Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong
香港大學心理學系

<div align="center">

Brown Bag Lunchtime Seminar
(Theme: Social and Health Psychology)

Understanding Biases in Charitable Donations: Baron and Szymanska (2011)
Replication and Extensions

1:00 p.m. – 2:00 p.m. │ November 3, 2023 (Friday)
Rm 813, 8/F, The Jockey Club Tower │ Centennial Campus │ The University of Hong Kong

</div>

Mannix CHAN
Undergraduate student
Department of Psychology
The University of Hong Kong

Abstract

When individuals decide to donate money to charitable causes, they expect that a certain amount of good will be done by the charity using that money. From a utilitarian perspective, a maximally cost-effective donor would donate in such a way that they accomplish the most amount of good with a given amount of money. However, real-world donors are influenced by factors other than maximising cost-effectiveness, and often are affected by various cognitive biases when donating.

Baron and Szymanska (2011) ran several studies which suggested that, when cost-effectiveness is held constant, individuals prefer charities that (1) use less of their donation to defray operational costs, (2) had low past costs, (3) spread their donation over several projects, and (4) helps people exclusively within their own country. They also found evidence which suggested that individuals preferred to help others by giving voluntarily rather than through systems of taxation.

In a replication and extension Registered Report with a US Amazon Mechanical Turk sample using CloudResearch (N = 1403), we replicated Studies 1 to 4 in Baron and Szymanska (2011). Additionally, we conducted two extensions, one on reputation and one on overhead funding.

We found support for the effects of waste/overhead (d = 0.70 [0.41, 0.99]), past costs (d = 0.59 [0.16, 1.02]), diversification (d = 0.63 [0.47, 0.78] for single projects; d = 1.18 [1.00, 1.36] for several projects versus one), nationalism/ingroup effect (d = 0.52 [0.47, 0.58]), and forced charity (d = 0.29 [0.21, 0.37] but has significant caveats regarding validity) on donations; as all five hypotheses were found to replicate, we conclude this as being a successful replication. Extending the replication, we found support for a preference for anonymity on donation allocation, opposite to our initial hypothesis (d = 0.54 [0.46, 0.61]), and support for a preference towards paid-for overhead costs on donation allocation (d = 0.60 [0.52, 0.68]). Following open-science best practices, all materials, data, and code were made available on OSF at https://osf.io/bep78/.

Additionally, this thesis was one of the world's first UG theses to be conducted as a Registered Report with the Peer Community in Registered Reports initiative. Pre-registration went through two rounds of in-depth review by experts in the field, and the protocols gained in-principle acceptance prior to any data collection (https://rr.peercommunityin.org/articles/rec?id=413). We will discuss the implications of conducting UG/MSc/RPg theses as Registered Reports with PCIRR.

About the speaker
Mannix conducted his undergraduate thesis in psychology in the year 2023 working with Dr. Gilad Feldman.

Zoom (For participants who couldn't attend the Seminar in person)
https://hku.zoom.us/j/3951550048?pwd=SncvL3RYakEycUtpL29vdDJEdlEwdz09
Meeting ID: 395 155 0048 │ Password: psyc

<div align="center">

~All are Welcome~

</div>

Enquiry: rpsyc@hku.hk