

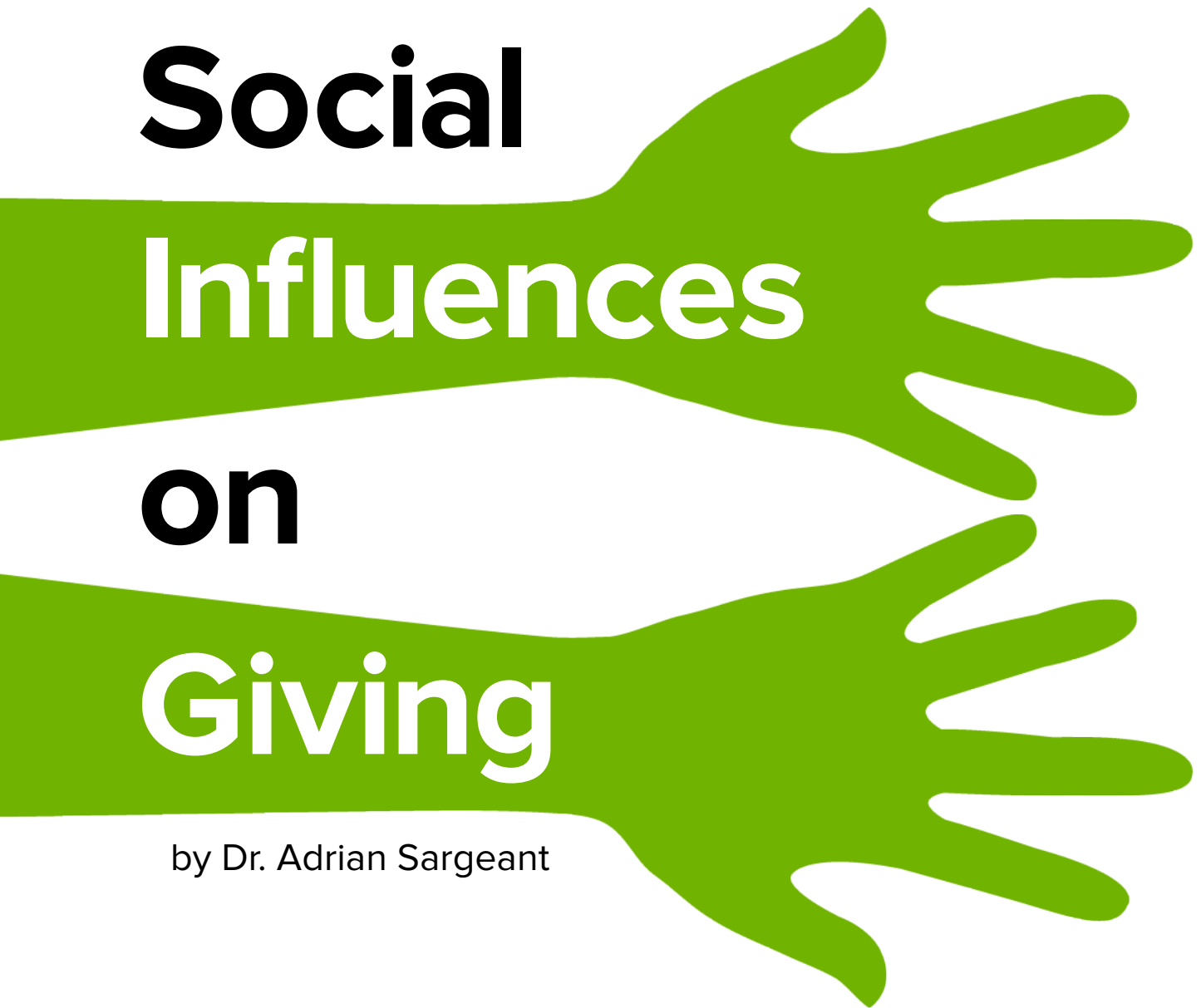
Social

Influences

on

Giving

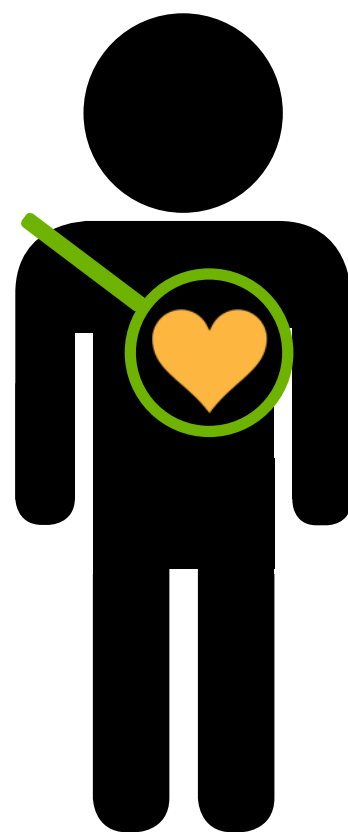
by Dr. Adrian Sargeant



A Social Giving Model

At the core of the social giving model is a person's sense of who they are, i.e. their self-concept. No external information, be it societal or social, can influence people's behavior without being processed by the individual actor.

Therefore, it is of central importance that fundraisers obtain an accurate understanding of their donors' selfconcept. This understanding is more than the layman prescription of "understanding your donors", it is about understanding the donors using the particular psychological principles outlined in this text.



Societal Environment

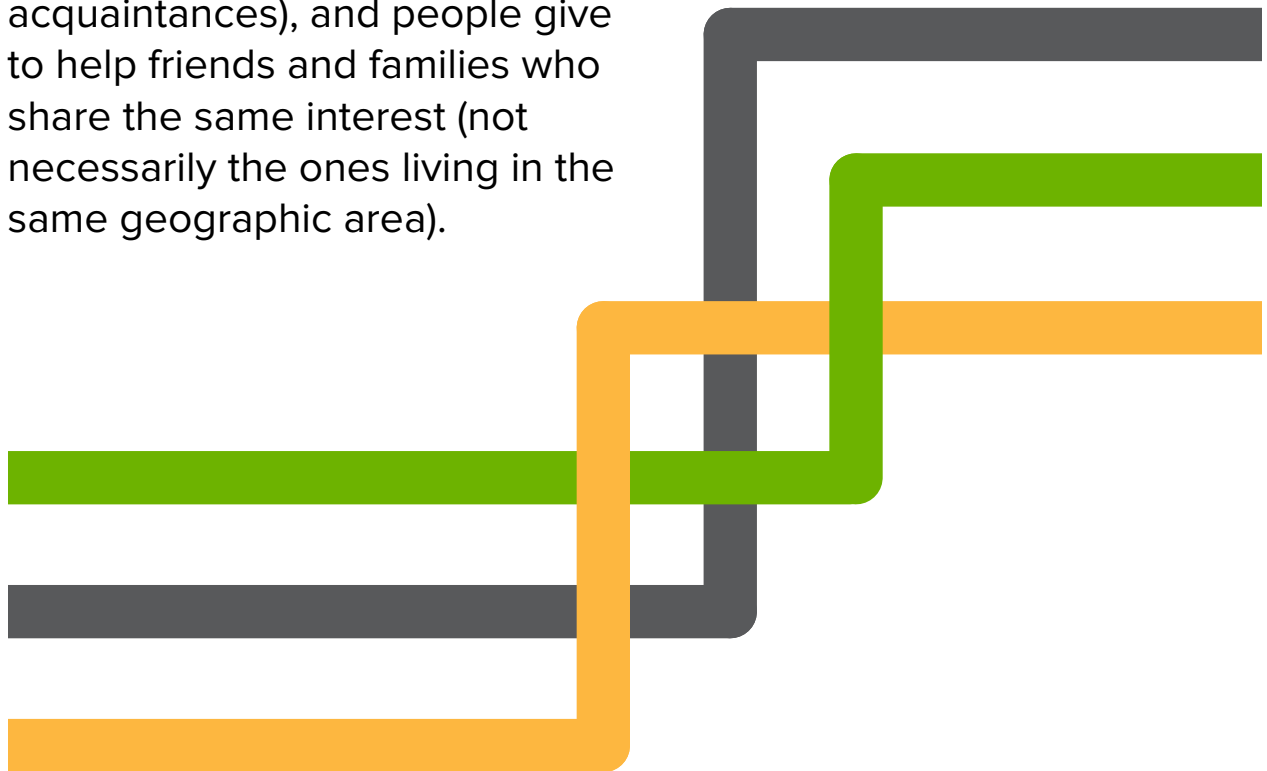


The societal environment shapes donors' sense of who they are. Elements included in this environment are history, philosophy, literature, religion, economy, culture and policy.

This is by no means an exclusive list of all the factors in a society that could shape people's self-concept. However, this is a worthwhile starting point for fundraisers to begin to understand their donors' behavior.

Social Networks

People give to help friends and families (not necessarily acquaintances), and people give to help friends and families who share the same interest (not necessarily the ones living in the same geographic area).



Social Identity

As you have noticed, once people give, be it in reaction to some social influence techniques, compliance to social norms, or perhaps helping friends through their social networks, people start to adopt an identity associated with the continuation of the behavior or the joining of a certain community or organization. For example, users of the Justgiving website begin to refer to themselves as “JustGivers” and people who participate in charity runs starts to refer themselves as “Charity runners”.



The adoption of these labels is important, because once people adopt these labels, they start to then behave in ways that are consistent with the expectations of such labels. JustGivers will continue to give and Charity runners will continue to run. The academic research on this topic has mostly focused on the donation of blood. Psychology Professor John Dovidio from Yale University and Sociology Professor Jane Allyn Piliavain at University of Wisconsin Madison are among the researchers who focus on studying the effect of role identity on donation behavior.

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