

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The polite wiggle-room effect in charity donation decisions

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Abstract

We extend research on charity donations by exploring an everyday tactic for increasing compliance: asking politely. We consider three possible effects of politeness on charity donations: a positive effect, a negative effect, and a wiggle-room effect where the perception of the request is adjusted to decline donating without feeling selfish. Results from six experiments systematically supported the polite wiggle-room effect. In hypothetical donations contexts, indirect requests were judged more polite. In real donation contexts, though, indirect requests were not judged as more polite and had no consistent effect on donation decision. Rather, the decision to donate predicted the perceived politeness of the request, independently of its phrasing. Experiment 4 provided causal evidence that participants justified their donation decisions by adjusting their perception of the request. The polite wiggle-room effect has important implications for organizations that seek to increase compliance while maintaining a positive image.

KEYWORDS

charity, donation decisions, ethical dissonance, moral wiggle room, politeness, prosocial behavior

1 | INTRODUCTION

Even though people are sensitive to the distress of those who are in need, they tend not to give to charities until they are asked. This “power of the ask” is well-known in fundraising circles and has received empirical and experimental support (Bekkers & Wiepking, 2010). Charities that decrease their request volume after receiving a government grant raise less money (Andreoni & Payne, 2003); donation requests increase the likelihood to give by up to 20 percentage points (Andreoni et al., 2016; Meer & Rosen, 2011; Yörük, 2009), and they can double the amount given in experimental games conducted in the lab (Andreoni & Rao, 2011).

Given the importance of requests for charitable fundraising, the next logical step is to understand which form a request should take in order to maximize its effectiveness. Accordingly, a vast body of research has investigated the efficacy of various methods of solicitation. This previous research typically manipulated the semantic information contained in the request, by providing social information about the contribution of others (Frey & Meier, 2004), emphasizing the situation of the beneficiaries (Hung & Wyer, 2014), and focusing on a person before asking for a group (Hsee et al., 2013).

Previous work has been extremely helpful in identifying the kind of information that increase the effectiveness of charity requests.

Charitable requests, though, vary not only in informational contents but also in their degree of *indirectness*, a close proxy for politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Indeed, speakers often veil their requests in indirect speech, rather than stating them plainly (Clark & Schunk, 1980; Lee & Pinker, 2010; Pinker et al., 2008).

Even though the intent of a speaker would be made perfectly clear by using an imperative such as “Make a donation,” a polite speaker may prefer to use a question such as “Perhaps you would like to make a donation?,” which does not convey the impression that the speaker can make demands, or already assumes that the response will be positive. Indeed, politeness satisfies two preferences of listeners: being positively valued and being treated as autonomous (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Polite requests show consideration for the feelings of listeners and treat them as autonomous by showing that the decision is theirs to make. In daily life, we tend to avoid directives in favor of more polite requests (Holtgraves & Yang, 1990) and for a good reason: We believe that polite requests are more likely to be granted than requests phrased as directives (Bohns, 2016).

If charities followed this everyday usage, we would expect them to eschew directives in favor of more polite requests. This is what was observed in a qualitative study of five British charity commercials, which were found to use politeness strategies to soften their requests—for example, phrasing the request as a question such as “We

TABLE 1 Requests from the largest 10 charities in the United States (as listed by forbes.com, retrieved on 06/01/2016). The table shows the phrase that appears on the donation button featured on the home page, as well as the header of the following donation page

Charity	Donation Button	Header of Donation Page
United Way	Donate	Support our work
Salvation Army	Donate here	Make a donation
Feeding America	Donate	Together we can solve hunger: Donate to Feeding America
Task Force for Global Health	Donate	Your donation helps us help millions
St. Jude Children's Research Hospital	Donate now	Make a donation to end childhood cancer
YMCA of the USA	Give	What would you like to give?
Goodwill Industries International	Give a gift	You make the difference
Food for the Poor	Donate now	Provide vital services to the poorest of the poor
Direct Relief	Donate	Deliver a world of good
American Cancer Society	Donate to save lives	Donate

save the children; will you?" (Pennock-Speck & Saz-Rubio, 2013). It is however easy to find examples that do not fit that template. Table 1 displays the largest 10 charities in the United States (as ranked by forbes.com) together with the request that appears on the donation button displayed on their home page, and the header of the donation page to which the button links.

As shown in Table 1, there is no sign that charities generally avoid directives in favor of more polite phrasings. In fact, most of the requests in Table 1 are phrased as directives. This can easily be explained for donation buttons, whose design can only accommodate very short sentences. However, the headers of donation pages do not have this constraint, and most of them are still phrased as directives, for example, "Support our work" or "Make a donation to end childhood cancer". Not all requests are phrased as directives, though, which begs the question: Given all the care that large charities give to their fundraising techniques, why did they not converge on a common strategy to phrase their requests?

One reason for this lack of convergence may simply be the lack of appropriate data. It might be that directives work best at eliciting donations, or that politeness works best—but that in the absence of experimental work, this regularity has not been identified yet. In this article, we fill that gap by considering three hypotheses linking the politeness of a request and the likelihood of a donation.

1.1 | Politeness helps

Our first hypothesis is simply that politeness helps. Under this hypothesis, phrasing the request as a question ("Would you like to donate") or further hedging that question ("Perhaps you would like to donate?") would be subjectively perceived as more polite than a directive ("Donate") by potential donors and would accordingly increase the likelihood of a donation. This hypothesis is in line with standard results on politeness and compliance: All other things being equal, directives are usually perceived as being low in politeness (Dillard et al., 1997; Holtgraves, 1992) and elicit lower rates of compliance (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Dillard et al., 1997; Enzle & Harvey, 1982; Jenkins & Dragojevic, 2013; Quick & Considine, 2008; Wilson & Kunkel, 2000).

1.2 | Politeness hurts

Although the *Politeness Helps* hypothesis is plausible, it is also possible that *Politeness Hurts* in the context of charity requests. Indeed, it is commonly accepted that politeness is not required in urgent and desperate situations (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Kellermann & Park, 2001; Miller et al., 2012). Using politeness in these situations can decrease their communicated urgency and decrease in turn the likelihood of getting help (Kronrod et al., 2012; Colaizzi et al., 1984). Just as "Would you be so kind and help me?" does not communicate the same urgency as the imperative "Help!," we may expect that a polite request such as "Perhaps you would like to donate?" does not communicate the same urgency as the directive "Donate." Accordingly, a polite phrasing of the donation request may decrease the likelihood of a donation, by downplaying the urgency of helping the beneficiaries. Furthermore, politeness may also decrease the likelihood of a donation because it makes it easier to say no, rather than "giving in" to social pressure (Bohns, 2016; Flynn & Lake, 2008).

1.3 | Politeness as moral wiggle room

Our final hypothesis is grounded in the idea that people commonly seek to satisfy two simultaneous but sometimes conflicting goals: promoting their financial prospects, and maintaining a positive view of themselves (Bénabou & Tirole, 2011). When financial prospects can only be promoted by unethical behavior, people experience a state known as ethical dissonance, in which they may try to justify their unethical, self-interested behavior by redefining it as excusable (Barkan et al., 2015; Chance & Norton, 2015; Shalvi et al., 2015). Being asked to donate money to a charity is not quite a case of ethical dissonance (it is not unethical to decline to donate), but it still creates a conflict between the pursuit of material self-interest and the desire to maintain a moral image of the self as a charitable and generous person. In such situations, people are known to engage in what has been variously called ethical manoeuvring (Shalvi et al., 2011), fudging (Ariely, 2012), or *moral wiggle room* (Dana et al., 2007).

People who engage in moral wiggle room leverage whatever aspect of the situation that can disguise or explain away their selfish behavior, in order to do what is the most beneficial while avoiding to look selfish in their own eyes (Exley, 2016). In the specific context of

charity requests, we believe that people who do not wish to donate may leverage the phrasing of the request in order to excuse their decision. The logic is the following: People who do not wish to donate can explain away their decision by considering that the request was impolite, whatever way it was phrased. Under this *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis, we expect that (a) the phrasing of the request has no effect on its perceived politeness; (b) it has no effect on the likelihood of a donation; but (c) individuals who decide not to donate will find the request to be less polite, whatever the way it is phrased.

Note that although the *Politeness helps* and *Politeness hurts* hypotheses assume that politeness has a causal impact on charitable donations, the *Polite wiggle room* hypothesis assumes that the decision to donate has a causal impact on the perception of the request as polite or impolite. Given that this is our preferred hypothesis, we do not expect to identify a causal driver of charitable donations. Indeed, the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis departs from several common assumptions about the effect of (charity) requests on compliance. The contents and phrasing of a request are commonly assumed to have a causal effect on compliance that is mediated by their impact on the requestee's beliefs (Miller et al., 2007; Small & Loewenstein, 2003). For example, showing a picture of a potential beneficiary may increase compliance because it increases the requestee's certainty that help is indeed needed (Jenni & Loewenstein, 1997). In contrast, the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis reverses the causal link between beliefs and compliance, by considering that requestees may change their beliefs *because* they do not want to donate and still want to maintain a positive view of themselves (Chance & Norton, 2015).

Accordingly, the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis offers an explanation of the conflicting findings about the effect of linguistic politeness on compliance (Kronrod et al., 2012; Colaizzi et al., 1984; O'Keefe, 1997). If the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis is correct, then it is not surprising that polite requests may work or backfire in different occasions, or have an erratic impact on perceived politeness, since their causal link to perceived politeness and compliance is weakened when requestees engage in moral wiggle room. The implications of this phenomenon will be explored in the General Discussion.

2 | METHOD STATEMENT

All experiments received ethical approval from Kingston Business School (England). We report all measures and conditions for all experiments—for example, the fact that a study does not report intrusiveness effects means that only politeness was measured in that study. Two experiments in which the donations were hypothetical are reported in Appendix C as Experiments A and B rather than in the main text, because we favor experiments in which the donations were real. Results in those two experiments are consistent with those reported in the text (albeit not exactly similar in terms of politeness and intrusiveness ratings, see Appendix C).

We used an a priori stopping rule to determine a sample size for each experiment following a rule of thumb. In terms of sensitivity, with 80% power and 5% alpha, our sample sizes across all experiments were sensitive enough to detect small effects for the main manipulation as

well as for the effect of donation on politeness— f^2 s from 0.02 to 0.04 for an effect of a predictor using a multiple regression analysis adjusted for gender and age. In addition, with 80% power and 5% alpha, our sample sizes were sensitive enough to detect small-to-medium to medium effects of the main manipulation on donation, that is, odd ratios ranging from 2.1 to 3.0 (Cohen, 1988; Faul et al., 2007).

No participants were excluded from analysis, provided that they responded to all questions used in the analysis. The only exception is Experiment B (reported in Appendix C), from which 23 participants were excluded because a system check showed that sound was not working on their computer, preventing them from hearing the request for a donation. Data from all experiments are available on the Open Science Framework: goo.gl/ffGH55.

3 | PRETEST OF DONATION REQUESTS

All experiments compared the efficacy and perception of three donation requests. The first request was a *directive* ("Donate to unicef now!"), which we assumed to be the least polite phrasing. The two other requests were two slightly different but expectedly more polite questions ("Would you like to donate to unicef now?" and "Could you perhaps donate to unicef now?"). We will refer to them as the *would-question* and the *could-question*.

Our experiments assumed the directive to be less polite and more intrusive than the would- and could-questions. We verified that this was indeed the case by asking 302 participants to judge the politeness and intrusiveness of these requests *as third parties*, that is, as disinterested observers who were not asking nor being asked for money.

Participants ($N = 302$, 44% women, median age 32, age range 18–69) were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk and read a vignette in which a person asked another for a charity donation. Participants were randomly assigned to the conditions in which the request was a directive, a would-question, or a could-question:

Person A asks person B for a charitable donation as follows: (Directive) Donate to unicef now! (Question) Would you like to donate to unicef now? (Hedge) Could you perhaps donate to unicef now?

Participants rated whether they agreed or disagreed with a series of statement about the politeness and intrusiveness of the request (see Appendix A). The politeness scale featured 14 items and was developed to assess whether the two basic needs of requestees were fulfilled: the need to be respected and the need to be autonomous; some items were adapted from MacGeorge et al., (2004). The intrusiveness featured eight items which measured persuasion awareness (Feiler et al., 2012) and psychological reactance Jonason and Knowles (2006). Participants provided their judgments on a 7-point scale anchored at *completely disagree* and *completely agree*. The politeness and intrusiveness scales showed good reliability, with a Cronbach's α of 0.83 for politeness and 0.93 for intrusiveness.

As expected, the politeness of the directive ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 0.9$) was perceived as significantly lower than both the politeness of the would-question ($M = 4.4$, $SD = 1.0$), and the politeness of the

could-question ($M = 4.2$, $SD = 0.9$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in politeness between the directive and the would question was $[-1.5, -1.1]$, $t(200) = -10.4$, $p < 0.001$, $d = -1.46$. The difference in politeness between the directive and the could-question was $[-1.7, -1.2]$, $t(197) = -10.6$, $p < 0.001$, $d = -1.50$. The would- and could-questions did not significantly differ in politeness, $[-0.4, +0.1]$, $t(193) = -1.0$, $p = 0.33$, $d = -0.14$.

Again as expected, the intrusiveness of the directive ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 1.3$) was perceived as significantly greater than both the intrusiveness of the would-question ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.4$), and the intrusiveness of the could-question ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.4$). The 95% confidence interval for the difference in intrusiveness between the directive and the would question was $[+1.3, +2.1]$, $t(199) = 8.6$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 1.21$. The difference in intrusiveness between the directive and the could-question was $[+0.9, +1.7]$, $t(198) = 6.9$, $p < 0.001$, $d = 0.97$. The would- and could-questions did not significantly differ in intrusiveness, $[-0.8, +0.1]$, $t(198) = -1.9$, $p = 0.06$, $d = -0.27$.

4 | EXPERIMENTS 1 AND 2

In these two experiments, participants were compensated for their time and were presented with a request for a charity donation at the end of the experiment. They could make a donation by parting with some of the money they earned in the experiment.

4.1 | Methods

Participants in Experiment 1 ($N = 196$, 38% women, median age 27, age range 18–74) and Experiment 2 ($N = 162$, 50% women, median age 32, age range 19–60) were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk. The donation request and subsequent questions appeared at the end of a 5-min survey on climate change predictions. The donation request appeared together with a picture of a child (borrowed with permission from the UNICEF website) and came in one of three phrasings: (Directive) *Donate to unicef now!* (Would-Question) *Would you like to donate to unicef now?* (Could-Question) *Could you perhaps donate to unicef now?* Participants who indicated they wanted to make a donation were directed to a donation page. Finally, all participants (whether they made a donation or not) rated the request for politeness by completing the politeness scale. The politeness scale of the pretest was adapted to a first-person perspective but the questions were otherwise as close as possible to that used in the pretest (see Appendix B).¹ The politeness scale achieved a satisfactory Cronbach's α in both experiments (0.79 and 0.75).

The donation page was different in the two experiments. In Experiment 1, participants simply indicated how much of their participation bonus (\$1) they wished to give to unicef. In Experiment 2, we followed the procedure of Soyer and Hogarth (2011) by asking participants to indicate how much they were willing to donate to unicef if they won the \$40 lottery in which they entered by participating in the study.

4.2 | Results

We follow a two-step analysis strategy. First, we assess whether the phrasing of the request impacts its perceived politeness and intrusiveness, as well as the likelihood of a donation (and the amount of the donation when it is not zero). Second, we assess whether the likelihood of a donation can explain the perceived politeness and intrusiveness of the request, controlling for the phrasing of the request. Under the *Politeness Helps* and *Politeness Hurts* hypotheses, we can expect the phrasing of the request to impact politeness, intrusiveness, and the likelihood of a donation. Under the *Polite wiggle Room* hypothesis, we can expect the likelihood of donation but not the phrasing of the request, to predict politeness and intrusiveness.

All regressions we report control for age and gender,² and use simple contrasts for the Request variable, comparing the would- and could-questions separately to the directive phrasing. Regressions were conducted using the `lm` or `glm` function in base R (R Core Team, 2015).

Figure 1 offers a visual summary of the findings of the two experiments. As shown in Figure 1, phrasing the request as a would- or could-question did not increase its perceived politeness nor the likelihood of a donation (displayed within each panel as the percentage of participants who did not donate on the left side, and the percentage of participants who donated on the right side). However, in line with the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis, the perceived politeness of the request was always greater among participants who decided to make a donation.

These observations were confirmed by statistical analyses. Tables 2 and 3 display the results of the first step of analysis for the Experiments 1 and 2. In both experiments, the phrasing of the request had no impact on its perceived politeness nor on the decision to donate. Table 4 displays the results of the second step of analysis, for Experiments 1 and 2. In both experiments, the request was rated as significantly more polite by participants who decided to make a donation, whereas its actual phrasing had no detectable effect.

In sum, data supported the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis more than the *Politeness Helps* or *Politeness Hurts* hypotheses. The phrasing of the request did not influence its perceived politeness, nor the decision to donate, but participants apparently adjusted their impression of politeness as a function of whether they wanted or not to make a donation.

In Experiments 1 and 2, participants made their donation decision first and assessed the request after. It is possible that this sequence encouraged participants to base their politeness ratings on their donation decisions, thus amplifying the impact of donation on perceived politeness and undercutting any effect of phrasing on perceived politeness. To rule out this possibility, Experiment 3 replicated Experiments 1 and 2 while counterbalancing the order of the donation and politeness questions.

¹Participants who made a donation also filled out a subquestionnaire about their motivations, which we do not analyze further in this manuscript.

²We controlled for age and gender as a matter of standard operating procedure, but the results of all studies stay the same if we do not include these covariates in the regressions.

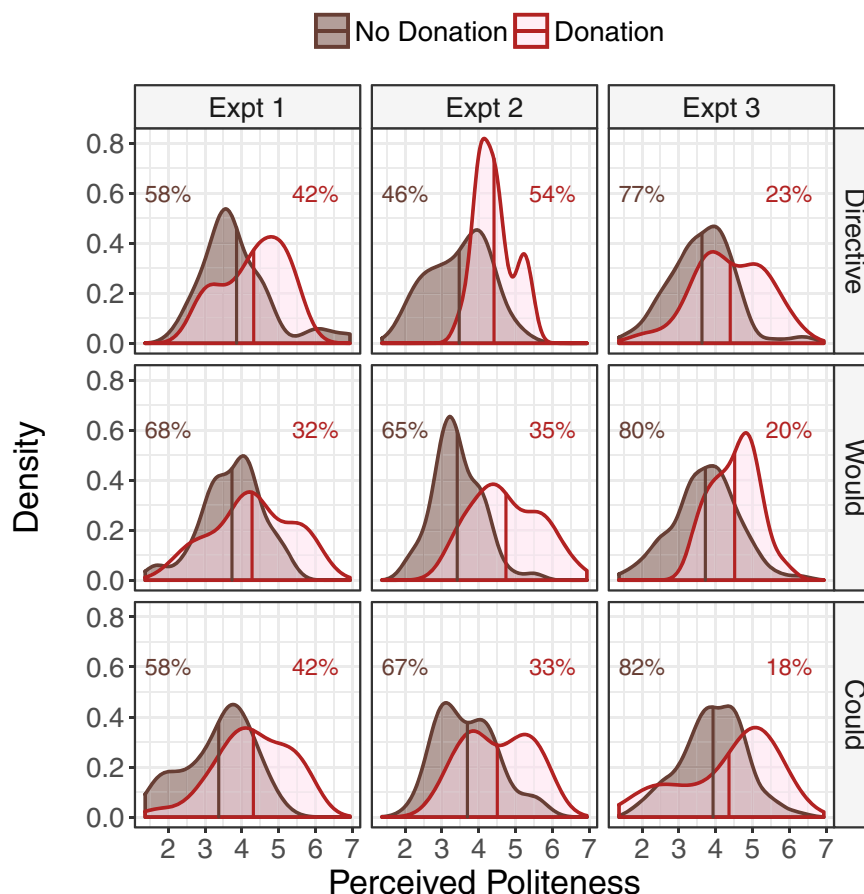


FIGURE 1 Results of Experiments 1 to 3. Phrasing the request as a would- or could-question did not increase its perceived politeness nor the likelihood of a donation (shown here as a percentage). However, the perceived politeness of the request was always greater among participants who decided to make a donation, independently of its actual phrasing [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

TABLE 2 First step of analysis, Experiment 1 (regression coefficients and standard errors). Phrasing the request as a would- or could-question had no impact on its perceived politeness nor on the probability of obtaining a donation

	Dependent variable		
	Politeness OLS (1)	Donation logistic (2)	Amount (if ≠ 0) OLS (3)
Would-Question	−0.11 (0.17)	−0.42 (0.37)	−0.04 (0.11)
Could-Question	−0.25 (0.17)	−0.01 (0.36)	0.005 (0.10)
Gender (Women)	0.12 (0.14)	0.50 (0.31)	0.04 (0.09)
Age	0.01* (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	0.001 (0.004)
Constant	3.53*** (0.24)	−0.17 (0.51)	0.35* (0.16)
Observations	196	196	75

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D1 in appendix D.

TABLE 3 First step of analysis, Experiment 2 (regression coefficients and standard errors). Phrasing the request as a would- or could-question had no impact on its perceived politeness nor on the decision to donate

	Dependent variable		
	Politeness OLS (1)	Donation logistic (2)	Amount (if ≠ 0) OLS (3)
Would-Question	−0.04 (0.09)	−0.40 (0.20)	0.01 (0.02)
Could-Question	0.01 (0.06)	−0.14 (0.13)	0.01 (0.01)
Gender (Women)	0.13 (0.15)	0.11 (0.34)	0.06* (0.03)
Age	0.01* (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.0003 (0.001)
Constant	3.39*** (0.22)	−1.23* (0.50)	0.07 (0.04)
Observations	162	162	63

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D1 in appendix D.

TABLE 4 Second step of analysis, Experiments 1 and 2 (regression coefficient and standard error). The decision to make a donation has a strong impact on the perceived politeness of the request, in contrast to the phrasing of the request

	Dependent variable	
	Politeness	
	(Experiment 1)	(Experiment 2)
Would-Question	−0.05 (0.16)	0.14 (0.15)
Could-Question	−0.25 (0.16)	0.20 (0.17)
Donation (Yes)	0.68*** (0.14)	1.10*** (0.13)
Gender (Women)	0.04 (0.14)	0.10 (0.12)
Age	0.02** (0.01)	0.01 (0.005)
Constant	3.23*** (0.23)	3.05*** (0.22)
Observations	196	162

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D2 in appendix D.

5 | EXPERIMENT 3

5.1 | Methods

Participants in Experiment 3 ($N = 354$, 42% women, median age 34, age range 18–72) were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk. The donation request and subsequent questions appeared at the end of a short survey on the interpretation of verbal uncertainty. Participants were randomly assigned to see one of the three phrasings of the request. Within each group, half of the participants saw the request, made their donation decision, and then rated the politeness and intrusiveness of the request. The other half saw the donation request, rated its politeness and intrusiveness, and then made their donation decision. Participants indicated how much of their participation bonus (\$1) they wished to give to unicef.

5.2 | Results

The aggregated findings of the study are displayed in the right panel of Figure 1. Donations were considerably lower than in Experiments 1 and 2—we speculate that this is the result of not using in Experiment 3 the child picture that accompanied the donation request in Experiments 1 and 2. Table 5 displays the results of the first step of analysis in which we regress our dependent measures on the phrasing of the request, the order in which the questions were asked, and their interaction. As in the two previous experiments, the phrasing of the request had no impact on the politeness and intrusiveness of the request, nor on the donation decision or donation amount. The phrasing of the request did not interact with the order manipulation.

Table 6 displays the results of the second step of analysis. The decision to make a donation had a large impact on both perceived politeness and intrusiveness, compared with the small and heterogeneous effects of the phrasing of the request. Results showed some hints of an interaction between the donation decision and the order

manipulation, suggesting that the donation decision had a lower impact when it came last. This effect, however, is driven by participants who made a donation ($M_{\text{Politeness}} = 4.7$ vs. 4.2 when the donation decision came first vs. last, $M_{\text{Intrusiveness}} = 2.2$ vs. 3.1 when the donation decision came first vs. last). Participants who did not make a donation were not affected by the order manipulation ($M_{\text{Politeness}} = 3.7$ vs. 3.8 when the donation decision came first vs. last, $M_{\text{Intrusiveness}} = 3.5$ vs. 3.7 when the donation decision came first vs. last).

In sum, Experiment 3 confirmed the findings of Experiments 1 and 2. Although there is some suggestion that asking the politeness questions first decreased the effect of the donation decision on politeness ratings, this interaction effect was small and mostly driven by participants who made a donation—and thus not in need for wiggle room.

Although our results so far support the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis, they could also be explained in terms of personality differences between individuals who donate and individuals who do not. It is possible that individuals who have a propensity to make charity donations also have a charitable disposition in the way they assess politeness. Such a disposition would explain why individuals who donate also find requests more polite (however, they are phrased), without the need for postulating a wiggle-room mechanism.

To address this concern, we conducted a final experiment in which we recontacted the participants of Experiment 3 in order for them to rate again the politeness of the request, *while giving them a false reminder of their donation decision*. If participants who made a donation rated the request as more polite because of a predisposition to do so, their politeness ratings should stay the same even when told that they did not donate. In contrast, if participants use politeness judgments as moral wiggle room, they should rate politeness as a function of the reminder they receive and not as a function of the actual decision they made.

We are mindful of the fact that deception techniques should only be used sparingly and responsibly, when they deliver a scientific value that is not feasibly achieved by nondeceptive techniques. In the course of this project, we were unable to identify a nondeceptive technique that would allow us to move beyond correlational results and provide causal evidence for the polite wiggle room effect. Nonetheless, we acknowledge the use of deception as one limitation of the current study.

6 | EXPERIMENT 4

In this final experiment, the participants of Experiment 3 were contacted 3 months later to do a follow-up rating of the politeness and intrusiveness of the request they were presented with, only with a twist. Before the rating task, we gave participants a reminder of the decision they made 3 months earlier. This reminder was actually randomly assigned: half the participants were “reminded” that they donated, and the other half were “reminded” that they did not donate. The prediction of the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis is that participants would rate the politeness and intrusiveness of the request as a function of this feedback and not as a function of their actual decision in Experiment 3.

TABLE 5 First step of analysis, Experiment 3 (regression coefficients and standard errors). Phrasing the request as a would- or could-question had no detectable impact on its perceived politeness and intrusiveness, and this result held whether the politeness/intrusiveness questions were asked before or after the donation decision. The same results hold for the likelihood of making a donation and for the donation amount, if different from zero

	<i>Dependent variables</i>			
	Politeness OLS (1)	Intrusiveness OLS (2)	Donation logistic (3)	Amount OLS (4)
Would-Question	−0.09 (0.17)	−0.24 (0.29)	−0.41 (0.44)	0.05 (0.14)
Could-Question	0.20 (0.17)	−0.20 (0.29)	−0.55 (0.45)	0.06 (0.14)
Order (Politeness First)	−0.17 (0.17)	0.54* (0.30)	−0.23 (0.45)	−0.15 (0.14)
Gender (Women)	−0.29** (0.10)	0.12 (0.18)	−0.06 (0.27)	0.15 (0.09)
Age	0.0003 (0.004)	0.01 (0.01)	0.003 (0.01)	0.001 (0.003)
Would-Question × Order (Politeness First)	0.34 (0.24)	−0.28 (0.42)	0.45 (0.65)	−0.05 (0.20)
Could-Question × Order (Politeness First)	−0.003 (0.24)	−0.24 (0.42)	0.48 (0.66)	−0.01 (0.20)
Constant	4.04*** (0.20)	2.89*** (0.35)	−1.20* (0.53)	0.41* (0.16)
Observations	354	354	352	71

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D1 in appendix D.

TABLE 6 Second step of analysis, Experiment 3 (regression coefficients and standard errors). The decision to make a donation, but not the actual phrasing of the request, had a strong impact on the perceived politeness and intrusiveness of the request

	<i>Dependent variables</i>	
	Politeness (1)	Intrusiveness (2)
Would-Question	0.09 (0.12)	−0.43* (0.20)
Could-Question	0.24* (0.12)	−0.39 (0.20)
Donation (Yes)	0.90*** (0.16)	−1.41*** (0.29)
Order (Politeness First)	0.03 (0.11)	0.23 (0.19)
Gender (Women)	−0.27** (0.10)	0.09 (0.17)
Age	0.001 (0.004)	0.01 (0.01)
Donation × Order (Politeness First)	−0.48* (0.24)	0.76 (0.42)
Constant	3.72*** (0.18)	3.29*** (0.33)
Observations	352	352

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D2 in appendix D.

6.1 | Methods

Participants in Experiment 4 ($N = 187$, 44% women, median age 36, age range 18–68) were invited to take part in a follow-up to Experiment 3 three months after the initial data collection (not all participants of Experiment 3 accepted this invitation, hence the smaller sample size in Experiment 4). About 49% of the participants who took part to Experiment 4 had decided to make a donation in Experiment 3. Participants were approached as follows:

We are interested in your perception of a donation request that you received in April 2015 in an Amazon Mechanical Turk online questionnaire. It is not a problem if you do not remember answering this questionnaire.

Participants were then told:

Few months ago (in April 2015), you took part in a research in which you received a bonus and you were given the possibility to donate some of your bonus to unicef. In April, you chose (to donate/not to donate) some of your bonus to unicef. We are now only interested in your perception of the donation appeal. So we will show you the appeal as you have seen it in April, and we will ask you a few questions about how it makes you feel now.

Participants randomly received a reminder that they donated or a reminder that they did not donate. They were then shown the request

TABLE 7 Regression analyses, Experiment 4 (regression coefficient and standard error). Participants who were reminded that they donated found the request more polite and less intrusive than participants who were reminded that they did not donate

	<i>Dependent variables</i>			
	Politeness	Politeness	Intrusiveness	Intrusiveness
Would-Question	0.25 (0.14)	0.21 (0.13)	−0.55* (0.27)	−0.55* (0.26)
Could-Question	0.48** (0.14)	0.43** (0.14)	−0.23 (0.28)	−0.16 (0.27)
Donation (Yes)	0.24 (0.14)		−0.26 (0.27)	
Reminder (You donated)		0.41*** (0.11)		−0.67** (0.22)
Gender (Women)	0.03 (0.12)	−0.01 (0.11)	−0.13 (0.22)	−0.08 (0.22)
Age	−0.004 (0.005)	−0.04 (0.005)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)
Constant	3.82*** (0.22)	3.69*** (0.22)	3.19*** (0.43)	3.51*** (0.43)
Observations	185	187	185	187

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

TABLE 8 Regression analyses, Experiment 4 (regression coefficient and standard error), on the subsample of participants who accepted the reminder as correct. Participants who were reminded that they donated found the request more polite and less intrusive than participants who were reminded that they did not donate

	<i>Dependent variables</i>			
	Politeness	Politeness	Intrusiveness	Intrusiveness
Would-Question	0.07 (0.17)	0.04 (0.16)	−0.39 (0.33)	−0.42 (0.31)
Could-Question	0.48** (0.18)	0.46** (0.17)	−0.40 (0.34)	−0.40 (0.33)
Donation (Yes)	0.39* (0.17)		−0.43 (0.32)	
Reminder (You donated)		0.67*** (0.14)		−0.93** (0.27)
Gender (Women)	0.06 (0.15)	−0.03 (0.14)	−0.29 (0.27)	−0.20 (0.26)
Age	−0.01 (0.01)	−0.01 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)	0.02 (0.01)
Constant	3.91*** (0.28)	3.78*** (0.26)	3.01*** (0.52)	3.31*** (0.50)
Observations	124	125	124	125

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

phrased in the same way as it was for them 3 months earlier and rated its politeness and intrusiveness. Finally, participants were asked if they thought our records were correct to show that they (did/did not) donate to unicef in the April survey.

6.2 | Results

Almost all (95%) participants who received a correct reminder accepted it as correct, whereas participants who received an incorrect reminder were split about whether it was correct (42% correct, 58% incorrect). Table 7 displays the regression analyses of politeness and intrusive-

ness, using either the actual decision in Experiment 3 or the reminder in Experiment 4 as predictors. As expected from the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis, Politeness and Intrusiveness ratings were significantly predicted by the reminder given in Experiment 4 but not by the actual decision made in Experiment 3. In a way that was largely independent from the phrasing of the request itself, participants who were told that they donated thought the request was more polite and less intrusive than participants who were told that they did not donate.

It might be surprising that participants relied so much on our feedback, while expressing doubts that it was correct. We believe that many participants who indicated that there might be a problem with

our records were not in fact absolutely sure of what they did 3 months before, which would explain why they relied on our feedback even though they had doubts about it. This is speculative, though, because we do not have a measure of their confidence.

For robustness purposes, we conducted similar analyses conducted on the subsample of participants who accepted the reminder as correct. These analyses delivered essentially the same results, as shown in Table 8. The effect of the actual decision on Politeness ratings crosses the 0.05 significance threshold, but this effect remains small, about half as large as that of the reminder, which (expectedly) increased in the subsample.

7 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

People are more likely to give to charities when they receive a request to do so and considerable work has been devoted to identifying the elements of a successful request. However, this body of research had not yet explored the common everyday tactic of asking politely. In this article, we considered three hypotheses about the effect of politeness in the context of online charity requests: that politeness would help, that politeness would hurt, and that politeness would be used as moral wiggle room for rationalizing the donation decision. For the most part, our results supported the third hypothesis. Increasing the linguistic politeness of a request (by turning it into a would- or could-question) did little for its perceived politeness and did not increase the likelihood of a donation—but the perceived politeness of the request was always lower for people who did not make a donation, independently of its phrasing. In sum, it appears that people adjusted their judgment of how polite the request was, to match their decision to give or not.

Note that our findings cannot speak to the exact temporal sequence of decision (giving or not giving) and evaluation (judging how polite the request was). The fact that we observed a wiggle-room effect in Experiment 3, in which we collected politeness judgments before collecting donations, does not imply that the wiggle room takes place before the decision. Indeed, we must expose participants to the request first, before collecting either judgments or donations. As a result, we cannot rule out the possibility that participants made a decision as soon as they read the request, before they were asked for politeness judgments. Nonetheless, it would seem more plausible that the decision comes first, and the wiggle room second—either as an attempt to adjust self-perceptions in a favorable direction, or as a device for actually going through with the difficult decision to not donate, once one has mentally committed to it (Harmon-Jones et al., 2015). Results of Experiment 4 show that a reminder was enough to trigger polite wiggle room, without the need for an actual decision. This suggests that, at least in this experiment, the wiggle room aimed at adjusting self-perceptions—but this does not rule out the possibility that wiggle room was also used as a commitment device in the other experiments. Since our experiments were not designed to tease out these possibilities, we have to leave this interpretation as a speculation.

Although our experiments were always consistent with the polite wiggle-room hypothesis, we occasionally found a small positive effect of the phrasing of the request on politeness and intrusiveness ratings. This suggests that our participants' linguistic judgments were not fully compromised by their attempts to rationalize their decisions. This

effect was detected in four of the 12 statistical tests conducted in the four experiments which used real financial donations (Tables 4, 6, and 7). Interestingly, it was almost always detected (seven tests out of eight) in the two experiments reported in Appendix B, which used hypothetical donations only. We suspect that this hypothetical character weakened the need for wiggle room, because it makes it easier both to dismiss the request (since no harm is actually done) and to overestimate one's likelihood of giving (since there is no actual cost attached to this decision).

People can find many excuses for not complying with prosocial requests (Chance & Norton, 2015; Dana et al., 2006; Exley, 2016). The current article shows that one of these excuses is to find fault with the request by a biased assessment of its politeness. These results are in line with recent development in the field of behavioral ethics and prosocial behavior. Although people may willingly engage in prosocial behavior, they often “give in,” that is, they reluctantly perform altruistic actions because they do not want to appear selfish, to others or to themselves (Cain et al., 2014). People who “give in” would rather not give, if they could do so without feeling selfish, and incur the negative emotional consequences attached to that feeling (Burgoyne et al., 2005). Various tactics can be employed in that service. People can try to avoid requests altogether, even at a cost (Lin et al., 2016); they can seek situations where selfishness is externally imposed, to avoid personal responsibility (Berman & Small, 2012); or they can rationalize the decision not to give, by emphasizing the risk that their donation may not actually be helpful (Exley, 2016). In this article, we have identified another tactic that can be used to justify the decision not to comply with a prosocial request: People who do not want to give can find fault with the way the request is phrased, considering it as impolite; however, it is actually phrased.³

Although this interpretation is consistent with current trends in behavioral ethics, our results are open to another (complementary) interpretation. People who decide to donate could exaggerate the politeness of the request in order to maximize the personal benefits of their altruistic action. Prosocial behavior triggers a wealth of positive emotions and psychological benefits (Dunn et al., 2014; Raposa et al., 2015), which are stronger when one does not feel coerced into helping (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Given that request are experienced as less coercive when they are more polite, donors may amplify their positive emotions and psychological benefits by recasting the request as polite and noncoercive—just as nondonors may attenuate their negative emotions by recasting the request as impolite and coercive. Another possible interpretation, in line with self-perception theory (Bem, 1967, 1972), is that people impassively observe their donation decision and try to infer why they made it: If they did not donate, they infer that there was something annoying or otherwise negative about the request. This interpretation does not draw on ethical dissonance, but its practical implications are similar.

Indeed, whether people adjust their perceptions of politeness to enhance the psychological benefits of giving, to attenuate the psychological costs of not giving, or simply to explain their own decision,

³We are not claiming that perceived politeness is the only mechanism people can use to justify non-donations. For example, and as discussed in the introduction, people may also rationalize that a would- or could-question signals that a request is less urgent. Self-serving justifications are complex and opportunistic, and no single mechanism may capture them all.

our findings suggest that such mechanisms can lead to virtuous or vicious circles with respect to charity donations. People differ in their propensity to give to charities (Aknin et al., 2012; Bekkers & Wiepking, 2010; Kogut & Ritov, 2011), and our results suggest that perceptions of politeness can compound these individual differences. Every time an individual decides to give or not give, this individual adjusts her perception of how politely the donation request was phrased, and this evaluation can affect her perception of the charity that issued the request. A similar effect is observed with online advertising: ads which are perceived as intrusive negatively affect one's perception of the website that contains them (McCoy et al., 2016). Similarly, we may expect that requests which are subjectively perceived as impolite or intrusive negatively affect one's perception of the charity that issued them. As a result, the decision to not donate may decrease the probability of a future donation because one's perception of the charity is adversely affected by the polite wiggle room mechanism.

Accordingly, our results suggest that charities should be mindful of polite wiggle room for two reasons: first, to increase the likelihood of a donation; and second, to engage in damage control with respect to individuals who decline to donate. Changing the phrasing of the request to make it linguistically more polite will have limited impact. A more promising strategy would be to restrict the wiggle room that people have when making subjective judgments of (im)politeness. For example, it might be a good strategy to make direct requests such as "Donate," while emphasizing the urgent and desperate situation of the beneficiaries—because such an emphasis will make it more difficult to find the request impolite. Other strategies may attempt to provide an "out" that would decrease the need to use polite wiggle room for people who want to decline the request: suggesting to simply "like" a donation request to show support (without donating), offering an easy exit strategy that would not require to say "no" (Dana et al., 2006), or quickly mentioning a ready made excuse to explain away a decision not to donate, that would not speak to the request or the requester (e.g., "no worries! One simply cannot donate on every occasion!"). Future research may explore the relative benefits of the two approaches and the possible biases they may introduce.

Future research may extend our results to face to face communication, which offers different opportunities and constraints than online solicitations. In particular, saying no is more unpleasant in face to face communication (Roghanizad & Bohns, 2017) and may lead to a stronger need for justification, and thus, a stronger reassessment of the request and the requester. Finally, we note that the mechanisms we investigated, and their implications, may also apply beyond the domain of charity donations. Public campaigns promoting healthy or green behavior, as well as for profit advertising campaigns, can all benefit from considering how people reconstruct messages as controlling or intrusive when they do not wish to comply. Restricting the availability of polite wiggle room may be instrumental in these broader domains, both to increase compliance and to preserve the positive image of the organization that issued the message, in the eyes of the individuals who did not wish to comply.

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APPENDIX A: ITEMS USED IN THE PRETEST

All items are scored on a 7-point scale anchored at *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. (R) denotes reverse-coded items. ☆: Taken from MacGeorge et al., (2004); ✱: Taken from Goldsmith (2000); ◇: Persuasion awareness items, adapted from Feiler et al., (2012); ✱✱: Psychological reactance items taken from Jonason and Knowles (2006); ✱✱: new items.

A.1 | Politeness scale

Person B feels liked. ☆
 Person B feels good about himself. ☆
 The request makes it clear that he could choose whether or not to take it. ✱
 The request leaves person B free to do what he wants. ✱
 Person B feels accepted. ✱
 Person B feels guilty. (R)✱
 Person B feels negatively about himself. (R)✱
 Person B feels uncomfortable. (R)✱
 Person B feels pressured to donate. (R)✱
 The request is quite direct. (R)✱

The request leaves person B the room to say no. ✱
 The request is not assertive. ✱
 The request is blunt. ✱
 The request leaves person B free to say no. ✱

A.2 | Intrusiveness scale

Person B feels someone is intruding on his beliefs. ◇
 Person B feels the donation request is coercive. ◇
 Person B feels the donation request is controlling. ◇
 Person B feels that the donation request is based on an ulterior motive. ◇
 Person B can tell that someone is attempting to influence him. ◇
 Person B wants to resist the attempt to influence him. ✱
 Person B wants to do the opposite. ✱
 Person B feels compelled to resist. ✱

APPENDIX B: ITEMS USED IN THE MAIN STUDIES

All items are scored on a 7-point scale anchored at *strongly disagree* and *strongly agree*. (R) denotes reverse-coded items. ☆: Taken from MacGeorge et al., (2004); ✱: Taken from Goldsmith (2000); ◇: Persuasion awareness items, adapted from Feiler et al., (2012); ✱✱: Psychological reactance items taken from Jonason and Knowles (2006); ✱✱: new items. The intrusiveness score was an average of the scores in persuasion awareness and psychological reactance.

B.1 | Politeness scale

The request made me feel liked. ☆
 The request made me feel good about myself. ☆
 The request left me free to do what I wanted. ✱
 The request made it clear that I could choose whether or not to take it. ✱
 The request made me feel accepted. ✱
 The request made me feel guilty. (R) ✱
 The request elicited a negative feeling about myself. (R) ✱
 The request made me feel uncomfortable. (R) ✱
 The request was directive. (R) ✱
 The donation request made me feel pressure to donate. (13) R ✱
 The request left me the room to say no. ✱
 The request was blunt. (R) ✱
 The request was not assertive. ✱
 I felt free to say no. ✱

B.2 | Intrusiveness scale

I felt that someone was intruding on my beliefs. ◇
 I felt the donation request was coercive. ◇
 I felt the donation request was controlling. ◇
 I could tell that someone was attempting to influence me. ◇
 I felt that the donation request was based on an ulterior motive. ◇
 I wanted to resist the attempt to influence me. ✱
 I wanted to do the opposite. ✱
 I felt compelled to resist. ✱

APPENDIX C: EXPERIMENTS A AND B

In these experiments, participants indicated the hypothetical likelihood that they would make a donation in an everyday context, after being exposed to one of three phrasings of a donation request. They also rated the request for politeness and intrusiveness. The only difference between the two experiments was that the request was presented in written form in Experiment A, while it was voiced by computer software in Experiment B.

C.1 | Methods

Participants in Experiment A ($N = 335$, 36% women, median age 34, age range 18–76) and Experiment B ($N = 251$, 42% women, median age 31, age range 19–68) were recruited on Amazon Mechanical Turk. The donation request and subsequent questions appeared at the end of a 5-minute survey on risk communication in a medical context. The donation vignette described an everyday context, and ended with one of three possible phrasings of the request:

Imagine that you are going to do some grocery shopping. You have some bank notes and a few small coins in your pocket. In front of the shop door a man stands with a small bucket labelled with a unicef logo and the picture of a needy child. When you pass near the man, he says to you: (Directive) *Donate to unicef now!* (Would-Question) *Would you like to donate to unicef now?* (Could-Question) *Could you perhaps donate to unicef now?*

Participants first indicated the likelihood that they would make a donation, on a 7-point scale anchored at *very unlikely* and *very likely*.

Second, they indicated the amount they would give, after being asked to imagine they had 5 dollars and 40 cents with them in the context of the request. Third, the perceived politeness and intrusiveness of the request were measured by the 14 and 8 items (respectively) shown in Appendix B. The measures of politeness and intrusiveness achieved satisfactory Cronbach's α s in the two experiments (0.82 and 0.77 for the politeness scale; 0.91 and 0.91 for the intrusiveness scale).

C.2 | Results

We follow a two-step analysis strategy. First, we assess whether the phrasing of the request impacts its perceived politeness and intrusiveness, as well as the likelihood of a donation (and the amount of the donation when it's not zero). Second, we assess whether the likelihood of a donation can explain the perceived politeness and intrusiveness of the request, controlling for the phrasing of the request. Under the *Politeness Helps* and *Politeness Hurts* hypotheses, we can expect the phrasing of the request to impact politeness, intrusiveness, and the likelihood of a donation. Under the *Polite wiggle Room* hypothesis, we can expect the likelihood of donation, but not the phrasing of the request, to predict politeness and intrusiveness.

All regressions we report control for age and gender, and use simple contrasts for the Request variable, comparing the would- and could-questions separately to the directive phrasing. Regressions were conducted using the `lm` or `glm` function in base R (R Core Team, 2015). To contextualize these statistical analyses, it is helpful to turn to Figure B1, which displays the findings of both experiments. The average likelihood of a donation (shown as a grey vertical line) was essentially the same in all conditions, which suggests that the phrasing of the request had little effect on the likelihood of a donation. Politeness and intrusiveness ratings (respectively shown above and below the regression lines) appear to be higher and lower, respectively,

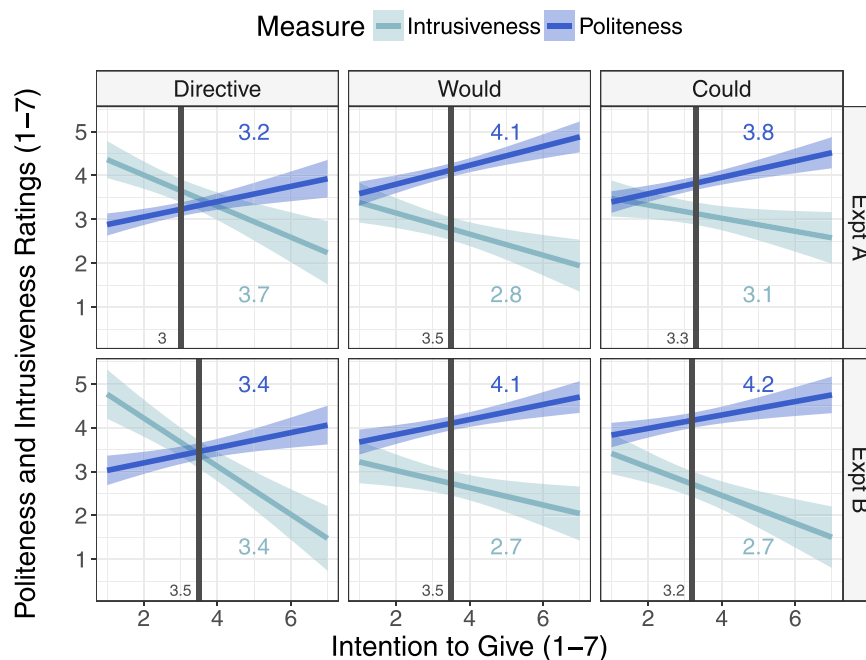


FIGURE B1 Results of Experiments A and B. The average intention to give is shown by the vertical lines, and is essentially the same for all phrasings of the request. However, perceived politeness and perceived intrusiveness are predicted by the decision to give [Colour figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

when the request was phrased as a question; and they seem to be largely correlated to the likelihood of a donation.

Tables C1 and C2 display the results of the first step of analysis for the two experiments. In Experiment A, phrasing the request as a would- or could-question clearly increased its politeness and reduced its intrusiveness, while having little detectable effect on the likelihood of a donation. Similar results were obtained in Experiment B.

Table C3 displays the second step of our analysis, in which we assessed whether the likelihood to donate and the phrasing of the request predicted politeness and intrusiveness perceptions. In both experiments, ratings of politeness and intrusiveness appeared to reflect a mixture of the phrasing of the request and the likelihood of an hypothetical donation. The likelihood of a donation always had a strong impact on the ratings, but phrasing the request as a would- or could-question had an even greater impact.

In sum, data from Experiments A and B did not support the *Politeness Hurts* hypothesis but provided partial evidence for both the

Politeness Helps and the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypotheses. In line with the *Politeness Helps* hypothesis, phrasing the request as a would- or could-question impacted its perceived politeness (positively) and its perceived intrusiveness (negatively). On the other hand, there was very little evidence that more polite requests increased the likelihood of donation. This result is in line with the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypothesis, but this hypothesis also predicted that politeness and intrusiveness ratings would only be influenced by the likelihood of a donation and not by the phrasing of the request.

Accordingly, Experiments A and B did not discriminate well between the *Politeness Helps* and the *Polite Wiggle Room* hypotheses, which may be the consequence of the hypothetical character of the request and the donation. This hypothetical character makes it easier both to dismiss the request (since no harm is actually done) and to overestimate one's likelihood of giving (because there is no actual cost attached to this response). To obtain stronger results, we tested our hypotheses with real donation requests in Experiments 1 to 4 reported here.

TABLE C1 First step of analysis, Experiment A (regression coefficient and standard error). Phrasing the request as a question clearly impacts its politeness and intrusiveness, but not the likelihood of a donation

	Dependent variables			
	Politeness (1)	Intrusiveness (2)	Likelihood (3)	Amount (if ≠ 0) (4)
Would-Question	0.89*** (0.12)	−0.86*** (0.20)	0.52* (0.23)	−0.01 (0.04)
Could-Question	0.60*** (0.12)	−0.50** (0.19)	0.23 (0.22)	−0.04 (0.04)
Gender (Women)	−0.08 (0.10)	−0.31 (0.17)	0.65*** (0.20)	0.05 (0.03)
Age	−0.001 (0.004)	0.01 (0.01)	0.01 (0.01)	−0.002 (0.001)
Constant	3.30*** (0.17)	3.30*** (0.27)	2.35*** (0.31)	0.24*** (0.05)
Observations	335	335	335	184

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D1 in appendix D.

TABLE C2 First step of analysis, Experiment B (regression coefficient and standard error). Phrasing the request as a question impacts its politeness and intrusiveness, but not the likelihood of a donation

	Dependent variables			
	Politeness (1)	Intrusiveness (2)	Likelihood (3)	Amount (if ≠ 0) (4)
Would-Question	0.66*** (0.13)	−0.69** (0.23)	0.06 (0.27)	−0.005 (0.04)
Could-Question	0.72*** (0.13)	−0.71** (0.24)	−0.25 (0.27)	0.01 (0.04)
Gender (Women)	−0.02 (0.11)	−0.15 (0.19)	0.51* (0.22)	−0.01 (0.03)
Age	0.01** (0.005)	−0.02 (0.01)	0.02* (0.01)	0.001 (0.001)
Constant	2.99*** (0.19)	4.04*** (0.33)	2.41*** (0.38)	0.14* (0.06)
Observations	251	251	251	134

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D1 in appendix D.

TABLE C3 Second step of analysis, Experiments A and B (regression coefficient and standard error). The likelihood of a donation always have a strong impact on perceived politeness and intrusiveness, but so does phrasing the request as a would- or could-question

	<i>Experiment A. Dependant variables</i>		<i>Experiment B. Dependant variables</i>	
	Politeness (1)	Intrusiveness (2)	Politeness (3)	Intrusiveness (4)
Would-Question	0.79*** (0.11)	−0.74*** (0.19)	0.65*** (0.13)	−0.67** (0.22)
Could-Question	0.55 (0.11)	−0.44* (0.18)	0.76*** (0.13)	−0.79*** (0.22)
Z(Donation likelihood)	0.36*** (0.05)	−0.42*** (0.08)	0.28*** (0.05)	−0.57*** (0.09)
Gender (Women)	−0.21* (0.10)	−0.15 (0.16)	−0.10 (0.10)	0.01 (0.18)
Age	−0.004 (0.004)	0.02* (0.01)	0.01* (0.005)	−0.01 (0.01)
Constant	3.48*** (0.16)	3.08*** (0.26)	3.15*** (0.18)	3.71*** (0.31)
Observations	335	335	251	251

* $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$. Standardised coefficients are available in Table D2 in appendix D.

APPENDIX D: STANDARDIZED EFFECTS, ALL STUDIES

TABLE D1 First step of analysis. Effect of request on politeness and intrusiveness ratings, as well as on donations. Table shows beta coefficients, except for the Likelihood of donation for Studies 1–3, where it shows odds ratios

	Exp A				Exp B				Exp 1			Exp 2			Exp 3				
	Pol	Int	Lik	Amt	Pol	Int	Lik	Amt	Pol	Lik	Amt	Pol	Lik	Amt	Pol	Int	Lik	Amt	
Would-Question	0.43	−0.27	0.14	−0.07	0.35	−0.22	0.02	−0.01	−0.05	0.66	−0.05	−0.04	0.45	0.05	−0.05	−0.07	0.66	0.07	
Could-Question	0.30	−0.16	0.06	−0.09	0.38	−0.22	−0.07	0.02	−0.12	0.99	0.01	−0.01	0.44	0.12	0.10	−0.06	0.58	0.08	
Women	−0.04	−0.10	0.18	0.13	−0.01	−0.05	0.14	−0.03	0.06	1.64	0.05	0.07	1.12	0.29	−0.15	0.04	0.94	0.22	
Age	−0.02	0.11	0.08	−0.13	0.17	−0.12	0.16	0.07	0.17	0.99	0.03	0.19	1.02	0.04	0.01	0.09	1.00	0.04	
Politeness first																−0.09	.17	0.79	−0.22
Would × Polite first																0.13	−0.06	1.56	−0.06
Could × Polite first																−0.01	−0.05	1.61	−0.01

Note. Pol, politeness; Int, intrusiveness; Lik, likelihood of a donation; Amt, amount of the donation if nonzero.

TABLE D2 Second step of analysis. Effect of the decision to donate on politeness and intrusiveness ratings. Table shows beta coefficients

	Exp A		Exp B		Exp 1	Exp 2	Exp 3	
	Pol	Int	Pol	Int	Pol	Pol	Pol	Int
Would-Question	0.38	−0.23	0.35	−0.21	−0.02	0.07	0.05	−0.12
Could-Question	0.28	−0.14	0.40	−0.25	−0.12	0.09	0.05	−0.12
Donation	0.38	−0.28	0.31	−0.38	0.33	0.57	0.39	−0.35
Women	−0.11	−0.05	−0.06	0.01	0.02	0.05	−0.14	0.03
Age	−0.05	0.13	0.12	−0.06	0.19	0.11	0.01	0.09
Politeness first							0.02	0.07
Donation × Polite first							−0.15	0.14

Note. Pol, politeness; Int, intrusiveness.