Smart Slacking

When Effort Minimization is Attributed to Efficiency Rather than Laziness

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SUMMARY

People often take actions to minimize their effort. But when is effort minimization seen as a vice (laziness) as opposed to a virtue (efficiency?) In this project, we first show that framing the same level of effort as efficiency as opposed to laziness radically changes our predictions of a successful outcome, such that efficiency framing predicts success and laziness framing predicts failure. Next, we provide insight into the cues people use to ascribe these labels. First, we see a strong outcome bias: any negative outcome is attributed to low efficiency, and high laziness, no matter the amount of effort invested. However, we also identify a case where effort minimization is attributed to high efficiency: low effort investments are correctly discounted as efficient when a positive outcome is achieved. Recognizing efficiency, in turn, allows us to remove the laziness label from effort minimizing choices, leading to lower regret and potentially higher chances of success.

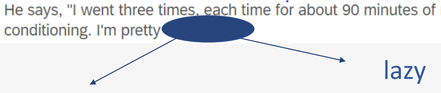
METHODS (STUDY 1)

Imagine that Bob wants to run a marathon at the end of the year.

He joins a gym to help get in shape.

At the end of his second month of gym membership, you ask him how much he's gone to the gym.

He says, "I went three times, each time for about 90 minutes of running and strength conditioning. I'm pretty



RESULTS (STUDY 1)

N=200; Mlazy=26.54, SD=24.89; Meff=39.65, SD=28.48;
B= -13.12; t=3.47, p=0.001
**all material/pre-reg and analyses on
https://researchbox.org/471&PEER_REVIEW_passcode=OZXPOV

METHODS (STUDY 2)

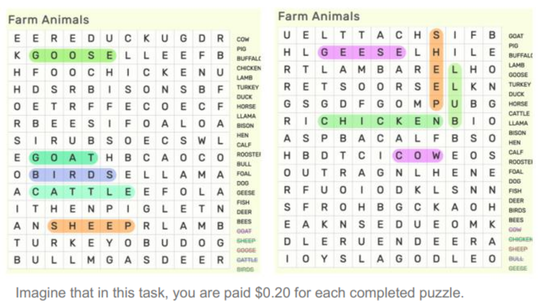
Imagine that you are participating in a study that requires you to complete a task.

You have to complete as many word puzzles as you can out of 20 puzzles.

A puzzle is considered completed when you find **5 of the words on the list.**

Two examples are shown below.

These puzzles were completed because **5 words were found from the list of 25 words.**



Imagine that in this task, you are paid $0.20 for each completed puzzle.

The average time of completion for the entire puzzle set is 40 minutes. That is, 40 minutes is the standard amount of time that it takes someone to solve all of the puzzles.

You can choose freely how much time you want to dedicate to the task and how many puzzles you want to complete from the 20 you receive.

You will be paid according to the amount completed.

LOW EFFORT Imagine that you work on the puzzles for 20 minutes.	**POSITIVE OUTCOME** You finish with a very good result, completing 18 puzzles out of 20.
AVERAGE EFFORT Imagine that you work on the puzzles for 40 minutes.	**NEGATIVE OUTCOME** You finish with a below average result, completing only 6 puzzles out of 20.
HIGH EFFORT Imagine that you work on the puzzles for 60 minutes.	

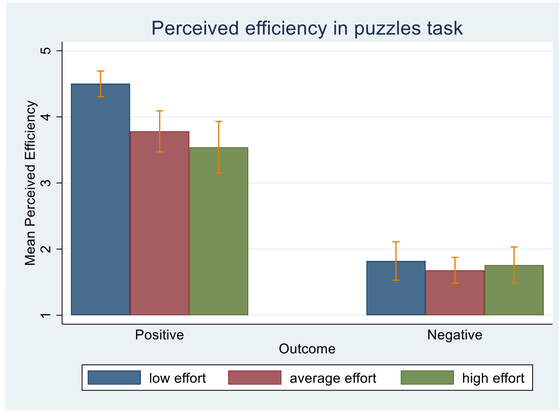
METHODS (STUDY 3)

Imagine that during quarantine you decided to set a new goal for yourself: you want to improve your cooking skills.

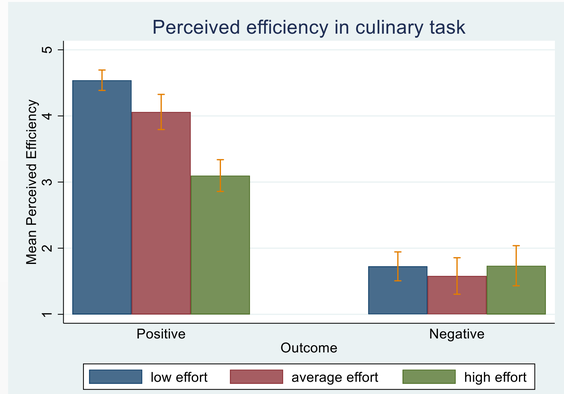
You just bought a recipes book and tonight you are trying one. You choose a recipe and get started!

LOW EFFORT The average time of completion is 40 minutes, but you end up working on the recipe for only 20 minutes.	**AVERAGE EFFORT** The average time of completion is 40 minutes, and you keep working on the recipe for the whole 40 minutes.	**HIGH EFFORT** The average time of completion is 40 minutes, but you end up working on the recipe for 60 minutes.
POSITIVE OUTCOME You finish the recipe and obtain something pretty good.	**NEGATIVE OUTCOME** You can't manage to finish the recipe with something edible, so you end up ordering out.	

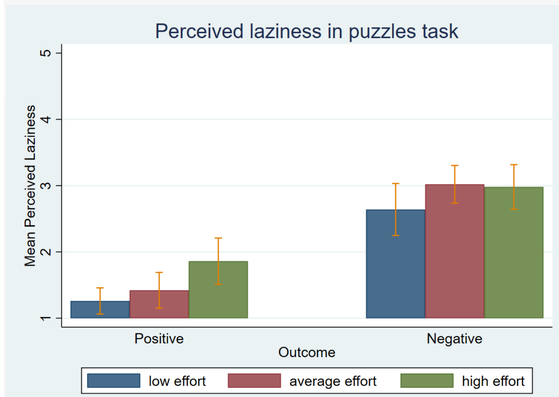
RESULTS (STUDY 2 and 3)



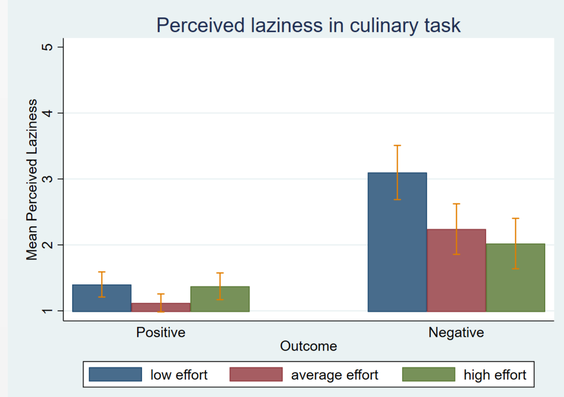
N=299; Finteraction(2, 294)=5.22, p= 0.006;
Foutcome(1, 294)=359.98, p<0.001; Feffort(2, 294)=7.55, p<0.001



N=300; Finteraction(2, 295)=19.10 , p<0.001;
Foutcome(1, 295)=448.80, p<0.001; Feffort(2, 295)=17.09, p<0.001



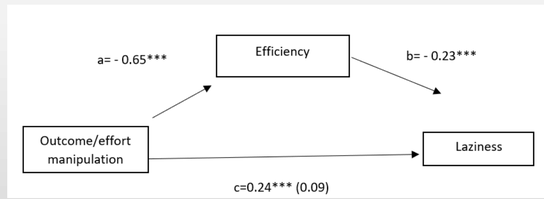
Foutcome(1,294)= 116.57, p<0.001;
Feffort(2, 294)= 4.63, p=0.01; Finteraction(2, 294) not sig.



Foutcome(1, 295)= 87.18, p<0.001;
Feffort(2, 295)=9.17, p<0.001; Finteraction(2, 295)=6.03, p= 0.003

MECHANISM (STUDY 2 and 3)

Mechanism culinary:



Mechanism puzzles: