

Increasing Prosocial Behavior Through Incentive Salience

ABSTRACT

- When incentivizing prosocial behavior, people worry about demotivating others and therefore downplay incentives.
- Emphasizing incentives inherent in prosocial behavior can have a net positive effect on engagement with the cause.
- When incentives are inherent to a prosocial behavior, increasing their salience encourages engagement among those lacking prosocial motivation and for causes perceived as less important, without harming engagement when prosocial motivation is high.

MOTIVATION

- Prosocial motivation changes cost/benefit thinking to incorporate outcomes for others (Goetz et al., 2010; Nussbaum, 1996)
- For people motivated by altruism, the amount of compensation becomes irrelevant (Batson, Sager, Garst, & Kang, 1997; Cialdini et al., 1997)
- We predict that increasing the salience of incentives will have no effect on engagement in prosocial behavior, meaning that engagement remains high.

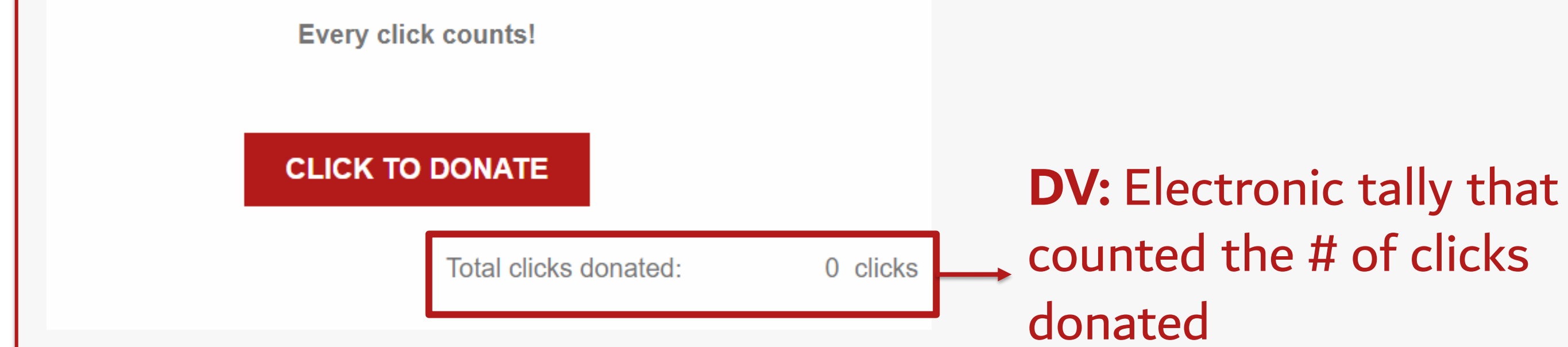
STUDY 1: Click Marathon

Participants	381 U.S. online participant
Design	Incentive salience (measured) x Prosocial motivation (measured)
DV	Prosocial behavior (number of donated clicks)

- “Click marathon” donation event:** For 90 seconds, participants donated effort to:
 - support a cause and;
 - earn \$0.001 bonus payment for each click.

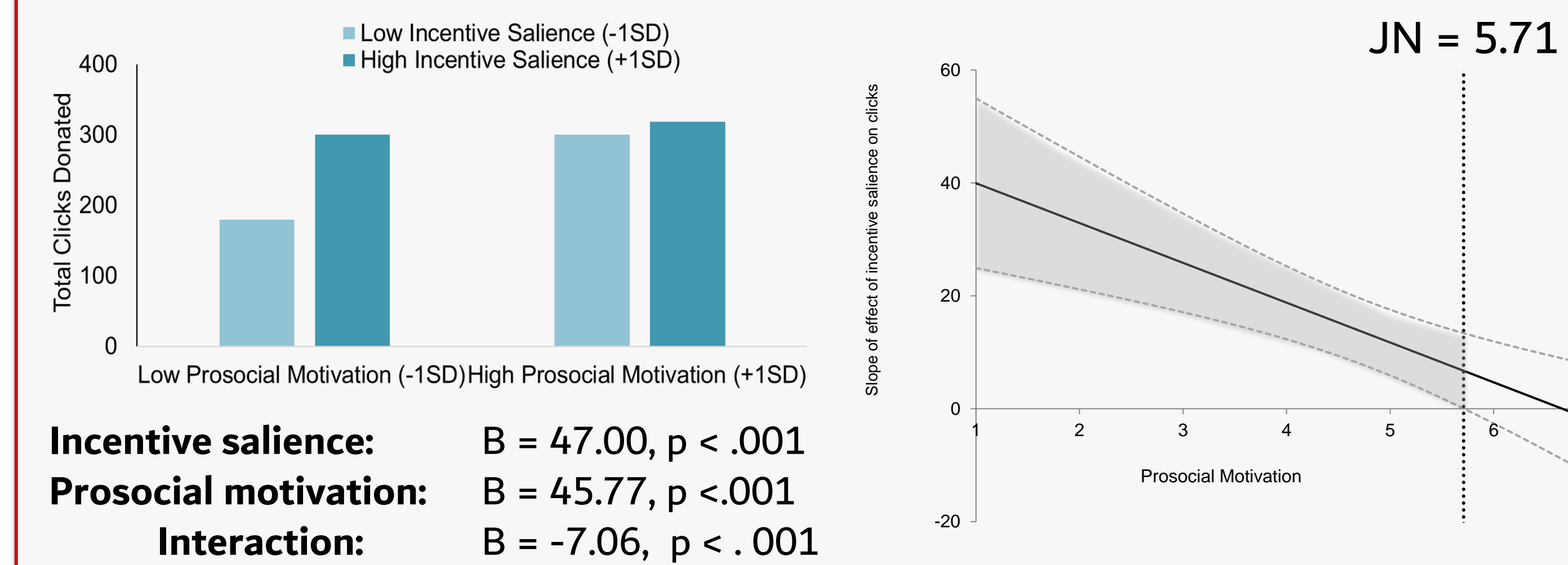


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- Incentive Salience** measured (3-item, $\alpha = .86$)
 - E.g. “I associate clicking with receiving a bonus”
- Prosocial Motivation** measured (3-item, $\alpha = .87$)
 - E.g. “It is my moral responsibility to help out with the cause”

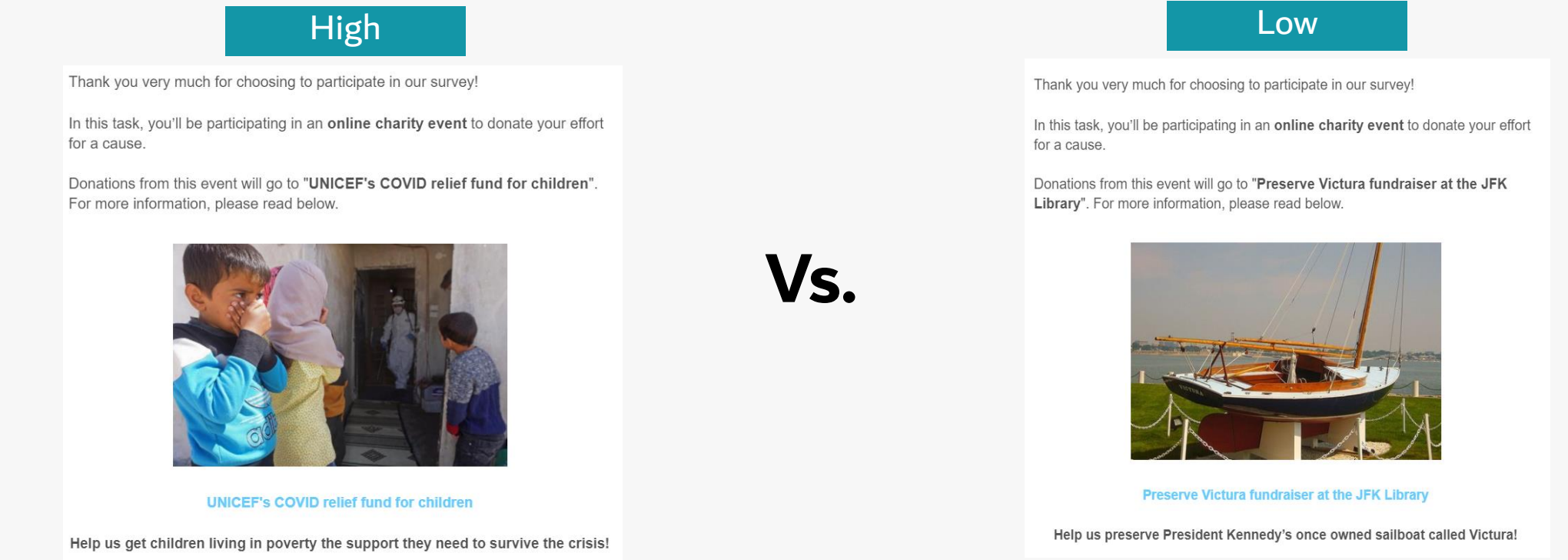
- Results:**
 - Interaction of Incentive Salience and Prosocial Motivation



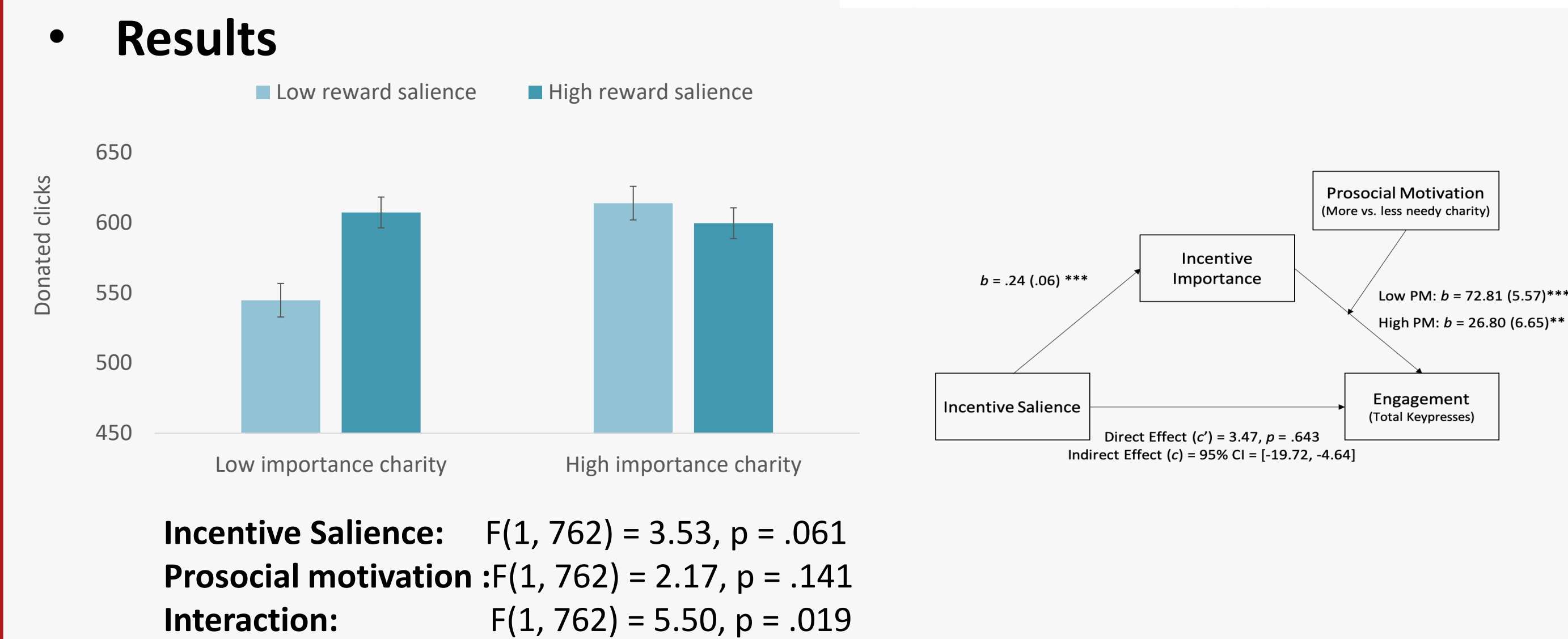
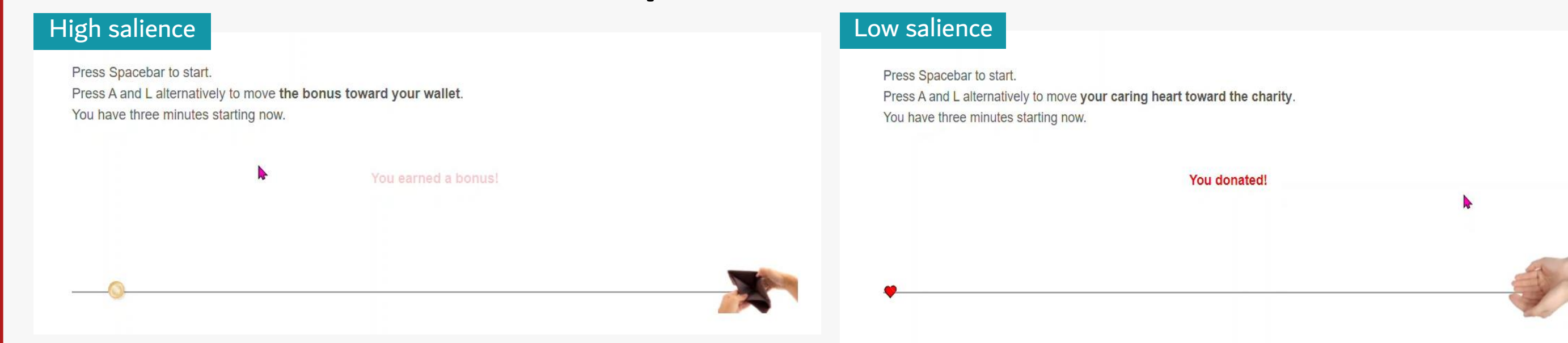
STUDY 3: Typathon

Participants	766 U.S. online participant
Design	2 (Incentive salience: Low vs. High) x 2 (Prosocial motivation: Low vs. High)
DV	Prosocial behavior (number of donated types)

- Prosocial motivation manipulation**



- Incentive salience manipulation**

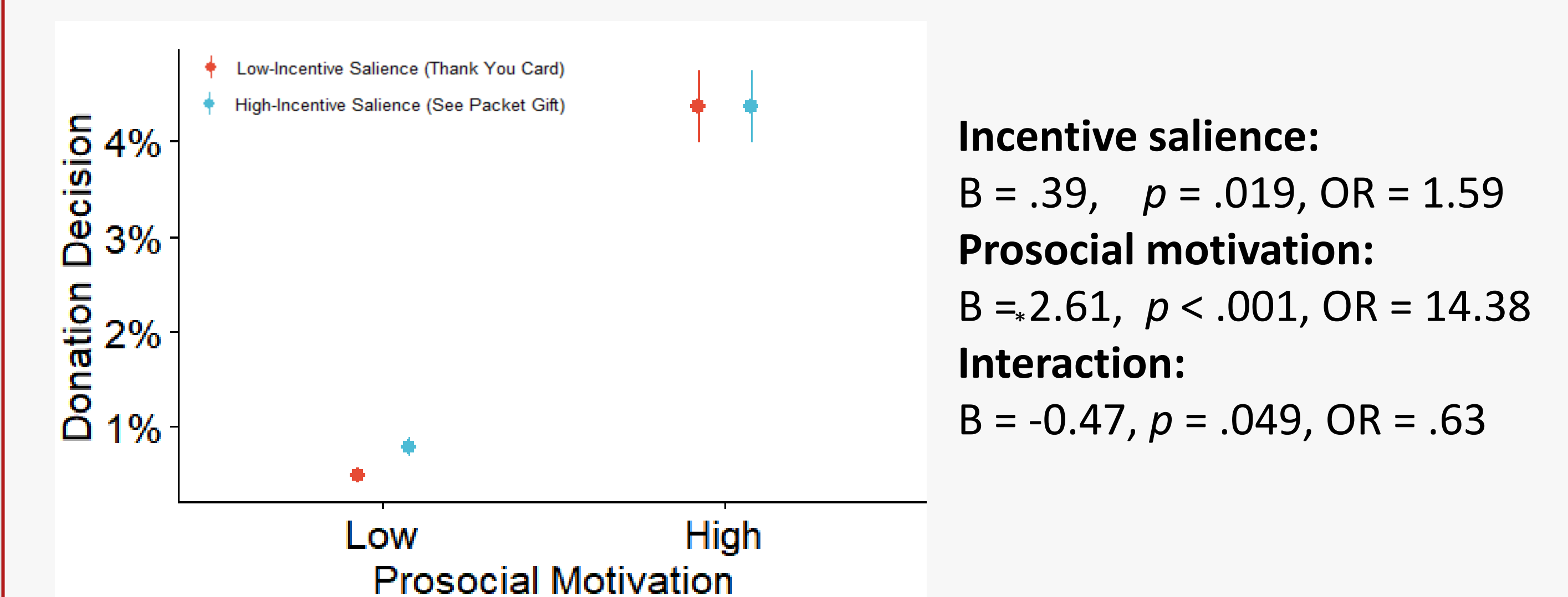


Field Study: University Donation Fundraiser

Participants	22,468 northeastern university alumni
Design	2 (Incentive salience: low vs. high) x 2 (Prosocial motivation: low vs. high)

- Incentive salience:** Low-incentive salient condition received a card thanking them for supporting their university; high-incentive salient condition received a small gift with their card
- Prosocial motivation:** Categorized alumni who donated frequently (i.e., in the prior year) and consistently (i.e., multiple times in the past five years) as high on prosocial motivation ($n = 5,900$); we categorized alumni without a recent or consistent history of giving were coded as low on prosocial motivation ($n = 19,458$)

- Results:**

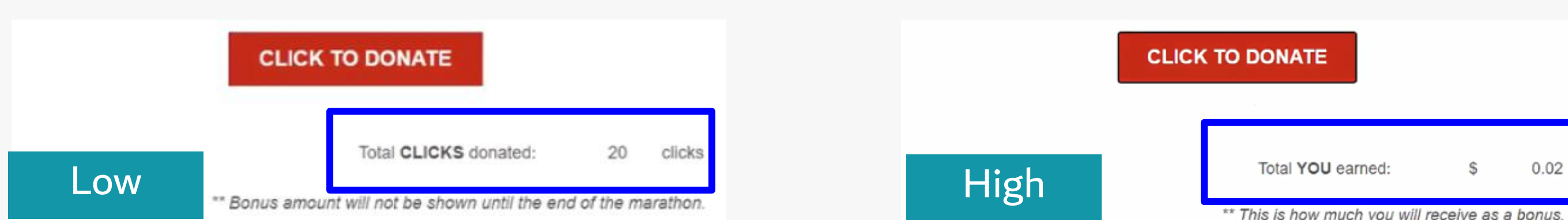


STUDY 2: Manipulating Reward Salience

Manipulating the visual salience of incentives

Participants	296 U.S. online participant
Design	2 (Incentive salience: low vs. high) x Prosocial motivation (measured)

- Click marathon, same as Study 1
- Reward salience manipulation:**



- Prosocial motivation measured**

