



# The Psychology of Volunteering: Motivating Behaviour Change

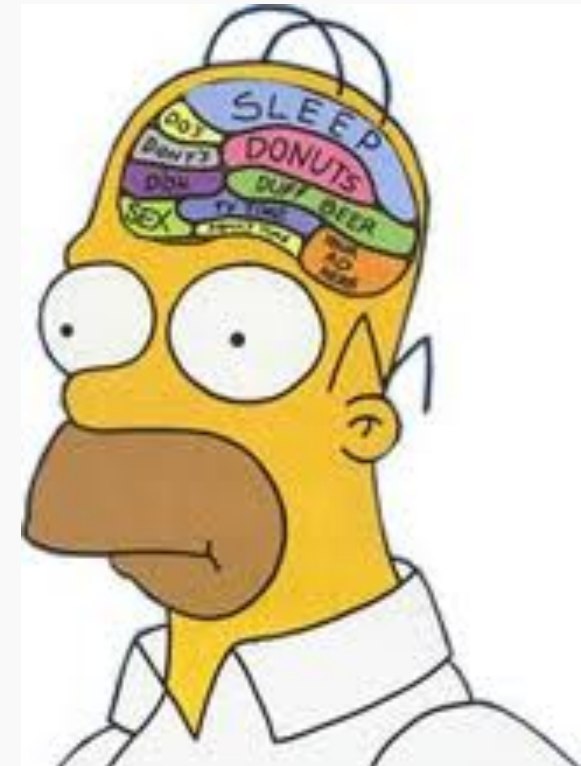
Dr. Rachel McCloy

# Overview

- Changing behaviour
- The Mindspace framework
- Some thoughts encouraging volunteering

# Changing behaviour

- Rational man models of changing behaviour
  - Costs and benefits
  - Information
- Behavioural economics
  - More “Homo Homer Simpsonus” than “Homo Economicus”
  - Often influenced by factors other than simple costs and benefits
  - Limited information/Limited time



# Mindspace

- 9 robust influences on behaviour
- Drawn from literature on behavioural economics and social psychology
- Simple way of thinking through how to make changes



# What does MINDSPACE stand for?

Messenger	Who communicates
Incentives	The kinds of incentives
Norms	What others do
Defaults	We “go with the flow”
Saliency	Novelty and relevance
Priming	Influenced by cues in environment
Affect	Emotion
Commitments	Promises and reciprocity
Ego	How we feel about ourselves

# Messenger

- We are heavily influenced by who communicates information
- Messengers at different levels
  - Social - friends, family etc.
  - Local – local organisations, council etc.
  - Wider world – media, government etc.
- Who will people trust and who will motivate them?



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# Messenger

- Of course, you must be very careful in choosing a messenger!



# Incentives

- More than just traditional financial incentives
- People do not respond to incentives in a straightforward way
  - More concerned with losses than gains
  - More concerned with short-term than long-term gain
  - Engage in mental accounting (with money, time etc.)
  - Sometimes financial incentives can get in the way
- Will people respond straightforwardly to the incentives you use?





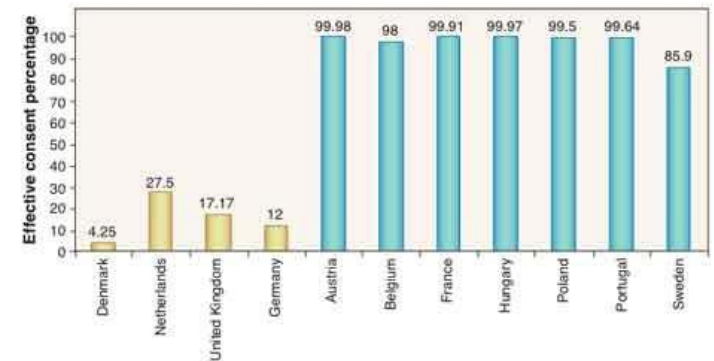
# Norms

- Real or perceived social norms are important
- Personal, local, national and international norms
  - E.g., “women didn’t go into a pub or club alone”
- Can be implicit in how you describe events
  - E.g.,. More people are doing X vs. Most people aren’t doing X
- What norms are acting on your target group? Can these norms be changed?



# Defaults

- We often go with the flow
- Inertia / habit
  - Think about what people's current routines and habits are
  - Can we use defaults to help rather than hinder?
  - How can we build new routines?
- What are the current defaults?  
What would be a better one?
- Pensions reform/ Organ Donation



Effective consent rates, by country. Explicit consent (opt-in, gold) and presumed consent (opt-out, blue).

# Salience

- Novelty and Relevance are important
- We pay more attention to things that stand out, and to things that are relevant to ourselves
- [www.thefuntheory.com](http://www.thefuntheory.com)  
(Volkswagen site)
- Can you make it salient and relevant to the target group?



# Priming

- People are influenced by cues in the environment
  - Positive images
  - Honour codes
- How is the environment structured? What can you do?



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# Affect

- Emotions are a key driver of behaviour
  - Can both motivate and act as barriers
    - Power of a positive experience
  - Anticipated regret – can be both positive and negative
    - “if you don’t try you’ll regret it”
- Are emotions holding people back? Could they push people forward?



# Commitments

- Public commitments and reciprocity
  - Pledgebank
- Fairness
- What role can commitments play?
- Fairness?

Impact of child benefit cut			
Tax rate	Annual income	Benefit	Keep or cut?
Lower 	£43,875 or less	£1,752.4	✓
Higher 	£43,876 or more	0	✗
2x Lower 	£87,750 (2 x 43,875)	£1,752.4	✓
1x Lower 1x Higher 	£87,751 (43,875 + 43,876)	0	✗

Note: higher rate tax begins after earning £43,875 (£37,400 + personal allowance of £6,475)

Source: [HMRC](#)

# Ego

- We do things that make us feel better about ourselves and that are consistent with the kind of person we think we are
  - Flattery
  - Feeling valued
  - “not my kind of thing”
- Who are the target audience? What do they value about themselves?



# Volunteering

- How might you apply Mindspace to thinking about recruiting and keeping volunteers?
- Some ideas...



# Incentives

- Incentives – what are people missing out on?



- What would the loss be to your organisation of a volunteer?
  - Can this incentivise people to stay?

# 1.3 million

**paid staff** would be required to replace the work of those who volunteer at least once a month

Equivalent cost:

# £23.1 billion

# Incentives

- “I don’t have time to volunteer”
- What are real time commitments?
  - Do people hold unrealistic views?
- Mental accounting
  - Finding “new” time for volunteering
  - Can you fit it into an existing account?
  - Can you compare with “problem” accounts?
    - E.g. time watching TV, time spent staring at smartphone
  - Are there things that can be done as part of day?



# Norms

- Norms – is there a norm you can emphasise?
- E.g. The US Federal Agency for Service and Volunteering

## Quick Stats

- In 2011, the number of volunteers reached its [highest level in five years, as 64.3 million Americans](#) volunteered through an organization, an increase of 1.5 million from 2010.
- Americans volunteered a total of almost [8 billion hours](#), an estimated economic value of roughly [\\$171 billion](#).
- [A majority of Americans](#) assisted their neighbors in some way and [more than a third](#) actively participated in a civic, religious, or school group.
- Americans overwhelmingly [volunteered in schools](#) or with other youth organizations, working to advance the lives of young people.
- Nearly [three out of five volunteers aged 25-54 are parents](#) to children who are under 18. These parents volunteered well above the national average, focusing on helping fill local needs while also serving as role models—showing their children that community involvement is a critical choice and habit that can improve lives.



# Norms

## More people do volunteer work

One in three involved in doing good, but many help out only occasionally

By **LESLIE KAY LIM**  
and **JANICE TAI**

MORE people than ever before are volunteering in Singapore, a survey showed yesterday.

One in three now helps out for a good cause – the first time the proportion has crossed the 30 per cent threshold.

But many volunteer only occasionally and on an informal basis, meaning it is not done via any organisation, according to the 2012 Individual Giving Survey commissioned by the National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre (NVPC).

They also spent less time doing so, compared with the last survey in 2010.

The survey, which is conducted once every two years starting from 2000, polled more than 1,500 people aged 15 and above. Respondents were asked if they had volunteered at least once in the preceding 12 months.

The findings came as a surprise

a tenth in the last survey.

“We’ve always wanted to see more direct, people-to-people volunteering,” Mr Lien told a press conference yesterday. “You don’t need to go through an organisation to befriend.”

More people are also volunteering on an occasional basis, contributing to the increase. “We have to be realistic in Singapore,” he said. “For some people, ad hoc is the only way they can contribute.”

He added that the challenge for non-profit organisations is how to turn occasional volunteers into regular ones. Better management is one area to concentrate on.

While volunteering is on the rise across all age groups, it rose particularly sharply among those aged 35 to 44. Mr Lien said one reason could be that many are parents who volunteer at schools and religious organisations.

Singapore Red Cross secretary-general Benjamin William said that age group may be more

Still, some said they were surprised by the findings, given that Singaporeans are not known to be active volunteers.

Insurance agent Peter Lim, 36, said: “I don’t know many people who do volunteer, and with the need to balance work and family, there’s very little time left to volunteer.”

The recent World Giving Index, for instance, ranked Singapore 140th out of 146 countries when it came to volunteering one’s time. The index, compiled by British-based Charities Aid Foundation, took into account only formal volunteering over a one-month period.

But informal volunteering should be included, said National Council of Social Service chief executive Ang Bee Lian, “as long as the outcome is people helping one another”.

Besides giving time, more Singaporeans are also giving money to good causes, the NVPC survey found. Nine in 10 respondents said they had done so. But they gave less on average, about \$305 each, down from \$331 in 2010.

Across income levels, those in



Volunteer Lily Ng interacting with (from left) Madam Chong Yong Chew, 76, Madam Tay Suay Tow, 77, and Mr Ng Ah Ngow, 72, at the CARElderly Senior Activity Centre in Circuit Road yesterday. PHOTO: JASON QUAH FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

### GIVING TIME

■ 32.3 per cent volunteered (up from 23.3 per cent). They spent an average of 72 hours a year each (down from 104 hours)

■ One in three volunteers did so only informally (up from one in 10)

■ Volunteerism rate saw the biggest jump among those aged 35 to 44

### GIVING MONEY

■ 91 per cent donated (up from 85 per cent). Total donations went up slightly to \$1.1 billion (from \$1.07 billion)

■ But average donation per person fell from \$331 to \$305

■ Half of the donations went to religious groups

■ Those earning below \$1,000 per month gave 1.82 per cent of their income – the highest

not new and it is not limited to Singapore. “Studies show that poorer people, because of their own vulnerabilities, notice other people in need more,” she said.

Madam Lily Ng is among those who volunteer despite having to juggle career and family commitments. The mother of two started visiting the CARElderly Senior Activity Centre in Circuit Road two years ago to befriend senior citizens and give them facials.

The 42-year-old, who works as an operations manager at a laboratory equipment company and runs an online skincare business

# Salience

- Can you make existing volunteers more salient?
  - Do your volunteers talk about volunteering?
- Can you make volunteering relevant?
  - Skills? Goals?



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# Affect and Ego

- Warm glow hypothesis (Andreoni, 1989, 1990)
  - Doing good things makes people feel good (and that is perhaps why they do them...)
  - Impure altruists
  - Can the warm glow increase subsequent good behaviour?
- Licensing effects (e.g. Mazar & Zhong, 2010) and trade offs
  - But – people know they do this – can you use it?





