

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

Participants381 U.S. online participantDesignIncentive salience (measured) x Prosocial motivation (measured)DVProsocial behavior (number of donated clicks)

"Click marathon" donation event:
For 90 seconds, participants donated

effort to:

(1) support a cause and;

(2) earn \$0.001 bonus payment for ea



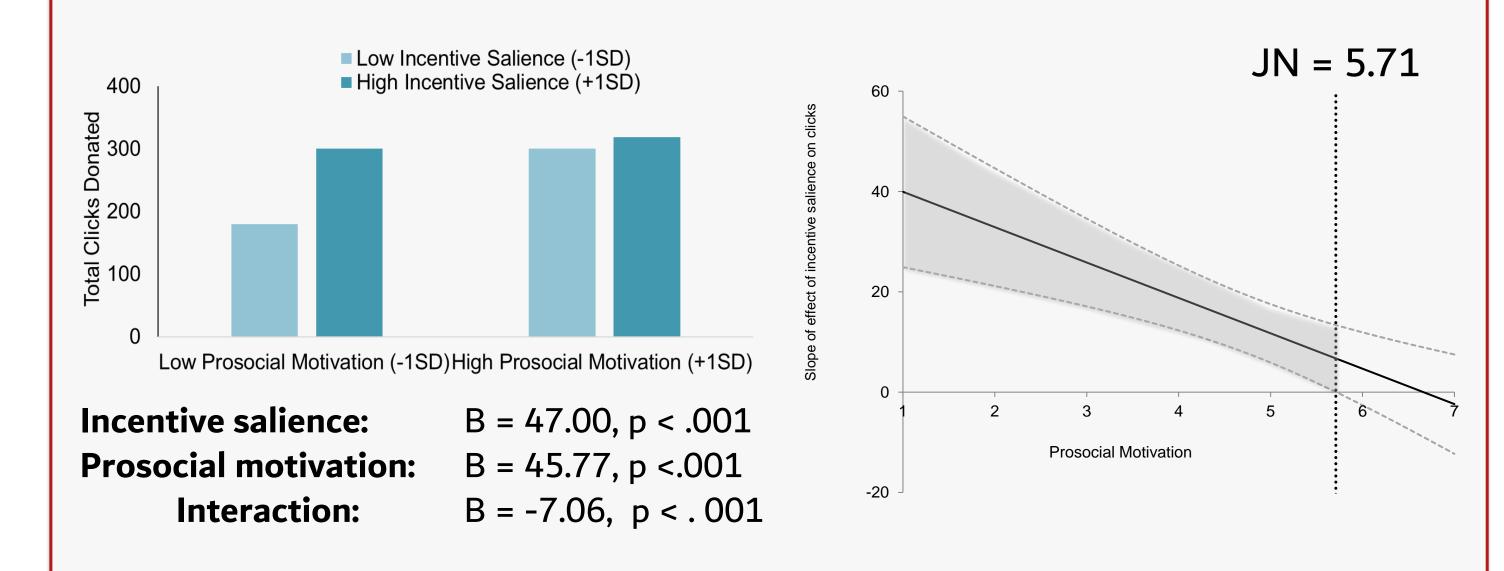
Wikipedia is a free online encyclopedia, a comprehensive written compendium that ntains information on all branches of knowledge. The mission of Wikipedia is to benefit readers in every corner of the world by acting as a free source of knowledge.



- 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 2: Manipulating Reward Salience

Manipulating the visual salience of incentives

Participants

296 U.S. online participant

2(Incentive salience: low vs. high) x Prosocial motivation (measured)

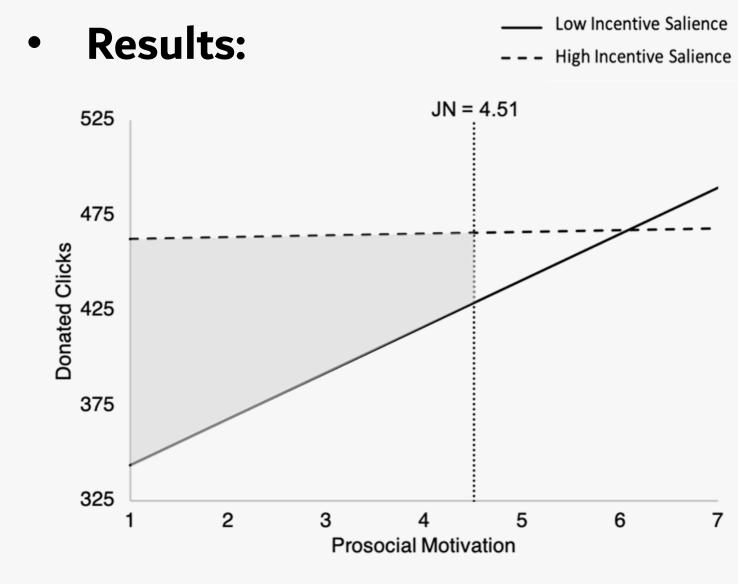
CLICK TO DONATE

High

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



Prosocial motivation measured



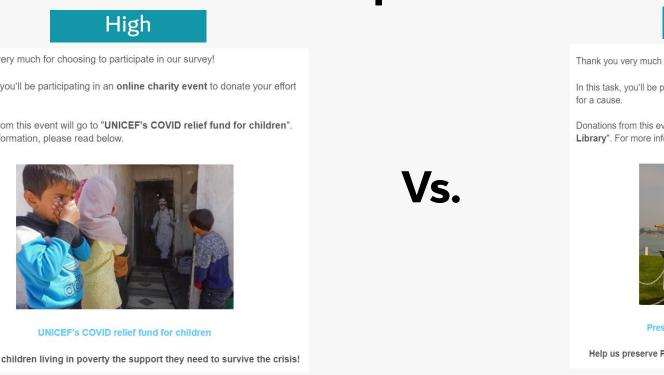
Incentive salience: B = 71.31, p = .019Prosocial motivation: B = 12.62, p = .017Interaction: B = -11.74, p = .027

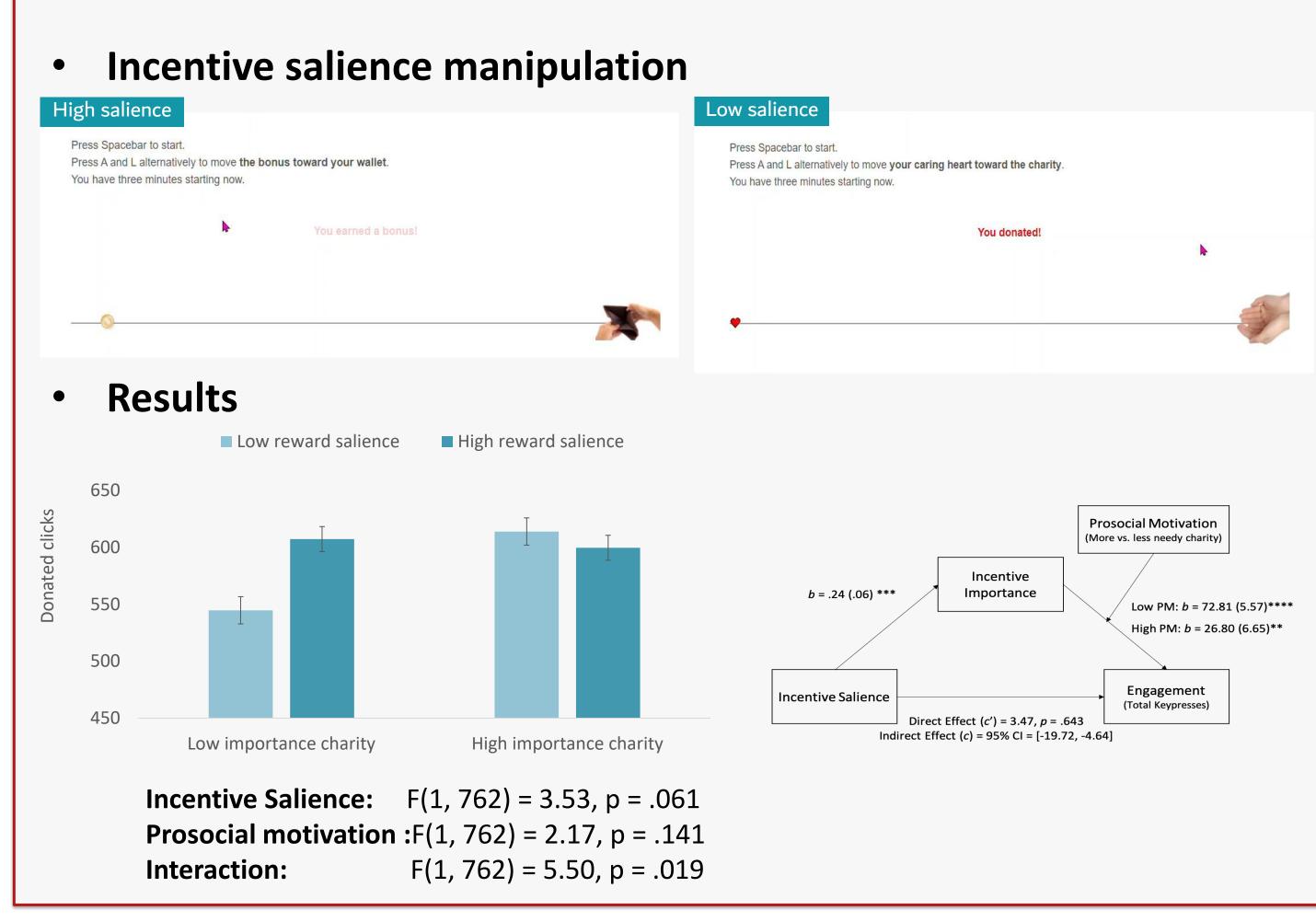
Incentive Importance Low PM: $b = 44.57 (5.76)^{****}$ High PM: $b = 20.37 (6.76)^{***}$ Engagement (Total Clicks) Indirect Effect (c') = -1.42, p = .839Indirect Effect (c') = 95% CI = [-3.43, -.06]

STUDY 3: Typathon

Participants
 Design
 2 (Incentive salience: Low vs. High) x 2 (Prosocial motivation: Low vs. High)
 Prosocial behavior (number of donated types)

Prosocial motivation manipulation





Field Study: University Donation Fundraiser

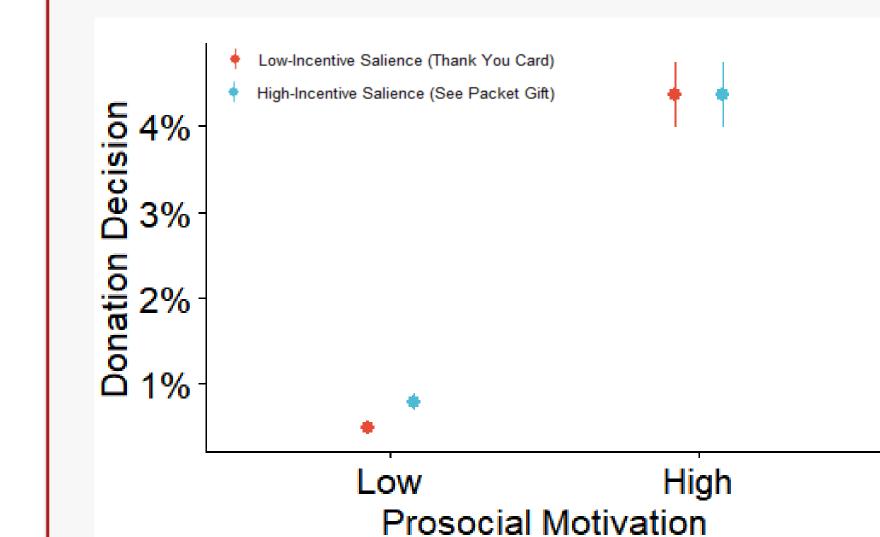
Participants

22,468 northeastern university alumni

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:



Incentive salience: B = .39, p = .019, OR = 1.59

Prosocial motivation:

B = $_*2.61$, p < .001, OR = 14.38 **Interaction:**

B = -0.47, p = .049, OR = .63

Selected References:

Batson, C. D., Sager, K., Garst, E., Kang, M., Rubchinsky, K., & Dawson, K. (1997). Is empathy-induced helping due to self—other merging?. Journal of personality and social psychology, 73(3), 495.; Cialdini, R. B., Brown, S. L., Lewis, B. P., Luce, C., & Neuberg, S. L. (1997). Reinterpreting the empathy—altruism relationship: When one into one equals oneness. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73(3), 481—494.; Goetz, J. L., Keltner, D., & Simon-Thomas, E. (2010). Compassion: An evolutionary analysis and empirical review. Psychological Bulletin, 136, 351-3; Nussbaum, M. (1996). Compassion: The basic social emotion. Social Philosophy and Policy, 13, 27-58