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Professor Russell James
Texas Tech University

The Epic Fundraiser:

Myth and Science in Philanthropic Storytelling (major and planned gifts)

The problems with asking a professor to speak

$$W = u(c_1, R_1) + \delta u(\hat{c}_2, R_2) + s\beta u(c_2, R_2),$$

where $\hat{c}_2 = \hat{s} * c_2$ and $\hat{s} = s + d*(1-s)$

With budget constraint

$$B = p_{c1}X_{c1} + p_{c2}X_{c2} + p_sX_s + p_dX_d + p_{R1}X_{R1} + p_{R2}X_{R2}$$

Anticipatory utility is assumed to be non-decreasing in inputs and subject to diminishing marginal utility separately for anticipatory utility from expected future consumption, $u'(\hat{c}_2) > 0$ & $u''(\hat{c}_2) < 0$, anticipatory utility from expected future circumstances of others, $u'(R_2) > 0$ & $u''(R_2) < 0$, and combined as total anticipatory utility, resulting in negative cross-partials, $\partial u'(\hat{c}_2) / \partial R_2 < 0$ & $\partial u'(R_2) / \partial \hat{c}_2 < 0$.

A shock that exogenously lowers death denial, d , lowers the subjective probability of survival to the future period, \hat{s} , and thereby lowers subjectively estimated future consumption \hat{c}_2 . Because the anticipatory utility from this subjectively estimated future consumption, \hat{c}_2 , is subject to diminishing marginal utility, $u'(\hat{c}_2) > 0$, the immediate marginal utility of \hat{c}_2 , and thus inputs d and s , will rise. However, this may not occur for the input of future consumption, c_2 , as the drop in death denial itself, d , reduces the effectiveness of this input in generating subjectively estimated future consumption, \hat{c}_2 , and hence in generating anticipatory utility. Additionally, the diminishing marginal utility of overall combined anticipatory utility, $\delta u(\hat{c}_2, R_2)$, also raises the immediate marginal utility of input R_2 (this from the negative cross-partial, $\partial u'(R_2) / \partial \hat{c}_2 < 0$). Thus, the exogenous shock should increase investments in $p_d X_d$, $p_s X_s$, and/or $p_{R2} X_{R2}$ relative to investments in $p_{c1} X_{c1}$, $p_{c2} X_{c2}$, and $p_{R1} X_{R1}$. The increased investment in $p_d X_d$ corresponds with "induced avoidance" in TMT. The increased investment in $p_{R2} X_{R2}$ corresponds with pursuit of "symbolic immortality" (increased support for in-group and resistance to out-group members) in TMT.

An Economic Model of Mortality Saliency in Personal Financial Decision Making: Applications to Annuities, Life Insurance, Charitable Gifts, Estate Planning, Conspicuous Consumption, and Healthcare

Russell N. James, III
Texas Tech University

The study of personal mortality saliency and the denial of death have a long history in psychology leading to the modern field of Terror Management Theory. However, a simple consumer utility function predicts many of the outcomes identified in experimental research in this field. Further, this economic approach explains a range of otherwise unexpected financial decision-making behaviors in areas as diverse as annuities, life insurance, charitable gifts and bequests, intra-family gifts and bequests, conspicuous consumption, and healthcare. With its relevance to such a wide range of personal financial decisions, understanding the impact of mortality saliency can be particularly useful to advisors in related fields.

Keywords: mortality saliency; terror management theory; annuities; life insurance; charitable gifts; healthcare

"I intend to live forever. So far, so good."

- Comedian Steven Wright

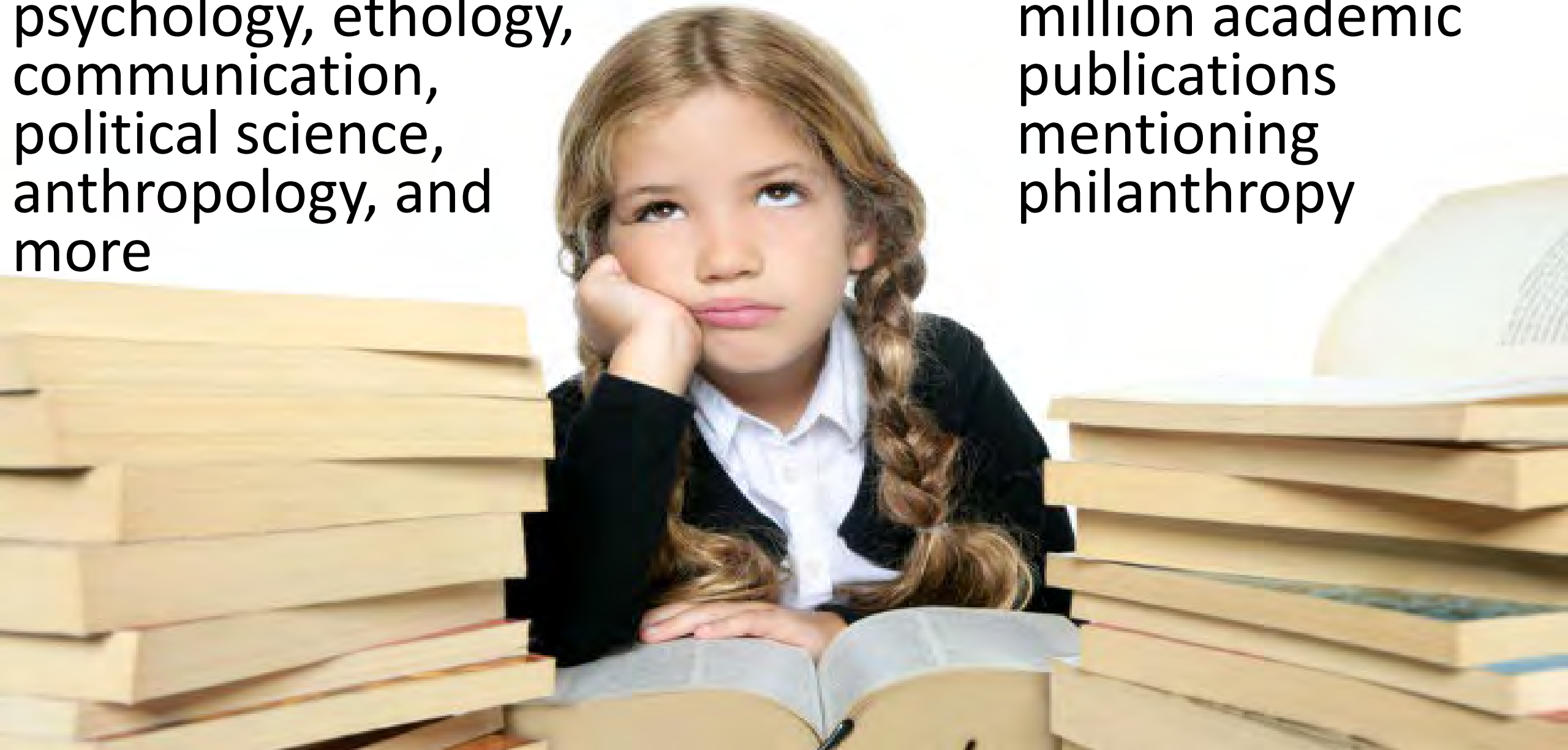
INTRODUCTION

A long history of work in psychology - beginning with Otto Rank (1941/2011), popularized by Ernest Becker (1973), and experimentally tested for decades by modern researchers (Burke, Martens, & Faucher, 2010) - called Terror Management Theory (TMT) suggests that humans treat personal mortality awareness far differently than other types of objective information. This paper proposes that a simple consumer utility function predicts many behaviors identified in TMT experimental research and provides insight into a wide range of otherwise perplexing behaviors with relevance to financial decision making. Understanding the sometimes unexpected implications of the model for financial

The first derivative of my economic model helps explain why people make charitable gifts in wills

There are philanthropy theories from economics, sociology, law, psychology, ethology, communication, political science, anthropology, and more

Google scholar estimates nearly ½ million academic publications mentioning philanthropy



But, I'm not going to go
through all of those



because I've been in
your shoes



Instead, I want to
share just one thing



Underwood, R.
(Director). (1991) *City
Slickers* [Motion
Picture]. United States:
Universal Studios. Clip
linked at
[https://www.youtube.c
om/watch?v=2k1uOqR
b0HU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k1uOqRb0HU)

Underwood, R.
(Director). (1991) *City
Slickers* [Motion
Picture]. United States:
Universal Studios. Clip
linked at
[https://www.youtube.c
om/watch?v=2k1uOqR
b0HU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2k1uOqRb0HU)



One key idea that,
if you understand
it deeply, can
transform
everything you do
in fundraising

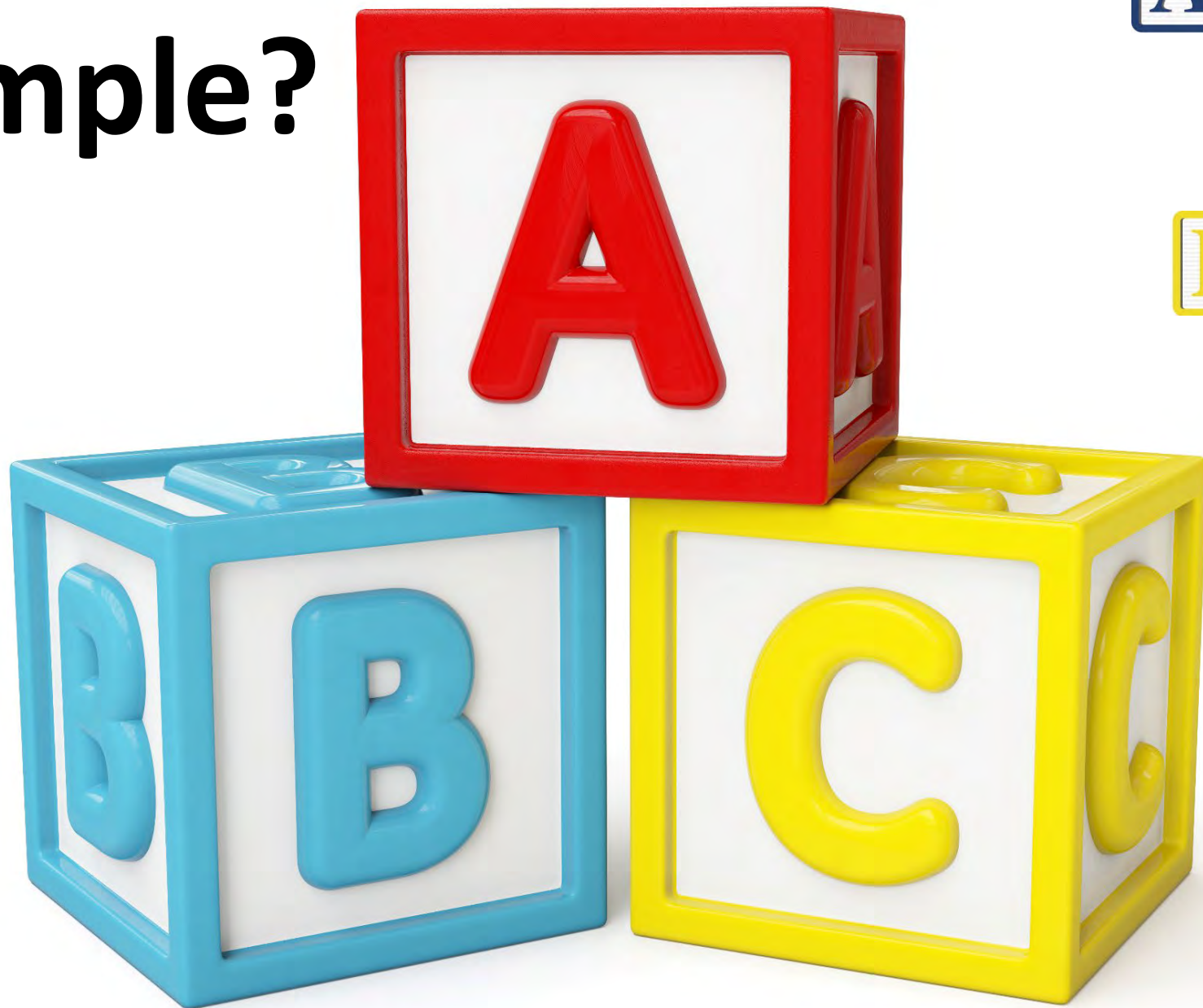


Advance the Donor's

Hero Story



Too
simple?



A D V A N C E

T H E

D O N O R S

H E R O

S T O R Y



There is a lot
hiding inside
each word

Advance
the
donor's
hero
story



**What is the
Donor's Hero
Story?**

Consuming more stuff is fine.

**But it doesn't make an
inspirational story.**

Piling up more things
is nice.

**But it doesn't make
a meaningful
journey.**





Spending money only on yourself is not noble. Its impact is temporary. It ends when you end.

No matter what you eat, wear, drive, or own, if your life is only about your own consumption, it's ultimately pretty meaningless.

No one
wants this as
an obituary



In Memory

He made a lot
of money.
The end.

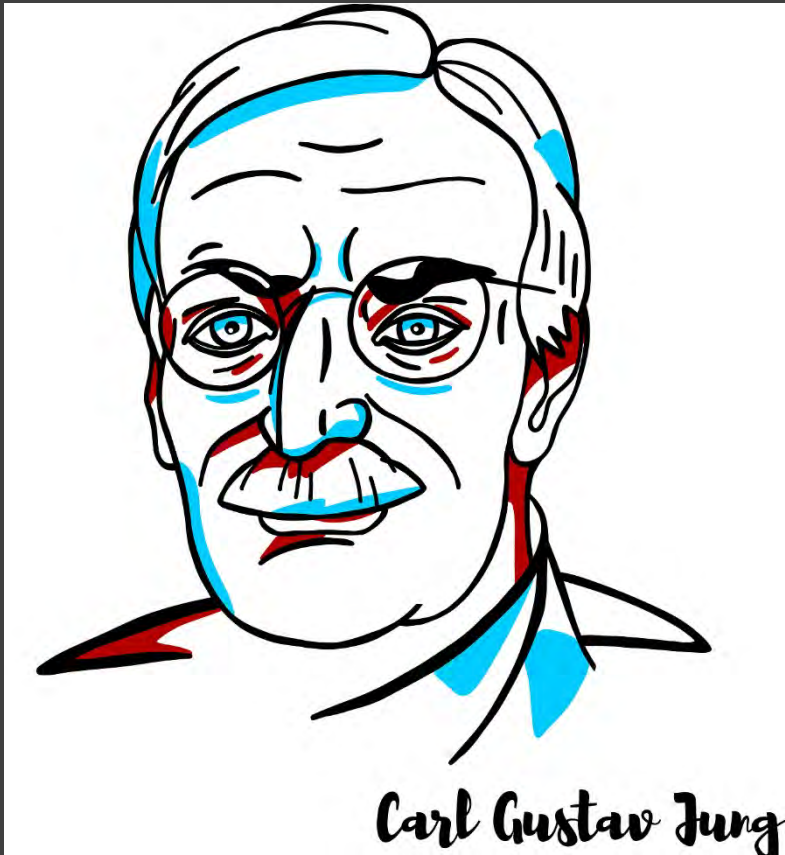


The heroic donor

That's where philanthropy comes in.

Donors can support meaningful values that transcend their own lives.

Philanthropy allows donors to be heroic.



The Hero as Jungian Archetype



- “a spiritual goal toward which the whole nature of man strives”
- These universal, ancient patterns are, “inherited with the brain structure – indeed they are its psychic aspect”

Death reminders increase attraction to personalized hero story

1. Death reminders increase self-reported similarity with a hero
2. After a death reminder, describing one's own hero (but not another's) reduces death-related thoughts
3. After a death reminder, reading of a heroic act reduces death-related thoughts only when the hero is reported to share the participant's birthdate



McCabe, S., Carpenter, R. W., & Arndt, J. (2016). The role of mortality awareness in hero identification. *Self and Identity*, 15(6), 707-726.

Pursuit of symbolic immortality: something reflecting the person's life story (community and values) will live beyond them

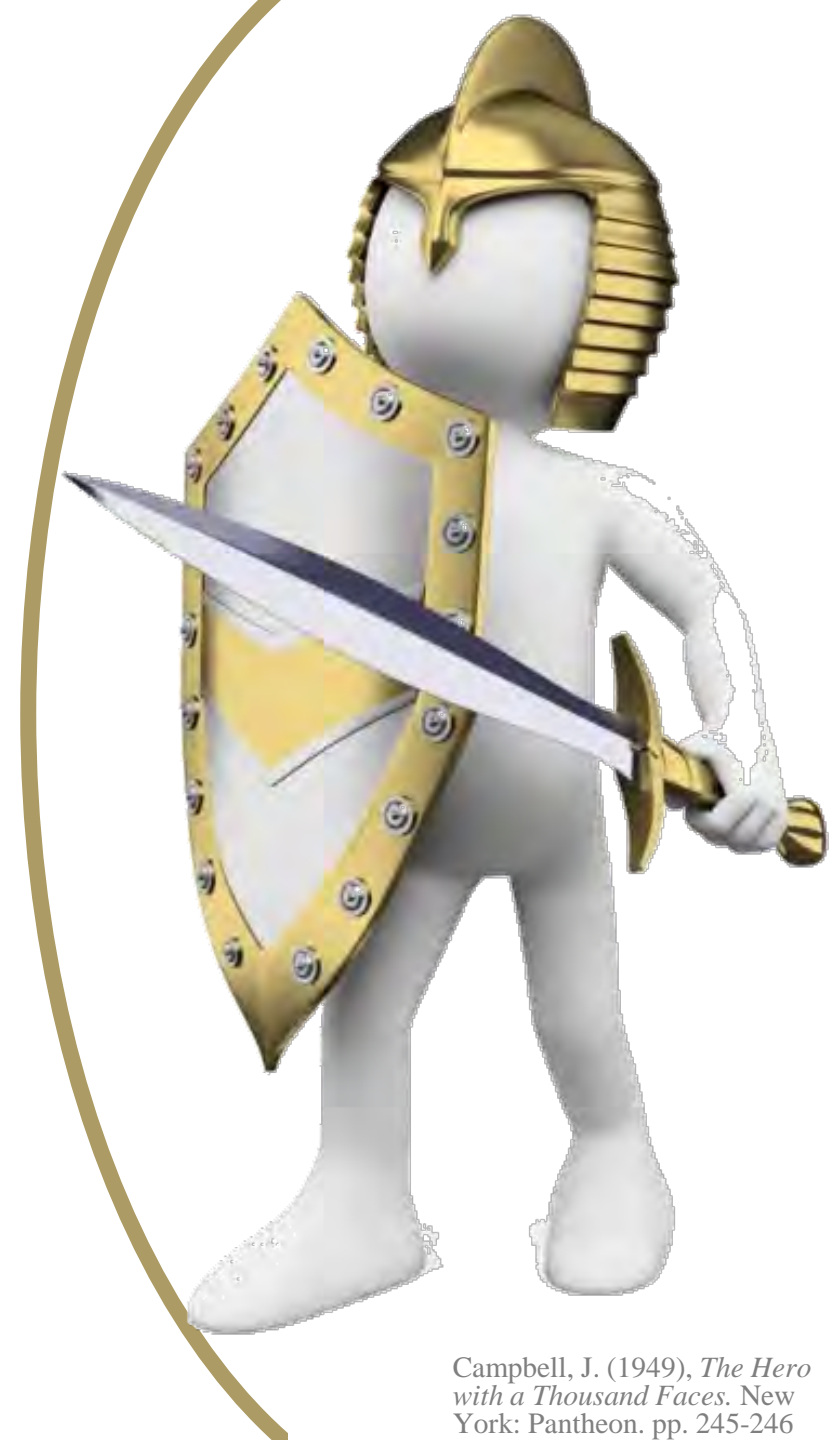
A man in a dark pinstriped suit jacket and white shirt is pulling open his shirt to reveal a blue superhero chest. The text "The universal hero story" is written in white on the blue chest. The man's hands are visible, pulling the white shirt away from his chest. The background is plain white.

**The
universal
hero
story**

The universal hero story

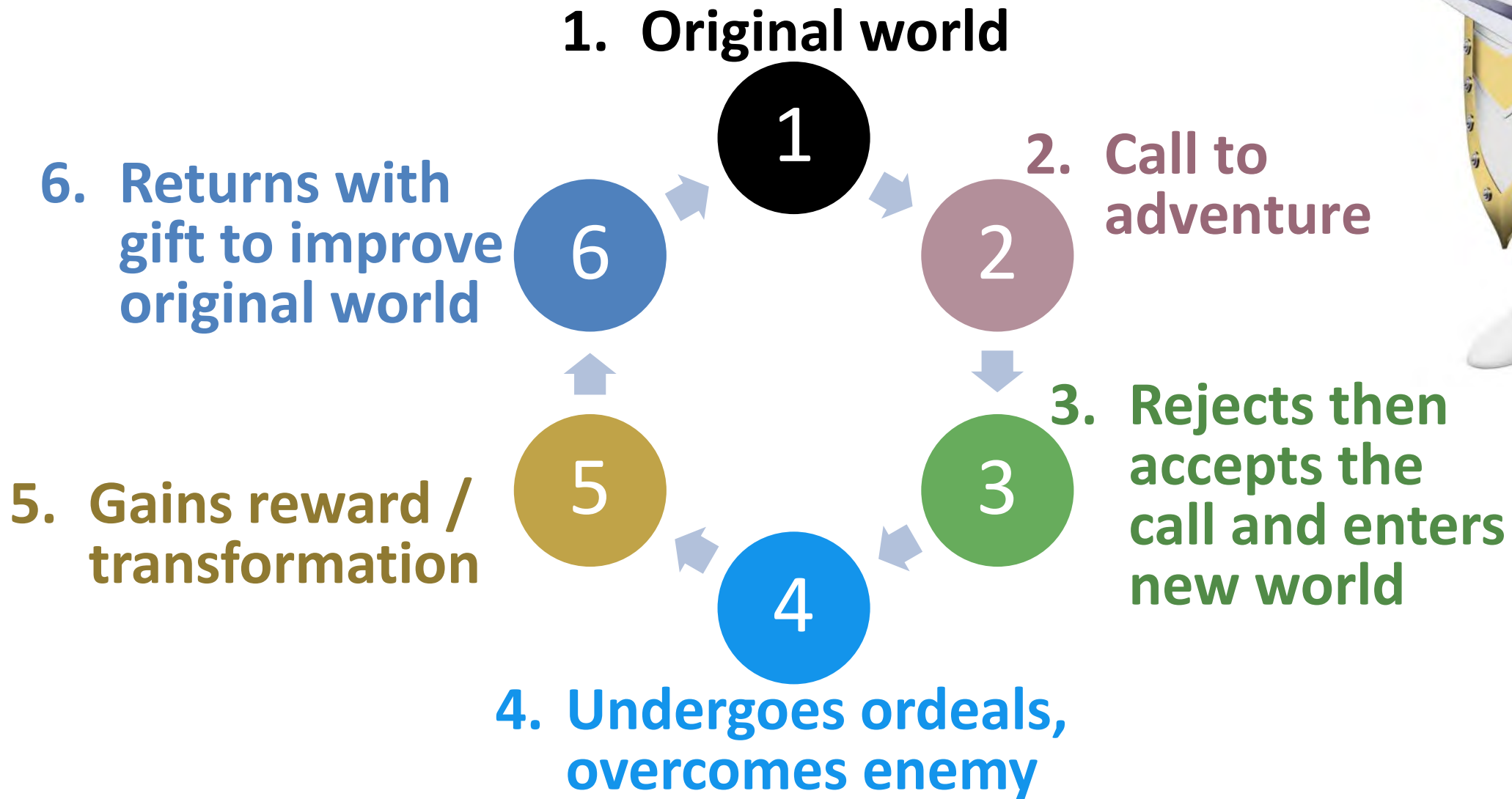
Joseph Campbell's "monomyth"

- 1949 Professor Joseph Campbell published *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*
- Hero stories in western cultures, eastern cultures, island cultures, indigenous tribes, industrialized societies, history, and modern day
- There are thousands of hero stories, but each is just a variation of a single, underlying, primal hero story: The monomyth



Elements in the universal hero story

Joseph Campbell's "monomyth"



The universal hero story

“The hero’s journey is like an operating system (or software in an operating system) that each of us receives at birth, hard-wired into our psyches, to help us navigate our passage through life.”

-Steven Pressfield

The universal hero story

When philanthropy addresses this core human need for heroism, it can become profoundly compelling and personally transformational

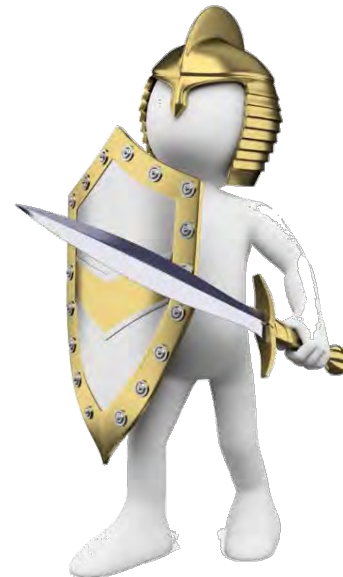
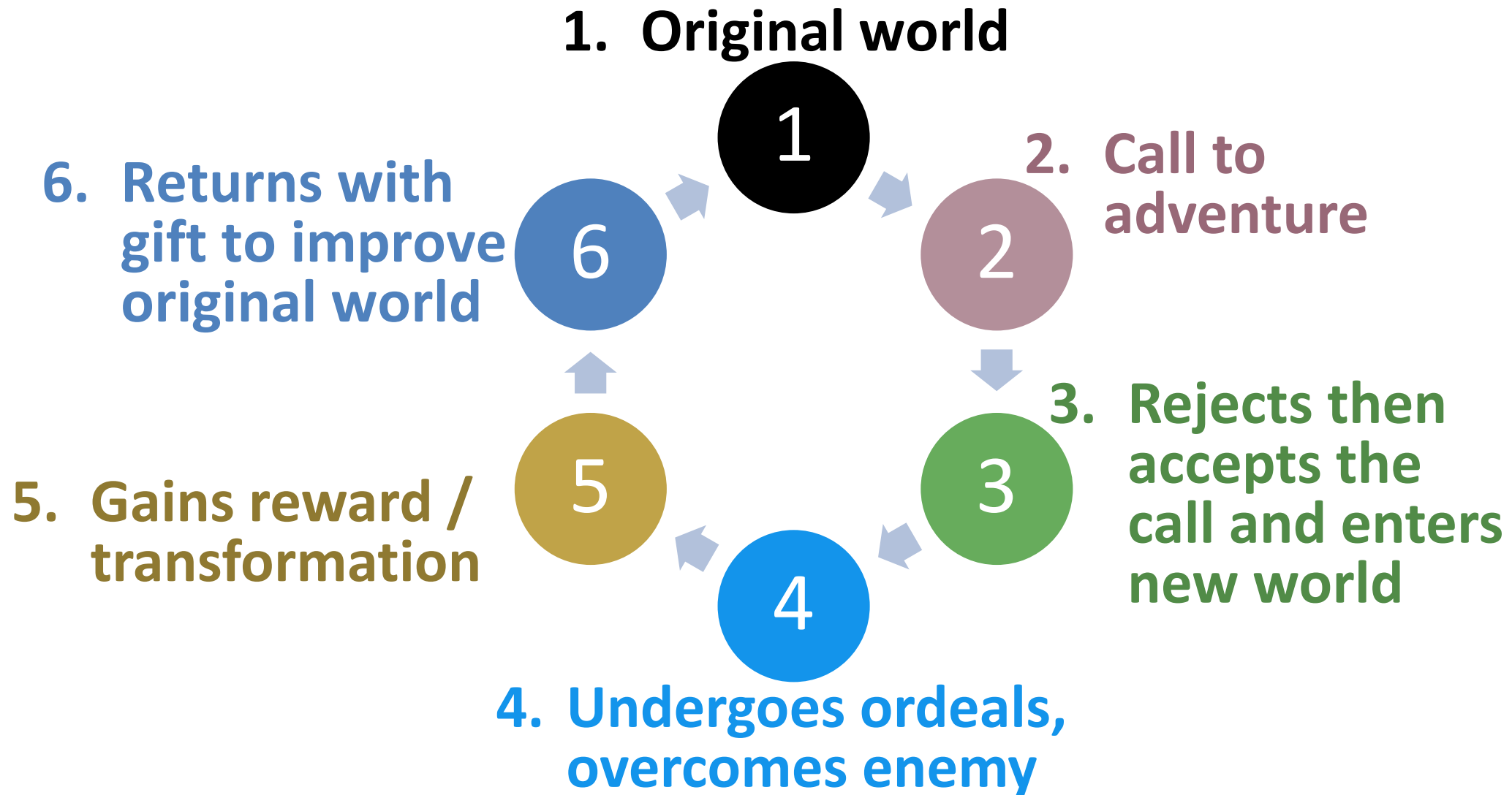


This need for heroism is exactly fulfilled through the classic elements of the universal hero story

These story elements function as primal “flags” that trigger a deep resonance in humans

The Donor's Hero Story

- A successful entrepreneur giving to her alma mater
- A cancer survivor giving to cancer research



Hero's journey

1. Original world
2. Call to adventure
3. Rejects then accepts call and enters new world
4. Undergoes ordeals, overcomes enemy
5. Reward/transformation
6. Returns with gift to improve original world

Spoiler alert: Every Hollywood epic movie



The highest grossing film franchises in history are all classic monomyth hero stories

Hero's journey

1. Original world
2. Call to adventure
3. Rejects then accepts call and enters new world
4. Undergoes ordeals, overcomes enemy
5. Reward/transformation
6. Returns with gift to improve original world

Reusing the same monomyth hero story elements

These monomyth elements appear with all types of Hollywood heroes including historical women (*Mulan*), modern women (*The Devil Wears Prada*), cartoon women (*Moana*), lions (*Lion King*), ogres (*Shrek*), wizards (*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*), and most superheroes (*Avengers: Endgame*)



Hero's journey

1. Original world
2. Call to adventure
3. Rejects then accepts call and enters new world
4. Undergoes ordeals, overcomes enemy
5. Reward/transformation
6. Returns with gift to improve original world

Why does Hollywood keep using the same monomyth?



Because it works.

It works because the universal hero story is “hard wired into our psyches.”

Hero's journey

1. Original world
2. Call to adventure
3. Rejects then accepts call and enters new world
4. Undergoes ordeals, overcomes enemy
5. Reward/transformation
6. Returns with gift to improve original world

Spoiler alert: Hollywood's epic hero movies



But, where is the fundraiser in the movie?

Hero's journey

1. Original world
2. Call to adventure
3. Rejects then accepts call and enters new world
4. Undergoes ordeals, overcomes enemy
5. Reward/transformation
6. Returns with gift to improve original world

The sage who challenges with a heroic choice





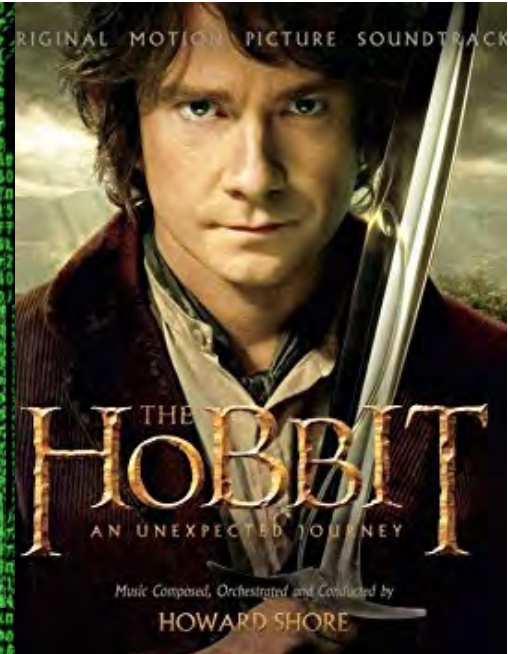


Obi-Wan: You must learn the ways of the Force, if you're to come with me to Alderaan.

Luke: Alderaan? I'm not going to Alderaan, I've gotta get home, it's late, I'm in for it as it is!

Obi-Wan: I need your help, Luke. She needs your help.

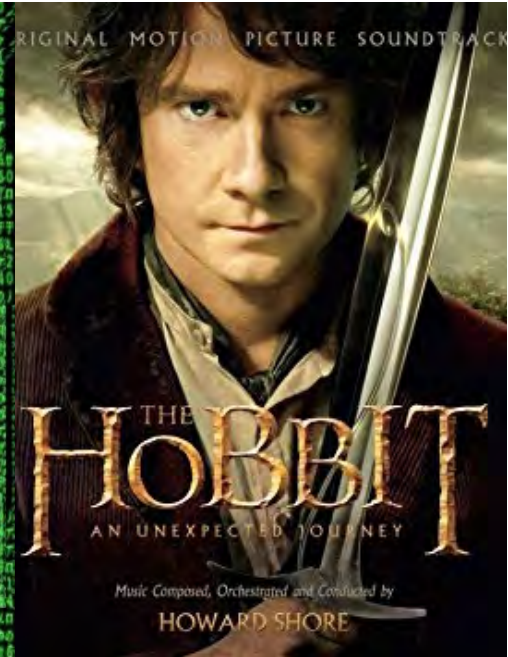
The sage who challenges with a heroic choice



The sage who challenges with a heroic choice

Are you giving someone the opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves?

Understanding this role should impact how you feel about confidently asking big vs. apologetically asking small.





The guiding-sage
Gandalf forces a
choice

“I’m looking for someone to share in an
adventure!”

Stay in your ordinary, self-focused, small world,
or go on a journey to impact the larger world.



The guiding-sage
Gandalf forces a
choice

“I’m looking for someone to share in an
adventure!”

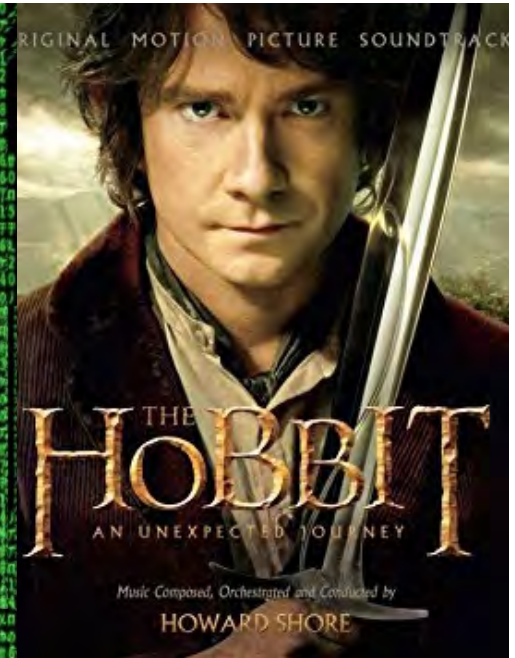
Stay in your ordinary, self-focused, small world,
or go on a journey to impact the larger world.

Actual Gandalf: “Bilbo Baggins, I am looking for someone to share in an adventure!”

Bad Gandalf: “I’m so sorry to inconvenience you, but if you might consider a short walk outside the shire, I would really appreciate it. Any time you could spare would help.”

A challenge to heroism
= asking to capacity

The sage challenges with a heroic choice

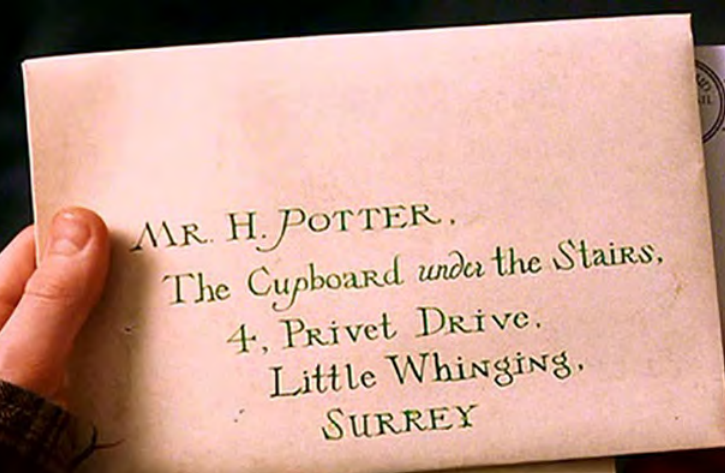


A challenge to heroism = asking to capacity



Joshua Birkholz's team analyzed nearly 1,000 gift officers. The top 20 percent highest producing fundraisers raised nearly 75 percent of the total dollars. What was different about these high performers? They usually asked for 100 percent of the donor's capacity rating. In comparison, "The bottom 80 percent tended to ask for about 40 percent of the capacity ratings."

(for any Harry Potter fans) **Joint sages challenge with a choice by direct mail**



The guiding sage role continues after the hero accepts the challenge

- Provides advice, guidance, and planning
- Introduces the hero to friends and allies
- Gives powerful instruments/weapons to the hero

Fulfilling these monomyth role functions attracts donors



Would
definitely
contact

Very
likely
to contact

Somewhat
likely
to contact

Somewhat
unlikely
to contact

Very
unlikely
to contact

Would
never
contact

Who at the charity are you more likely to contact?

- Gift of stock
- Real estate gift
- Charitable gift annuity
- Gift in a will

5,621 People Surveyed.

Each person chose from only 13 titles for each scenario. Scenarios and titles were rotated among ten different respondent groups balancing alphabetical and reverse alphabetical title order.





Tested 63 Titles

Chief Advancement Officer; Advancement Development; Business Development; Campaign; Charitable Estate Planning; Development; Donor Development; Donations Consultant; Donor; Donor Assistant; Donor Counselor; Donor Ombudsman; Donor Relations; Estates; Executive; External Relations; Finance; Financial; Financial Advisor for Donors; Fundraising; Gift Planner; Gift Planning; Individual Giving; Institutional Advancement; Leadership Gifts; Legacy Planning; Major Gifts; Philanthropic Strategist; Planned Gifts; Planned Giving; Real Estate Gifting; Resource Development; Special Gifts; Stewardship

Director of Advancement; Advancement Development; Advancement/Planned Giving; Annual Giving; Charitable Estate Planning; Charitable Planning; Complex Gifts; Development; Development & Marketing; Donor Advising; Donor Assistance; Donor Development; Donor Relations; Donor Guidance; Estate & Gift Planning; Estates; Finance; Fundraising; Institutional Advancement & Gift Planning; Institutional Advancement; Legacy Planning; Major Gifts; Major Gifts & Legacy Planning; Personal Philanthropy; Philanthropic Opportunities; Philanthropy; Planned Gifts; Planned Gifts & Grants; Planned Giving; Planned Giving & Estate Administration; Planned Giving & Finance; Planned Giving Development; Resource Development; Stewardship; Stewardship & Development; Trusts & Estates; Trusts, Estates & Gift Planning

Gifts of stocks, real estate, CGA, and will

Best 10 Titles (63 tested in all cases)

1. (do) Trusts, Estates & Gift Planning
2. (co) Financial Advisor for Donors
3. (do) Estate & Gift Planning
4. (do) Planned Giving & Finance
5. (do) Donor Advising
6. (do) Planned Giving & Estate Administration
7. (do) Charitable Estate Planning
8. (co) Gift Planner
9. (do) Charitable Planning
10. (co) Donor Guidance

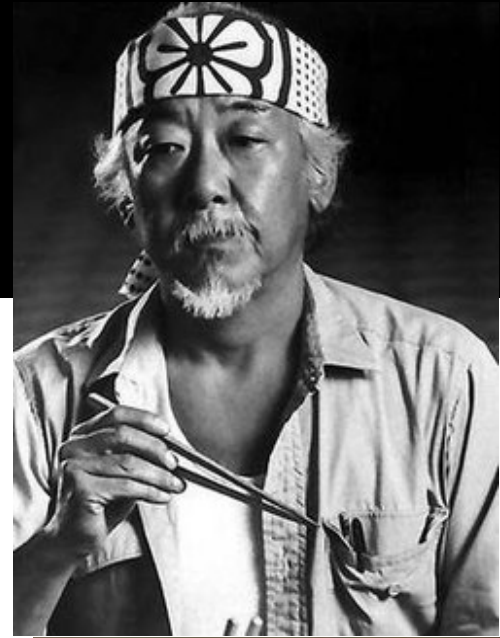
Worst 10 Titles (63 tested all cases)

1. (do) Advancement
2. (do) Institutional Advancement
3. (co) Advancement
4. (do) Development & Marketing
5. (co) Business Development
6. (co) Institutional Advancement
7. (co) Advancement Development
8. (do) Development
9. (do) Advancement Development
10. (co) External Relations

The guiding sage

- Provides advice, guidance, and planning
- Introduces the hero to friends and allies
- Gives powerful instruments/weapons to the hero

What barriers prevent fundraisers from fulfilling this monomyth role in the donor hero's journey?



The counterfeit mentor

The guiding sage

- Offers expertise
- Finishes the journey
- Focuses on the future



The jester

- Doesn't know
- Quits at the punchline
- Lives for today



The competing hero story

The hero story is powerfully attractive.

But, not just for donors.



Who is the hero?



Are the donors just an ATM for the heroic administrators?

Are the administrators just following the heroic donor's orders?

The organization as the Hammer of Thor

The organization is important in the donor's hero story. It is the hero's powerful instrument or weapon that makes the journey possible.



Donor hero story

Core fundraising message: Your gift can make a meaningful impact matching your life story and values.

Donor motives: Donors give to make a personally meaningful impact.

It's about the gift's impact

Messages

VS

Administrator hero story

Core fundraising message: Hello. I'm great. Can I have some money please?

Donor motives: Donors give because we deserve it.

It's about the organization's impact

Donor hero story

Donor: Hero

Administrator:
Execute donor instructions

Fundraiser: A helpful guide who inspires and advances the hero's journey

Roles

VS

Administrator hero story

Donor: Give. Get out of the way.
(ATM)

Administrator:
Hero

Fundraiser: A socially unpleasant sales role pushing the administrator hero story onto unwilling ATMs

What impact does story choice have for fundraising? Donor retention? Fundraiser retention? Administrators?

Donor hero story

Core fundraising message: Your gift can make a meaningful impact matching your life story and values

Donor motives: Donors give to make a personally meaningful impact. *[GIFT IMPACT]*

Role of donor: Hero

Role of administrator: Execute donor instructions

Role of Fundraiser: A guiding sage who advances the hero's journey

Administrator hero story

Core fundraising message: Hello. I'm great. Can I have some money please?

Donor motives: Donors give because we deserve it.

[ORGANIZATIONAL IMPACT]

Role of donor: Give. Get out of the way. (ATM)

Role of administrator: Hero

Role of Fundraiser: A socially unpleasant sales role pushing the administrator hero story onto unwilling ATMs

**We can follow your
commands and make it
happen**

- It covers pre-budgeted items
- It becomes unrestricted (scholarships)
- We are competing against the private family foundation

**Donor
hero
story**



**Admin
hero
story**

Different hero stories work for different audiences

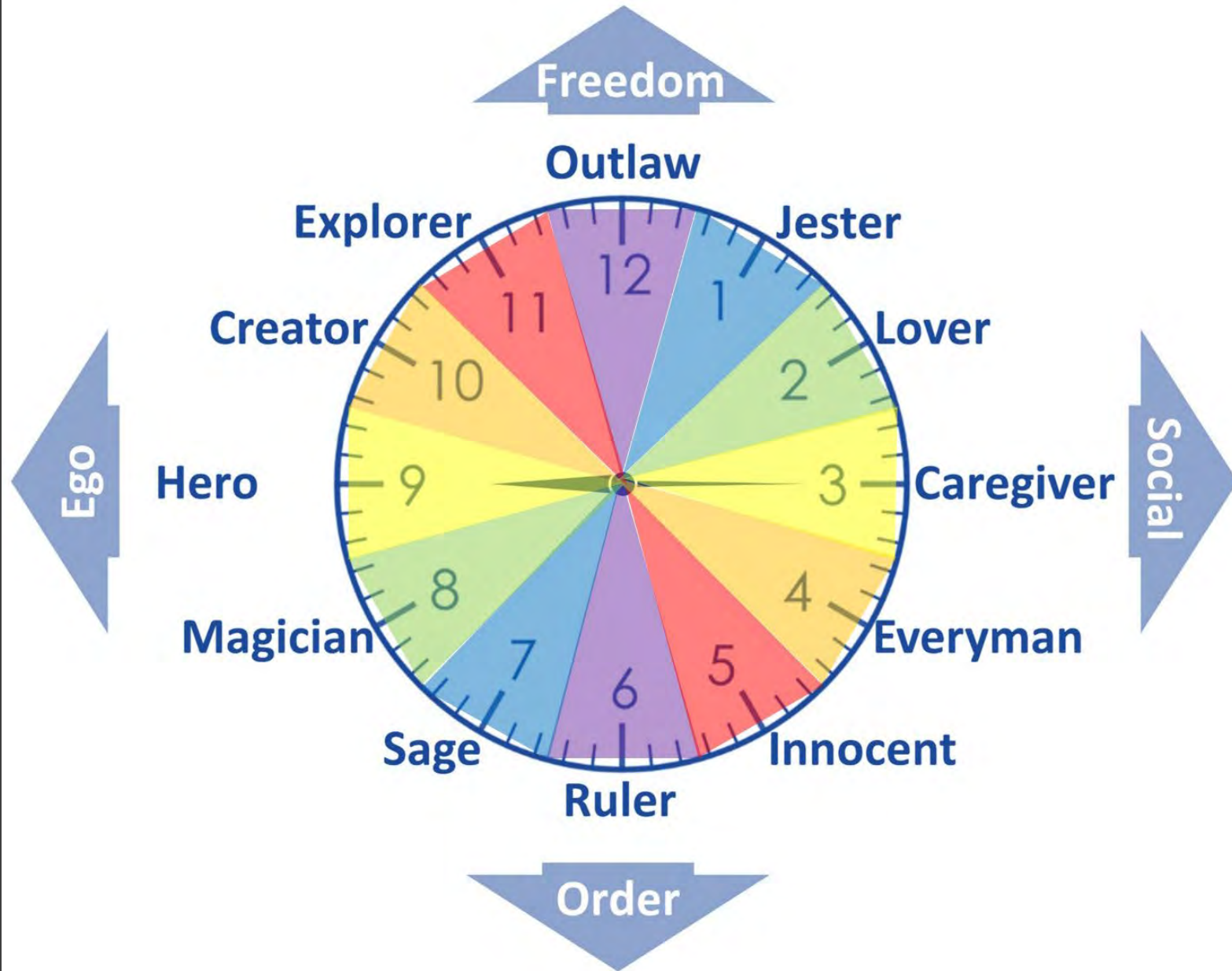
Will the hero story
feel natural for every
donor?



Nope.

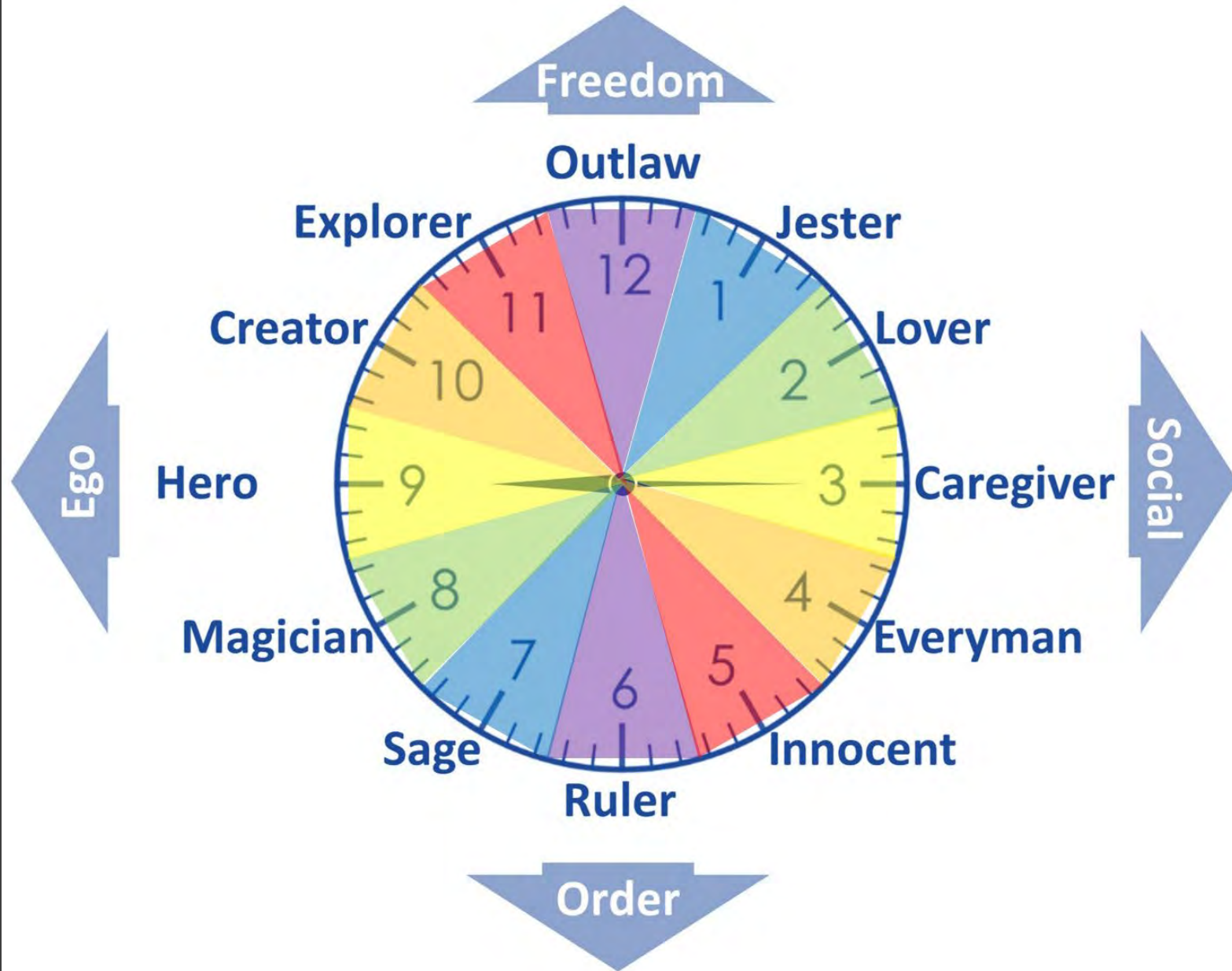
The twelve archetypes

Different people will be more comfortable with different archetypes based upon their ego-social or freedom-order orientation



Why push for the donor hero story?

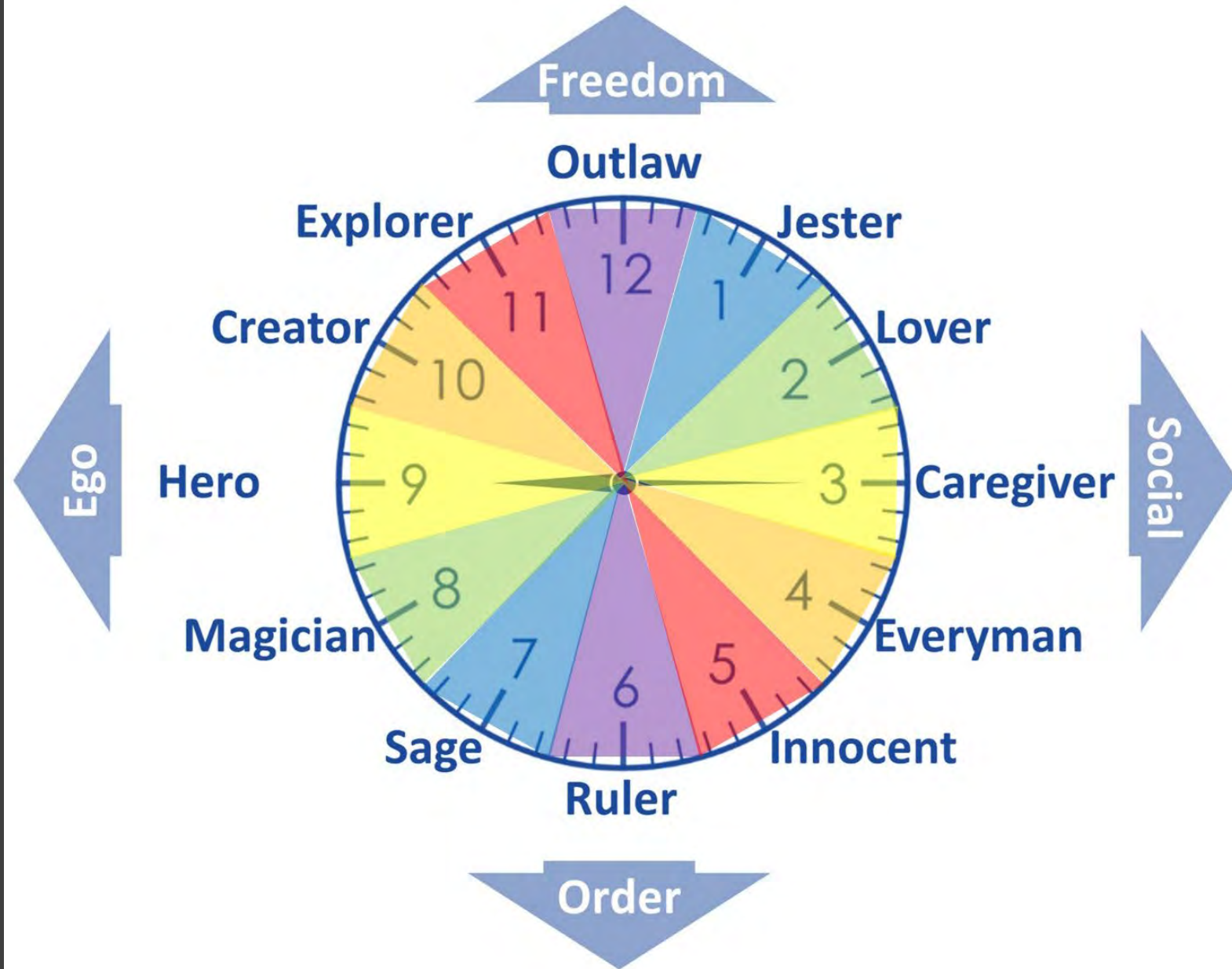
- The donor hero story motivates giving big and concentrated
- Alternative archetypes can motivate small, broad, and dispersed giving



Caregiver-Hero

From ego to social

- Part of *community* of heroic donors (like me)
- Honoring a *loved one* (with my name)
- Recognition as an unpleasant “second gift” to inspire others



Advancing
the donor's
hero story
means moving
from natural
orientation to
hero

- **Ruler-Hero:** Board member donor
- **Outlaw-Hero:** Social change donor fighting the system
- **Explorer-Hero:** Innovative research
- **Innocent-Hero:** Organizational trust; Giving as obligation
- **Sage-Hero:** Teaching others (education, religion)
- **Jester-Hero:** Ice bucket or “movember” campaign
- **Creator-Hero:** Creates good works (built by the donor)
- **Magician-Hero:** Magically transforms the situation



How do I ask donors
for money so they
will give it to me?

How do I
deliver value
to donors so
their
experience will
be worth the
gift?

“The Ask”

The effective challenge is rooted in the donor's identity. It promises a victory that will deliver enhanced identity (private meaning and/or public reputation)

Is in his ordinary world

Returns to the place of beginning with a gift to improve his world

Identity

Enhanced Identity

Challenge

Is faced with a challenge: the call to adventure

Enters a new world, undergoes an ordeal, overcomes an enemy, gains a reward or transformation

Victory

Challenge

Rejects then accepts the call

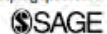


Charitable bequest decision-making v. small giving or volunteering decision-making



Charitable Estate Planning as Visualized Autobiography: An fMRI Study of Its Neural Correlates

Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly
 2014, Vol. 43(2) 355–373
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 sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav
 DOI: 10.1177/0899764012463121
 nvsg.sagepub.com



Russell N. James III¹ and Michael W. O’Boyle¹

Abstract

This first ever functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) analysis of charitable bequest decision making found increased activation in the precuneus and lingual gyrus of the brain compared to charitable giving and volunteering decisions. Greater lingual gyrus activation was also associated with increased propensity to make a charitable bequest. Previous studies have shown that activation of these brain regions is related to taking an outside perspective of one’s self, recalling the recent death of a loved one, and recalling vivid autobiographical memories across one’s life. We propose that bequest decision making is analogous to visualizing the final chapter in one’s autobiography and that fund-raisers may do well to emphasize donors’ autobiographical connections with the charity. Due to inherent mortality salience, people may resist creating this final chapter but, once engaged, may seek to leave an enduring legacy.

Keywords

bequest, fMRI, charitable giving

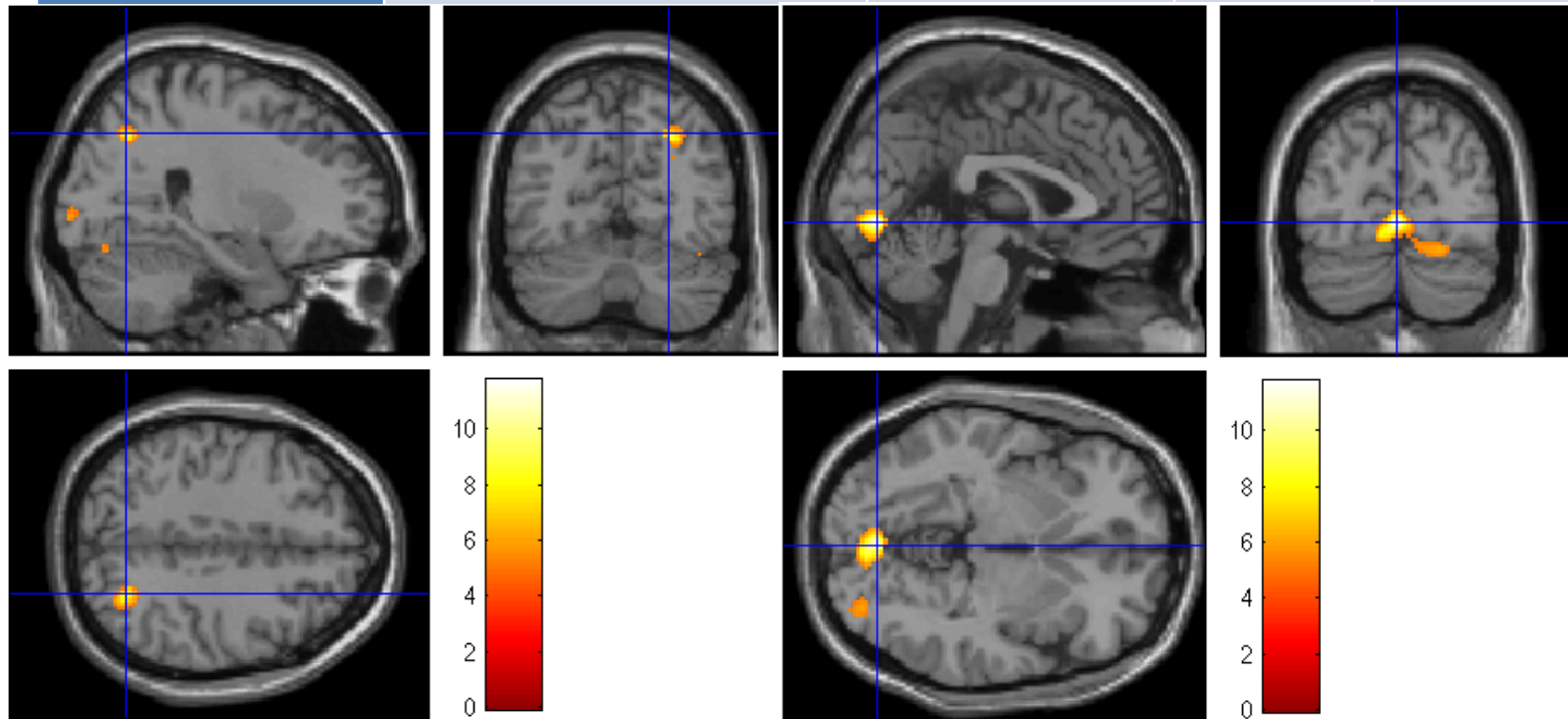
In 2010, charitable estate gifts exceeded US\$22 billion, far surpassing the total of all corporate charitable giving which totaled about US\$15 billion (Giving USA Foundation, 2011). Over the previous 20 years charitable bequests have more than doubled in real dollar terms (Giving USA Foundation, 2011). Demographic trends point to substantial additional growth of charitable estate giving in the coming years. Such growth is based not only on the aging of the population as a whole but also on the increasing

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Contrast	Brain Region	MNI co-ordinates	Peak p FWE	Clust-er p FWE
(1) Beq> Give	Lingual Gyrus	-2, -78, -2	.004	.000
	Precuneus	26, -66, 42	.102	.009
(2) Beq> Vol	Lingual Gyrus	2, -80, -4	.007	.000
	Precuneus	30, -66, 40	.180	.004
	Precentral Gyrus	-34, -3, 36	.397	.001
(3) Beq> (Give+ Vol)	Lingual Gyrus	0, -78, -4	.001	.000
	Precuneus	26, -66, 42	.007	.001



Visualized autobiography

visualization + 3rd person perspective on self

Same areas activate when people are vividly reliving events in a photo (Gilboa, et al., 2004) or mentally “traveling back in time” (Viard, et al., 2007) or recalling autobiographical personal events

Greater visualization predicted greater interest in making a bequest gift to the charity

The donor's own story was the key



Life stories

Summarizing a series of in depth interviews with legacy donors, Dr. Claire Routley wrote...



*“when discussing which charities they had chosen to remember, there was a clear link with the **life narratives** of many respondents”*

References to “important in your life” increase interest

2014 & 2015 Surveys, 1,822 Respondents

Interested
Now

Will Never
Be
Interested

40%

Make a gift to charity in your
will to support causes that
have been important in your
life

6%

30%

Make a gift to charity in your
will

7%

12%

Make a **bequest** gift to charity

14%



Life Questions

At what age did you first begin to think about the importance of conserving the natural environment?

___ childhood ___ high school ___ my 20s ___ my 30s or later

Which of the following have been important in your life?

Time I have spent outdoors

Time I have spent on a river

Time I have spent in a forest

Time I have spent on a lake

My life experiences with wildlife

My life experiences with wild birds

My life experiences with trees and plants.

In a survey of 5,000+ people, this generated the strongest intention to leave a bequest to an environmental charity of any questions tested

Using life stories of other donors



ADVANCE

Backstory and setting developing motivation before the ask

An inciting incident reducing decision avoidance at the ask

Climax and resolution delivering gratitude, impact reporting, and compatible publicity after the ask

THE DONOR'S

Donor identifies as or with the hero

HERO

A sacrificial protector of group members or values

STORY

Uses character and plot that triggers visualization producing social emotion while avoiding error detection

Tested different marketing messages with 11 groups, 4,560 total, 40 charities

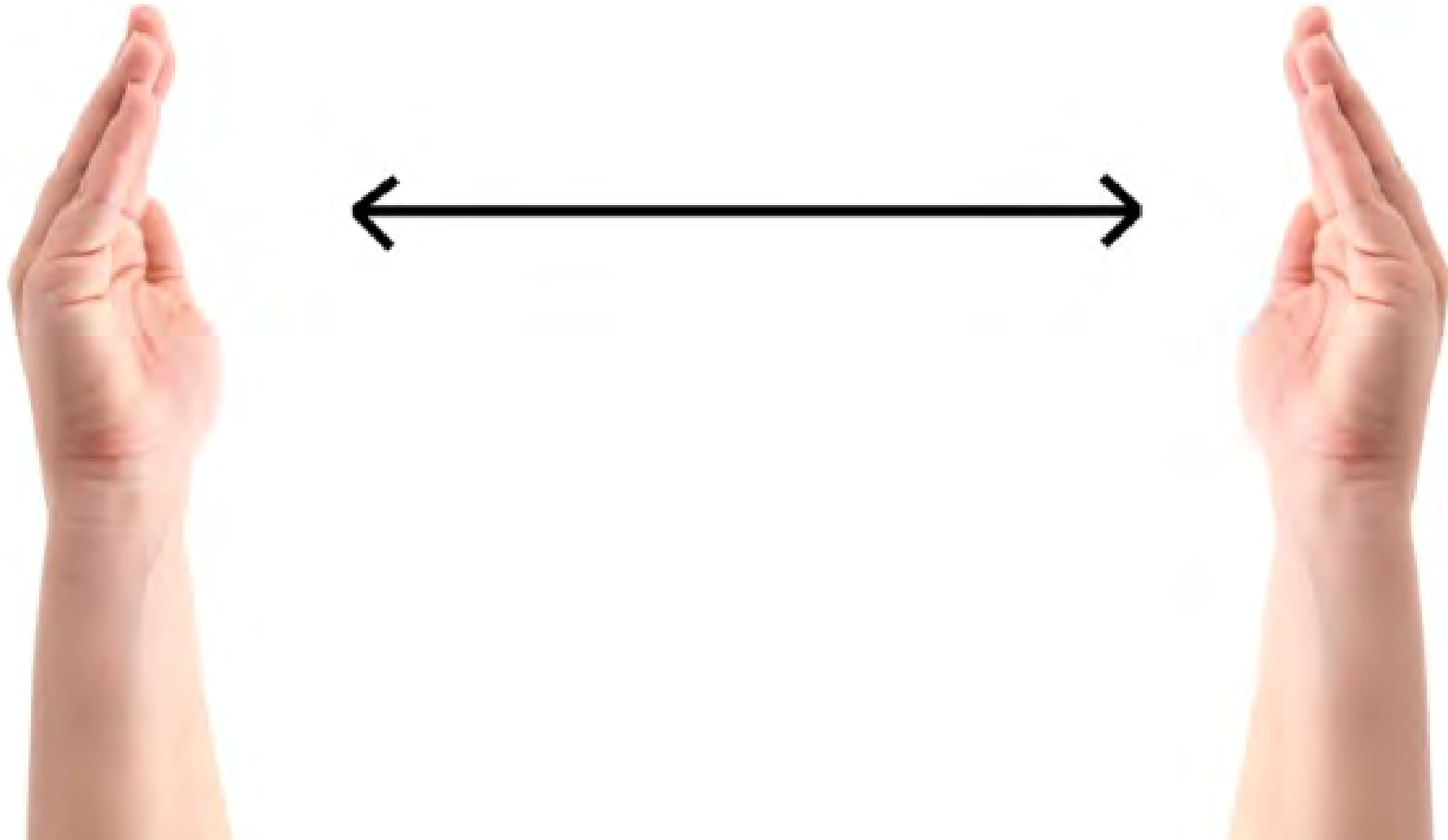
If you were asked in the next 3 months, what is the likelihood that you might **GIVE** money to _____?

If you signed a will in the next 3 months, what is the likelihood you might leave a **BEQUEST** gift to _____?



Organization	Beq%	Give%	Organization	Beq%	Give%
Amer Cancer Society	26.79	36.77	Wildlife Conserv Soc	19.90	29.26
The Red Cross	25.93	41.12	Goodwill Industries	19.65	34.42
ASPCA	24.18	33.77	Big Brothrs/Big Sisters	19.47	30.49
Habitat for Humanity	24.01	34.90	The United Way	18.97	28.97
Amer Heart Association	23.17	33.95	Joslin Diabetes Center	18.91	29.18
Natl Cancer Coalition	22.56	34.54	Canine Compan for In	18.90	29.67
Breast Cancer Res Fnd	22.53	33.93	Fnd Fightng Blindness	18.77	28.37
Natl Breast Cancer Fnd	22.43	33.48	AIDS Project LA	17.71	25.64
The Amer Humane Assn	22.23	33.91	Prevent Blindss Amer	17.51	28.32
The Alzheimer's Found	21.40	32.00	San Fran AIDS Found	17.39	25.49
Susan G. Komen Br Canc	21.39	29.22	Nat Audubon Society	17.33	24.24
Dana Farber Cancer Inst	21.13	29.63	YMCA	17.16	28.12
American Diabetes Assn	20.84	32.54	Boys and Girls Clubs	17.14	30.10
World Wildlife Fund	20.82	29.08	Girl Scouts	16.71	31.27
Guide Dogs for the Blind	20.80	31.46	YWCA	16.21	24.42
The Alzheimer's Assn	20.80	31.86	Amer Indian College F	15.97	22.33
American Lung Assn	20.78	31.40	CARE	15.86	24.69
MD Anderson Cancer Cr	20.59	30.53	Boy Scouts	14.51	23.56
UNICEF	20.37	32.31	United Negro Coll Fnd	14.13	21.90
The Salvation Army	19.98	31.44	Ducks Unlimited	13.60	19.49

Other groups received messages after the current giving question to see if the bequest gap would shrink



Social Norms Formal Evidence

Information indicating that it is common for Americans to leave 5% or 10% to charity. Sharing survey results showing agreement with concept.

Spendthrift Heirs Formal Evidence

Statistics showing how rapidly heirs typically spend inheritance from published academic research

Message	Give- BEQ Gap	Gap 50+	Gap Male	Gap Female
None	10.2	14.0	7.7	11.7
Spendthrift Heirs (Formal)	9.4	11.4	8.4	10.1
Social Norm Stats (Formal)	8.8	11.7	7.5	9.7
Heirs + Social Norms	8.0	10.2	6.4	9.0

Deceased bequest donor life stories



With new images or pure text (no significant difference)

Message	Give-Beq Gap	Gap 50+	Gap Male	Gap Female
None	10.2	14.0	7.7	11.7
Spendthrift Heirs (Formal)	9.4	11.4	8.4	10.1
Social Norm Stats (Formal)	8.8	11.7	7.5	9.7
Heirs + Social Norms	8.0	10.2	6.4	9.0
Deceased Beq. Stories	6.7	7.5	4.4	7.5



With new images or pure text (no significant difference)

Living bequest donor life stories

E.g., “School janitor Lester Holmes died in 1992” becomes “School janitor Lester Holmes signed his will today”

Message	Give-Beq Gap	Gap 50+	Gap Male	Gap Female
None	10.2	14.0	7.7	11.7
Spendthrift Heirs (Formal)	9.4	11.4	8.4	10.1
Social Norm Stats (Formal)	8.8	11.7	7.5	9.7
Heirs + Social Norms	8.0	10.2	6.4	9.0
Deceased Beq. Stories	6.7	7.5	4.4	7.5
Living Bequest Stories	4.4	4.3	3.3	5.0

The most effective message for increasing interest in a bequest gift:

Life stories of living donors



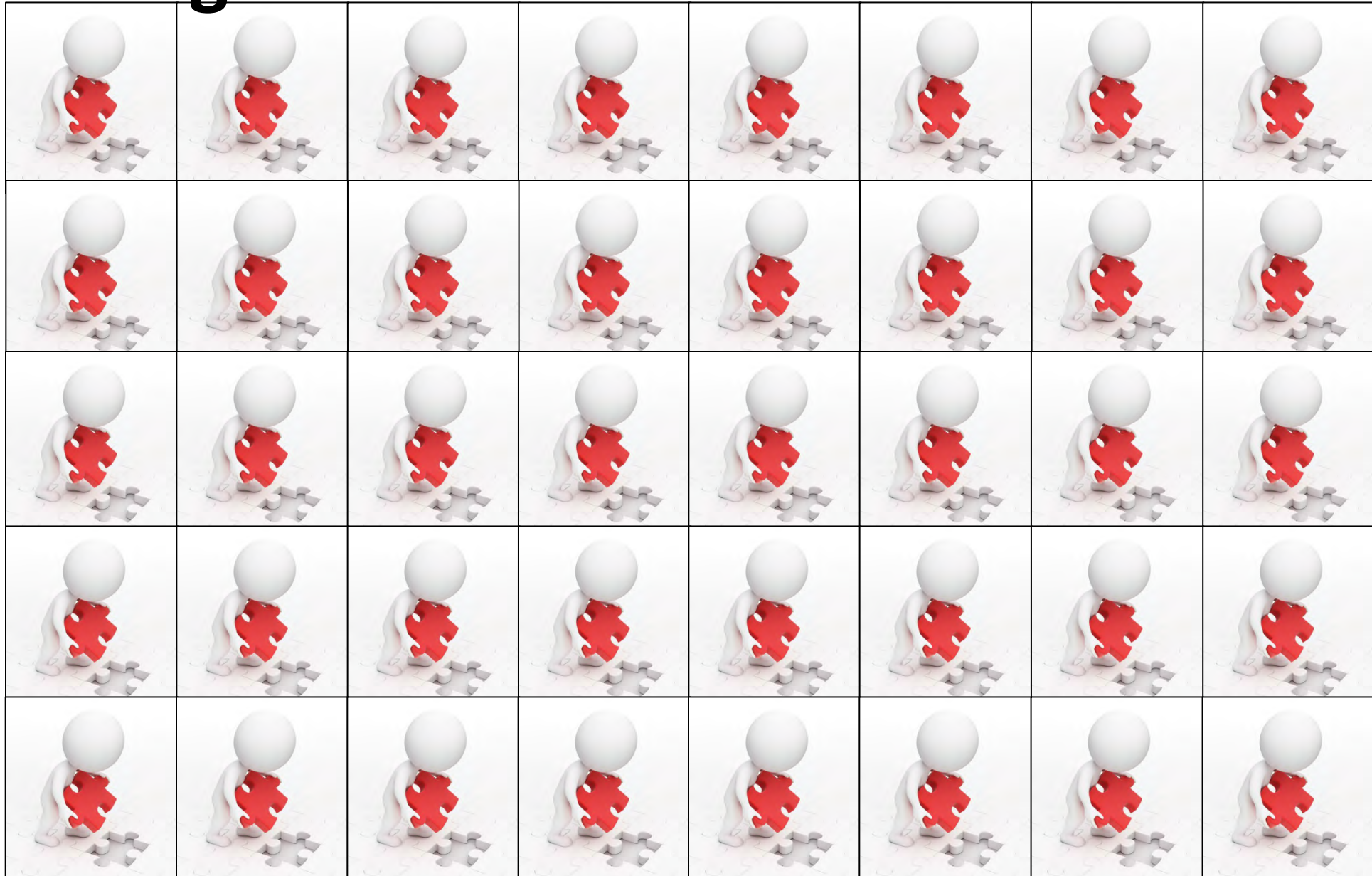
With new images or pure text (no significant difference)

Message	Give-Beq Gap	Gap 50+	Gap Male	Gap Female
None	10.2	14.0	7.7	11.7
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Heirs + Social Norms Stats	8.0	10.2	6.4	9.0
Deceased Beq. Stories	6.7	7.5	4.4	7.5
Living Bequest Stories	4.4	4.3	3.3	5.0

**Which message
type
worked best
for which of
the 40
charities?**



Living donor stories outperformed all other messages for 40 out of 40 charities tested



More Stories Increase Interest Even More



1st 4 Stories: Janitor, pet groomer, carpenter, symphony patron

2nd 3 Stories: fisherman, coach, physician

With new images or pure text (no significant difference)

Message	Give-Beq Gap	Gap 50+	Gap Male	Gap Female
None	10.2	14.0	7.7	11.7
Deceased 1 st 4 stories	6.8	7.5	5.5	7.6
Deceased All 7 stories	6.6	7.5	5.4	7.4
Mixed Dec/Liv 7 stories	6.0	7.2	5.0	6.6
Living 1 st 4 stories	4.8	5.7	3.9	5.4
Living All 7 stories	4.1	2.5	3.0	4.7

Using life stories of other donors



ADVANCE

Backstory and setting developing motivation before the ask

An inciting incident reducing decision avoidance at the ask

Climax and resolution delivering gratitude, impact reporting, and compatible publicity after the ask

THE DONOR'S

Donor identifies as or with the hero

HERO

A sacrificial protector of group members or values

STORY

Uses character and plot that triggers visualization producing social emotion while avoiding error detection

People like me do things like this



ADVANCE

Backstory and setting developing motivation before the ask

An inciting incident reducing decision avoidance at the ask

Climax and resolution delivering gratitude, impact reporting, and compatible publicity after the ask

THE DONOR'S

Donor identifies as or with the hero

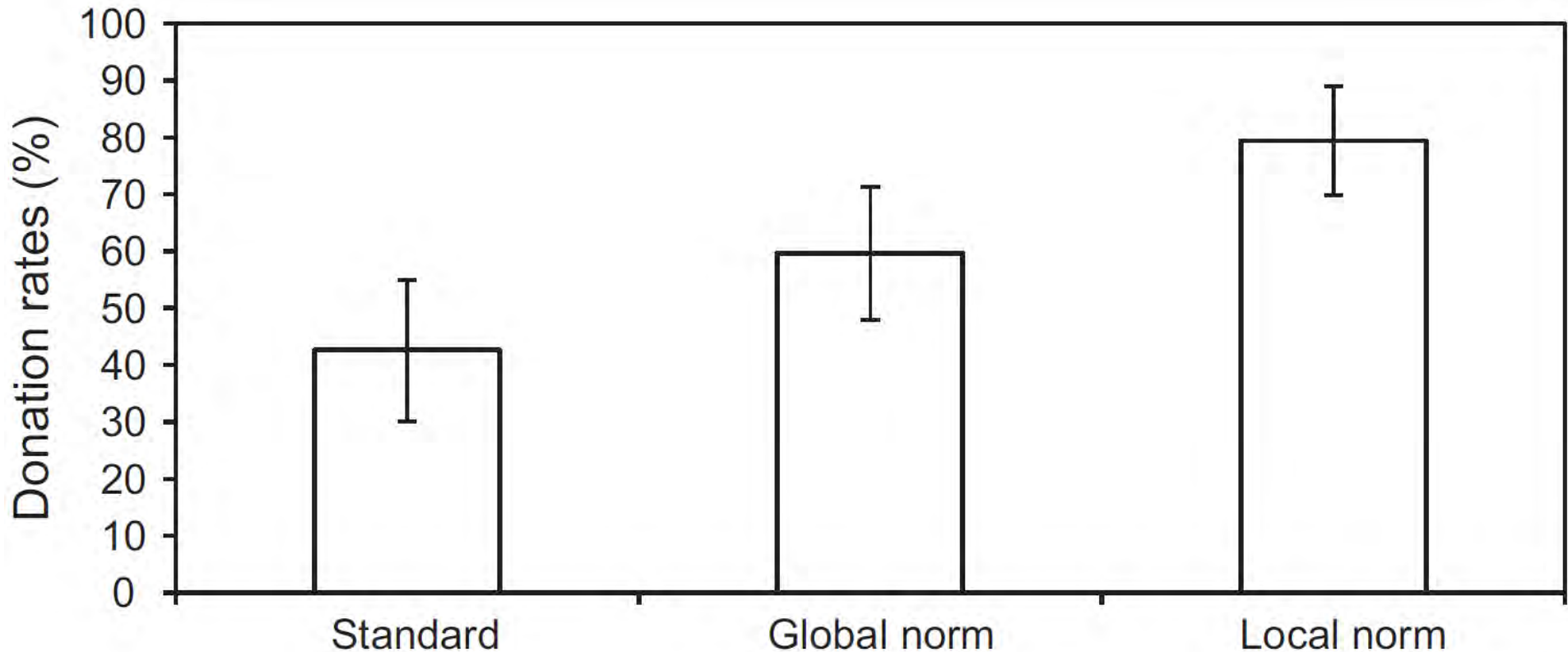
HERO

A sacrificial protector of group members or values

STORY

Uses character and plot that triggers visualization producing social emotion while avoiding error detection

People LIKE ME do things like this

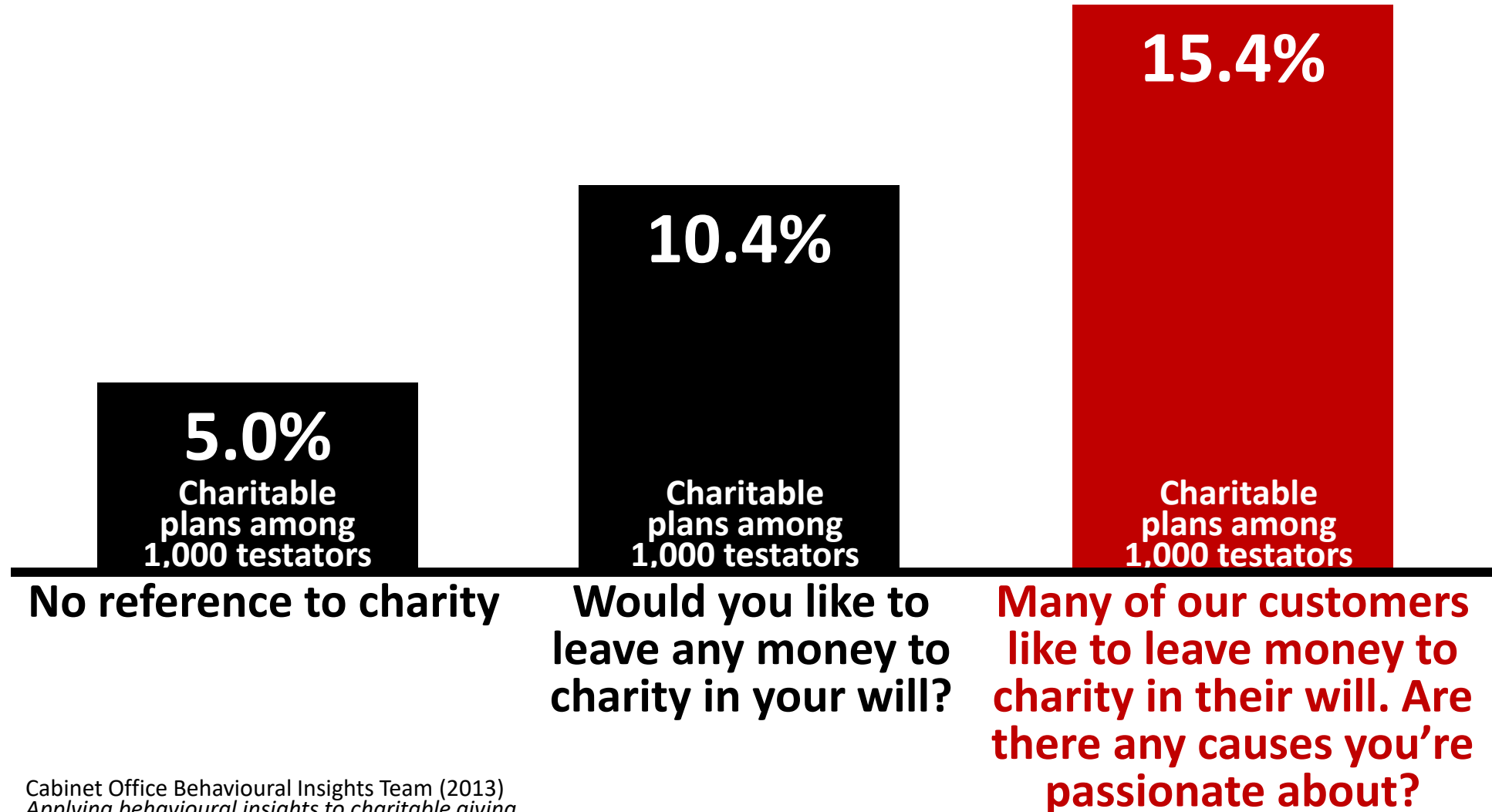


You can support Golomolo by donating 20 Swedish crowns.

You can support Golomolo by donating 20 Swedish crowns. **73% of University students in Sweden** who were asked for a contribution have donated 20 Swedish crowns to Golomolo.

You can support Golomolo by donating 20 Swedish crowns. **73% of Linnaeus University students** who were asked for a contribution have donated 20 Swedish crowns to Golomolo.

Charitable bequests are influenced by a simple social example



The social norm increased charitable bequest intentions

2014 Survey, 2,369 Respondents, Groups D/E/LateG+H

Interested
Now

Will Never
Be
Interested

31%

Many people like to leave a gift to charity in their will. Are there any causes you would support in this way?

9%

23%

Make a gift to charity in my will

12%

12%

Make a **bequest** gift to charity

14%

Testing Charitable Gift Annuity Ad Messages



What “you” could do or what someone else has done?

You make a gift and receive a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount will go to the charity at the end of your life.

Gift Annuity

Interested Now

Definitely/somewhat/slightly

All: _____%

55+: _____%

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount will go to the charity at the end of her life.

Gift Annuity

All: _____%

55+: _____%

Please rate your interest in pursuing the above described charitable giving arrangement

What “you” would do or what another donor has done?

You make a gift and receive a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount will go to the charity at the end of your life.

Gift Annuity

Interested Now
Definitely/somewhat/slightly

All: 33.5%
55+: 23.2%

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount will go to the charity at the end of her life.

Gift Annuity

All: 38.6%
55+: 38.6%


Please rate your interest in pursuing the above described charitable giving arrangement

Text only or text and donor picture?

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount will go to the charity at the end of her life.

Gift Annuity

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

Please rate your interest in pursuing the above described charitable giving arrangement: % Interested now (definitely/somewhat /slightly)

All: _____%

55+: _____%

All: _____%

55+: _____%

Text only or text and donor picture?

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount will go to the charity at the end of her life.

Gift Annuity

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

Please rate your interest in pursuing the above described charitable giving arrangement: % Interested now (definitely/somewhat /slightly)

All: 38.6%

55+: 38.6%

All: 31.1%

55+: 29.8%

What's the problem with the donor picture? Is it just this photo? This donor age? Is it photos in general or what?



Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

Interested now (definitely/somewhat /slightly)

55+
_____%

35-54
_____%

U-35
_____%

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

_____%

_____%

_____%

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

_____%

_____%

_____%

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

55+
24.4%

35-54
38.4%

U-35
44.5%

22.0%

47.4%

32.6%

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

Sara made a gift and received a tax deduction and yearly income for life. Any unused gift amount goes to the charity at the end of her life.



Gift Annuity

41.1%

30.6%

30.2%

Interested now (definitely/somewhat /slightly)

Similar [dissimilar] age donor photos did better [worse] than text only or non-donor photo



Why?

The association was completely explained (mediated) by the answer to one question

How much do you identify with Sara?

- She is not at all like me
- She is not really like me
- She is a little bit like me
- She is somewhat like me
- She is a lot like me



THE DONOR'S

Donor identifies as or with the hero

**People like me
do things like this**

Individual component definitions



ADVANCE

Backstory and setting develop heroic motivation from life story and values (*before the ask*)

An inciting incident promises heroism and requires a choice (*at the ask*)

Climax and resolution confirms heroism through gratitude, impact reporting, and compatible publicity (*after the ask*)

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STORY Uses character and plot that triggers visualization producing social emotion while avoiding error detection

Socratic Fundraising: Asking works better than telling

Average for all 10 organizations: The Nature Conservancy, The World Wildlife Fund, The American Cancer Society, The National Breast Cancer Foundation, A local animal shelter, The American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, UNICEF, CARE, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, The YMCA or YWCA.

Initial information (5,438 Respondents)	If you happened to sign a new Last Will & Testament in the next 30 days, what is the percentage likelihood that you might include a gift to _____	In the next 30 days, what is the percentage likelihood that you might make a gift to _____
Telling people Referencing the causes	14.23%	13.83%
Telling people more Referencing the causes and describing example projects of the charities	14.88%	14.64%
Asking people Please rate the importance of the causes	17.23%**	19.06%***
Asking people more Please rate the importance of the causes and example projects of the charities	20.32%***	21.23%***

OK, professor, all this research is nice. But, I've got a donor meeting next week. How exactly do I bring up the topic of her inevitable death?



Three stories and shut up

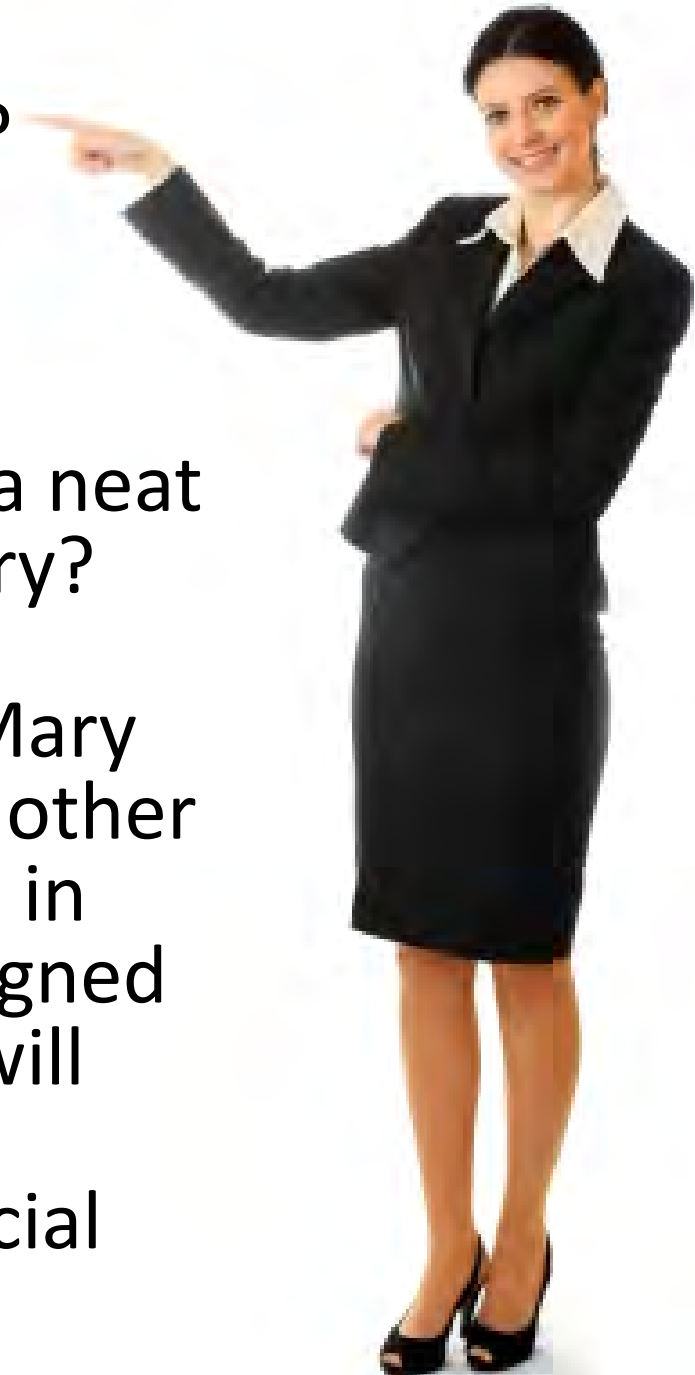
4 S

1. Story
2. Story
3. Story
4. Shut up

Concept from
Jeff Comfort,
Oregon State University

So, what's new at Texas Tech?

1. ... new coach ...
2. ... new building ...
3. Oh, and Mary Smith did a neat thing. Did you know Mary? She graduated two years before you... No? Well, Mary spent her career helping other people get their finances in order and she recently signed a new will that one day will endow a permanent scholarship for our financial planning students.



Three stories and shut up

4 S

1. Story
2. Story
3. Story
4. Shut up

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Using social "story" words not formal words

AVOIDANCE: Don't lead with death

Story: Character

Identification with the hero. "People like me do things like this"

life story connects with gift in a will

norming the gift

SYMBOLIC IMMORTALITY: lasting impact

impact on our in-group

A bit more direct...
(people like me do things like this)



“Many donors who give as regularly as you have put our organization in their will; what are your thoughts about doing that?”

Individual component definitions



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**Please
connect
with me on
LinkedIn for
links to all
my slides,
videos, and
books!**

**Professor Russell James
Texas Tech University**

**The Epic
Fundraiser:**

**Myth and Science
in Philanthropic
Storytelling
(major and
planned gifts)**