CREATING MEASURABLE IMPACT TO RESEARCH AND PRACTICE THROUGH KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

In 2015, CIFAR launched Change Makers — a three year cross Canada dialogue series themed around topics of social importance. Through these events, CIFAR has connected the knowledge and expertise of Fellows from multiple CIFAR research programs with key community leaders, better positioning them to innovate and drive social change.

On October 4, 2016 in Vancouver, BC, CIFAR hosted its sixth workshop as part of this series themed around the psychology and economics of prosocial giving. This workshop, held in partnership with the Vancouver Foundation, brought over 50 community leaders from foundations, not-for-profit service organizations, and health care institutions together with two CIFAR Fellows, Patrick Francois from CIFAR’s program in Institutions, Organizations & Growth and Professor within the University of British Columbia’s Department of Economics and Lara Aknin from CIFAR’s program in Social Interactions, Identity & Well-being and Assistant Professor within Simon Fraser University’s Department of Psychology. Together, participants explored the economics and psychology behind how prosocial behaviours are built and nurtured and the benefits and rewards of charitable giving.

While 80% of survey respondents said they plan to integrate the knowledge they gained from the event into their decision-making or practices at work, impact was also made on the CIFAR Fellows. Through the workshop, dialogue amongst participants highlighted that there are clear cultural implications of giving for effectively engaging communities. For example, those not born in Canada tend to give more than people in Canada which has implications for organizations operating in highly multicultural cities with larger immigrant populations. Also, immigrants that have been educated on the value of giving and experience how volunteering can be an effective mechanism for integrating into a new community tend to later advocate amongst new immigrants in their community (i.e. peer to peer) to volunteer/give. These
conversations with workshop attendees helped CIFAR Fellow Lara Aknin to shape a research project and associated experiments in collaboration Irene Bloemraad another Fellow from the Social Interaction, Identity & Well-being program, around how giving may be helpful for new comers to Canada. Further, questions and comments from workshop attendees also spawned new ideas for a follow up study related to this joint project.

Lara’s exposure to Patrick Francois’s research on the norms shaping the transmission of prosocial behavior were also beneficial to her work in several ways. In particular, his insights helped her to think about removing or controlling such information from her own studies that specifically explore the unique emotional outcomes of helping (vs social rewards or conforming with the norm).

This example showcases how there can be mutual benefit, both to knowledge users and researchers, experienced through CIFAR-driven knowledge mobilization experiences. This reciprocity of knowledge sharing across community and academic sectors rather than a one-directional transfer of research information has formed the foundation for CIFAR’s knowledge mobilization activities and has now become, through the Forum, a key mechanism by which CIFAR explores new research questions.

ABOUT CIFAR

Established in 1982, CIFAR is a Canadian-based, global organization, comprised of over 400 fellows, scholars and advisors from more than 130 institutions in 17 countries. CIFAR brings together outstanding researchers to work in global networks that address some of the most important questions our world faces today. Our research is focused on improving human health, transforming technology, building strong societies and sustaining the Earth. Our networks help support the growth of research leaders and are catalysts for change in business, government and society.

CIFAR

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