciplines is likewise criticized for being based on second-hand theory borrowed from more basic (pure) disciplines. A case is developed for making practitioner experience and theoretical constructs from other discipline's part of philanthropy's growing knowledge base. To this end, and in order to help fill prominent gaps in the literature, additional research is suggested which can strengthen the theoretical foundations of direct mail communication, which medium is characterized as the very *voice of philanthropy* for most nonprofit organizations.

Developing a Mind of its Own

In addition to the values of serving others and achieving a level of autonomy, an important characteristic that demarcates professions from vocations is their development of a body of knowledge (Sarfatti Larson, 1977; Houle, 1980; Freidson, 1986; Sullivan, 1995; Dean, 1995). This process by which a discipline develops *a mind of its own,* begins with its founders' enunciation of first principles, is followed by the eventual codification of their legacy, and then continues over time as others increment the base of knowledge with new contributions. If the development of a knowledge base is rudimentary at first and later matures—like the pattern of human development described by psychologists (cf. Piaget, 1948; Bruner, 1959)—then lack of agreement and controversies are inevitable, understandable, and forgivable. Like a child whose synaptic connections are not yet fully formed, tentativeness among scholars, arguments over intellectual turf, and sporadic, uneven growth are all part of being a young discipline. It has a mind of its own, but it has yet to fully make up its mind. Moreover, change demands malleability.

However, being young and formative are inadequate excuses for being inhospitable and myopic. As a loving and affirming home offers a child tremendous developmental advantages over one that lacks affection and is characterized by abuse, so a discipline that dismisses a priori, the insights of practitioners as unworthy anecdote, and refuses to search neighboring disciplines for cognate theory, shuts itself off from important sources of knowledge. The writer suggests that this may be occurring in the infant field of philanthropic fundraising, and particularly in its sub field of direct mail fundraising.

Sullivan (1995) frames this problem in light of a larger phenomenon he traces to the "epistemic regime of positivism … [that] valorizes scientific and technological rationality and certifies that their application to the human world can be unproblematic" (p. 166). Sullivan sources this world view in the work of Auguste Comte who, in nineteenth century Paris, proclaimed that humanity was locked in a struggle to "pass beyond its early immaturity, which had led to the invention of divine protectors to explain a terrifying world, into a mature outlook which could confront and master the human as well as the physical world by the unaided power of scientific reason" (p. 166). Comte's legacy has a continuing influence on the modern university, where research "sharply distinguishes facts from values as it segregates the generation of knowledge from its application" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 166). Comte (1853) essentially performed a frontal lobotomy on the collective worldview of the nineteenth century world, resulting in the disconnection of all things subjective from all things scientific. In his regime there was no room for theology, poetry or the inner life of the soul. Sullivan (1995) observes that "neither Comte nor his followers had use for the concern with character formation which had been central to the inherited educational system centered upon the ancient classics. Rather than reshape that inheritance, Comte simply moved to abolish it" (p. 167). In sum, Sullivan notes that "positive knowledge provided facts but no values. It approached the world as a set of processes to be neurally mapped and, if possible, elucidated through the generation of explanatory laws" (Sullivan, 1995, p. 168).

On one hand, most fundraisers would *value* discovering explanatory laws of soliciting gifts. Many early leaders in the field of psychology drew upon established theory in their discipline to gain an understanding of economic behavior in sales and marketing (Scott, 1903, 1913; Dichter, 1947; Kotler, 1969, Engel, Blackwell and Minard, 1978; Engel, Warsaw & Kinnear, 1994). Research in the field of fundraising, designed to identify the best way to maximize response to direct mail fund appeals, would be in keeping with the positivist view that controlled research is a powerful way to develop knowledge. However, such research conducted by those dedicated to serving others, is guided not by a value-neutral positivist philosophy, but by a worldview that elevates service to others over knowledge. This philanthropic worldview can provide a context for guiding and constraining research. This assumption is supported by the research of Duronio and Tempel (1997) which indicates that far from being value-neutral, fundraisers work in a segment of the economy, where financial rewards are limited because they are driven by the driving value aptly captured in Peter Drucker's description of the purpose of the nonprofit sector: "nonprofit institutions are human-change agents" (1990, xiv).

If research in the nonprofit philanthropic sector is to contribute to the aim of changing lives, it must, in Sullivan's (1995) words, rehabilitate "nonformal modes of rationality which do not screen out the practical, moral, and historical standpoint of both the subjects and the objects of knowledge. That means the rediscovery and expansion of the idea of practical rationality: (p. 171). Citing Schön (1983, 1987), Sullivan argues that "the principal failute of positivism, or what he calls 'technical rationality' is its denigration of practical know-how. Schön sees technical rationality as applied positivism because it recognizes as knowledge only abstract models of causal relationships among precisely defined entitites" (p. 173).

Similarly, Bruner (1990) notes that positivism has created inside his discipline of psychology, "a worried restlessness" and preoccupation with "neat little studies" (p. xi). He notes a loss of credibility because psychologists have failed to ask "the great psychological questions . . . about how we consturct our meanings and our realities, quesitons about the sahping of mind by history and culture" (p. xi). "The wider intellectual community" he continues, "comes increasingly to ignore our journals, which seem to outsiders principally to contain intellectually unsituated little studies, each one a response to a handful of like little studies" (p. xi).

Such views prompt several questions. Are those who set the resarch agendas in fundraising guilty of "what Gordon Allport once called methodolitary" (cited in Brunner, 1990, p. xi)? As they lock out from participation, fundraising practitioners, do they perpetuate the "the long-standing dominance of pure over applied knowledge in the universities and professional schools" (Sullivan 1995, p. 175)? As research in the field of fundraising moves from infancy to asolecense, can a rapprochement of the technical and practical dimensions, prevent it from the triviality Bruner observes characterizes so much research in psychology?

The writer is convinced that rigorous and relevant research is possible, and 30 years of experience working within the U.S. nonprofit sector in roles as a fundraiser and consultant in fundraising and management indicates that it is necessary. Working with hundreds of nonprofit executives who sought advice on fundraising, and on direct mail fundraising in particular, the writer has observed that few of these leaders had prior education in the underlying theory of, or training in the overt tasks related to raising money by mail. In light of these deficits, the extraordinary growth of the nonprofit sector, and the fact that to most who contribute to nonprofit causes direct mail is the very *voice of philanthropy*, the development of a body of theory and practice in direct mail fundraising is imperative. However, as the following will argue, theory building among academic leaders in philanthropy (unlike theory in marketing, consumer behavior, communication, rhetoric, and other cognate disciplines) *thus far has tended to ignore research focused on the communicative processes that cause individuals to contribute to philanthropic causes*. The economic justification alone, established definitively by the following statistics, supports the thesis that research in this under-studied area is critical to the advancement of philanthropy in America.

By 1998, America's collective voice of philanthropy had generated $664.8 billion in revenues for 1.23 million nonprofit organizations—$132.1 billion of which was comprised of private contributions from individuals, corporations, foundations, and federated campaigns (Independent Sector, 2001). Growth in charitable giving more than doubled in the decade from 1991 to 2001, increasing from $105 billion to $212 billion, according to the AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy (2002). This same report indicated that funds raised by nonprofit organizations equaled 2.1 percent of U.S. gross domestic product in 2001, with $177 billion in gifts contributed by individuals and bequests making up 83.5 percent of all donations. Contributions by individuals accounted for 75.8 percent ($160.72 billion), and bequests made up the remaining 7.7 percent ($16.3 billion). In 2002, the AAFRC Trust for Philanthropy (2003) reported a 1 percent increase in giving over the previous year to $240.92 billion, with $201.83 billion contributed by individuals and in bequests, making up 83.8 percent of all donations. Contributions by individuals accounted for 76.3 percent ($183.73 billion), and bequests made up the remaining 7.5 percent ($18.10 billion).

Lewis (2003) reported the findings of Marshall Marketing and Communication's survey on direct mail, commissioned by advertising agency Vertis. Their data revealed that in 2002, 77 percent of Americans making gifts to charity and concluded that "church solicitations were most likely to spur people to give, followed by a special fund-raising event, and a mail appeal. Internet appeals or infomercials were the least likely to prompt donations" (Lewis, 2003 p. 44). The Vertis data did not account for larger gifts raised from individuals through personal one-to-one contact.

Of such larger contributions (often referred to as planned or deferred gifts) Panas (1984) notes that: "One third of your money comes from about your top ten donors, and the next third from about the following one hundred donors" (p.14). Even these contributions, usually raised in face-to-face interaction with donors, are secured because the individual soliciting communicated something that caused the prospective donor to say yes. Whether sitting in the executive suite, asking a billionaire for a six-figure pace-setting gift, or writing to a working class family for a $15 contribution to feed the homeless, both fundraising scenarios require that something be communicated that will resonate with and motivate the one being solicited to act. Seiler (2003) defines that something as the organization's case for support, which he argues must "paint a picture or tell a story about the organization [using] specific examples, such as people who have been helped or particular projects that have been funded" (p. 62). Now more than ever, according to Nichols (1999), for nonprofit organizations three national philanthropic trends heighten the importance of developing a motivating case: slow and flattened growth in charitable giving, over solicitation of foundations and corporations, and greater dependency of nonprofits and less on government to solve social problems.

Direct Mail Remains the Dominant Medium

According to Huntsinger (1989a) "fund raising by direct response marketing is the utilization of one or more media for the purpose of raising funds from a mass audience—or from a precise pinpointed audience" (p. 6). The predominant direct response fundraising medium in America remains direct mail. Warwick (1990), supports this assertion, citing Arnold Fishman, late president of Marketing Logistics and author of *Guide to Mail Order Sales*, who estimated "that direct mail fundraising yielded more than $40 billion in 1988" (p. 10). This amounted to 38.5 percent of all funds raised in the nonprofit sector that year. John Schulte (2003), president of the National Mail Order

Association, which publishes *Guide to Mail Order Sales,* estimated that by 2002, total giving by direct response had climbed to $98.5 billion in the U.S. Thus, more than half of all funds given by individuals were contributed because they received a direct request for a gift in a fund appeal letter.

Impact of Email on Direct Mail Fundraising

Research conducted by Peppers and Rogers Group of Norwalk, Connecticut posed the question, “Think that e-mail is the most effective way of maintaining relationships” (Direct Magazine, 2001)? Researchers found that 34 percent of those surveyed indicated a preference for paper mail, 4 percent chose email and just 2 percent preferred communication with businesses or charities through the Internet. The Direct Marketing Association (2002) reported similar trends, noting that direct mail remains “the number one method in which contributors get information about charities to which they donate” (DMA, 2002, p. 231).

Consistent with these trends were Hatch’s (2003) somewhat cynical observations that direct mail continues to be the preferred medium of direct response marketing:

> During the dot-com boom, the hotshot twenty-somethings did not have even one direct marketing skill, as they sneered at us old-timers living in the past who did not understand the “new paradigm.” They cost investors a trillion dollars or more and are to this day dining on crow. . . . Contrary to what techies will tell you, the workhorse of direct marketing is still direct mail (p. 114).

The billions raised through appeals to the human heart through direct mail result in what Barbara Marion (1997) describes as a "great flood of funds" which she says "passes, in some measure, through the metaphoric hands of a very small segment of the population: professional fundraisers. The hands that help channel the flood toward its intended goals should be guided by a solid understanding of the historical, philosophical, and ethical basis of the mission of philanthropy and the calling of fundraising" (p. 69).

The Communicative Domain is Ignored

Marion's comments are good as far as they go. However, she lists only three research domains (historical, philosophical and ethical). Given her assertion that so much is at stake in the work undertaken by fundraisers, it is surprising that an equally important fourth domain seems to have been—the *communicative* basis of the mission of philanthropy. Given the sheer volume of funds raised annually through direct mail, it would seem that the field of fundraising can ill afford research agendas that systematically ignore the contributions implicit in the experience of its practitioners. Neither is it prudent to ignore the theory and practice that has evolved in fields and disciplines like marketing, communication, consumer behavior, advertising, cognitive psychology, rhetoric, semiotics, discourse analysis, content analysis management, organization development.

Particularly troubling is the tendency of academic leaders in philanthropy to discourage studies focused on the communicative processes of soliciting gifts. Some (Carbone, 1983, 1987; Payton, Rosso & Tempel, 1991) would argue that because their experience is *merely anecdotal*, the knowledge of fundraising practitioners does not constitute legitimate knowledge. However, others (Argyris & Schön, 1974; Schön, 1983, 1987, Sullivan, 1995) would honor their knowledge as valuable—holding that their collective experience preserves learned patterns of action from painful trial and error. The fact is that much learning by practitioners actually does become codified knowledge. However, it is often the proprietary intellectual property of advertising agencies for which its dissemination would put at risk, its competitive advantage in the marketplace. Some leaders in the field of advertising have published research upon their retirement, or as campaigns loose their relevance as times change (cf. Caples, 1974; Ogilvy, 1963, 1983; & Wunderman, 1997). Among those contributing in this fashion to advertising's body of research have been some of America's leading scholars in psychology who came from Vienna to make their mark in the mid-twentieth century (see Maloney, 1994; Scott, 1903, 1913; Dichter, 1947). One of these pioneers was Walter Dill Scott, also a distinguished academic leader who served as president of Northwestern University. Larger nonprofit organizations also record their experimentation with variables in the fundraising process (cf. Lewis, 2002). However, like agencies, most do not freely share their results. Some worthy studies are found in trade publications such the test of hand-addressed mail with typed by Printz and Maltby (1997). In this case, the article was a cooperative effort between a nonprofit leader and consultant, neither of whom had anything to loose, since the agency had few competitors in its niche in Seattle Washington, and the consultant would only stand to benefit from those who, reading of his success, would wish to retain his services. Still, for the most part, in the interest of protecting trade secrets and maintaining a competitive advantage, even among nonprofit organizations, knowledge is not always freely disseminated.

The writer suggests that it is foolish to underestimate the value of practitioner-based knowledge in fundraising, just as it would be ill advised not to heed the advice of a chain saw juggler who says that experience shows it is better to catch a buzzing saw on the handle rather than business end of the blade. Because the experience of practitioners is formed and reformed in response to practice that has proven to work, it could provide valuable direction for research on communication variables which could be tested, validated, elevated to the status of theory, and ultimately codified for the benefit of other practitioners.

The importance of codifying practitioner knowledge is underscored by the writer's own experience with four organizations. In all four cases, important knowledge of past successes was not documented, but remained the private learning of a key executive responsible for fundraising. Consequently, that knowledge was not passed on to new staff members as these senior fundraisers moved on to new positions in other organizations. This occurred with an international relief agency headquartered in Canada, a metropolitan symphony orchestra in the U.S., a human services agency in Michigan, and a youth organization in California). All four nonprofit organizations conducted direct mail campaigns that exceeded the performance of any past direct efforts by dramatic margins. The executive director of the youth organization wrote: "It was the most successful effort I have seen in 25 years of conducting direct mail campaigns," the symphony's annual fund director said, "the campaign exceeded our wildest expectations, yielding a response rate of 26 percent," the director of development at the healthcare agency said, "it was our best effort to date," and the relief agency said: "it outperformed any past appeal targeted to this type of audience." However, after the individuals who gave their campaigns such high marks left their organizations, departing with them was all knowledge of their successful direct mail campaigns. For example, in the case of the symphony orchestra cited above, despite the fact that their 26 percent response rate yielded $168,000.00 in contributions, the new Vice President of Institutional Advancement apologized for not even having records about his predecessor's campaign, conducted with the writer's firm only three months before. These examples underscore the transience of institutional memory, indicate that the successes of practitioners could provide valuable learning to the field as a whole, and suggest potential targets of research opportunity which should be defined as hypotheses, replicated, tested, validated, and codified as best practices in the field.

The limitations of the apprenticeship-style of education as a vehicle for preserving and transmitting knowledge in the field of fundraising has been noted by Duronio and Tempel (1997) and serves as strong incentive to those who champion the cause of moving fundraising toward the status of a profession. However, in the process of creating this body of knowledge, it would seem that the patterns of effectiveness developed by reflective practitioners (Schön, 1983, 1987) in the field should be a starting place for developing knowledge about theory and practice. Foremost among these patterns of effectiveness would be practitioners' implicit theories about the essential communicative tasks of fundraising—what works best to motivate the giving of gifts, as they shape and send messages through various media to accomplish this end? The writer suggests that these implicit notions about what works and does not work in fundraising are simply waiting for others to frame them as explicit hypotheses, which others can then test, validate, and elevate to the status of validated theories. However, many who have aspired to create a body of knowledge for the field of fundraising (Carbone (1986, 1987, 1989; Dean, 1995; Duronio & Tempel, 1997; Payton, Rosso & Tempel, 1991) run the risk of wittingly or unwittingly alienating valuable allies among practitioners, who should be allies in this cause. In championing their crusade to build a respectable body of theoretical knowledge, the rhetoric used casts practitioners as ignorant gypsies, embarrassing cousins their academic betters would rather not acknowledge. Thus, according to Layton (1987) most research has tended to focus on broader issues such as the history of philanthropy, economic patterns, and issues related to the concept of giving, but the notion of getting (asking for money) is virtually ignored. Perhaps this omission is symptomatic of academic leaders' uneasiness about the very notion of asking for money. Perhaps researchers are more comfortable developing theories about why individuals give than what communication processes cause their giving. The former approach would cast them as innocent observers of the effects of altruistic drives, whose fruition is philanthropy, while the latter would make associate them with the act of asking for money—an aspect of philanthropy which research has confirmed is distasteful to most fundraisers (Duronio and Tempel) and thus is probably even less palatable to researchers, with some (Payton, Rosso, and Tempel, 1991) equating fundraising with manipulation., albeit for noble ends. Research in this communicative dimension seems to have been ignored, as the following illustrates.

A Gap in the Literature of Philanthropy

Dove, Lindauer, and Madvig's (2001) recent book on the subject of annual campaigns contains a small amount of material on the subject of direct mail. Most literature on the subject of annual campaigns lacks depth on the subject of direct mail, with a few notable exceptions (Huntsinger, 1977, 1989a, 1989b, 1992; Kuniholm, 1985, 1989; Lautman, 1984, 2001; Lewis, 1989; Warwick, 1990, 1992, 1993, 2001, 2003).

This is consistent with an even more worrisome disconnect in the field uncovered by research. Many fundraisers do not see themselves as responsible for personally asking others to make donations on behalf of the organizations for which they work. Duronio and Tempel (1997) note that "one of the most serious challenges facing fundraisers and hampering professionalization of the field is the discomfort with and distaste for fund raising experienced by fund raisers themselves" (p. 191). The dominant mindset of the individuals they interviewed is captured in one respondent's words: "I could never ask directly but I think I can help design a program to encourage people to give" (p. 192). Eugene Tempel, who teaches at the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy, notes that participants in its certificate program, The Fund Raising School, freely discuss their discomfort about raising money, and "one of the reasons often given is that they don't know how, and practicing is helpful in making fund raisers comfortable" (1997, p. 193). Other reasons cited included "fears of rejection and of reciprocity, discomfort with assuming a subservient position as the asker, and the reluctance to pry into personal matters" (p. 193). Payton, Rosso, and Tempel (1991) agree, noting that "the most common criticism of all is that fund raising is demeaning; regardless of the form it takes, fund raising is begging. Such a definition puts the fund raiser in an inferior social as well as economic position" (pp. 275-276).

If fundraisers do not see themselves personally asking for money, they see themselves even less in the role of implementing direct mail campaigns and maintaining direct mail programs. Duronio and Tempel's (1998) study does not even index the subject, and it is acknowledged to be the seminal study on the profession. Direct mail is referenced to only in passing in some interviewee quotes. One reference in their index to direct response consulting services refers to a Watson and Hughey, now doing business as Direct Response Consulting Services, covered in light of the negative views toward direct mail their mishandling of sweepstakes mailings that misrepresented that led to congressional hearings, law suits, and new legislation regulating such business in various states. Regarding any other coverage on the task-competence of the fund raisers they studied, the authors admitted they had to abandon an the original goal of learning "in detail how fund raisers actually spend their time at work" (p. 208) due to lack of funds and time. However, this omission seems symptomatic of the field's academic researchers' proclivity to talk about philanthropy and just about any other topic in general terms, but to assiduously avoid the communication processes by which one constructs and delivers to a potential giver a request for money. Layton's (1987) review of the literature affirms this proclivity: "there is almost nothing which examines the phenomenon of 'getting' with the same depth and comprehension of that the phenomenon of giving has received" (1987, p. xv). Duronio and Tempel reveal a similarly telling perspective, consistent with the dearth of research on the day-to-day work of fundraisers and practitioners. They quote another influential researcher, Robert Carbone (1986, 1987, 1989, 1989, 1997), whose research on the field of fundraising proceeded their own:

> Carbone noted that a review of the programs for conferences for fund raisers indicated that almost all sessions were concerned with how fund raisers can better do their job. This "somewhat single-minded attention to expertise on the job," he wrote, 'suggests that many fund raisers have only a rudimentary understanding of what is involved in professionalism and in the attainment of stature as a true profession " He indicated that competence is important, but strongly emphasized that competence is not enough if "an occupational group aspires to be recognized as a true profession" (Duronio and Tempel, 1997, p. 22)

Contrary to Carbone's views, I would argue that that such conferences probably *should* be almost exclusively about improving job performance, based on the fact that the effectiveness of fundraisers is judged using measurement/reward systems (Kotter, Schlesinger, & Sathe, 1986; Engel, Warshaw & Martin, 1994; Roberts & Berger, 1989) that include measures of performance like response rates, return on investment, and net income. Moreover, since Duronio and Tempel (1997) estimate that 74 percent of America's approximately 50,000 paid fund-raisers report learning their skills on the job, such events offer a perspective broader than the limited apprenticeship of on the job training. For example, in venues like The Fund Raising School, Duronio and Tempel (1997) observe that practice in solicitation through role-playing the actual process of soliciting donations has helped fundraisers overcome their negativism about asking for money on personal appointments. Although the authors conclude, that "fund raising may never become a 'true profession'" they concur that it "might adopt professional standards" (Duronio and Tempel, 1997, p. xvi). This conclusion is reinforced by the consensus of 2600 individuals who responded to their survey question asking them to specify what they felt was most important for improving the field. Overwhelmingly, 1,186 (46 percent) identified education for fund raising as foremost.

Marion (1997), writing for one of the few academic journals in the field (Indiana University's *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*), predicts that to fill the need for more and better education in fund raising, "colleges and universities will play an important role in formalizing, validating, and disciplining the education of the professional." She concludes with a prediction that "if the number of academic programs increases, and if curricula focus more directly on philanthropy and fundraising, graduates of these degree and certificate programs will form the new leadership and will become the highly sought-after and well-compensated professionals" (p. 78).

Part of the education Marion calls for should, no doubt, be in philosophical and theoretical issues important to philanthropy, as Carbone notes—education as much as training. However two competing schools of thought seem at odds, holding differing values about what constitutes worthy sources of knowledge. Payton, Rosso and Tempel (1991) are rather condescending and dismissive in tone when discussing practitioners:

> Writing about fund raising by practitioners is about practice, but it usually gives answers only to a narrow list of questions; it avoids awkward and complicated questions. Perhaps that is why there is not yet a serious book on the ethics of fund raising—no book about the ethics of competence, the ethics of relationships, and certainly not about the ethics of rhetoric.
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> Fund raising is usually thought of as a *business;* fund raisers borrow most of their practices, language, and even their values from the marketplace. The philosophy of fund raising is often a crude form of pragmatism ("vulgar pragmatism," one might say)—opportunistic and manipulative. If it works, it's good (or good enough) . . . . Fund raisers typically borrow whatever seems useful from professional schools—principally from schools of law, business, and public administration, but also from communication or journalism and occasionally schools of social work and education—schools which are themselves notorious borrowers from the more basic disciplines of the humanities and the social sciences. As a consequence, fund raising in particular, and philanthropy in general, skate on thinner intellectual ice that is prudent. *Our first*

> *recommendation is that fund raising be studied from the perspective of the liberal arts* (p. 276).

Academic Myopia—Closing the Door to Practitioners and Other Disciplines

Unfortunately Payton, Rosso and Tempel's narrow view of what constitutes legitimate knowledge, reflecting a Positivist view of scholarship (Hunt, 1991), limits the valuable contributions to integrate the experience and wisdom of fundraising practitioners and insult other scholarly traditions, all justified hyperbole for emphasis, nonetheless ironic for one complaining of another's vulgarity by being vulgar themselves. At best their comments are uncivil. Their cynicism and criticism is reminiscent of first century Gnostics—who claimed superior knowledge in mystical matters and subscribed to a dualist worldview of a universe in which the spiritual and material realms were fundamentally divided (Chadwick, 1967). In practice, their views threaten to insulate philanthropy from practitioner-originated knowledge as fourth century ascetic Symeon the Stylite insulated himself from the world by living 56 years atop a column on a platform measuring about 42 inches in circumference. St. Symeon sought "to realize in the flesh the existence of the heavenly hosts, by . . . [lifting] himself above the concerns of earth and overpowering the downward tendency of man's nature" (Davis, 1912, p. 348). Fundraising is a field comprised of fundraisers who themselves do not want to ask for funds, whose body of knowledge and theory is being led by researchers whose agendas are about everything but the processes their profession is about at the most fundamental level—raising funds.

The hyperbole of these examples aside, the myopic views of Payton, Rosso and Tempel (1991) amounts to censorship and arrogance as they presume to judge whose knowledge is a worthy addition to the fields body of knowledge and theory. Fundraising can ill afford to discourage the contributions of practitioners, many of whom care and think deeply about their work. The authors encourage the contributions of social psychologists, psychology, anthropology, sociology and history, and they give particular praise to historians whom they laud for being “the most generous contributor of all the disciplines to philanthropic studies” (1991, p. 277). However, it is noteworthy that the historians whom they laud did not presume to censor the record of fund raising across the millennia and in American history (Morison, 1936a, 1936b; Curti and Nash, 1965; Rudolph, 1962, 1977; Addams, 1964; Rothman, 1971; Rudolph, 1972, 1977; Hands, 1968; Bremmer, 1980, 1982). For example, Morison’s (1936a) account of the fundraising techniques employed by John Eliot, Hugh Peter, Thomas Weld and William Hibbens reveal task-orientations in their quests for funds—techniques striking for their similarities to current fundraising practices. Historical records of Benjamin Franklin’s philanthropic endeavors reveal an entrepreneurial fundraiser in a class that had no other members. He is shown by historians to be a consummate pragmatist at pressing his friends to support causes for the betterment of Philadelphia, yet as one consumed by a vision that his efforts would make a difference, as his allusions to the influences of Defoe and Mather (to undertake people-helping initiatives) affirm. Given Payton, Rosso and Tempel’s narrowly construed philanthropic world view, one wonders if Benjamin

Franklin would be welcomed, were he inclined to speak at a seminar on matching gifts or planned giving—both of which strategies he innovated in his time (Isaacson, 2003). If the records of history are deemed valuable to building a base of knowledge and theory in fundraising, and if those records are laden with learning gleaned from the examples of those long dead, then why would similar narratives about the work of contemporary practitioners be pejoratively dismissed as vulgar—the embodiment of techniques appropriated from the world of business, some other impoverished discipline forced to borrow their theoretical foundations, or worse yet from the unclean world of marketing or even sales? Granted, many fundraisers are focused on task to the exclusion of giving hallowed thought to why they do what they do. After all, they spend their days as servants and stewards responsible to account for their time to employers who pay them to work. However, these practitioners could be mentored by scholars—encouraged and empowered to think categorically as reflective parishioners (Schön 1987). Their experience can be tested and generalizations can be developed from the valuable experience of practitioners, then codified, and made transferable to subsequent generations of fundraisers.

Unfortunately, this has not happened as judged by the writer's own review of recent research and the literature reviews of others (Kelly, 1991, 1998; Layton, 1987; Lindahl & Conley, 2002; Preissler, 2002). Absent in these reviews are articles testing the communicative variables of the fundraising process. The few such studies that do exist, according to Kelly (1991), often cover old ground on donor motivation, which phenomenon is discussed below. There seems to be a momentum toward research on almost any topic other than those related to asking others directly for money. The writer believes this reflects the biases of academic leaders who set research agendas. Perhaps this zeal for other topics has unwittingly muted the voices of fundraising practitioners and scholars those who might otherwise research neighboring disciplines.

As it stands, the literature is virtually void of research on factors related to improving fundraising practice at the task level—the level of shaping and sending communication that causes others to give, despite (or perhaps because) Robert Carbone (1986) proposed, in 1985, three areas for further research in the field of philanthropy: "studies that deal with philanthropy and the philanthropic environment, studies about fundraisers and their professional activities, and studies concerned with the management of fundraising" (p. 26).

Using Carbone's classification to organize their summary of research in the ensuing 16 years, Lindahl and Conley (2002) report that "scholars have made significant strides in both empirical and theoretical research in the area of donor motivations" (p. 92). However, their review showed relatively little task-related research, and an inordinate amount of research into donor motivation that fails to break new ground and fails to add incremental knowledge to the field.

Of this trend, Kelly (1991) concludes that, "fundraising research is dominated by studies on donor attitudes and motivations that are flawed by redundancy, findings of marginal quality, and an absence of cumulative knowledge" (p.117). Obviously no fan of the motivational genre of research, Kelly says: “donor motivation continues to be a mystery—one that has captivated the attention of fund-raising scholars almost to the exclusion of other equally or even worthier, research problems and topics” (1991, p. 116). Kelly quotes F.E. Andrews (1953), who had been commissioned by the Russell Sage Foundation to research donor motivations. In a survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center in the early 1950s, Andrews’ concluded: “We can seldom know all the complex factors that move another person to action, and he himself, with every attempt at honesty, may be quite mistaken” (Kelly, 1991, p.116). Kelly complains that the endless attempts of graduate students to identify the unidentifiable motivational factors of donor giving only digs a rut and fails to increment theory in the field. She dismisses such research as formulaic research programs, perpetuated by advisors whose students cover old ground in the pedantic pursuit of degrees.

However, in defining the parameters of her own critical analysis, Kelly (1991) seems to contradict herself, and makes dubious generalizations that call into question the extent to which her research can generalized beyond higher education. Her introduction speaks of the immense influence of the nonprofit sector, noting that “fund-raising practitioners conduct prospect research to identify potential donors, plan special events to cultivate donors, solicit gifts by direct mail, phonathons and face-to-face meetings; and write and edit publications to report fund-raising results and recognize donors” (Kelly, 1991, p. 2). Then she remarks that the work of these individuals relies “on fund-raising principles that have primarily been administrative in purpose” (p. 2). This assumption dismisses a priori, the validity of any on-the-job apprenticeship, seminars, and literature—the main sources of most fund-raising training. She says rather pejoratively: "Collectively, these principles form a dominant perspective of the fund-raising function that focuses on how to raise more money without questioning the rationale for the function or its effect on recipient organizations or society" (p.2). On one hand, Kelly seems to laud fundraisers for all they do, yet criticizes their admittedly formative educational structures as worthless, and fundraisers themselves of being unable to see beyond technique and make generalizations of their own.

Not only does Kelly fail to consider cognate studies, but even within the genre of research more narrowly construed as fundraising, she limits the literature reviewed to five books: Lord (1988), Panas (1984), Pray (1981), Broce (1986) and Seymour (1966). She justifies this limited selection based on the fact that they are "recommended by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) as training resources for educational fund-raising practitioners" (1991, p. 144). None of these resources, however, give serious coverage to direct mail fundraising, which uses rigorous mechanisms for planning and implementation characteristic of for profit companies, which conduct carefully executed and evaluated campaigns.

This oversight is consistent with two additional limitations she imposes on the scope of her study. Kelly limits her focus to higher education, which is legitimate, given the size of the field. She also limits her focus to the raising of larger gifts.

These restrictions are understandable, given the size of the nonprofit sector and practical limitations. Her justification is also understandable: "Although gifts are solicited from numerous sources, . . . charitable organizations are increasingly dependent on smaller and smaller percentage of those gifts" (p. 143). However, her focus on raising larger gifts through personal contact from a relatively small pool of prospects, while very sensible, limits the value of her conclusions to those organizations, which depend on direct mail fundraising.

In other fields, researchers are seeking to break through the borders of their disciplines, and in doing so offer valuable perspective for those who would set research agendas for philanthropy and fundraising. In the field of consumer behavior, for example, Harvard's Gerald Zaltman sets a tone for making progress in developing theory from unlikely places—in other disciplines:

> If a truism about scientific progress exists, it might be this: just as today's knowledge contradicts much of what recently preceded it, so will much of it be contradicted or significantly diminished by what we are yet to learn. Put differently, the half-life of knowledge gets shorter and shorter the more and more of it there is. This paradox should encourage us to make friends with ignorance. In fact, knowledge can only come from ignorance. We can then feel comfortable asking two questions of ignorance: What do we know that is in error? and What do we fail to know because of perceived irrelevance? Relevance is the presence of substantive associations between two seemingly separate bodies of research.

> Failing to see relevance when it is present is a form of ignorance inadvertently encouraged by traditional practice in science. (2000, p. 423)

For philanthropy and fundraising, relevant information exists, but researchers thus far show little inclination to dip into other genres for knowledge. For example, Layton's (1987) impressive literature review, *Philanthropy and Volunteerism: An Annotated Bibliography* virtually ignores fundraising as a subject of research. Of her review, Kelly (1991) notes that "this first comprehensive bibliography on philanthropy references 1,614 publications, of which only 9 books and 11 articles—or slightly more than 1%—deal with fund raising" (p.108). Of course, her bibliography covers nothing from journals of marketing, communication, management, psychology and other fields with knowledge relevant to the task of philanthropic fundraising.

Indeed, a larger part of the problem may be the prejudice against borrowing from other disciplines cited above and referenced throughout this paper. Zaltman, who admits to being enriched by the insights of disciplines outside his field of consumer research (e.g. neurobiology, psychiatry, sociology) remarks of the value of such cross-pollination:

> Broad intellectual peripheral vision is required for seeing the potential relevance of seemingly unconnected ideas. How this vision develops is unclear. The proclivity for it is a matter of personal taste reflecting habits of mind whose origins range from childhood experiences to professional training. It is also a matter of imagination, of analogic thinking skills, and of problem-framing styles. However, a careful comparison of narrow and broad intellectual peripheral vision

> would probably reveal that they involve the same cognitive processes. What enables us to connect other research in consumer behavior to our own is also involved in seeing relevance of research conducted much further away. Like walking, it is an everyday skill that can, with practice, prepare us for major hikes. (p. 424).

Like Zaltman, Schön (1987) argues for a democratization of knowledge—counting equally valid the spontaneous knowledge of reflection-in-action derived not from taxonomies of principles, but from the artistic interaction of the problem solvers with the problems needing solutions. He suggests an epistemological parallel with artists and engineers who create apart from strict procedures, and borrow from other domains to create new knowledge.

Illustrating his point, Schön (1979) relates creativity to generative metaphor, which he illustrates in a problem-solving case in which product-development researchers struggled to improve the performance of paintbrushes made with synthetic fibers, that failed to lay down even streams of paint. Then thinking metaphorically one of the team said, "You know, a paintbrush is a kind of pump!" The researcher observed that artificial fibers formed a hard angular, rather than gently curved profile when pressed against a surface being painted. As a result, paint did not flow smoothly. However, of the natural brushes he said, "paint is forced through the *spaces between bristles* onto the surface. The paint is made to flow through the 'channels' formed by the bristles." Finally, he generalized from these observations that "painters will sometimes *vibrate* a brush when applying it to a surface, so as to facilitate the flow of paint." (p. 257). By noticing how paint moved through the bristle's channels, actuated by the vibration of the brush, reflection on a practice "led them to a variety of inventions." Schön concluded, "Paintbrush-as-pump is an example of what I mean by a generative metaphor" (p. 357).

For fundraisers, it is suggested similar reflection on the root cause of effective practice can be a source for useful theory in fundraising practice, despite the views of detractors who dismiss the value of practitioner contributions. Moreover, useful insights can also be gleaned from other disciplines, which are even more directly applicable to the field of direct mail fundraising. That is, while Schön's example illustrates the power of metaphor to reveal relationships between what might appear to be unlike operations, in other disciplines similarities with direct mail fundraising are even more apparent, such as principles in fields like communication, marketing, consumer behavior, and others.

Other Fields and Academic Disciplines Offer Valuable Knowledge

At the risk of being accused of vulgarity in the eyes of critics of practitioner research and borrowing from other disciplines (cf. Kelly, 1991, 1998; Carbone, 1983, 1987; Payton, Rosso & Tempel, 1991) the writer suggests that valuable literature offers research into theory and practice in disciplines and fields outside philanthropy and fundraising—resources which can make the voice of philanthropy stronger and thus benefit the millions America's nonprofit organizations serve.

For example, no literature reviewed in the field mentions the legacy of Lester Wunderman (1996), acknowledged as the father of direct marketing. Facing the same conflicting mix of variables Kelly alluded to above (that it is hard to know among all the variables, what motivates someone to give) he developed and named a new niche in marketing that today is poised to make traditional advertising obsolete—direct response marketing. Having begun his career in mail order sales in the 1937 at age 19, he grew up in the early years of mail order sales. He pioneered ways to test variables in advertisements, controlling variables through A/B split tests of ads in which one variable (such as the headline) differed in each half of equally divided print run in a publication, newspaper, or direct mail letter. One such test was run in the New York Post for the Young People's Record Club in 1947. Half the papers on a given day carried a control headline and half ran a test: "The old headline was NOW A WONDERFUL NEW WAY TO BRING THE ENCHANTING WORLD OF MUSIC TO YOUR CHILD. The rest of the papers carried our ad with a new headline, HELP YOUR CHILD DISCOVER THE ENCHANTING WORLD OF MUSIC" (1996, p. 54). The new ad improved response 108 percent. No research studies like Wunderman's were reviewed in Lindahl's and Conley's (2002) review. It is striking, given the long-established history of sound research design in direct marketing that so few research projects on direct mail fundraising exist in the nonprofit sector.

Many research studies in profit marketing confront situations are parallel in construction to those confronted by fundraisers. Yet the work of scholars studying philanthropic fundraising generally seems to ignore these valuable cognate studies (perhaps representing the priorities and prejudices). For example, Strahilevitz and Myers

(1998) examined the growing trend of offering donors products, the sale of which benefits nonprofit organizations, which receive commission income. They concluded that the effectiveness of a product as a fundraising offer was related to the nature of what was being sold. They suggested that a warm glow affect often accompanied such transactions, a factor that mitigated acceptance of products that might otherwise not be attractive. In other words, a young child selling a candy bar will often get a sale, because the customer wants to help the child and the local school the child represents—whether it was a priority to buy a candy bar that day or not. Friestad and Wright (1994) developed a model for understanding how individuals cope with persuasion attempts when exposed to a marketing message, and how the messages of those marketing affect the attitudes of consumers toward those doing the marketing. In fundraising, where the relationship is considered so important (Burnett, 2002) such insight is helpful for developing sensitivity in message design. Moreover, this single article references 27 sources of persuasion theories and models, which have influenced consumer research. Similarly, Aaker, Stayman and Hagerty (1986) conducted three studies that examined the impact of emotional and psychological warmth evoked by television commercials. With many charities raising money through media for humanitarian causes, this subject is potentially beneficial to their efforts. Stout and Leckenby (1986) conceptualized as a multidimensional construct to determine how consumers respond emotionally to advertising. The research of 1,498 respondents who viewed 50 television commercials yielded a typology that addressed how people respond emotionally on three progressively involved levels (descriptively, emphatically and experientially). Zeitlin and Westwood (1986) use Plutchik's (1980) eight primary emotions to study the impact of the emotional impacts of advertising and Yi (1990) conducted an experiment in which a relationship was established between the degree of emotional and cognitive priming (setting the context in which the ad was presented) and the impact of the advertising message presented could activate attitudes conducive to the acceptance of the message of the advertisement. This may be relevant to the issues of context setting in developing fund appeals both in print and media. The author summarized, "by providing an understanding of context effects, this study expands both the scope of strategic and tactical approaches to persuasion" (Yi, 1990, p. 6). Also focused on the relationship between emotion in advertising and effectiveness is the research of Stout and Rust (1993). Beginning with the assumption that emotion in advertising helps capture and hold attention, enhance recall, and ultimately increase sales, the authors review the literature. They note a general lack of scholarly consensus among researchers on the role and impact of emotion on advertising, citing 49 sources on the subjects of how emotion or feelings affect information processing and creates positive feelings toward a brand.

Literature like that reviewed above represents a representative sampling of similar studies that grew in the advertising industry in America. Of this tradition, Maloney (1994) notes that as early "as 1901, Walter Dill Scott, who would later become president of Northwestern University, conducted a program of advertising research" (p. 15). Scott (1903, 1913) authored two of the earliest textbooks applying psychology to the problems of advertising. Alexander Biel, notes that "copy research in advertising started with the work of Daniel Starch, who was measuring the recognition of print ads as early as 1932" (1995, p. 1) Starch published three early texts (1914, 1923, 1930) and shortly thereafter George Gallup developed a measure of print recall (Biel, 1995). According to Lavidge (1999), Gallup began the first advertising research department in the U.S. at they Young and Rubicam agency. Most research into the effects of advertising is confounded by the multitude of variables. The beginning of the twenty-first century, according to Lavidge (1999), is characterized by niche markets in both the nonprofit and for profit sectors, and advertising is moving toward mass customization, where every printed, and eventually every mediated communication will call be presented with each recipient's name and other relevant information, giving it a one-of-a-kind look and feel.

Warnings On Reliance on Technique

Although the literature suggests many sources of theory and practice exist, Argyris and Schön (1974) argue that the knowledge base of a vocation must "permit detection of and response to its own inconsistencies, ineffectiveness, and ultimately to its degree of obsolescence" (p. 157). They observe that the established professions share in common, a pattern of development that usually culminates in the rise and dominance of technique, which trend they criticize as lacking the perspective-giving humanization needed to constrain the use of amoral technique toward moral ends.

For fundraisers, whose organizations are dedicated to the pursuit of philanthropic ends, the danger of being unduly constrained by an overly burdensome body of knowledge is not a problem now. Now the literature of the field is thin. On the other hand, one of the leading direct mail practitioners in the nonprofit sector, Jerry Huntsinger (1992) does offer a caveat. He laments the misplaced reliance, in our age of ubiquitous micro processing, on technology rather than human-interest-rich prose. Huntsinger warns that even in the nonprofit sector's philanthropically driven enterprises, technology can subtly inject into those organizations' cultures, values that if not a threat to their missions, can mute their voices.

To protect against the over-reliance on technique and technology Houle (1980) sketched 14 principles that can guide a vocation as it seeks to move to new levels of professionalism: 1) Clarity of objectives, tasks and mission (cf. Drucker's defining questions "What is our business and what should it be?" and his eight key result areas (1973, pp. 77, 100), 2.) Mastery of theoretical knowledge, 3), Capacity to solve problems, 4) Use of practical knowledge, 5) Self-enhancement, 6) formal training, 7) Credentialing, 8) Creation of a subculture, 9) legal reinforcement, 10) Public acceptance, 11) Ethical practice, 12) Penalties 13) Relations to other vocations, 14) Relations to users of services (pp. 35-73).

The Heritage of Philanthropy—The Friend of Man

Following Houle and Drucker, for philanthropic organizations to begin with mission and tasks means understanding its heritage. From an etymological perspective this heritage is apparent in two Greek roots, *φιλός* (filial love) and *ανθρωπός* (man), which combine to form the word philanthropy (*ή φιλανθρωπία*) and translates into

English as *the friend of mankind* (Gingrich, 1971). Philanthropic organizations help people. (To the extent that much philanthropy is concerned for the welfare of animals and other causes, perhaps the dominant word would be *helping*. However, to be consistent with the language, all charitable causes will be assumed when the reference is made to people-helping organizations.) From a historical perspective in America (to which this research is limited), in the1830s the nation's commitment to the principles of philanthropy were expressed in its zeal to found voluntary associations. This commitment ran so deep that it was a defining trait to Alexis de Tocqueville (1956, [1835]). Founding father Benjamin Franklin embodied this tendency, mobilizing community support for "a lending library, college, volunteer fire corps, insurance association" (Isaacson, 2003, p.2). Throughout its history from the example of the hospitality native Indians expressed to Pilgrim settlers (Bremmer, 1960) through the Civil War era (Bremmer, 1980) to the founding of Hull House and the evolution of the concept of social interdependence (Addams, 1970) the historical records (Rothman) are testimony to the charitable impulse of Americans to channeled their love for mankind into building people-helping enterprises.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, organizations like Rotary International continued the tradition of social service when, in 1905, "Paul P. Harris, a Chicago attorney, formed a group of three friends: a tailor, a coal dealer and a mining engineer. Harris' goal was to recapture the camaraderie he had witnessed in the rural Vermont community where he grew up. Originally a social club, by 1907 the Rotary Club of

Chicago had refocused its energies on reaching our to those less fortunate. Their initial project, constructing Chicago's first public restrooms, was the birth of the world's first service-club organization" (Wright, 2003, p. 13).

Similar commitment to philanthropy was apparent in the words of James A. Blaisdell, now etched in stone on the gateway of Pomona College: *They only are loyal to this college who departing bear their added riches in trust for mankind.* Blaisdell, like many who observed and helped shape America's spirit of giving, believed those blessed by higher learning carried a debt of reciprocity—that from those to whom much had been given, much was expected.

That expectation is now facilitated in the twenty-first century by leaders in philanthropy, through their work as articulate advocates, raising funds for worthy causes. In the context of this review, a distinction is made between *direct* fundraising, asking directly for financial support and *indirect* fundraising, generating funds indirectly in the form of marginal profit from the sale of goods and services like cookies and car washes. Indirect fundraising is often used, according to Ardman (1980), when a cause is not compelling enough to attract gifts on its own merit. Either method helps perpetuate the tradition of people caring for people that so inspired Tocqueville about the American spirit.

However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, that spirit is threatened, according to Robert Putnam (2000). The disturbing trend of America's loss of social capital, is summarized in his book's title, *Bowling Alone,* which also serves as an exemplar of the very problem he describes. Even though more people are bowling than ever before, Putnam notes that they are bowling not in leagues, but alone. He suggests this as a microcosm of what he sees in at large in American society—a decline in community, or as he puts it, social capital. However, there is an exception. Remaining among the country's one million-plus nonprofit organizations, are rich veins of social capital. People-helping nonprofit organizations continue to mobilize money and volunteers in service to others (Independent Sector, 2001).

Much of this social capital is invested in boards, which give leadership to these nonprofit organizations. However, getting board members to speak as the voice of philanthropy for the causes they help govern is not always easy. To address this problem, Kay Sprikel Grace (1998) works with board members of nonprofits to help shift the paradigm of fundraising from that of begging to recruiting investors. Her goal is to help board members to shed the field of fund raising of its "tin cup" (p.viii) image and replace it with an investment mentality. Her aptly titled *Beyond Fund Raising: New Strategies for Nonprofit Innovation and Investment*, like the research of Duronio and Tempel (1997) and Seiler (1997), draws attention to the dissonance caused by the very term fundraising, for those who make their living raising funds. Duronio and Tempel (1997) found that many are squeamish, as if it is somehow unseemly to ask others for money. Grace found that board members were embarrassed to raise money, fearing the image of holding a tin cup like a beggar seeking alms.

Therefore, Grace's book and the workshop on which it is based ("Putting Away the Tin Cup"), seeks to shift the fundraising paradigm from that of donor-contributor to donor-investor, in an attempt to de-stigmatize fundraising and build the esteem of those who ask for money by putting their work "into the larger context of development and philanthropy." She notes that after one of her workshops an attendee wrote: "I now feel proud to ask for money for our college" (Grace, 1998, p. x).

However, while the metaphor of donor-investor may reposition fundraising in the minds of those embarrassed to ask for money, it may do so at a cost. That cost may be the loss of the inherent power of an appeal to help those in need out of love for mankind (*ή φιλανθρωπία*). Explained in terms of Black's (1962) conception of metaphor, the idea of investing in community becomes a new *focus*, and generates a new meaning for philanthropy, deriving that meaning by its *framing* in terms of the familiar notion of donating. Schön (1979) describes this as generative metaphor—seeing things "in new ways. Conceiving of generative metaphor as a special case—a special case of SEEING-AS by which we gain new perspectives on the world" (p 255).

The notion of investing to benefit the community at large, which may not be as powerful a motivation as feeding a hungry man, might frame donation as investment with a logical series of reasons that make sense, but which ultimately not get read for lack of emotional connection with readers. For example, the following proposition makes sense:

Problem: Homeless families

Solutions: Emergency shelter

Temporary work

Skill assessment

Job retraining

Interview training

Job placement

End Results: Families escape poverty

Employers gain productive employees

Aesthetic atmosphere of community improves

Communities prosper as the tax rolls grow and social services needs ebb

In Sum: An investment has been made in the community and lives have been helped.

While these logical statements are probably true for the scenario hypothesized, and while board members would probably feel more comfortable describing a homeless outreach in terms of the investment it makes in the community, *the words as positioned here lack passion*, even if the outline were fleshed out in prose. The word “invest” is devoid of the drama and regenerative power implicit in the word “rescue,” a contrasting notion that is often part of the names of homeless outreaches operated by faith-based charities—e.g. The Los Angeles Rescue Mission. While the notion of investing *makes sense*, the idea of rescuing the lost *inspires passion*.

The sources discussed in this research support many of the points Grace makes—the value of building relationships with donors rather than jumping from one gimmicky fundraising technique to another, the need to build those relationships on shared values, and the imperative of planning and systems necessary for long-term success. However, the donor-investor image lacks the power implicit in metaphors like donor-rescuer, donor-builder, donor-healer, or donor-educator. Grace's donor-investor paradigm, like much recent literature on fundraising, takes a sound step toward developing a theory of fundraising (Bhatia, 1998; Ritzenbein, 1998; Carbone, 1997; Dean, 1995; Duronio and Tempel, 1997; Grace, 1997; Kelly, 1991, 1998; Marion, 1997; McCagg, 1997). Like Grace, many efforts most fall short on integrating into their models, an understanding of how to communicate with passion.

Several contributions relevant to the subject of direct mail fundraising appear in the winter 1998 edition of The Indiana University Center on Philanthropy's journal series, *New Directions for Philanthropy*. Titled *Understanding and Improving the Language of Fundraising*, this edition is one of a kind, devoted to philanthropic language, including direct mail fundraising. In his article, *Content Analysis of Fundraising Letters,* Ritzenbein (1998) says that "most research into fundraising, at least in higher education, is of . . . [a] highly personal nature and does not improve our knowledge to the level that more formal research would" (p. 24). Citing Cone (1987), Reitzenbein identifies several authors (Flannagan, 1993; Clark, 1993; Cover, 1980; Schneiter, 1985) as evidence that research that "tends to be anecdotal, based largely on someone's experience as a fundraiser and his or her best sense of what 'works' and does not work (pp.23-24). Perhaps made to support the valid observation that the field of fundraising lacks enough sound research, Ritzenbein's views seem consistent with Schön's (1983) description of

Technical Rationality, which he characterizes as knowledge that is specialized, has well defined boundaries, is based on the scientific method, and strives for standardization. Fundraising desperately needs the knowledge base a produced by a paradigm of Technical Rationality, which Schön defines as the dominant epistemology of practice in higher education. Hunt (1991) has documented the etymology of a sizable back and forth debate in the field of consumer behavior about the appropriate philosophical and methodological foundations for consumer research. In setting the stage for his contribution to the debate, Hunt notes that "In the 1920s and 1930s, a group of German philosophers in Vienna (hence, the Vienna circle) developed a philosophy—later given the label 'logical positivism'—that relied heavily on Machian neopositivism, Humean skepticism, Wittgenstein's *Tractus-Logico Philosophicus*, and Russel's *Principa Matematica*" (p.1).

Ortnoy (1979) describes the point at which logical positivism intersects with those who would use language in philanthropy to raise funds—their "faith in literal language as the only adequate and appropriate tool for objective characterization of reality" (p. 1) Schön describes positivism's more general intersection with the professions, whose "activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique" (1983, p. 21). However, he observes, "With this emphasis on problem solving, we ignore problem *setting*" (Schön, 1983, p. 40). Ritzenbein's dismissive view of practitioners shows the influence of Positivism in which "reality could, and should, be literally describable" (Ortony, 1979, p. xi) Describing the prejudice of this view, Ortony continues, "Other uses of language were meaningless for they violated this empiricist criterion of meaning" (1979, p. xi). Schön (1983) adds, "for according to the Positivist epistemology of practice, craft and artistry . . . [have] no place in rigorous practical knowledge" (p. 34). Ritzenbein's comments seem to signify a Positivist bias against practitioner experience. However, just as frenetic MASH units in times of battle have innovated medical techniques that eventually gained widespread acceptance, so too fund raisers—who work in the real world of missed deadlines, conflicting goals, and flawed execution—can offer significant knowledge for improving practice in the field.

Moreover, Ritzenbein failed to list any of the most frequently cited authors, known for their expertise in direct mail copywriting. Missing from his list were leading practitioners in general direct response marketing, advertising, as well as those focused exclusively on the nonprofit community (Bly, 1988, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1999a, 1999b, 2002, 2003a, 2003b; Bly and Blake, 1992a, 1992b; Bly, Roberts and Feit, 2001; Caples, 1936, 1938, 1957, 1974, 1983; Dichter, 1947a, 1947b, 1948, 1949, 1964, 1971, 1979, 1986; Frank, 1990; Geller, 1998, 2002; Hatch, 1993, 2003; Hatch and Jackson, 1997; Hopkins, 1986; Huntsinger, 1977, 1989a, 1989b, 1992; Johnston, 2000; Joyaux, 2001; Jutkins; Kuniholm, 1989, 1985; Lautman, 1984, 2001; Lewis, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990; 1991, 1992, 1994; Lewis and Nelson 1996a, 1996b; Ogilvy, 1963, 1983; Stone, 1979, 1997, 2001; Ries, 1981; Sackheim, 1970, 1995a, 1995b; Stein, 1997; Thomas, 2002; Vögele, 1992; Warwick, 1990, 1992, 1993, 2001, 2003; and Wunderman, 1997).

In addition, Ritzenbein's notes that "there is so little previous research and no real basis for making theoretical predictions about how fundraisers deal with rhetorical issues." However, an extensive literature does exist, which shows results of A/B split tests in direct response marketing and fundraising (Caples, 1974; Ogilvy, 1963, 1983; Warwick, 1992, 2003). These studies were specifically designed to compare copy approaches which evenly distributed varied headline copy among even and odd numbered records in files or advertisements. Smith and Berger (1996) used a factorial experimental design to analyze responses among 18,144 individuals who received direct mail fund appeals to determine how they decided whether to give and what amount to contribute. Their results discovered correlations between gift amounts asked and those received as well as correlations between the written content of letters and the size of gifts contributed. Studies provide feedback to copy tests and the manipulation of other variables such as handwritten mail, which indicate statistical significance (cf.. Printz and Maltby, 1997; Lewis, 2002; Warwick, 2003). Carefully controlled procedures not only report the descriptive statistics (total responses, response percentages, average amounts contributed or sales volumes) but also report inferential statistical analysis in split A/B tests reporting results of paired t tests on ANOVAs (Dickerson, 1992). The assumption that most of the knowledge is anecdotal is simply not true, though it may appear so at first glance. For example Caples (1974) and Wunderman (1997) were both pioneers in the direct response field, and meticulously measured response rates and factors correlated with increased results. Many of their tests involved small changes in the written messages of fund appeal letters. Decades of research, primarily the results of direct mail campaigns conducted by advertising agencies—both for commercial direct marketing and fundraising—remains inaccessible. It is not that research does not exist in the area of direct mail communication; it is jut not widely accessible.

If communication is the key to persuading people to donate to a nonprofit cause, then the greater need is not helping solicitors feel better about asking (as Grace's paradigm shift attempts) but helping those asked feel better about giving. The more important task is to equip solicitors to inspire passions—anger, hope, joy, dreams—the messy human stuff that is essential to what Drucker (1989) describes the essential product of a nonprofit enterprise—changing lives. Not that giving courage to solicitors is not critical, since an inhibited solicitor won't solicit. So while research and theoretical structures like those proposed by Grace and others make a valuable contribution to a field in need of order and theory, many ignore a central theory—that to be motivated to give, people need fundraisers to put human faces on their causes, faces that will make them pound their fist at injustice, cry for a family who has lost everything in a fire, ache for a child whose father was killed in battle. These are the human factors of shattered dreams, wasted lives and desperate straights that have historically motivated Americans, as de Tocqueville observed, create people-helping associations.

Sources of Theory and Best Practices in Direct Mail Fund Raising are Minimal

The sheer volume of income that is raised within the nonprofit sector through the medium of direct mail is, in itself, ample justification for research on the subject, since so much depends on the performance of so few. Despite these high stakes, Marion (1997) notes that the proliferation of academic institutions offering nonprofit management programs have utterly failed to develop programs to formalize fundraising training: "The Institute for Nonprofit Organization Management . . . produced a 478-page publication . . . of twenty-five papers that contained only passing reference to the education of the fundraising professional. Not one of the papers was directed to this opportunity and responsibility" (pp. 77-78).

This omission is problematic in light of Carbone's (1987) observation that if fundraising is to be considered a profession, it must be characterized by "a body of knowledge and skills based on widely recognized theoretical concepts initially imparted to future members in specialized schools or programs" (p. 88). Research on the subject of direct mail fund raising is overdue and stands to make a valuable contribution to the field of fund raising, as it seeks to become a true profession (Duronio & Tempel, 1997, Marion, 1997; Dean, 1995, Shaw & Taylor, 1995, Kelly, 1991, 1998). Key to this development will be the identification of sources of theory and practice in the literature of fund raising itself and other disciplines.

Implications for Future Research

As noted above, direct mail fundraising is a major source of contributions for grass roots nonprofit organizations, which receive modest gifts of less than $50. Foundation grants, characterized by much larger individual gifts, represented only 11.2 percent of total charitable giving, and the balance of giving came from bequests and other sources (AFP, 2003). So for most Americans, the voices of needy men, women and children who were helped by their gifts were communicated by what they read in direct mail fund appeals. Because this communication channel represented the primary connection between donors and the charities they supported, it is important to understand the variables and constraints affecting then medium of direct mail.

Because direct mail fund raising is central to the survival and progress of America's nonprofit sector, future research must focus on variables associated with effective copywriting, package design, and offer development, using split tests that measure results with paired “t” tests of dollar frequencies produced by appeals. In addition, the development of a corpus of literature, and more significantly, tracks for adding relevant literature is needed so new practitioners may be equipped by the knowledge of those who came before them. According to Duronio and Tempel (1997) 74 percent who enter the field learn their profession not through formal training, but on the job. Forty-six percent of 2,600 responses to their survey question asking how the field of fundraising could be improved identified education, four times the second issue—leadership from fundraising managers.

It follows, therefore, that training in the field's dominant medium, direct mail, is particularly important. This is underscored by the consensus of practitioners (Warrick, 1997; Squires, 1996; Nash, 2000) who suggest that often 9 of 10 pieces of mail sent to donor lists will essentially fail to produce a response. Moreover, the failure rate climbs to 99 percent or higher for acquisition mailings sent to non-donors in attempt to raise an initial gift. Warrick concludes, "Most of the time, almost no one will respond to your appeal for funds by mail. The only reason direct mail fundraising works is that someone who does send you a first gift is very likely to send another when asked. Direct mail fundraising is built on slim margins" (1990, p.15).

Identifying the Gaps in Knowledge

Given the importance, complexity and risk inherent to direct mail fundraising, as well as the desire of those in the field to become more professional in their work, it would seem that formal organization design would this function. The organization design model of Kotter, Schlessinger and Sathe described above (1986) is useful to this end by calling for a three-way fit among tasks, personnel, and organization design variables. The selection and development elements of their organizational design structure are consistent with the natural progression an occupation must make the transition from a field of endeavor to a profession. Those who make this transition, according to Sullivan (1995), seek to use their knowledge and skills to not only better their position, but to contribute to the greater good of society. Sullivan further identifies four features that distinguish an occupation as a profession: codified knowledge, formal training in that knowledge, autonomy, and commitment to serving others. Duronio and Tempel (1997) similarly noted these factors and identified gaps in the knowledge of many fundraisers that mitigate against its ranking as a true profession.

However, Duronio and Tempel (1997) did not ask questions that would determine the specific skill level in direct mail fundraising of those participating in their research. However, they suggested several recommendations for further research into the nature of fundraising as a field of endeavor, including research on how fundraisers spend their time, standards of practice, and levels of performance.

Moreover, the current subject of direct mail fundraising suggests several questions for such research. Concerning individuals: What training in the tasks of direct mail fundraising, has the average person responsible for this area had? How do they organize the tasks of direct mail? What ethical, philosophical, and spiritual underpinnings guide their practice? What does their work output look like? What results have they achieved (response rates, Return on Investment, etc.)? How have they assimilated feedback from their performance data? What do we know about the state of the art of direct mail fund raising? Concerning the field as a whole: What theoretical tools are available for describing and analyzing this genre of professional communication? What is the volume and type of research available on the subject of direct mail fund raising? What knowledge, in cognate communication fields, is useful for understanding this field?

The research of McCabe and Campbell (1996), also underwritten by a Lilly Endowment grant, fills in some of the gaps in Duronio and Tempel study. McCabe and Campbell surveyed leaders responsible for fundraising in religious nonprofit organizations. They discovered that "75 percent of the organizations responding to the survey said they depended mainly on trial and error to learn about fundraising." When asked what communication methods their organization used most frequently to raise funds, 77 percent said they used newsletters (median = 4/year) and 75 percent said they used direct mail letters (median = 4/year). Twenty percent characterized their fundraising skills as strong, 40 said their skills were average and 20 percent described themselves as having weak skills. Numerous sources of knowledge and models of practice do exist, however, which could ameliorate this lack of knowledge and confidence.

Dissertation Topic—The Voice of Philanthropy: Speaking Narratives of Need

It is strange that the field of philanthropy, whose very purpose is expressed in its name (the friend of man), has codified so little practical and theoretical knowledge on the subject of direct mail, which is the primary voice of philanthropy for many nonprofit organizations. Perhaps scholars in the field view the subject, and those who are its practitioners, as “poor relations” with whom they would prefer not to be seen in public.

However, since direct mail fundraising is a central part of American philanthropy, it is important that leaders in the nonprofit sector become educated in theoretical issues and trained in skills that represent best thinking and best practices. It is, therefore, proposed that dissertation review the sources both in practitioner-based literature and that of other academic disciplines, which can increment the body of knowledge in this area. A proposed title would be: *the voice of philanthropy: relevant theory and practice related to the task of direct mail fundraising.*

As a preliminary step, a qualifying paper is proposed which would review a corpus of direct mail fundraising letters, drawing upon research tools in genre analysis (Bhatia’ 1993, 1998) narrative analysis (Leiblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998; Fisher, 1987) and discourse analysis (Bell, 1997; Gee, 1999) to determine the usage narratives to communicate to audiences through direct mail fund appeals, noting the characteristics of the letters examined which might indicate definite structures among the letters examined. Methodology developed and found useful in this preliminary study would then be extended to additional sources in preparing research for the dissertation.

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