

Authors

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What do the latest experimental psychological research results and the British talent show the X-Factor have in common?

They both have important implications for how we think about engaging citizens of rich countries with the world's poor.

An experimental game conducted by [James Andreoni](#) and [Justin Rao](#) shows that communication triggers increased altruism. A result which has been seen for real in the British tabloid newspapers, as a normally fiercely anti-immigration press has developed a bit of a soft-spot for Zimbabwean migrant and frustrated X-Factor star [Gamu Nhengu](#) (who, is awesome, by the way).

[Chris Dillow](#) draws out the implications:

The world's poorest do not communicate with us, which causes us to give less to them than we otherwise would. By contrast, we are bombarded with messages from the well-off, which - on its own - tends to dispose us to be altruistic towards them.

and

there are huge costs to being out of sight. Whether it be benefit claimants in the UK or the poor overseas, the mere fact of being anonymous means people are meaner towards you.

And so the challenge: if we want to increase altruism towards the world's poor, how to create a space for communication between them and the citizens of rich countries? [Poverty porn](#)? [Slum tourism](#)? [Fasting](#)? How do we create this engagement whilst respecting the dignity of all involved?

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