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INTERACTION OF MI AND RECOGNITION ON FUNDRAISING

THE INTERACTION OF MORAL IDENTITY AND RECOGNITION ON FUNDRAISING
BEHAVIOR

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy in Psychology at Virginia Commonwealth University.

By

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Richmond, VA
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Abstract

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By: C. Otis Fulton, M.S.

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Virginia Commonwealth University, 2022.

Major Director: Dr. Jeffrey D. Green, Professor, Department of Psychology

The research examined the role of moral identity in motivating prosocial behavior, specifically volunteer fundraising measured in dollars via Facebook fundraisers for the Spina Bifida Association, a national nonprofit organization. I predicted a three-way interaction of moral identity symbolization, internalization, and recognition (i.e., public acknowledgement of the gift by the organization) to predict prosocial behavior. When moral identity internalization is low, I hypothesized that high moral identity symbolization will motivate recognized prosocial behavior due to the opportunity to have one's prosocial behavior in a public venue. In contrast, when moral identity internalization is high, prosocial behavior would be motivated regardless of the level of symbolization and recognition. The main effect of recognition on fundraising was not significant, nor were the predicted interactions regarding identity symbolization, internalization, and recognition. Notably, empathy was significantly and positively associated with monies raised.

Introduction

We can be heroes, just for one day.
— David Bowie, *Heroes*

As with all behaviors, prosocial behaviors are influenced by dispositional and situational factors to a greater or lesser degree. A review of the literature examining predictors of prosocial behavior shows that they fall into the two broad categories that social and personality theorists have emphasized for decades: individual-difference variables like dispositions, and contextual variables, such as incentives and group norms. In general, research suggests that dispositional variables are relatively weak predictors of prosocial behavior. However, Grant and Mayer (2009) showed that dispositional prosocial and impression management motives reliably predict prosocial behavior. Meanwhile, other studies have shown that prosocial behavior can be predicted by individual differences like empathy (Joireman, Kamdar, Daniels, & Duell, 2006), agreeableness, and conscientiousness (Ilies, Scott, & Judge, 2006), and other-orientation (Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). Still, the link between dispositional variables and prosocial behavior is not consistent across studies (Organ & Ryan, 1995), suggesting that contextual factors likely moderate their relationship.

Because prosocial behaviors are essential to the functioning and sustainability of nonprofit organizations, understanding what motivates prosocial behaviors in an organizational context is an important topic of inquiry. Research has shown that dispositional prosocial motives reliably predict prosocial behaviors towards charitable organizations (Grant & Mayer, 2009). For example, impression management motives strengthen associations between prosocial motives and group citizenship by encouraging individuals to behave in ways that result in positive outcomes for the organization, and the opportunity to be seen by others behaving in a prosocial

manner. Other studies have shown that prosocial behaviors towards charitable organizations are predicted by individual differences like empathy, agreeableness, conscientiousness and other-orientation (Ilies et al., 2006; Joireman et al., 2006; Meglino & Korsgaard, 2004). However, with regards to nonprofit organizations, the link between dispositional variables and prosocial behavior is not consistent, suggesting that many contextual factors moderate the relationship (Organ & Ryan, 1995).

A growing body of research has explored the role that an individual's "moral self" plays in a range of prosocial behaviors, including charitable giving (Boegershausen, Aquino, & Reed, 2015). The moral self refers to the degree to which an individual's moral self-schema is paramount to their self-definition. Researchers refer to an individual's *moral identity* to describe the extent that the moral self-schema is central to an individual's self-definition (Aquino & Reed, 2002). This is also sometimes referred to as one's "moral identity centrality." This research was inspired by work that has examined the role that recognition of one's prosocial behavior, specifically making a charitable donation, plays in donation behavior (Winterich, Mittal, & Aquino, 2013). This research differs from, and expands upon, previous research in two significant ways. First, previous research has measured donation behavior in artificial manners. For example, in one study, participants were entered into a lottery to win a \$50 amazon.com gift card, and asked if they would like to donate part, or all of a \$50 amazon.com gift card to a nonprofit organization if they won the card. Second, previous studies have used donors as subjects of the research. This research looked at the prosocial behavior of *volunteer fundraisers* (as opposed to donors) who were asked to do real fundraising for an actual nonprofit organization using the Facebook fundraiser platform. Thus, this study not only analyzed individuals' fundraising behaviors in extant, not artificial, fundraising scenarios, but also

associated the effects of aspects of moral identity, recognition, and their interaction on these behaviors. These so-called “peer-to-peer” fundraisers (soliciting donations from friends) are often called the “front door” of a nonprofit, (VanHuss & Fulton, 2017) because they result in both enhanced revenue (compared to individual donors) but also provides the nonprofit with the names and contact information of the donors to the fundraiser, most of whom are new to the organization.

Literature Review

Motivations for Volunteerism

This research focused on volunteer fundraisers; psychologists who study why people initially volunteer have focused on how the personality, needs of potential volunteers, and the social situations they confront affect volunteering. For example, Davis et al. (1999) found an association between dispositional empathy and willingness to engage in certain kinds of volunteer activities. Penner and others (Mazzoni & Nelson, 1998; Penner & Finkelstein, 1998; Penner, Midili, & Kegelmeyer, 1997) demonstrated that a cluster of personality dispositions (which include empathy) plays a significant role in the decision to volunteer. How do individual differences in background and personality actually translate into volunteering? Omoto and Snyder (Omoto & Snyder, 1995) approached the question of how different people make the decision to volunteer from a novel perspective. They argued that people decide to volunteer because volunteering will serve some purpose or meet some need for them. Their functional analysis of volunteering is based on the principle that much of human behavior is motivated by goals and needs. Therefore, understanding *why* a person engages in a particular activity requires identifying the function the activity serves or the need that was satisfied for that person. The same behavior can serve different functions for different individuals or for the same individual at

different times. Snyder explored people's motives for volunteering and developed an instrument that assesses different volunteer motives. Clary et al. (1999) identified six motives for volunteering: Values, to express values related to altruistic and humanitarian concerns for others; Understanding, to acquire new learning experiences and/or use skills that otherwise are unused; Social, to strengthen social relationships or engage in behaviors favored by important others; Career, to gain career-related benefits; Protective, to reduce negative feelings about oneself or address personal problems; and Enhancement, to grow and develop psychologically. Initiation of volunteering depends on whether the person believes the act will meet one or more of these needs and serve the intended functions. According to the theory, whether volunteer activity is sustained depends on the extent to which the volunteering experience in fact satisfies the relevant motive(s) for the individual. Many researchers find that volunteers say that they are most motivated by value-based, other-oriented, or prosocial motives (Reed & Selbee, 2001). For example, Penner and Finkelstein (1997) conducted a longitudinal study of motives of volunteers at an AIDS service organization. They measured male volunteers' motives for volunteering at the beginning of the study and found that the Values motive correlated most highly with the extent of volunteer activity and with time spent with HIV-positive clients 10 months later. Similarly, Clary & Orenstein (1991) also found that this altruistic or Value motivation was related to the amount of help given by crisis-counseling volunteers. However, Snyder and others have persuasively argued that sustained volunteering can also be motivated by other less selfless motives, such as advancing one's career or developing social relationships (Clary & Mark, 1999). Hart and his associates (2004) proposed a model that attempts to integrate both the sociological and psychological approaches to volunteering. Using data from a national survey, they presented evidence that both personality factors and social structures (e.g., family, culture) play important

roles in the incidence of volunteering, but the relationship is not a direct one. Rather, these factors affect things such as a person's attitudes, identity, commitment to ideals, and the richness of the person's social networks. It is these latter factors that directly lead to volunteering. Similarly, Wilson and Musick (1997) developed a model in which both volunteering and informal helping are predicted from demographic variables, "human capital" (education, income, functional health), "social capital" (number of children, social interaction patterns), and "cultural capital" (religiosity and valuing helping). Omoto and Snyder (2002) also included "considerations of community" in their modeling of volunteering. They argued that being part of a community and identifying with it both can affect whether and for how long individuals choose to volunteer.

Research has demonstrated that multiple personal, social, and organizational factors affect people's initial decision to volunteer. The factors that determine the initial decision to volunteer resemble those involved in spontaneous helping. Empathy, other-oriented and self-oriented motivations, and the recognized needs of others all contribute to the initial decision to volunteer. Volunteering is a long-term activity, and longitudinal studies of volunteers find that once people decide to volunteer, a large percentage of them remain volunteers for several years (Penner, Dovidio, Piliavin, & Schroeder, 2005). This research proceeded under a similar organizing principle – examining the effects of various moral identity characteristics on a prosocial behavior – but the behavior in question was individuals' creation of fundraising platforms.

Theory of the Moral Self

Moral psychology is an area of study in both psychology and philosophy. Traditionally, "moral psychology" is a term that referred to the study of moral development (Graham et al.,

2011). The term has come to include a number of issues that include ethics, psychology and the philosophy of mind (Russell & Doris, 2008). Plato and Aristotle's philosophical works described the earliest study of moral psychology that focused on moral education (Carr, 2014). Psychology and philosophy first diverged regarding moral judgment with the empirical work of F. C. Sharp in the late nineteenth century and coincided with the more general development of psychology separate from philosophy (Chapman, 1898). Since that time, both philosophers and psychologists attempted to empirically gauge an individual's moral sense, particularly focusing on differentiating children from adults (Hartshorne & May, 1930). These early efforts proved unsuccessful because they attempted to measure morality as an individual trait instead of an individual's psychological representation of morality (Wendorf, 2001).

Contemporary moral self research is based on the premise that morality is a characteristic of a person and not simply a result of abstract moral reasoning (Blasi, 1999). Morality is understood to be at the heart of what it means to be a person (Darcia & Daniel, 2004). The moral self is concerned with the morality of selfhood (the qualities by virtue of which a person is oneself) that implicates both who a person is (a person's sense of self and identity based on deeply felt concerns, commitments, and attachments) (Harter, 1999) and how a person acts (a person's characteristic ways of thinking, feeling, and regulating behavior). These ideas follow an ontological tradition in moral philosophy and psychology, which posit that the self involves both a private dimension rooted in the core of one's being, and a public dimension manifested in an orientation to be true to oneself in action (Erikson, 1964; James, 2011). Thus, moral self research has focused on explaining (i) how morality is internalized into a person's sense of self, the "having" side of the moral self, and (ii) how that internalized morality influences cognitive and

affective self-regulatory capacities that govern decisions and behavior, the “doing” side of the moral self.

The “having” side of the moral self is cognitively and socially constructed (Harter, 1999). Social construction occurs through roles, practices, and interpersonal interactions within the social-moral context in which a person is embedded, such as family, community, or organization (Hunter, 2000). Cognitive construction occurs through individuals’ beliefs about their self (i.e., self-concepts and identities) based on social interactions that bring meaning to their experiences (Harter, 1999). When these socially and cognitively constructed beliefs are based on morality, a person is understood as “having” a moral self.

The “doing” side underscores the executive agency of the self to take responsibility, make decisions, initiate actions, and exert control over itself and the environment (Baumeister, 1998). Without this executive function, the moral self would be a “mere helpless spectator of events, of minimal use or importance” (Baumeister, 1998). Cognitive and affective self-regulatory capacities are essential to agency, governing nearly all the self’s activities, especially those concerning morality (Baumeister, Heatherton, & Tice, 1993). As such, the “doing” side of the moral self has been described as a self-regulatory mechanism that motivates moral action (Aquino & Reed, 2002). In sum, this “having” and “doing” conceptualization of the moral self implies that the moral self is not a standalone construct or variable but is a complex mix of moral constructs and processes, wherein self-defining moral beliefs, orientations, and dispositions implicate cognitive and affective self-regulatory capacities essential to moral action. This holistic understanding reflects an emerging trend in both moral psychology (Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004) and self psychology more generally (Leary & Tangney, 2012).

This study sought to correlate both such sides of the moral self – the “having” component, internalizing morality into the sense of self via the presented ability to help raise funds for a medical condition’s research and support, as well as the “doing” component, the executive decision-making performed to engage in such prosocial fundraising behavior, or not. Furthermore, this work examined how an external situational effect, recognition, interacts with these components of the self.

Connecting Moral Theory with Moral Action

The question of why people act morally has been a subject of inquiry in psychology for more than fifty years. Kohlberg’s stage theory of moral development provided a construct for examining how moral reasoning influenced individuals’ behavior in hypothetical situations (Kohlberg, 1984). Kohlberg’s model is based (in part) on Piaget’s theory of cognitive development. Kohlberg assumed that moral principles would motivate individuals to behave morally when understood. His model describes six stages of development of moral reasoning, beginning with a focus on avoiding punishment by authorities (Stage 1) and ending with an acceptance of a universal principle of justice and rights (Stage 6). The motivation for moral action comes from moral understanding; the model largely discounted other facets of morality, such as emotion.

Martin Hoffman outlined a theory focused on the role of moral emotion in morality (Hoffman, 1970, 2001). In contrast to cognitive approaches, in Hoffman’s model, moral emotion was seen to drive moral motivation. Specifically, “... abstract moral principles, learned in ‘cool’ didactic contexts (lectures, sermons), lack motive force. Empathy’s contribution to moral principles is to transform them into prosocial hot cognitions – cognitive representations charged with empathic affect, thus giving them motive force” (Hoffman, 2001, p. 239). Emotion provides

the motivating ‘spark’ that leads to action. Moral understanding is seen as focusing and directing moral emotion. Some other scholars also emphasize the role of emotion, although not to the extent than does Hoffman, for example, Eisenberg (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987).

While Kohlberg’s theory was foundational, it was found to be limited because moral reasoning alone is not a strong predictor of moral behavior (Blasi, 1980). Empirically, research has generally shown moral reasoning (Blasi, 1980) and moral emotion (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987) to be only moderately positively associated with moral action. This weak and inconsistent relationship between moral judgment and moral behavior is known as the “judgment–action gap” (Frimer & Walker, 2008). Therefore, moral cognitive-emotional motives are not the only drivers for moral action; significant unexplained variability in moral behavior remains. Given the moderate relationship between moral reasoning and action, Blasi (1980) became skeptical of Kohlberg’s notion that moral judgment is directly linked to moral action and advocated for searching for potential moderating factors. The same can be said for the linkage between moral emotion and moral action. It has been shown that moral cognitive-emotional sources of motivation can spark moral action in some individuals in some situations. However, they cannot by themselves account for extraordinary moral action, consistent moral behavior, and persistent moral commitment. For these things, there may be moderating factors between moral cognitive-emotional motivation sources and moral action (Price Tangney, Stuewig, & Mashek, 2007).

Blasi (1983) proposed the Self Model of moral functioning to fill the gap between moral understanding and moral action left by Kohlberg’s theory. His model has three key components. First, before leading to moral action, a moral judgment can also be considered within the context of a judgment of personal *responsibility*, such that ‘an action, evaluated as moral, is also judged to be strictly necessary for the individual’ (Blasi, 1983, p. 198). This suggests a person might not

only decide what is the ‘right’ or ‘moral’ action in a given situation but might also assess whether they feel responsible for taking action on that judgment. Second, the model stipulates that the criteria for judgments of responsibility often originate from the structure of an individual’s self. More specifically, Blasi first coined the term “moral identity” to reflect individual differences in the extent to which being moral is a central characteristic of a person’s sense of self. The third component of the Self Model is self-consistency. Blasi postulated that to want to live in a way that is consistent with one’s sense of self is a natural human tendency. Therefore, when one’s self is centered on moral concerns, this consistency bias serves as a key motivating force for moral action. In summary, Blasi postulated that moral judgments might more reliably predict moral behavior if they are 1) filtered through responsibility judgments based on moral identity, and 2) spurred into action via the tendency toward self-consistency.

Additional work is needed to uncover plausible drivers of the significant gap between moral understanding and moral action. In particular, research that manipulates a certain aspect of the moral-behavioral pipeline, while allowing for measurement of other components of moral identity, will permit analysis of the strength of both the manipulated and measured variables on prosocial behavior.

Moral Psychology’s Resurgence

A renewed interest in moral psychology across many areas of psychology followed the independent publication of two landmark papers by Jonathan Haidt (Haidt, 2001) and Joshua Greene and colleagues (Greene, Sommerville, Nystrom, Darley, & Cohen, 2001). The focus shifted away from developmental processes emphasized by Kohlberg and others to an emphasis on social, cognitive, affective, and neural processes that contribute to moral judgements. Moral Foundations Theory, proposed by Jonathan Haidt and Craig Joseph in 2004, is a construct that

explains the variation in moral reasoning in terms of innate, modular foundations (Haidt & Joseph, 2004). Later, Moral Foundations Theory would be used to differentiate between the moral foundations of (political) liberals and conservatives (Haidt & Graham, 2007). Moral Foundations Theory expands on the earlier Three Ethics Theory, which outlined three moral ethics: community, autonomy, and divinity. Haidt and Graham expanded Three Ethics Theory into five cognitive systems. Calling them the Five Foundations of Morality, they postulated that each varies in importance depending on culture. The five psychological foundations are:

- 1) Harm/care: The sensitivity to signs of suffering in offspring that develops into a general dislike of seeing suffering in others and the potential to feel compassion as a response.
- 2) Fairness/reciprocity: Developed when someone observes or engages in reciprocal interactions. (This foundation is concerned with virtues related to fairness and justice.)
- 3) Ingroup/loyalty: Recognizing, trusting, and cooperating with members of one's ingroup as well as being wary of members of other groups.
- 4) Authority/respect: The way an individual navigates in hierarchical groups and communities.
- 5) Purity/sanctity: The emotion of disgust that guards the body by responding to stimuli that are biologically or culturally linked to disease transmission.

When applied to political liberals and conservatives, Haidt and Craig found that liberals value harm/care and fairness/reciprocity more than the other three moral foundations, while conservatives value all five foundations equally. Developed from the Five Foundations of Morality theory, the Moral Foundations Questionnaire (Graham et al., 2011). The survey measures the five moral intuitions. Test-takers rate considerations with regards to their relevancy

to their own moral judgements. The instrument measures the degree to which the individual relies on the five moral foundations in making judgements.

Published concurrently in 2001, independently of the work of Haidt, Joshua Greene and colleagues released the study, “An fMRI Investigation of Emotional Engagement in Moral Judgement” (Greene et al., 2001). This research challenged the emphasis of moral psychology on reason in making moral judgments, applying “the methods of cognitive neuroscience to the study of moral judgement.” Researchers examined the nature of the interaction of reason and emotion, their neural correlates, and the factors that moderate the influence of reason and emotion on moral judgements. They argued that moral dilemmas vary systematically in the way they engage emotional processing, and that these systematic variations influence an individual’s moral judgements.

A recent synthesis, called the “science of moral understanding,” draws from intergroup conflict as well as moral psychology, attempts to describe how moral judgments divide individuals and provide a way to bridge moral divides (Gray & Graham, 2018). Earlier research (Haidt & Graham, 2007) describes liberals and conservatives as having fundamentally different moral minds, but by focusing on the differences between political opponents, this research is thought to have overlooked what principles on which liberals and conservatives agree with regards to morality. Gray’s research suggests rather that people have one consistent moral mind that is grounded in perceptions of harm. In this conceptualization, liberals and conservatives agree about morality being about harm but diverge concerning what is harmful. For example, there is common agreement that things like murder, theft, and fraud are wrong. And when each side begins associating someone’s behavior with harm, those behaviors are seen as intrinsically immoral. Perspectives found in the science of moral understanding is consistent with Blasi’s

analysis (1984) which showed, “even though there may be several non-overlapping moral traits that compose each unique person’s moral identity, there exists a set of common moral traits likely to be important to most people’s moral self-definitions.” (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p. 1424).

Using longitudinal studies, researchers (Cohen & Morse, 2014) have described the stable traits that moral people exhibit. In general, they can be described as sincere, modest, fair, and disciplined, prudent, and organized. In addition, they are good at resisting temptations (i.e., they exhibit high self-control) and thinking about the future consequences of their behavior (i.e., they exhibit a high consideration of future consequences). Finally, integrity is important to them, and they want to see themselves as possessing moral traits.

Aspects of Haight and Graham’s Five Foundations of Morality, as well as traits that are exhibited by moral people (Cohen et al., 2014) can be expressed and organized as an individual’s “moral identity.” Moral identity has been defined in a range of different ways by psychologists. Given the salience of moral identity to increasing charitable giving in a range of published research, and in order to justify the use of measures in this study, I will next review psychologists’ different conceptualizations of moral identity as a trait that influences prosocial behavior.

Moral Identity

The concept of moral identity emerged in the social sciences literature over four decades ago, largely spurred by Blasi’s (Blasi, 1980; 1983; 1984) work in the early 1980s. Blasi’s analysis (1984) shows that “even though there may be several non-overlapping moral traits that compose each unique person’s moral identity, a set of common moral traits are likely to be important to most people’s moral self-definitions.” (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p.1424). More recent research has focused on using the concept of moral identity to examine the relationship between

moral judgement and moral actions. More recent researchers have defined *moral identity* as “the degree to which being a moral person is important to an individual’s identity” (Hardy & Carlo, 2005). Those individuals who believe that moral values (e.g., honesty, compassion, fairness, generosity, etc.) are central to defining their personal identity are said to have a strong moral identity. Research has shown that individuals appear to construct moral identities for themselves and that internalizing one’s moral identity can influence moral action (Krettenauer, Murua, & Jia, 2016). Research has demonstrated that small cues (such as “primes”) can alter which facet of an individual’s identity (e.g., as a patriot, as a parent, as a Black man) is salient at a given point in time (Bargh, 2006). Priming identities that individuals perceive as more self-relevant has been shown in past research to be more impactful (Leboeuf, Shafir, & Bayuk, 2010). The malleability of identity, and the fact that different facets of identity can be brought to the surface by different cues, helps distinguish the effects of identity from underlying preferences.

Aquino and Reed’s Self-Importance of Moral Identity Questionnaire. Since its publication, the majority of empirical moral identity research has utilized Aquino and Reed’s (2002) Self-Importance of Moral Identity Questionnaire (Hertz & Krettenauer, 2016). The measure presents a list of nine attributes that characterize a highly moral person: caring, compassionate, fair, friendly, generous, helpful, hardworking, honest, and kind. The authors argue that “to measure moral identity, it should not be necessary, in principle, to discover the entire universe of traits that might compose a person’s unique moral identity. Rather, all that is needed to invoke and subsequently measure the self-importance of a person’s moral identity is to activate a subset of moral traits that are linked to other moral traits that may be more central to a particular person’s self-concept.” Through a series of several different studies, Aquino and Reed (2002) created a 10-item questionnaire for assessing moral identity in adults. This self-report

paper-and-pencil measure involves (1) presenting participants with a list of nine moral traits, (2) asking them to visualize a person with those traits (their self or someone else) and how that person would think, feel, and act, and (3) having them rate statements such as, ‘It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics.’ Based on the properties of identity outlined by Erikson, (1964), Aquino and Reed (2002) developed and validated two 5-item subscales, one to indicate ‘the respondent’s actions in the world’ (labeled symbolization) and another to tap ‘the degree to which the moral traits are central to the self-concept’ (labeled internalization). The questionnaire renders “moral identity centrality,” the extent to which moral identity is central to a person’s self-concept, (Aquino, Freeman, Reed, Lim, & Felps, 2009) which differs across individuals. High moral identity centrality has been shown to elicit moral behavior more consistently (Aquino, McFerran, & Laven, 2011).

A large body of research has explored how moral centrality and being a moral person are related to one’s self-concept. Although a number of constructs and labels for moral centrality have emerged (e.g., moral identity and moral self-concept), each involve the degree to which moral qualities, concerns, commitments, or goals are significant definitional components of the self. Much of this literature on moral centrality (approximately 70 percent of the empirical work) has adopted Aquino and Reed’s (2002) concept of moral identity, defined as “a self-conception organized around a set of moral traits.” The internalization and symbolization dimensions align with the “having” side of the moral self and the “doing” side of the moral self (respectively) mentioned previously here.

Aquino and Reed describe moral identity as an associative network of related moral traits, goals and behaviors that make up an individual’s schema of their moral character. Their framework explains the everyday, more automatic, less reflective moral behaviors that

individuals engage in. A person with a highly internalized moral identity is someone for whom this network of morally relevant knowledge is accessible faster, and in greater quantity, within the person's working self-concept. As a result, their moral identity is more central to their overall identity (Aquino et al., 2009). Someone who is high in moral identity internalization will bring these cognitively accessible moral trait associations to mind more consistently, quickly, and more easily than an individual who is low in internalization. The two dimensions of moral identity correspond to different motivations for prosocial behavior. Research has shown that the internalization dimension is a more reliable predictor of prosocial behavior than is the symbolization dimension (Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, 2008). Someone who is high in moral identity symbolization tends to engage in socially observable behaviors that communicate their commitment to some moral goals or ideals. They will be more likely to convey their moral identity in a public manner, externally, via their actions, and less likely to act privately on their moral identity. Someone who is low in this dimension is less likely to engage in these public behaviors. People who are high in moral identity are motivated to engage in prosocial behaviors to maintain self-consistency; they engage in prosocial behaviors because it is consistent with their concept of what it means to be a moral individual. People who are high in moral identity internalization are motivated to behave in a prosocial manner *regardless* of the private or public nature of their actions because moral schema are more accessible to them in working memory (Blasi, 1980). For these individuals, failure to act in a prosocial manner would result in a state of dissonance between the way they view themselves (as moral individuals) and how they should behave.

Moral identity shows considerable promise as a predictor of prosocial behavior, including toward nonprofit organizations. There is evidence which shows that moral identity predicts

various types of prosocial behavior across many situations (see a review by Shao, Aquino, & Freeman, (2008)). According to moral identity theory, motivation to show concern for others is likely to be felt most strongly by people whose moral identity is highly relevant to their sense of self (Reed & Aquino, 2003). There is a correspondence between an individual's concept of what it means to be a moral person and personality traits that predict prosocial behavior, like being caring, compassionate and helpful (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Research suggests that people who are high in moral identity internalization are more likely to have a stronger motivation to behave in a prosocial manner with regards to nonprofit organizations than are those who are low in moral identify internalization. Aquino and Reed (2002) tested the effect of internalized and symbolic moral identity on the donation of food. They found that only internalized moral identity predicted such giving, not symbolic moral identity. For every unit increase in internalized moral identity, the odds of donating cans increased by eighty percent. The only conditions under which symbolic moral identity made a difference is when internalized moral identity was low. In those situations, people donated more when their symbolic moral identity is high and when public recognition is offered (Winterich et al., 2013).

Research initially tended to focus on the internalization dimension (Aquino et al., 2009) or consider additive effects of internalization and symbolization (Skarlicki, Van Jaarsveld, & Walker, 2008). There are sound theoretical reasons for doing so, as the two dimensions are positively correlated, ranging from .13 to .17 (Winterich, et al., 2013; Aquino & Reed, 2002). Winterich and colleagues (2013) demonstrated empirically that the predictive power of these two dimensions can be enhanced by treating them as having joint (interactive) effects, at least when the dependent variable is *recognized* prosocial behavior. This research also demonstrated how the contextual variable of recognition “may act as a moderator of the effect of symbolization on

prosocial behavior.” It provided insight regarding the joint effect of symbolization and internalization by demonstrating that the effect of symbolization is dependent on an individual’s level of internalization. Specifically, the effect of symbolization on the study’s dependent variable (charitable donations) declined as internalization increases, an interactive effect. Research showed that symbolization does not generally provide any further motivation for prosocial behavior beyond that which is provided by moral identity internalization. However, symbolization does increase charitable donations for those low in internalization, provided that the behavior is anticipated to be recognized.

Empathy and Prosocial Behavior

Research has focused on a range of emotions (such as guilt, sadness, distress, and concern) that motivate helping and altruism in humans. Moral emotions (e.g., guilt, shame, empathy; Tangney et al., 2007) often exert stronger influences on moral actions than moral judgment (Jennings, Mitchell, & Hannah, 2015). Empathy, defined as understanding and vicariously experiencing others’ emotions (Eisenberg & Miller, 1987; Knight, 2015). Empathy plays a fundamental role in moral functioning (Eisenberg, 2000). According to Davis (1983), empathy contains two cognitive components, namely perspective taking (PT, spontaneously understanding other people’s point of views) and fantasy (FS, imaginatively understanding the feelings of fictional characters in books or movies), and two emotional components, namely empathic concern (EC, an other-oriented feeling of sympathy or concern for the misfortune of others) and personal distress (PD, a self-oriented feeling of discomfort and uneasy when witnessing others in need). Higher scores on empathy indicate better abilities in understanding and experiencing other people’s mental states, and greater sensitivity to their needs (Masten, Morelli, & Eisenberger, 2011). Other oriented empathic responses (e.g., EC) elicit behaviors

aiming at reducing the distress of the victims, thus are more strongly associated with prosocial engagement. However, self-oriented responses (e.g., PD) are more likely to reduce uncomfortable feelings of the witness, leading to avoidance responses if able to do so (Habashi, Graziano, & Hoover, 2016; Leiberg, Klimecki, & Singer, 2011). Empathy has also been shown to facilitate OPB. In an online environment, empathic individuals show greater willingness to share, help, and donate (Farrelly & Bennett, 2018; Khang & Jeong, 2016).

The capacity to experience sympathetic emotions in response to another person's problem or distress has been identified as the key element linking personal predispositions to immediate action (Cunningham, 1986). In particular, empathy has been shown to have important implications for helping and altruism in humans. There are two major reasons why empathy has attracted so much interest as a possible link between personal dispositions and altruistic actions. The first is that there is a substantial relationship between the ability to experience empathy and willingness to engage in prosocial behaviors. For example, Nancy Eisenberg and her associates (Zhou et al., 2002) reported that the more empathic children were, the more likely they were to behave in a prosocial manner. A similar relationship is found among adults: Empathy plays a critical role in adults' decisions to offer or not to offer help (Davis, 1994). Thus, across a wide range of people and situations, empathy is a critical element in helping. That said, to date there has been no research relating empathy and moral identity. A number of recent studies have examined the interaction of both on prosocial behavior concurrently, (Jiao, Wang, & Maheswaran, 2018; Leng, Sun, Ma, Zhang, & Guo, 2020) but the exact relationship between the two has yet to be investigated.

The most widely used measure of trait empathy is the Interpersonal Reactivity Index (IRI) (Davis, 1983). The IRI consists of 28 items that are evenly divided into four subscales, with

seven items per subscale. The subscales are “Fantasy,” the extent to which subjects identify themselves with fictional characters, “Perspective-taking,” a type of empathy that is assessed by how quickly another’s point of view is adopted, “Empathic concern,” an assessment of an individual’s level of care and compassion for others, and finally “Personal distress,” which assesses an individual’s level of discomfort and anxiety in response to the suffering of another. When time constraints are absent, or when researchers wish to examine different dimensions of empathy, the IRI is often selected. However, such an instrument did not lend itself well for the current study, which captured volunteer subject data in a necessarily brief online survey. Here, the need to keep the online experience for subjects as short as possible was important to prevent subjects from dropping out before they completed the survey.

For this reason, the Single Item Trait Empathy scale (SITES) was employed in this research. The SITES consists of this single item: To what extent does the following statement describe you: "I am an empathetic person," rated using a scale that ranges from 1=Not very true of me to 5=Very true of me. Taking only seconds to complete, the SITES is a trait measure of empathy, meaning it assesses the degree to which individuals’ empathic responses to others varies across situations (Konrath, Meier, & Bushman, 2018). The SITES is positively correlated with the IRI and has been demonstrated to be consistent over time with test-retest correlations from 2 weeks to 6 months greater than .55 and predicted prosocial behavior in a sample of adults.

Recognition of Nonprofit Supporters

Winterich and colleagues demonstrated that moral identity symbolization does increase charitable donations for those low in moral identity internalization, provided that the behavior is anticipated to be recognized (Winterich, et al., 2013). This research examined this relationship in the context of volunteer fundraisers, instead of individuals who make direct charitable

contributions. Prior to this study, no research to date examines the interaction of recognition and moral identity on volunteer fundraising.

Recognition of donors is an accepted practice in the nonprofit industry to encourage charitable giving and/or the donation of time (Moore, 2008). There are for-profit organizations that assist nonprofits to create and execute recognition programs for the supporters (VanHuss & Fulton, 2017). Recognition has been described as “an expression of appreciation given by a group of individuals who undertake desired behaviors (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998). Recognition of donors can be expressed publicly in a variety of ways, for example, granting “naming” rights for buildings and programs, (Harbaugh, 1998) publishing donors’ names in newsletters, (Kotler, 2005) and bestowing donors with pink ribbons for their support of cancer research (Moore, 2008). Here I will define recognition as *the knowledge by the supporter that their behavior either receives or will receive attention in a public manner*. Although many nonprofits provide recognition to all supporters, research on the effectiveness of recognition has been equivocal (Wymer, 2001). For example, some supporters avoid recognition as a means of avoiding future solicitations on the part of the nonprofit, for religious (e.g., humility) reasons, or because donors do not want the nonprofit to use its funds for recognition. However, in a 2017 study of eighty-three fundraising programs conducted by thirty-three U.S. nonprofit organizations, there was an overall redemption rate for recognition gifts of 50.1% among recognition earners. In ninety-eight percent of the fundraising programs, those who accepted recognition raised more, on average, than recognition decliners (VanHuss & Fulton, 2017).

The lack of clarity regarding the effect of recognition on prosocial behavior for nonprofit organizations motivated this research, which sought to provide a greater understanding of how recognition might interact with moral identity to predict prosocial behavior, specifically

volunteer fundraising. To date, most research on prosocial behavior with regards to nonprofit organizations has focused on *donors*. This research focused instead on *volunteer fundraisers* for so-called “peer-to-peer” programs, which raised \$1.6B for the top 30 programs in the U.S. in 2018. With regards to building a base of donors, nonprofits focus a great deal of time and energy on the acquisition of new supporters. Peer-to-peer fundraising not only provides the short-term benefit of revenue, but it also gives the nonprofit a list of names (the donors recruited by the peer-to-peer fundraiser) that can be tapped for future support. It is the most successful “foot in the door” technique that is utilized by nonprofit groups (Cialdini, 1993) and is often described as the “front door” of the nonprofit organization.

Facebook Fundraisers

Nonprofit professionals were skeptical when, in 2015, Facebook announced that users of the platform could fundraise on Facebook for their favorite charities (Hessekiel, 2019). One fear was that Facebook would represent a barrier between the organizations and their donors because of the difficulty in collecting contact information and other data about the supporters. However, with more than one billion dollars a year being raised each year since 2018, Facebook fundraising has transformed peer-to-peer fundraising. The success of Facebook fundraisers mirrors the success of the platform more generally. Facebook fundraisers provide donors with a social setting, manageable giving levels, and a platform that is already connected to their bank or credit card. There are no fees to the nonprofit incurred by fundraising on the platform. Facebook treats fundraisers like any other source of marketing data that they collect on those users starting fundraisers and those users who donate.

A Facebook fundraiser involves nonprofit supporters raising donations directly through the Facebook platform. This is done by sharing images and information about their personal

connection to the cause and encouraging their friends and family members to give. These fundraisers can be started at any time, whether associated with birthdays or after spontaneous inspiration. When done well, it's a no-fee, convenient, and fulfilling way to give to nonprofit organizations. The process begins with a donor creating a fundraiser on Facebook. They share it with their Facebook "friends" far and wide—whether created in association with their birthday or not. Then, their friends, family members, and general network donate in support. However, these donations don't flow directly to the nonprofit like a typical donation might. If a nonprofit isn't registered with Facebook Payments, fundraisers set up in the nonprofit's honor will be associated with Network for Good. This is a donor-advised fund (DAF), a specialized type of philanthropic savings account that can collect interest.

There is great incentive for nonprofits to register with Facebook and avoid having funds raised on their behalf going through Network for Good. Facebook fundraisers handled via Network for Good follow a predetermined set of steps that take significantly longer than direct donations. These steps are as follows: (i) A user makes a donation. (ii) The donor immediately receives the maximum tax deduction allowed by the IRS. (iii) Their donation is placed into the DAF, where it can be invested and grown tax-free. (iv) Facebook directs this donation out of the DAF toward the beneficiary selected by the donor (the nonprofit). These steps can (and will) occur without the nonprofit's interaction in the process at all. However, by taking hold of Facebook fundraisers and optimizing the process, nonprofits can raise significantly more money, typically in a significantly shorter period of time.

Still, there are a variety of reasons why organizations resist Facebook fundraisers. On the front end, Facebook fundraisers can be confusing, hard to manage, and without easy access to donors or fundraisers. The most common complaints about the process are as follows:

(a) Nonprofits don't know how to find, track, encourage, and thank new fundraisers. (b) Nonprofits don't know how to find and thank new donors. (c) The data provided by Facebook is difficult to understand. (d) There is a loss of brand control and protection. (e) It can take months to receive funding from Network for Good, Facebook's DAF. These complaints have led to more than one organization issuing statements on their Facebook pages, encouraging donors to give directly through their website rather than through the platform. Even more common are nonprofits simply ignoring the process— which may still result in funding, but certainly not as much as if the platform was optimized.

The selection of Facebook fundraisers as the source of the dependent variable for this study is notable. Other avenues to measure volunteer fundraising are available and are in fact simpler to utilize, since Facebook's lack of transparency forced me to use a third-party company for data collection tools as described in the Dependent Variables section (below). Much of the significance of this study derived from collecting data on the most important single platform in the volunteer fundraising sphere: Facebook, which means that the findings have significant ecological validity. The combination of ease of fundraiser creation for study participants with the sheer scale of Facebook's fundraising visibility lent the study particular relevance and applicability.

Overview of Study

This research examined the role of moral identity symbolization and internalization in motivating prosocial behaviors, specifically fundraising for a nonprofit organization. The study employed a 2 (Condition: Recognition vs. Control) X Continuous (Moral Identity Symbolization; MI-S) X Continuous (Moral Identity Internalization; MI-I) mixed-methods design.

I hypothesized a three-way interaction of moral identity symbolization, internalization, and recognition to predict prosocial behavior. Specifically, I predicted that the effect of moral identity symbolization and internalization on prosocial behavior would depend on the amount of recognition the fundraiser expects to attain. When moral identity internalization is low, I hypothesized that high moral identity symbolization would motivate recognized prosocial behavior due to the opportunity to present one's moral characteristics to others. In contrast, when moral identity internalization is high, prosocial behavior would be motivated irrespective of the level of symbolization and recognition. The pattern of expected results is shown in the table below. Note that the scale represents relative fundraising amounts across groups, not actual monies raised.

Table 1.

Expected means on a general 1-10 scale; “10” represents most successful fundraisers.

		Symbolization	
		Internalization	Low
Recognition	Low	2.5	8
	High	6	9.5
Control	Low	2	3
	High	5	6

My expected results provide a framework for predicting prosocial behavior by combining the two dimensions of moral identity with the situational factor of recognition. Because recognition makes fundraising behaviors more publicly visible, it functions as a symbolic reward (Grant, 2012).

Hypotheses

Below are the set of hypotheses for the study. The first three hypotheses concern amount of money fundraised; the fourth and fifth hypotheses concern the likelihood of starting a fundraiser; and the sixth and final hypothesis is an exploratory analysis of the effect of controlling for perceived empathy. Interaction effect hypotheses are listed before lower-order (main) effect hypotheses since the former effects would be of greatest importance if found to be significant. This is because a presence of such interaction(s) would have the greatest explanatory value in characterizing the outcomes of individuals’ Facebook fundraisers.

- H1: I predicted a positive three-way interaction between recognition, internalization and symbolization. Specifically, the effect of internalization and symbolization on monies raised will vary between the two levels of recognition (recognition versus control). (This effect can be visualized in Table 1. In the control group, the fundraising amount response variable is expected to increase slightly for individuals high in symbolization, but the overall success of the fundraiser is not expected to be much. In the recognition group, however, the effect of high symbolization was expected to be large for those individuals who are high in internalization and even larger for those who are low in internalization.)
- H2: I predicted a positive two-way interaction between recognition and symbolization. In this way, those who are high in symbolization and are in the recognition group would raise more money than those in the control group, regardless of their level of symbolization. (Additionally, I did not predict significant two-way interactions between internalization and symbolization, owing to the posited three-way interaction, or between recognition and internalization.)
- H3a: I predicted a positive correlation between symbolization and monies raised, regardless of recognition or internalization status (i.e., main effect for symbolization)
- H3b: I predicted that participants in the recognition group would raise significantly more money than those in the control group, regardless of internalization or symbolization status (i.e., main effect for recognition)
- H4: I predicted that participants in the recognition group would be significantly more likely to begin a successful fundraising page than those in the control group (i.e., main effect for recognition)

- H5: I predicted a positive three-way interaction between recognition, internalization, and symbolization on the likelihood of beginning a successful fundraising page.
- H6: I conducted an exploratory analysis that adds the Single Item Trait Empathy Scale (SITES) to the above regression model as a main effect. In this analysis, I predicted that the three-way interaction term will remain significant after controlling for empathy, as measured by SITES, in the model. Specifically, after controlling for perceived empathy, moral identity would be significantly associated with amount fundraised, and the magnitude of this effect would vary based on recognition group.

Methods

Participants

For this study, 311 subjects were recruited via email from the constituents of the Spina Bifida Association, (SBA) a national nonprofit that supports treatment and research to cure spina bifida (see Appendix 2 for solicitation email). A power analysis was performed incorporating simulation of expected means and standard deviations of outcomes among the different possible levels of the experimental variables. Specifically, the analysis was designed to detect, with $1-\beta=80\%$ power and $\alpha=0.05$ false positive rate, a significant three-way interaction between recognition group, internalization, and symbolization on amount of money fundraised. Participants were randomized equally in simulations. Specifically, a total sample size of 136 participants was found to have adequate power to detect the interaction effect in the simulations. Owing to potential missingness, outliers, or other issues with responses, the target was to recruit at least 150 participants to this study.

Emails advertising participation in this study were sent to the entirety of the Spina Bifida Association's email list (23,021 email addresses). Of these, 5,572 members opened the email,

546 members filled out one of the two questionnaires, and 311 members provided complete and usable data for the study. The sample decreased in size due to those subjects not completing their names, an item which came at the end of the questionnaire. Without the subject's name there was no way to track whether they began a successful Facebook fundraiser (one that raised a minimum of one dollar).

Procedure

Aquino and Reed's (2002) Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale, or MIS (see Appendix 1) was administered to assess characteristics of participants' moral identity. The MIS consists of items that measure two factors relating to moral identity. There are 5 questions that correspond to each. Questions are on a 7-point Likert scale with anchors *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. The internalization scale is a measure of the extent to which one values moral traits or considers them central to one's identity. The symbolization scale seeks to identify whether one's actions represent moral self-expression or commitment (e.g., group membership, activities that are considered to be moral). Taking the MIS, participants were initially asked to review nine characteristics that may exemplify an individual who is inclined to behave in a moral fashion. Then a visualization task is undertaken in which participants are asked to imagine how a person with these traits would feel, act, and think. Finally, participants answered each of the ten items. An example of a question from the internalization scale is, "It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics." An example of a question from the symbolization scale is, "I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics" (Aquino & Reed, 2002, p. 1428). Overall, both the internalization (Cronbach's $\alpha = .83$) and symbolization (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$) scales of the MIS have had high internal consistency reliability coefficients in past work (Aquino & Reed, 2002).

All participants were contacted via email sent from the Spina Bifida Association asking them to participate in a study that would allow the organization “to learn more about the supporters who make up our community.” The email was sent in November of 2021. This timeframe was selected because it came after the organization’s fall fundraising campaign and before their end-of-the-year fundraising campaign. Those agreeing to participate clicked a link in the email that took them to a page hosting the survey items. In addition to completing Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale, participants were also asked to complete the Single Item Trait Empathy scale (SITES) and provide key demographic information, including their email, age, gender, and “mission connection,” e.g., spina bifida patient, immediate family member of a spina bifida patient, friend of a family with a spina bifida patient, and other (see Appendix 4). After completing the Scale and demographic information, the participants were offered the opportunity to set up a Facebook fundraiser that will benefit the Spina Bifida Association. Setting up the page was relatively effortless; subjects were provided with a link that leads directly to the organization’s Facebook fundraiser setup page.

The non-Recognition group received no additional information. The Recognition group was also told that everyone who sets up a Facebook fundraiser would have their names and Facebook link displayed on the organization’s “Champions for Spina Bifida” website. By tagging them in this way, their Facebook followers would be aware of their participation. In addition to the background information both groups provided, they were also asked to complete a manipulation check question assessing the desirability of this form of recognition (e.g., “if you set up a Facebook fundraiser for a charitable organization, how much would you enjoy being “tagged” on the charity’s Facebook page as a form of thanks?”). The manipulation that was selected is consistent with recognition being “an expression of appreciation given by a group to

individuals who undertake desired behaviors” (Fisher & Ackerman, 1998). The inclusion of supporters in public lists is a common practice among nonprofit groups.

Dependent Variables

The study examined two main dependent variables. The first was a dichotomous variable: setting up a Facebook fundraiser (yes/no) and raising some amount of money. The other was a continuous variable: the total amount of money raised by the participant within fifteen days (the default time limit for a Facebook fundraiser). Collecting data from Facebook can be difficult; Facebook began Facebook fundraisers as another type of data collection tool regarding individual’s philanthropic interests that could be sold to advertisers and other groups, including nonprofit organizations. Data was collected for this study by a business partner of Facebook that owns a proprietary method to monitor and extract data from Facebook fundraisers and interact with fundraisers via the Messenger application. There was one limitation in their data collection capability – it was not able to detect Facebook fundraisers which were started but raised *no* money. As a result, I was unable to detect what are known in the nonprofit world as “zero-dollar fundraisers,” only those raising one dollar or more.

One moderating factor that is sometimes controlled for in research on charitable giving is family income. The average Facebook fundraiser generates 7.4 donations from friends and family; the average donation size is \$31 (Peyrot, 2019). The number of donations per fundraiser and the average size of those donations is relatively consistent across different nonprofit sectors (e.g., environment, health, poverty, etc.). Because of the fairly modest size of the average donation, family income was not a concern regarding this research.

Results

The characteristics of my sample are summarized in Table 2. Of the participants providing complete data, 164 (53%) set up a Facebook fundraiser that raised a dollar or more. Forty-three percent of the sample was aged 50 or older, and 75 percent was female. Notably, 52 percent of the sample had been diagnosed with spina bifida themselves, and another 32 percent had an immediate family member diagnosed, so almost all those who participated had a strong personal link to this particular disease. The number of unique donors was similar for fundraisers in the control group ($M = 4.69$, $IQR = [2,6]$) and recognition group ($M = 4.38$, $IQR = [1,5]$). A typical fundraiser from participants in the control group raised more money (median \$112.50) than from participants in the control group (median \$70.00).

Table 2.

Descriptive Statistics by Recognition Group.

Group	N	Started Fundraiser Count (%)	Number Donors			Total Raised		
			Mean	Median	IQR	Mean	Median	IQR
Control	133	74 (56%)	4.69	4.00	(2,6)	197.80	112.50	(52.50, 250.0)
Recognition	178	90 (51%)	4.38	3.00	(1,5)	227.30	70.0	(30.0, 210.0)

In addition to the 311 participants described above, some respondents to the email solicitation completed the questionnaire up to the point of providing their name and email address but did not provide this identifying information. This made it impossible to track any Facebook fundraising they may have done. There is a possibility that these individuals could have been different than those participants who did provide their names and emails. If these groups differed with respect to moral identity measures of internalization and symbolization, bias could result in my estimates of the effects of these measures on fundraising. To assess whether

such bias occurred, I performed an additional analysis where I compared the overall internalization and symbolization scores between participants who did and did not provide their names and email addresses. I compared these groups with independent-samples t-tests. A summary of this analysis is given in Table 3. I provide the means and standard deviations of the scores for the measures, as well as the results of the test comparing them. For both measures, the differences in scores between those participants who did and did not provide their names and email addresses did not significantly differ ($p = 0.45$ for internalization and $p = 0.78$ for symbolization). Therefore, it is unlikely that these participants differed systematically from those who did provide identifying information.

Table 3.¹

Summary of moral identity measures for participants who did and did not provide names and email addresses in the questionnaire.

Measure	Provide Names/Emails?		T-statistic	Degrees of freedom	P-value
	Yes	No			
Internalization	33.20 (2.26)*	33.50 (1.87)	0.76	145	0.45
Symbolization	26.85 (3.60)	27.00 (3.21)	0.28	135	0.78

* Mean and standard deviation for measure

Each of the experimental groups had a small number of positive outliers resulting from a high-dollar fundraiser, skewing the data positively. For this reason, in all analyses, I performed a logarithmic transformation on the monies raised variable to make the distribution of the variable

¹ Of the 80 individuals who did not provide their names and emails, most also did not provide demographic information that followed the name and email questions in the survey: age, gender, and relationship to Spina Bifida, making it impossible to make comparisons on these demographics to the 311 participants who did provide this information.

more normally distributed, to satisfy the assumptions of linear regression and t-tests. This transformation is recommended for data that are positively skewed (Bland & Altman, 1996).

Hypothesis 1. I fit a regression model to monies raised in fundraisers using main effects for recognition group, internalization status, and symbolization status, as well as all two-way interactions between the variables and the three-way interaction between the variables. I predicted a positive three-way interaction between recognition, internalization, and symbolization on monies raised. Specifically, I predicted that participants in the recognition group who had high levels of internalization and symbolization would raise significantly more money than participants who did not have these characteristics or were not in the recognition group (see results for each hypothesis below). I fit a regression model to the amount of money raised in fundraisers and found marginal evidence for this interaction, $t(303) = -1.727, p = .086$. The change in the log of monies raised associated with the three-way interaction – the intersection of being in the recognition group, being an internalizer, and being a symbolizer – was -1.432 (95% CI = $-3.070, 0.206$), indicating that the interaction of these three-factors decreased the amount of money raised, but not significantly so. No lower-order interactions or main effects in the model were significant. The overall model did not significantly predict monies raised, $F(7,156) = 1.652, p = 0.125$. Table 4 gives the table of regression coefficients and p -values for this model. The three-way interaction was the only term in the model that warranted further study, as there were no significant lower-order effects. The estimate for the interaction ($\beta = -1.432$) suggests that participants in the recognition group who were high symbolizers and high internalizers on average raised less money in their fundraisers than participants who were lower with respect to symbolization and internalization and/or were not in the recognition group.

The R^2 of the model was .07, suggesting that 7% of the variance in money raised was explained by the interaction of group, internalization, and symbolization. Inspection of diagnostic plots for the model revealed no causes for concern, as there was no trend in model residuals with respect to fitted values.

Table 4.

Summary of regression model on monies raised using three-way interaction term.

Term	Estimate	Standard Error	P-value
Recognition Group	-0.299	0.416	0.473
Internalization	-0.075	0.404	0.853
Symbolization	-0.324	0.458	0.481
Group*Internalization	0.291	0.554	0.600
Group*Symbolization	0.711	0.671	0.291
Internalization*Symbolization	0.254	0.592	0.668
Group*Internalization*Symbolization	-1.432	0.829	0.086

Hypothesis 2. I predicted a positive two-way interaction between recognition and symbolization, such that participants in the recognition group who were high in symbolization would raise significantly more money than participants who were low in symbolization or were not in the recognition group. Referencing Table 4 and model, there was no significant interaction between recognition group and symbolization ($p = .291$).

Hypothesis 3a. I predicted a positive correlation between symbolization and monies raised, regardless of recognition group or internalization. Given the non-linear relationship between the two variables, I computed Spearman's rank-based correlation coefficient to test this hypothesis. I found no significant correlation between symbolization and monies raised (Spearman's $\rho = -.129$, $p = .099$.) This result suggests that there is no significant relationship between level of moral symbolization status and fundraising amount in my sample.

Hypothesis 3b. I predicted that participants in the recognition group would raise more money than those in the control group, regardless of internalization or symbolization status. I tested this hypothesis with an independent samples t-test using a logarithmic transformation for monies raised due to positive skew in the data. I found no significant difference in monies raised by recognition group, $t(161) = 1.52, p = .131$. The average amount of money raised (in dollars, before transformation) was \$197.82 in the control group and \$227.27 in the recognition group. This suggests that by itself, the recognition group and control group did not differ significantly in terms of monies raised in the fundraisers.

Hypothesis 4. I predicted that participants in the recognition group would be significantly more likely to begin a fundraising page than those in the control group. I fit a logistic regression model to test this hypothesis and found no evidence that recognition group significantly altered the likelihood of beginning a fundraiser ($p = .375$). The change in odds associated with being in the recognition group was 0.815 (95% CI = 0.519, 1.279), indicating that being in the recognition group did not affect the likelihood of beginning a fundraiser. In the model, 52.7 percent of started fundraisers were correctly predicted; with only this term included in the model, all observations were predicted to have started a fundraiser, suggesting that recognition group did not lead to a well-calibrated or predicted assessment of the likelihood of beginning a fundraiser. This suggests that other factors may better predict the likelihood of beginning a fundraiser, such as degree of personal investment with the disease, socio-economic status, etc.—at least for samples resembling this one, a point to which I will return in the discussion. The model effect size was small, with Nagelkerke's $R^2 = 0.003$.

Hypothesis 5. This hypothesis regards if a participant would begin a Facebook fundraiser, (yes/no) not the amount of money raised among participants who did begin a fundraiser. I

predicted a positive three-way interaction between recognition group, internalization, and symbolization on the likelihood of beginning a successful fundraising page. I fit a logistic regression model with the three-way interaction term and all lower-order terms to test this hypothesis and found no significant relationship between the interaction and likelihood of beginning a fundraiser ($p = .820$). The change in odds associated with the three-way interaction term, specifically the intersection of being in the recognition group, being an internalizer, and being a symbolizer, was 0.792 (95% CI = 0.108, 5.942). No other interaction or non-interaction terms in the regression model were significantly associated with likelihood of beginning a fundraiser. With all terms included in the model, 56.5 percent of cases were correctly predicted; 83.5 percent of started fundraisers were correctly predicted while only 26.1 percent of not-started fundraisers were. The model effect size was small, with Nagelkerke's $R^2 = 0.039$.

Hypothesis 6. I predicted a positive three-way interaction between recognition group, internalization, and symbolization on monies raised, after controlling for perceived empathy. I fit a regression model similar to that reported in Table 4 for Hypothesis 1, adding participants' SITES empathy score as a control variable for perceived empathy. There was stronger evidence for the three-way interaction term when controlling for empathy ($p = .056$), as summarized in Table 5. However, the coefficient for the interaction was negative ($\beta = -1.578$), suggesting that those in the recognition group and with high symbolization and internalization raised less on average than those who did not have all these characteristics. Notably, empathy itself was significantly and positively associated with monies raised ($\beta = 0.619$, $p = .016$). This coefficient corresponds to an 85 percent increase in monies raised for participants self-identifying as empathetic, compared to those who do not, while holding other factors constant in the model.

Table 5.

Summary of regression model on monies raised using three-way interaction term, controlling for empathy.

Term	Estimate	Standard Error	<i>p</i> -value
Group	-0.384	0.411	0.352
Internalization	-0.422	0.422	0.319
Symbolization	-0.530	0.459	0.250
Empathy	0.619	0.254	0.016
Group*Internalization	0.487	0.551	0.378
Group*Symbolization	0.713	0.661	0.282
Internalization*Symbolization	0.445	0.588	0.450
Group*Internalization*Symbolization	-1.578	0.819	0.056

Discussion

This study investigated the relationship between recognition, moral identity and charitable behavior, specifically volunteer fundraising for a national nonprofit organization. Although the findings did not unfold as expected, this study resulted in a nontrivial amount of money being raised for the Spina Bifida Foundation. That outcome is an important one, and hints at the real-world significance of the topic, although the study yielded mostly null results statistically.

Broadly, the results of my study indicated that the possibility of recognition, as well as the moral identity traits (internalization and symbolization), did not affect fundraising behaviors, by themselves or in interaction with each other. My primary hypothesis was a positive three-way interaction between high internalization and high symbolization scores and being in the recognition group I predicted that for those who were recognized, people with greater

internalization and symbolization would raise more money in their Facebook fundraisers, relative to those who were not recognized. By testing this hypothesis with a multiple regression model, I found that this interaction effect did not exist in my sample, and neither did lower-order or main effects for any of these variables. Further, there was no significant difference in money raised between participants in the two recognition groups, regardless of internalization or symbolization status (i.e., no significant main effect for recognition). Additionally, none of these variables, by themselves or in interaction, significantly affected the likelihood of beginning a Facebook fundraiser. The recognition versus no recognition conditions yielded similar results: Recognition on a third-party website did not incentivize fundraising as predicted.

One significant finding I uncovered in my study was a positive association between self-reported empathy and monies raised. Specifically, I added perceived empathy, from the one-item SITES scale (Konrath et al., 2018), as a control variable to the regression model I had previously fit to assess the effects of its inclusion on estimates in my model. Highly empathetic people were more likely to raise more money for their Facebook fundraiser, when holding other variables constant. An increase of one unit on the SITES scale was associated with an approximately 85 percent increase in fundraising. This large effect is particularly notable given the brevity of the SITES scale and has implications for fundraising practice.

Limitations and Further Directions

Two factors are of interest in explaining the null findings: the sample and the lack of incentive that was provided by a type of recognition that has been proven to be successful in other scenarios regarding fundraising (Grosenick, 2020). Regarding the latter, Hypothesis 3b was not supported: recognition and control groups did not vary significantly in terms of money raised. There also were no interactions involving recognition. In this sample of largely high

internalizers (more than half had the maximum internalization score), the effect of recognition was not an additional factor to motivate more successful fundraisers. In other, more varied populations, there could be a significant effect of recognition (perhaps among very low internalizers). There are larger effects of exogenous variables to this study (number of Facebook friends), or that recognition *by the fundraisers Facebook friends* that they are starting a fundraiser provides enough positive psychological benefit, and recognition on the Spina Bifida Association website is superfluous to this. It seems that the recognition on Facebook to their peers was adequate for these fundraisers. From a motivational perspective, Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) proposed sharing of personal information on Facebook was motivated by two primary needs; to belong and for self-presentation (Lee, Im, & Taylor, 2008). Rosenbaum et al. (2013) also found soliciting recognition from peers to be a significant goal of posting status updates on Facebook.

It may be the case that the effect of recognition could have been larger if there was an additional requirement for the fundraisers. For example, maybe the Spina Bifida Association would only have recognized the fundraisers on their website if their fundraisers raised \$500, etc. so that the recognition seemed more special or rare. Scarcity, or in this case, the perception of exclusivity, has been shown to be a strong motivator of behavior by increasing perceived value or desirability (Cialdini, 1993).

Regarding an individual participant's number of Facebook friends: ideally, I would have liked to control for number of Facebook friends in all models, for two reasons. First and most obviously, a greater number of Facebook friends means there would be more potential donors for the fundraiser to draw from. As less obvious reason is that having more friends means there are potentially more people to recognize the fundraiser, through sharing it on their own pages.

However, due to limitations in collecting individuals' information on the Facebook platform, it was not possible to gather data on participants' number of Facebook friends.

Another explanation for the null result may be found with my sample. It was my belief that subjects recruited from the membership of a healthcare nonprofit would be particularly well suited for this study. Spina bifida is a condition that can affect anyone, regardless of age, sex, gender, ethnicity, etc. I assumed that members of this type of organization (with a health-related mission) would include a heterogeneous pool with regards to moral identity centrality when contrasted with the membership of a social welfare organization (e.g., The Southern Poverty Law Center) or other nonprofits whose members are self-selected, and therefore may be more skewed as a group to be high in moral identity internalization. However, that may not have been the case.

When comparing the sample means for moral identity internalization and symbolization in the Winterich, et. al. (2013) study of the influence of recognition on charitable behavior, we see that the Spina Bifida Association sample is actually very similar. Tables 6 and 7 show the mean moral identity scores for all participants in my study, those in the recognition group, and the control group for all participants and only those participants beginning a Facebook fundraiser, respectively.

Table 6.

Mean moral identity scores among all participants.

	Both groups	Recognition group	Control group
Internalization	$M = 6.63, SD = 2.26$	$M = 6.62, SD = 2.31$	$M = 6.64, SD = 2.21$
Symbolization	$M = 5.37, SD = 3.60$	$M = 5.45, SD = 3.50$	$M = 3.12, SD = 3.71$

Table 7.

Mean moral identity scores among participants starting a Facebook fundraiser.

	Both groups	Recognition group	Control group
Internalization	$M = 6.69, SD = 2.21$	$M = 6.70, SD = 2.28$	$M = 6.69, SD = 1.89$
Symbolization	$M = 5.36, SD = 3.40$	$M = 5.30, SD = 3.56$	$M = 5.42, SD = 3.22$

In the Winterich et. al. (2013) study, the mean for internalization ($M = 6.17, SD = .96$) was significantly higher than that for symbolization ($M = 4.17, SD = 1.13$). In addition, in their sample, the mean for internalization is very high at an absolute level, more than 6 on a 7-point scale, with approximately 30% of that sample scoring 7 on a seven-point scale. These means were consistent with those obtained in the scale development (Aquino & Reed, 2002) and in subsequent research (Aquino et al., 2009; Aquino et al., 2011; Reed, Aquino, & Levy, 2007; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007; Skarlicki et al., 2008).

Winterich et. al. (2013) found that recognition increases charitable behavior among participants characterized by high moral identity symbolization and low moral identity internalization. These individuals share donation activity to enhance or maintain a positive social image (Choi & Winterich, 2013; Grant & Mayer, 2009). The means for my sample's internalization scores shown in Tables 6 and 7 were consistently higher than in the Winterich, et. al. study. That leads to two possible conclusions: first, that the high ceiling that was evident in the internalization scores across all groups negated the effect of recognition for all participants. Such ceiling effects were present across the entire sample, as well as pertinent comparisons of groups within the sample. Table 8 displays the results of independent samples t-tests comparing the moral identity concepts by recognition group, for participants who started a fundraiser, as well as for all participants who completed questionnaires. All these tests had null findings,

indicating that the high scores and associated ceiling effects were present across groups. The second involves the type of recognition that was offered. Recognition by the Spina Bifida Association may not have been salient enough to influence participants’ fundraising behavior. Again, this suggests that recognition by the friends of the person initiating the fundraiser on Facebook provides enough positive psychological benefit.

Table 8.

Comparison of moral identity concepts with t-tests.

Sample	Moral Identity Concept	T-value	DF	P-value
Entire	Internalization	0.275	289	0.784
	Symbolization	-1.436	275	0.152
Those who started fundraiser	Internalization	-0.022	162	0.982
	Symbolization	0.748	160	0.455

With regards to why there was no effect of internalization and symbolization on money raised, one partial reason may be that there was not much variation in the sample with respect to symbolization and particularly internalization. Most respondents scored high on both measures. There could have been an effect of one of these variables/concepts in another population. So maybe this could be true in younger populations, people with less money or fundraising experience, etc.

A final issue that should be mentioned is the question of the validity of the Moral Identity Scale itself, and particularly as applied to self-report data. In my sample, the correlation between the two subscales, internalization and symbolization, is 0.17 for those who started a fundraiser, and 0.13 for the entire sample, regardless of whether they started a fundraiser. Very low correlations such as these cast doubt on any single superordinate construct of moral identity being measured in my sample. While a very high correlation between the subscales is also

undesirable from the perspective of statistical efficiency, as this could indicate the subscales were measuring the same construct, the above correlations still seem low, suggesting that the construct validity of the scale may be suspect.

It seems unlikely that participants would score *too* low on the MIS, perhaps because of the impact of social desirability on their responses. Participants may feel a social pressure to respond in a certain way to MIS questions, as it has been found that both the internalization ($r = .18$) and symbolization ($r = .26$) subscales of the MIS are associated with impression management (Aquino & Reed, 2002). Not surprisingly then, Aquino and Reed (study 5, 2002) reported extremely high means coupled with very low standard deviations for the average score for each of the five internalization questions ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.42$) and each of the five symbolization questions ($M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.69$) (note that this version of the MIS used 5-point Likert scales). Other researchers have reported similar findings with the scale. Hall and Derryberry (2010) reported the same pattern of high means and low standard deviations for participants in their study's low racial prejudice group, with average internalization ($M = 24.03$, $SD = 1.24$) and symbolization ($M = 18.48$, $SD = 3.42$) scores also measured on a 5-point scale.

As was the case in my research, the internalization dimension may be more likely to exhibit both higher scores and lower variability. A skewness analysis of the Hall and Derryberry (2010) data showed the internalization scores to be highly negatively skewed, indicating that the majority of scores were high, and that there was little variability in the way the questions were answered. I have noted above that the previously mentioned studies utilized a 5-point Likert scale, unlike my research, which used a 7-point scale (the MIS was normed using a 7-point scale). What type of scale is used is dependent on the researcher's preference. The limited variability that is seen may be due in some part to the inconsistency in measurement. A narrower

range of scores would likely result in a higher likelihood of ceiling and floor effects, but to what extent it is difficult to determine.

Discussion of the associations between moral identity subscales should also consider the broader associations between these scores and moral behavior identified in the literature. Hertz and Krettenauer (2016) conducted a meta-analysis of 111 studies that examined the relationship between moral identity and moral behavior. Sixty-five percent of the studies in the meta-analysis utilized Aquino and Reed's Moral Identity Scale. Overall, across all analyzed studies, there was a significant positive correlation between moral identity and moral behavior (random effects model, $r = .22$, $p < .01$, 95% CI [.19, .25]). However, the authors note that the predictive effect was small to moderate, approximating the average effect size found in most social psychological research. The magnitude of this correlation falls below the common thresholds for moderate (0.30) and large (0.50) effect sizes established by Cohen (Cohen, 1988). Their conclusion was that moral identity does not strongly predict moral behavior. Further, the studies that were based on explicit self-report data yielded the strongest effect sizes, suggesting that social desirability biases inflate the relationship between moral identity and behavior. This is consistent with the high scores and low variability for the MIS generally, which was seen in my sample.

Implications

Regarding the addition of empathy to the model in Hypothesis 6, and its effect—it is notable that perceived empathy (simply a one-question instrument, how does the statement “I am an empathetic person” describe you) is a significant term in the model, and decisively, after no other significant findings before this point. However, this shouldn't be too surprising, given the extensive body of research demonstrating the strong relationship between empathy and prosocial behavior (Xiao et al., 2021). There are a number of ways in which perceived empathy could

positively affect monies raised. For example, in the creation of the Facebook fundraiser, people perceiving themselves as empathetic may include more detailed and persuasive text in the fundraiser description, or may share their fundraiser in more ways, in building on their empathy. People who describe themselves as being less empathetic may do this to a lesser extent, instead adopting a “set-it-and-forget-it” attitude towards the fundraiser.

We cannot know for sure if the finding regarding empathy and fundraising wasn't because of the sample consisting of supporters of the Spina Bifida Association. Still, in the last thirty years, a substantial number of studies that propose empathy as an explanation for prosocial behavior have been published (Verhaert & Van den Poel, 2011). The empathy–altruism hypothesis addresses the distinction between empathic concern and personal distress and differentiates altruistically versus egoistically motivated behavior (Batson, 2010). This hypothesis further states that being confronted with others in need may increase levels of empathic concern or personal distress. Of those in my sample, 52 percent reported that they had themselves been diagnosed with spina bifida, and an additional 32 percent had an immediate family member diagnosed with spina bifida. Not surprisingly, high charity involvement (Bennett & Gabriel, 2000) has been found to occur when a particular issue has either personal relevance, inherent interest or intrinsic importance to the supporter. This factor—the proximity to those in need or being in need oneself—may have motivated their altruism as reflected by fundraising. This would also explain the greater than expected number of participants who started successful Facebook fundraisers.

Conclusion

“Social fundraising,” collecting charitable donations using volunteer fundraisers on social platforms, is a relatively new fundraising venue for nonprofits. Nonprofit fundraising can be

conceptualized as having three “waves” (Losquadro, 2022). The first wave took place through direct mail and handwritten checks. The second wave was through the internet and online fundraising pages on nonprofit websites. In just the last seven years a third shift in giving developed, the third wave — in-channel engagement and social fundraising tactics. Between crowdfunding campaigns on Twitter, Facebook fundraisers and TikTok philanthropy, donors give to nonprofits through the channels that they’re already spending significant time on — social networks. Through the first two waves, nonprofits have used recognition as a tool to motivate donations and fundraising. They have applied the same recognition strategies for motivating supporters in the third wave, fundraising on social networks. The null findings in the present research suggest that the type of recognition which has been applied successfully in the first two waves (VanHuss & Fulton, 2017) will not result in more funds being raised through Facebook fundraisers and other social networks which constitute the third wave.

The nonprofit industry is heavily invested in the types of recognition that are effective in the *offline* environment. Many nonprofits have conducted correlational studies (Grosenick, 2020) which have shown that the application of recognition was related to higher fundraising. Elaborate and expensive recognition product systems have been implemented by nonprofits based on this belief. A conservative level of expense spent on recognition of supporters is 3 percent of total monies raised. The American Cancer Society Relay for Life fundraising program spent, at its high mark, over \$10,000,000 annually on recognition programs for fundraising volunteers. Nonprofits are translating how they have applied recognition in the past into the online, social fundraising environment. This research suggests that approach will not be successful, resulting in wasted money that could instead be put towards their missions.

The act of online sharing is a strategy for impression formation. When negative social consequences, such as embarrassment, result from an act of sharing, the action is avoided (Campbell & Goodstein, 2001). Individuals who started Facebook (birthday) fundraisers have been interviewed, including people who successfully hit their fundraising goals as well as those who did not (Berman, 2020). A majority of fundraisers who hit their goal said they were likely to launch another birthday fundraiser the following year for the same organization. Most fundraisers who did not hit their goal said they were unlikely to launch another birthday fundraiser because they were embarrassed. The source of this embarrassment was not hitting the goal they publicly shared with their network of friends. Interestingly, that did not mean that they had less affinity for the organization. They still wanted to be a supporter, just in a less public way. This is but one example of the important real-world implications of understanding how and why recognition is effective—or not—in social fundraising settings.

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Appendix 1 – Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale (MIS)

Aquino and Reed's (2002) Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale and Instructions

Listed alphabetically below are some characteristics that might describe a person:

Caring, Compassionate, Fair, Friendly, Generous, Hardworking, Helpful, Honest, Kind

The person with these characteristics could be you or it could be someone else. For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics. Imagine how that person would think, feel, and act. When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, answer the following questions using the scale below.

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree

1. It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics.
2. Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am.
3. I often wear clothes that identify me as having these characteristics.
4. I would be ashamed to be a person who has these characteristics.
5. The types of things I do in my spare time (e.g., hobbies) clearly identify me as having these characteristics.
6. The kinds of books and magazines that I read identify me as having these characteristics.
7. Having these characteristics is not really important to me.
8. The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations.
9. I am actively involved in activities that communicate to others that I have these characteristics.
10. I strongly desire to have these characteristics.

Appendix 2 – Solicitation Message

Solicitation email to participate in survey

Subject: We want to know more about YOU!

Dear (**FIRSTNAME**),

Thank you for being part of the Spina Bifida Association family. We are working with researchers at Virginia Commonwealth University in order to learn more about the supporters who make up our community.

Please take just a few minutes to answer a brief survey. All information will be kept confidential.

Many thanks – click on this link that will take you to the survey. (**LINK**)

Sincerely,

Sara Struwe

President & CEO

Appendix 3 – Single Item Trait Empathy Scale (SITES)

The Single Item Trait Empathy Scale (SITES) consists of a single item:

To what extent does the following statement describe you: "I am an empathetic person," rated using a scale that ranges from 1 = Not very true of me to 5 = Very true of me.

Appendix 4 – Survey Demographic Items

First Name

Last Name

Email

Age

< 20

30-39

40-49

50-59

60-69

70+

Gender

M

F

Non-Binary

Other/prefer not to answer

Relationship to Spina Bifida

Diagnosed with spina bifida

Immediate family member diagnosed

Relative diagnosed

Friend diagnosed

Other

VITA

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