

# Supplementary Information: “Praise from peers can promote empathetic behavior”

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# Contents

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>A Summarizing information on studies</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>B Further details on Measurements</b>	<b>2</b>
B.1 Treatments . . . . .	2
B.2 Dependent variables . . . . .	3
B.3 Mediators . . . . .	4
B.4 Attention checks . . . . .	4
B.5 Respondent covariates . . . . .	4
<b>C Task descriptions</b>	<b>4</b>
C.1 Main choice task . . . . .	4
C.2 Reservation wage task description . . . . .	7
<b>D Study 1: Costs of Empathy</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>E Study 2: Eliciting Naturalistic Praise (non-experimental)</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>F Study 3: Praise Lowers the Cost of Empathy</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>G Study 4: Peer praise increases reported happiness</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>H Study 5: Peer praise increases likelihood of empathy task through increased happiness</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>I Scope of peer praise for empathy</b>	<b>39</b>
I.1 Subgroup analyses . . . . .	39
I.2 Fading effects of peer praise . . . . .	46
<b>J Explorations of other mechanisms for peer praise on empathy</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>K Ethical considerations</b>	<b>48</b>

## A Summarizing information on studies

	Study goal	N	Trials	Total obs.
<b>Study 1</b>	Costliness of empathy	318	3	954
<b>Study 2</b>	Eliciting peer praise	114	-	114
<b>Study 3</b>	Peer praise on empathy	328	15	4680
<b>Study 4</b>	Happiness as mediator	223	1	223
<b>Study 5A</b>	Mediation analysis	337	20	6480
<b>Study 5B</b>	Mediation analysis	624	3	1731
<b>Total</b>	-	1944	-	14182

Table A.1: **Summarizing information on studies.** *N* indicates number of consented respondents.

**General handling of attrition** For all studies, we evaluated attrition and its possible effects on our results in the same manner. We present for each study an attrition evaluation plot, whereby the x-axis presents in order questions posed to the respondents in the survey experiment. The y-axis denotes the proportion of respondents who attrited (compared to the original starting sample). We indicate through colored vertical lines where Pre-Treatment, Treatment, Mediator (or Other), and Outcome variables are measured. When large proportions of attrition occur at specific moments of the survey, it can become quickly clear to the researcher if these are at key points of the study – such as if it was treatment-induced attrition, which would most directly and problematically affect estimation of average treatment effects. Throughout our studies we see very low attrition (an average of 5%) with no obvious correlations with introduction of treatment.

## B Further details on Measurements

### B.1 Treatments

**Measurement of peer praise** We elicited naturalistic peer praise in Study 2 (see details on the Study in Methods section) in the following manner:

1. We ask respondents to provide feedback on two tasks a real adult has performed – the FEEL and DESCRIBE tasks and explained what each task entailed and an example drawn image of a person.
2. Respondents are asked to think of language that would admire or encourage the participant for choosing and doing the FEEL/DESCRIBE, especially positive things that can be said to people who choose to empathize/be objective to others in order to encourage them. Respondents then are asked for three words, then a full sentence.

Finally respondents are asked to select how they feel about people who choose and engage in empathetic/objective behavior in a thermometer from 0-10 with zero as least warm and 10 as most warm.

3. To encourage respondents to think and write genuinely, we ask respondents in a series of follow up questions to tell us what the likelihood participants who are shown their words will believe that they are genuine, and give respondents the opportunity to return and edit their responses if they desire.

We collected the words used by respondents to praise empathetic behavior and created a word cloud, with a short sentence above indicating the average feeling thermometer value for that behavior, calculated from Study 2 participants. This constitutes the main peer praise for empathy treatment, replicated here and found in the main text as well. We similarly create a peer praise for describe treatment for our robustness checks. Both are found in Figure B.1.



Figure B.1: Left panel (a) main peer praise for empathy treatment; right panel (b) peer praise for objectivity.

## B.2 Dependent variables

**Measurement of main choice task** Our main dependent variable is a forced-choice task selection between FEEL and DESCRIBE, where the former is always coded as a 1 while the latter is coded as a 0 when conducting statistical tests; for more detail please see SI Section C.1.

**Measurement of reservation wage** We also measure an incentivized reservation wage elicitation for the FEEL task; for more detail please see SI Section C.1.

## B.3 Mediators

**Happy** In Studies 4 and 5, immediately after the randomization of treatment, respondents were asked about their happiness developed from an emotion scale by Harmon-Jones, Bastian and Harmon-Jones (2016). We specifically focus on the measurement of respondent emotion *in the moment*, so as to avoid conflating emotions across the experience of the overall survey with the emotions related to the treatment. Below is the phrasing of the happiness measure:

This scale consists of a number of words that describe feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to the word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way RIGHT NOW.

**scale: very slightly or not at all/ a little/ moderately/ quite a bit/ extremely  
emotions: happy/enjoyment/liking**

## B.4 Attention checks

Given concerns of greater online fatigue and inattentiveness during the COVID-19 global pandemic (see Peyton, Huber and Coppock (N.d.)), we follow Peyton et al.'s work, and the work of others on the usage of attention checks in online surveys (see for example Berinsky et al. (2019)), and incorporate two pre-treatment attention check questions for Studies 4, 5A and 5B. The first attention check is styled in a multiple choice and the second via a grid question (see Figures B.2-B.3) to capture most attentive respondents as well as least Berinsky et al. (2019). The multiple choice (attentionMC) and screening questions in the grid (attentionG) are drawn directly from Berinsky et al. (2019), while the filler questions in the grid are designed to elicit non-politically oriented opinions from respondents so as to minimize possible priming effects downstream.

## B.5 Respondent covariates

Each study asked a series of respondent-level covariates within the surveys; for ease we present information on the collection and timing of each of respondent covariates across studies in Table B.2.

# C Task descriptions

## C.1 Main choice task

The main choice task that appears throughout Studies 1, 3, 4 and 5, entails a practice round, where respondents practice both FEEL and DESCRIBE activities (Study 2 entails only describing the task, but does not ask respondents to practice it). Descriptions of the practice and main task can be found in the Methods section. For the practice, main task (and reser-

We are interested in what sections people like to read in the newspaper. This might affect what they learn from articles and how they feel about the issues discussed in them. We also want to see if people are reading the questions carefully. To show that you've read this much, please mark both the classified and none of the above options below. That's right, just select these two options only.

Regardless of how frequently you read the newspaper, what would you say are your favorite newspaper sections to read? (please check all that apply)

National

Local

Real estate

Comics

Classified

Style

Sports

Business

Science and technology

Opinion

None of the above

All of the above

Figure B.2: MC attention check

vation wage task) images are drawn from the **Faces Data** in Chicago Faces and Harvard Faces Databases (Ma, Correll and Wittenbrink, 2015), randomized among the following features: Race=Black/White, Gender=Male (no variation), Valence=Angry/Fearful; images are randomized *without replacement* within respondent. See Figure C.8 for example draws of faces.

In the grid below, you will see a series of statements. Please tell us whether you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Agree strongly	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Disagree strongly
The best sport to watch live is baseball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook is the best social media platform	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Two is greater than one	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Football is more interesting than basketball	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Please click the "neither agree nor disagree" response	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Twitter is more engaging than Instagram	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Soccer is more fun to play than hockey	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure B.3: Grid attention check

	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4	Study 5 (A & B)
<b>State of residence</b>	Post DV	-	Post T/DV	Pre T	Pre T
<b>Age</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Pre T	Pre T
<b>Sex</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Pre T	Pre T
<b>Education</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Pre T	Pre T
<b>Race</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Pre T
<b>Income</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Pre T
<b>Religion</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Pre T
<b>Party</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Pre T
<b>Ideology</b>	Post DV	Post DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV
<b>Trump approval</b>	Post DV	-	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV
<b>Biden approval</b>	-	-	-	-	Post T/DV
<b>Baseline empathy</b>	Post DV	-	Post T/DV	Post T/DV	Post T/DV

Table B.2: Measurement of respondent covariates across studies. T indicates when treatment (peer praise) was measured, DV indicates when dependent variables are measured. In Studies 1 and 2 no treatments were manipulated.



Figure C.4: Race=Black, Valence=Angry



Figure C.5: Race=Black, Valence=Fearful



Figure C.6: Race=White, Valence=Angry



Figure C.7: Race=White, Valence=Fearful

Figure C.8: Example faces from Chicago Faces Database.

## C.2 Reservation wage task description

In the next task, you will be making choices between real amounts of money. You will see several choices to make between the two decks of cards, exactly like the tasks you completed earlier. For each choice between the decks, the FEEL deck asks you to be objective and write about the age and race of a person, and the DESCRIBE deck asks you to be empathetic and write about the internal experiences and feelings of a person. In all cases, the persons shown faces similar to those you saw earlier in the experiment. This time, you will see a real payment for completing a trial from each deck, for each choice. Please select the option that you prefer for each of the choices. There are no accurate or inaccurate answers. A random draw from one of the sets of choices will be enacted, and you will be directed to the deck you chose under that choice set, and paid the amount for that choice. These choices are thus **real decisions with real pay**.

[Present list of paired options of decks for respondent to click on.]

Wages for DESCRIBE are always \$1.00; wages for FEEL range from \$0.99 to \$1.13 in 1 cent increments. Each time an option for a pair is clicked on, the respondent will see the sentence below the pair “I would prefer to conduct task DESCRIBE/FEEL for Y amount, over task FEEL/DESCRIBE for Z amount.”

Recall your preferred choices for wages for DESCRIBE and FEEL.

[Randomly assign one of the paired options in the **Real Wage Task** to execute. Highlight the selected row.]

A random draw of the paired choices you have made has been

selected: you will now conduct task X for Y amount. Your Y pay will be added to your survey pay at the end of this survey.

## D Study 1: Costs of Empathy

Study 1 was fielded in September 2020, with a total of 318 respondents. The purpose of the study was to establish the baseline costliness of empathy. Figure D.9 presents the consort diagram for Study 1. Descriptive statistics on respondent covariates are presented in Table D.3. Respondents were also asked about their beliefs on how often other respondents on the platform chose the FEEL and DESCRIBE tasks, and what they thought others' beliefs about empathy and objectivity were (see Table D.4). Other than measuring respondents' behavioral choices to establish baseline costs of empathy, we also directly asked respondents to rate the FEEL and DESCRIBE tasks for difficulty using the NASA task load; summary statistics for answers to these questions are presented in Table D.5 and differences between the answers by task type are in Table D.6.

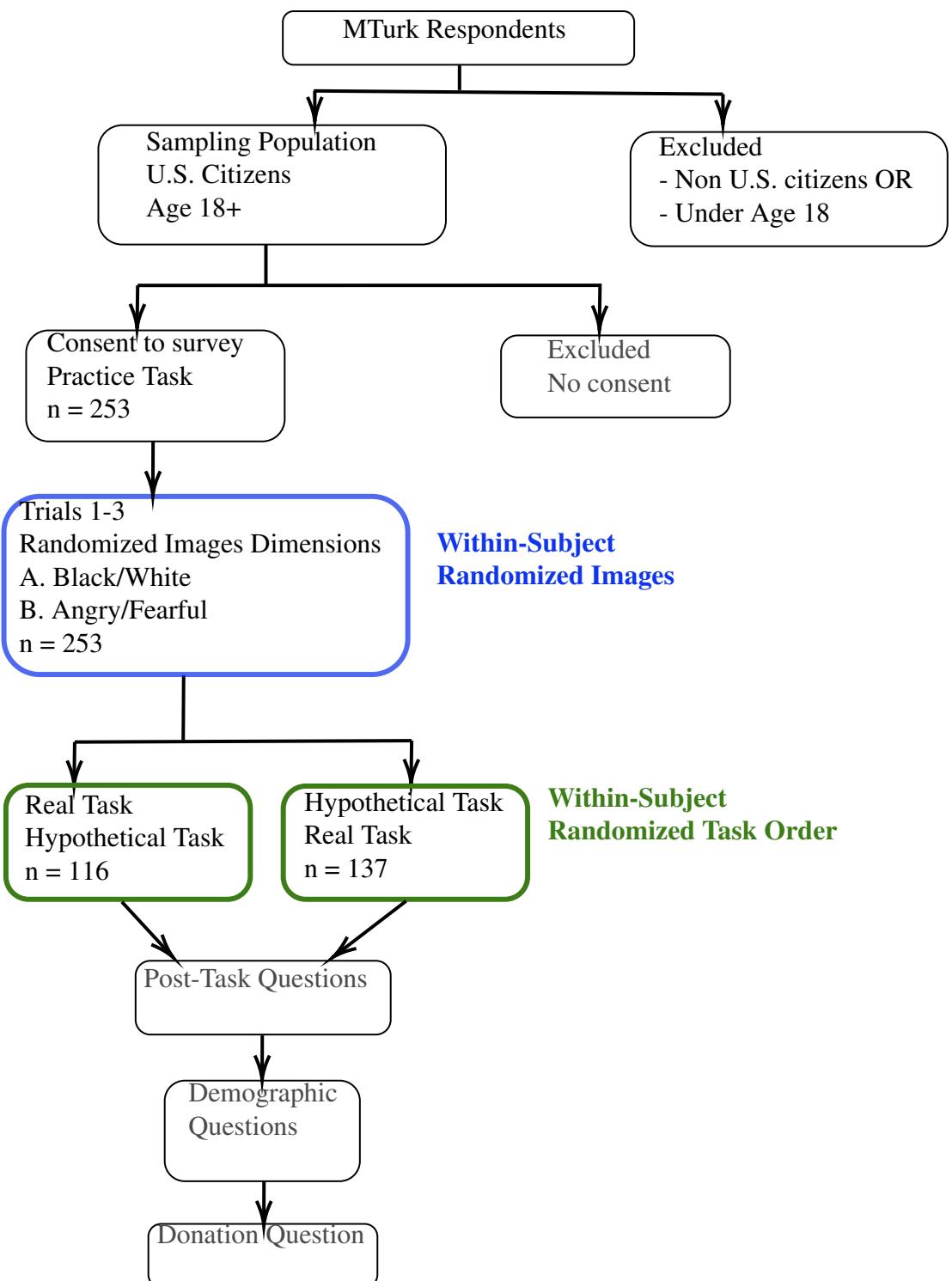


Figure D.9: Study 1: Consort Diagram

	Level	N	%						
Sex	Female	97	30.5						
	Male	155	48.7						
Race	Missing	66	20.8						
	White	195	61.3						
Education	Asian	1	0.3						
	Black or African American	33	10.4						
Race	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	13	4.1						
	Other	7	2.2						
Education	Missing	69	21.7						
	Associate degree	17	5.3						
Education	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	149	46.9						
	High school or equivalent (GED)	14	4.4						
Education	Kindergarten to 8th grade	1	0.3						
	Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)	43	13.5						
Education	Medical (MD), law (JD) or other doctoral degree (PhD)	2	0.6						
	No schooling completed	1	0.3						
Education	Some college, but did not complete a degree	25	7.9						
	Missing	66	20.8						
Income	100k or more	14	4.4						
	25k to less than 50k	91	28.6						
Income	50k to less than 75k	91	28.6						
	75k to less than 100k	29	9.1						
Income	Less than 25k	27	8.5						
	Missing	66	20.8						
Religion	Atheist/agnostic	45	14.2						
	Buddhist	9	2.8						
Religion	Hindu	4	1.3						
	Jewish	6	1.9						
Religion	Muslim	7	2.2						
	Nothing in particular	24	7.5						
Religion	Orthodox (Greek or Russian)	1	0.3						
	Protestant	53	16.7						
Religion	Roman Catholic	103	32.4						
	Missing	66	20.8						
Party	Democrat	62	19.5						
	Independent	33	10.4						
Party	Lean Democrat	21	6.6						
	Lean Republican	13	4.1						
Party	Republican	63	19.8						
	Strong Democrat	34	10.7						
Party	Strong Republican	26	8.2						
	Missing	66	20.8						
Ideology	Conservative	34	10.7						
	Liberal	75	23.6						
Ideology	Moderate	37	11.6						
	Slightly conservative	24	7.5						
Ideology	Slightly liberal	23	7.2						
	Very conservative	25	7.9						
Ideology	Very liberal	34	10.7						
	Missing	66	20.8						
	N	Missing	Mean	SD	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max
Age	250	68	36.45	11.36	20	29	33	40	77

Table D.3: **Study 1 Respondents (Summarizing covariates).** Total number of respondents 318.

Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Belief people choose Feel task	252	57.421	23.959	3.000	39.750	79.000	100.000
Belief people choose Describe task	250	67.320	17.788	2.000	56.250	80.750	100.000
Belief people think empathy is good	250	72.396	18.783	1.000	58.500	86.000	100.000
Belief people think objectivity is good	250	72.128	16.948	1.000	63.000	85.000	100.000

Table D.4: Descriptive Statistics - Empathy norms

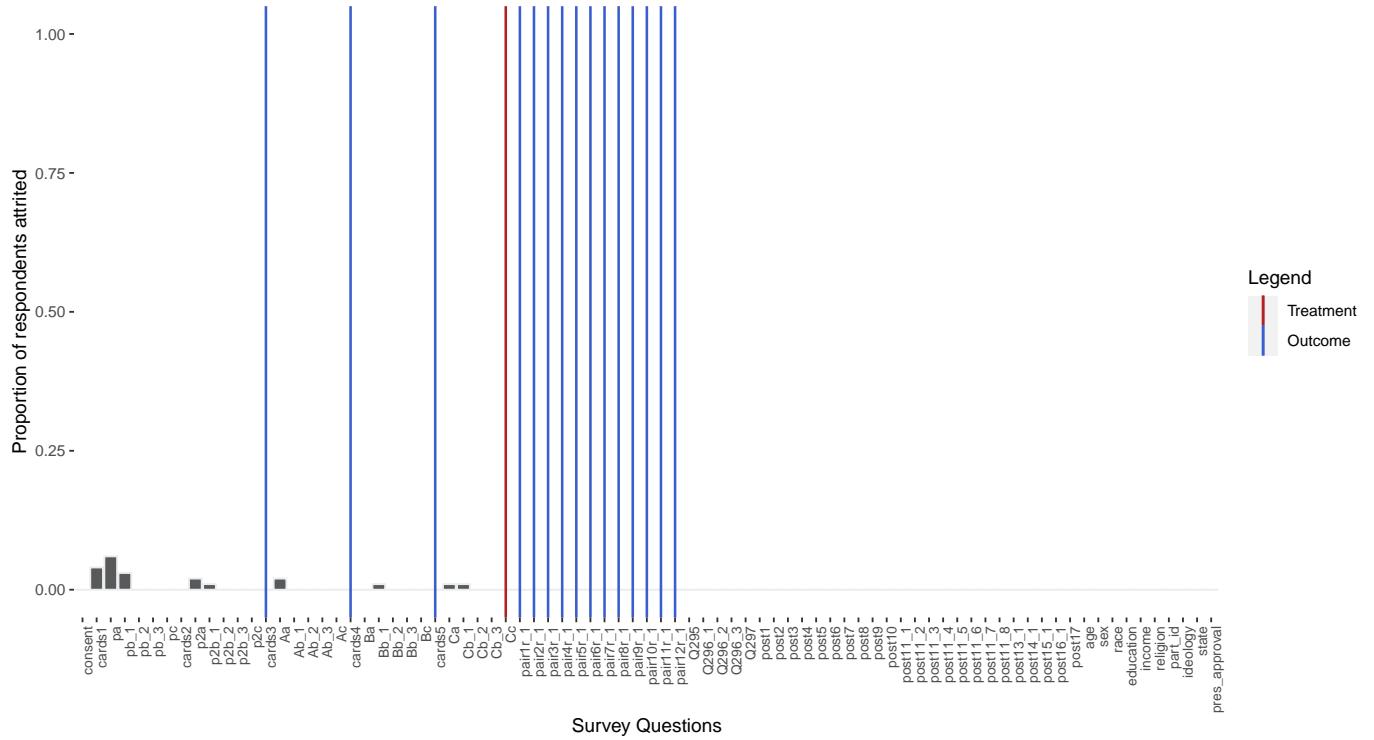
Variable	N	Mean	St. Dev.	Min	Pctl(25)	Pctl(75)	Max
Describe task mentally demanding	252	2.702	1.232	1.000	2.000	4.000	5.000
Feel task mentally demanding	252	2.937	1.043	1.000	2.000	4.000	5.000
Describe task hard to accomplish	252	2.385	1.037	1.000	2.000	3.000	5.000
Feel task hard to accomplish	252	2.762	1.085	1.000	2.000	3.000	5.000
Describe task raised insecurity	252	2.095	1.177	1.000	1.000	3.000	5.000
Feel task raised insecurity	252	2.329	1.170	1.000	1.000	3.000	5.000
Describe task done successfully	252	3.762	1.005	1.000	3.000	4.000	5.000
Feel task done successfully	252	3.575	1.048	1.000	3.000	4.000	5.000

Table D.5: Descriptive Statistics - NASA task load

Task	Demanding	Hard	Insecure	Successful
Objective (DESCRIBE)	2.702	2.385	2.095	3.762
Empathy (FEEL)	2.937	2.762	2.329	3.575
Difference	0.234 (p=0.0217)	0.377 (p=1e-04)	0.234 (p=0.0256)	-0.187 (p=0.042)

Table D.6: Task load summary. Mean values reported (choices from 1-5).

**Study 1 Attrition** Attrition evaluation plot for Study 1 is presented in Figure D.10.



**Figure D.10: Attrition across survey questions:** X axis denotes survey questions in chronological order. Blue vertical lines mark outcome questions: open-ended, three short words, and a feeling thermometer, which followed the choice tasks. Red vertical line represents randomization of hypothetical and real wage tasks. Y axis is the proportion of total n attrited, calculated as number of attrited respondents / total n.

## E Study 2: Eliciting Naturalistic Praise (non-experimental)

Study 2 was fielded in September 2020 with a total of 114 respondents who consented to the survey. The purpose of the study was to elicit naturalistic peer praise for the empathy and objective tasks. The consort diagram for Study 2 is presented in Figure E.11. Table E.7 presents respondent covariate descriptives from the study. No attrition occurred in the study. Respondents were asked to write sentences and words that would praise peers who engaged in empathetic/objective behavior due to doing the FEEL and DESCRIBE tasks. Figure ?? presents a plot of the words that occur differentially across the words elicited for praising FEEL and DESCRIBE.

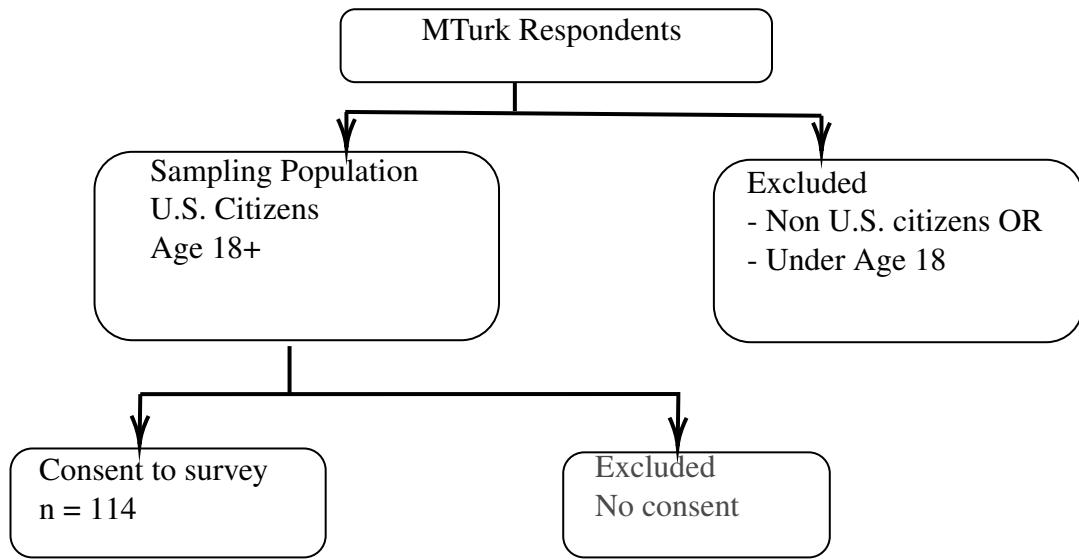


Figure E.11: Study 2: Consort Diagram

	Level	N	%					
Sex	Female	38	33.3					
	Male	76	66.7					
Party	Democrat	38	33.3					
	Independent	17	14.9					
Ideology	Lean Democrat	8	7.0					
	Lean Republican	7	6.1					
	Republican	23	20.2					
	Strong Democrat	11	9.6					
	Strong Republican	10	8.8					
	Conservative	19	16.7					
Race	Liberal	36	31.6					
	Moderate	20	17.5					
	Slightly conservative	8	7.0					
	Slightly liberal	9	7.9					
	Very conservative	8	7.0					
Education	Very liberal	14	12.3					
	Asian	2	1.8					
	Black or African American	15	13.2					
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	9	7.9					
Income	Other	8	7.0					
	White	80	70.2					
	Associate degree	11	9.6					
	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	53	46.5					
Religion	High school or equivalent (GED)	9	7.9					
	Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)	21	18.4					
	Medical (MD), law (JD) or other doctoral degree (PhD)	2	1.8					
Income	Some college, but did not complete a degree	18	15.8					
	100k or more	9	7.9					
	25k to less than 50k	32	28.1					
Religion	50k to less than 75k	39	34.2					
	75k to less than 100k	17	14.9					
	Less than 25k	17	14.9					
Age	Atheist/agnostic	36	31.6					
	Buddhist	1	0.9					
	Jewish	1	0.9					
	Mormon	1	0.9					
	Nothing in particular	17	14.9					
Religion	Orthodox (Greek or Russian)	1	0.9					
	Protestant	22	19.3					
	Roman Catholic	35	30.7					
	N	Mean	SD	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max
Age	114	34.58	10.9	19	27	31	38	72

Table E.7: **Study 2 Respondents.** Total number of respondents 114.

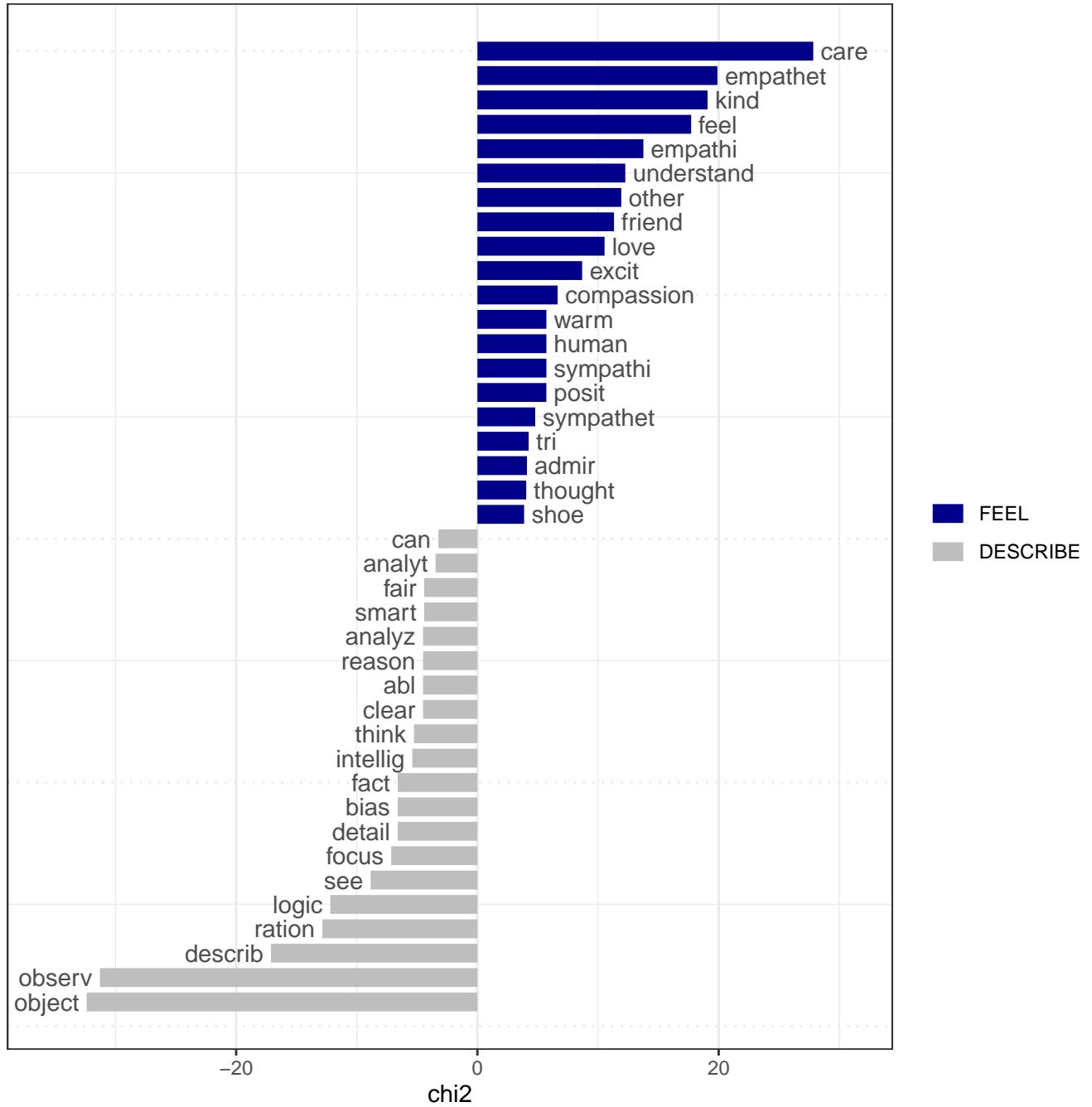


Figure E.12: **Keyness plot of words for empathy (FEEL) versus objective (DESCRIBE) tasks.** Figure plots the results of a keyword of features comparing their differential associations with providing language in praise of peers who engage in empathy (FEEL) versus objective (DESCRIBE) tasks, after calculating “keyness”, a score for features that occur differentially across different categories. Here text for (FEEL) and (DESCRIBE) are the different categories.

As a further check on whether positive feelings are held towards people who exhibit empathetic or observational behaviors, we asked respondents to provide thermometer ratings towards people who exhibited these types of behaviors. We calculate the positive and negative sentiments for praise texts respondents generated for people who display empathetic

and objective behaviors respectively, using the Lexicoder Sentiment Dictionary and verify whether the thermometer ratings are positively correlated with positive text sentiments and negatively correlated with negative text sentiments. Figures E.13 and E.14 present linear association results that suggest the same.

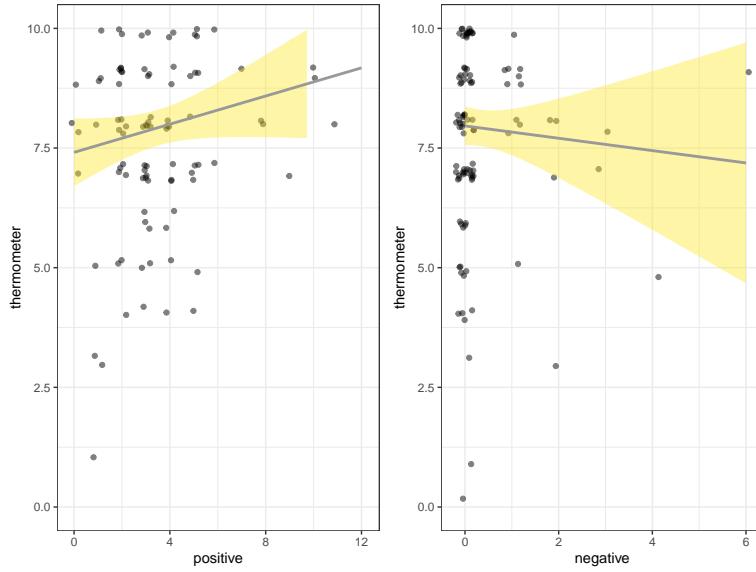


Figure E.13: Correlation between positive and negative text sentiments for generated texts of praise for empathetic behavior with thermometer ratings for people who engage in empathetic behavior.

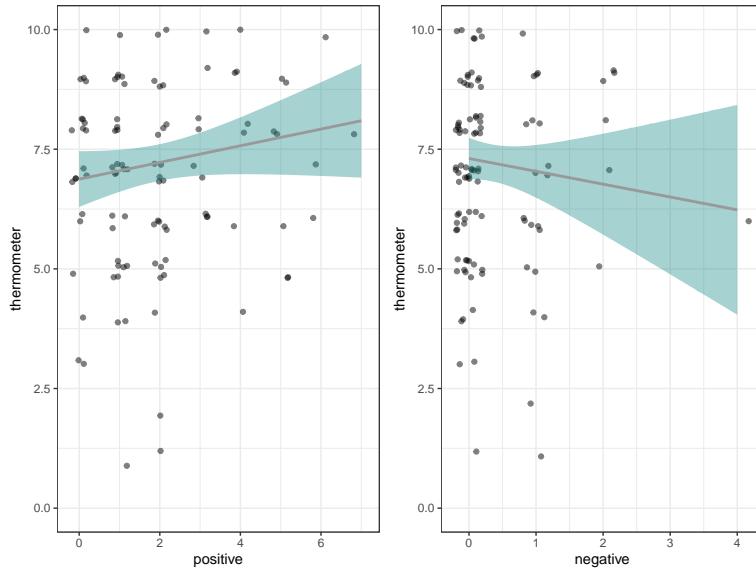


Figure E.14: Correlation between positive and negative text sentiments for generated texts of praise for objective behavior with thermometer ratings for people who engage in objective behavior.

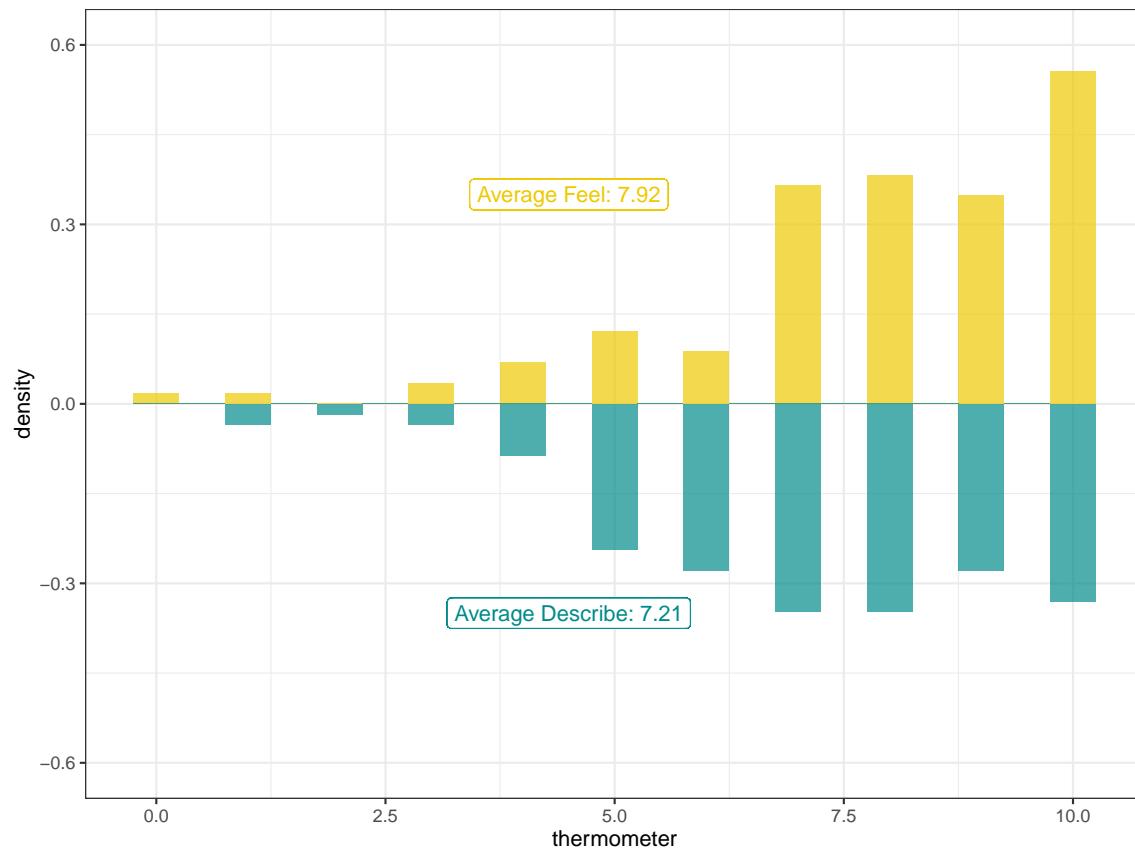
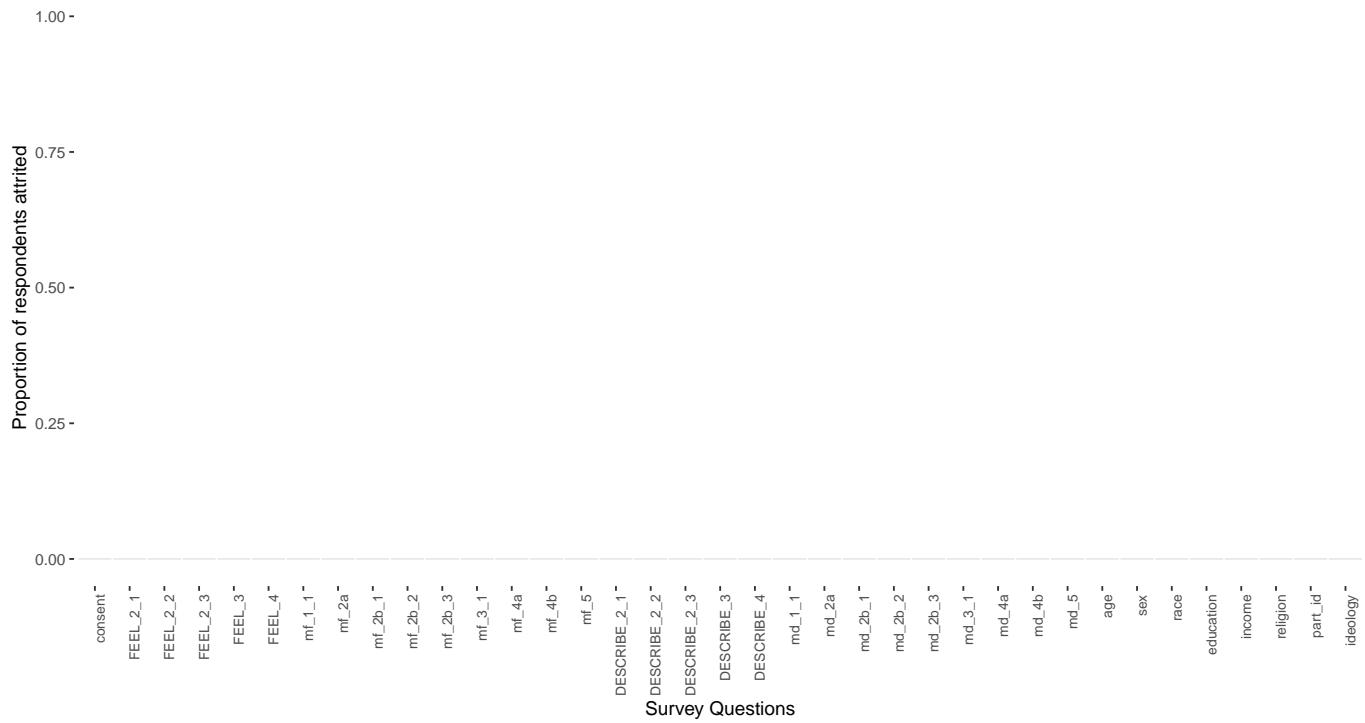


Figure E.15: Distributions of thermometer ratings towards peers who exhibit empathetic behavior (top) and towards peers who exhibit objective behavior (bottom).

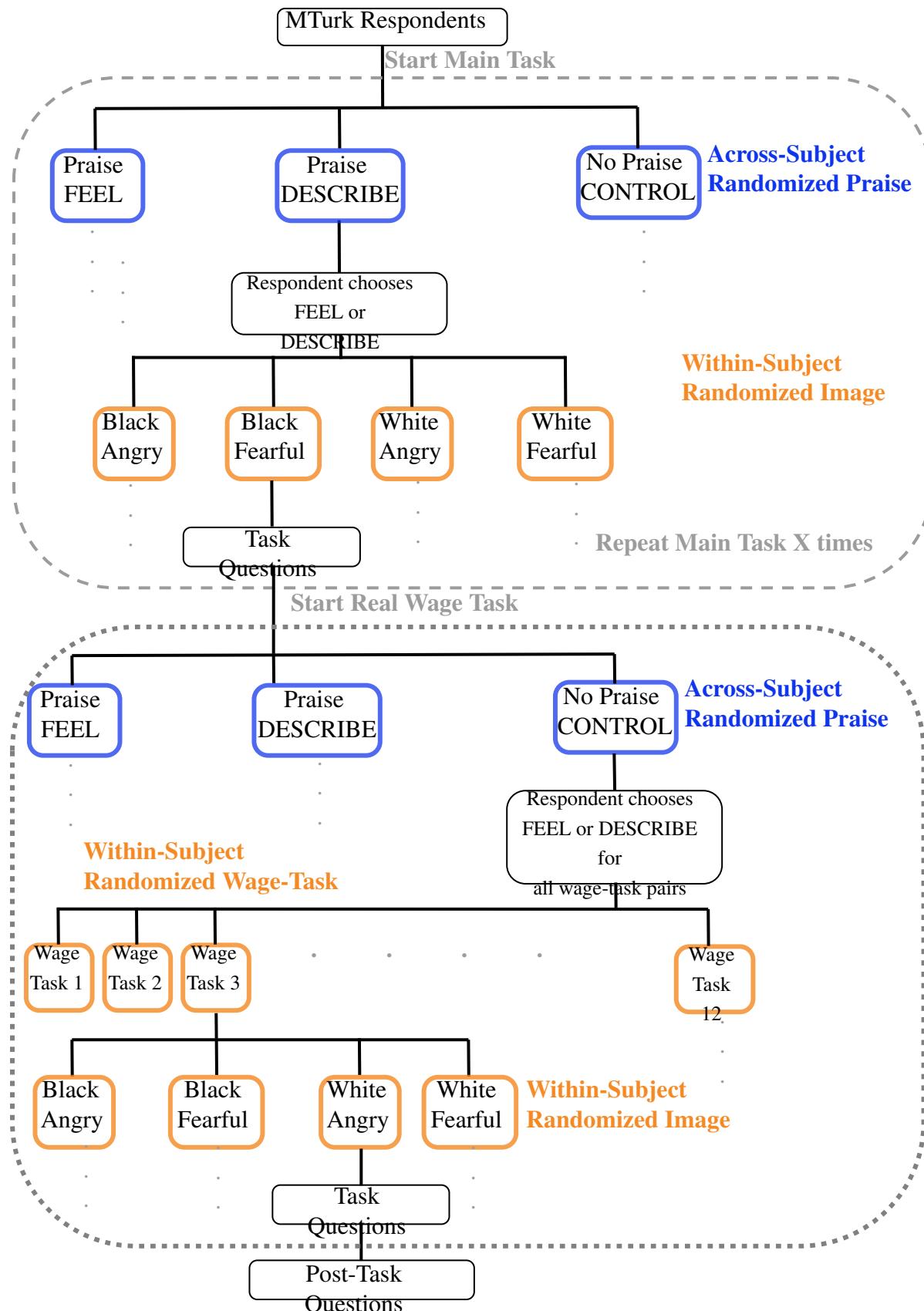
**Study 2 Attrition** As demonstrated in Figure E.16, no attrition occurred in Study 2.



**Figure E.16: Attrition across survey questions:** X axis denotes survey questions in chronological order. Y axis is the proportion of total n attrited, calculated as number of attrited respondents / total n. No attrition occurred in Study 2.

## **F Study 3: Praise Lowers the Cost of Empathy**

Study 3 was fielded in November 2020 with 328 respondents. The primary purpose of the study was to establish whether peer praise (for empathy) could encourage empathetic behavior. We randomized peer praise for empathetic behavior, peer praise for objective behavior (taken from Study 2) and a control arm of no intervention and measured respondents' choice of task between FEEL and DESCRIBE. Secondarily, we were interested in evaluating whether peer praise might change reservation wages for the FEEL task. Figure F.17 depicts the consort diagram for Study 3.



**Figure F.17: Study 3 Consort Diagram.** Peer praise for feel, peer praise for describe and control equally randomized throughout.

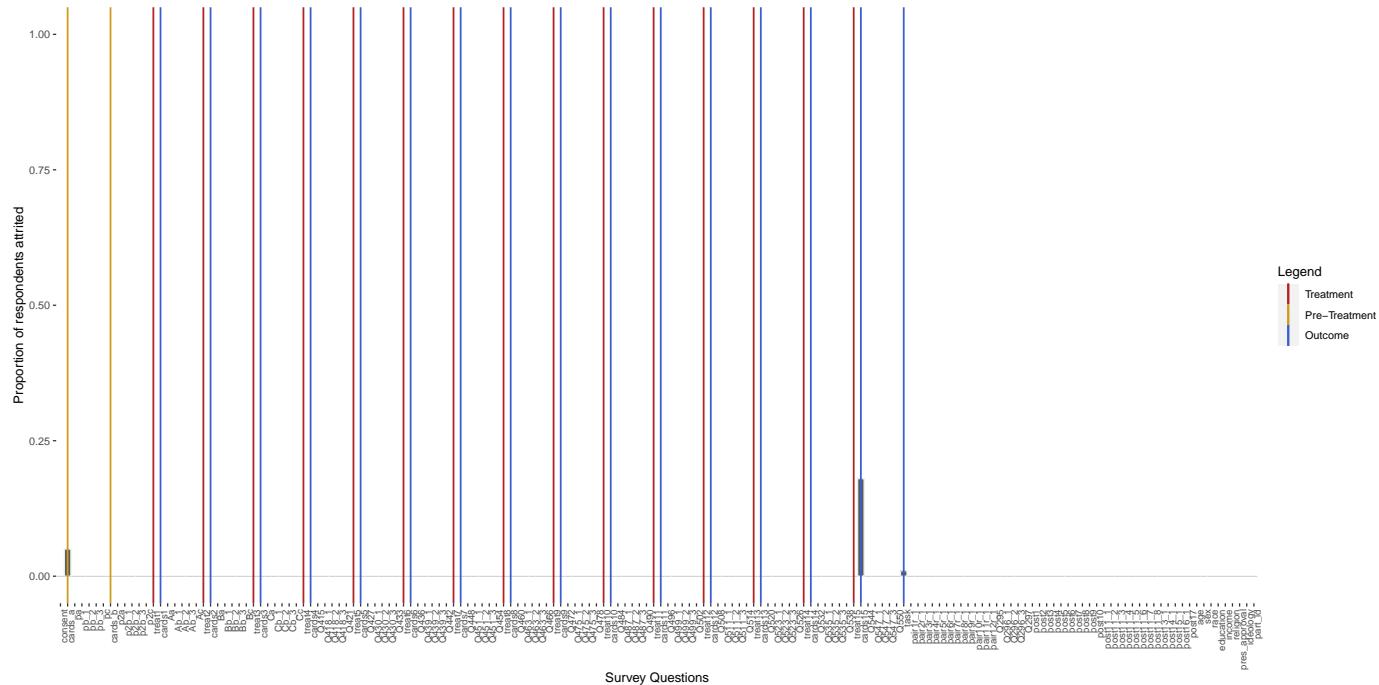
	Level	N	%
Sex	Female	99	30.2
	Male	153	46.6
	other	1	0.3
	Missing	75	22.9
Party	Democrat	40	12.2
	Independent	30	9.1
	Lean Democrat	25	7.6
	Lean Republican	21	6.4
	Republican	60	18.3
	Strong Democrat	32	9.8
Ideology	Strong Republican	45	13.7
	Missing	75	22.9
	Conservative	32	9.8
	Liberal	49	14.9
	Moderate	42	12.8
	Slightly conservative	26	7.9
Race	Slightly liberal	28	8.5
	Very conservative	33	10.1
	Very liberal	43	13.1
	Missing	75	22.9
	Other	9	2.7
Education	Asian	1	0.3
	Black or African American	48	14.6
	Hispanic or Latino	2	0.6
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	10	3.0
	Missing	78	23.8
	Associate degree	23	7.0
Income	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	122	37.2
	High school or equivalent (GED)	23	7.0
	Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)	54	16.5
	Medical (MD), law (JD) or other doctoral degree (PhD)	2	0.6
	Some college, but did not complete a degree	25	7.6
	Some high school, but did not graduate	4	1.2
Religion	Missing	75	22.9
	100k or more	20	6.1
	25k to less than 50k	75	22.9
	50k to less than 75k	78	23.8
	75k to less than 100k	49	14.9
	Less than 25k	31	9.5
Religion	Missing	75	22.9
	Atheist/agnostic	42	12.8
	Buddhist	2	0.6
	Hindu	2	0.6
	Jewish	6	1.8
	Mormon	2	0.6
Religion	Muslim	4	1.2
	Nothing in particular	33	10.1
	Orthodox (Greek or Russian)	1	0.3
	Protestant	52	15.9
	Roman Catholic	108	32.9
	Missing	76	23.2
		N	Missing
		Mean	SD
		Min	Q1
		Median	Q3
		Max	
Age		253	75
		36.3	10.48
		21	29
		34	41
		71	

Table F.8: **Study 3 Respondents (Summarizing covariates).** Total number of respondents 328.

	<b>Log Odds</b>	<b>95% CI</b>	<b>Odds Ratio</b>	<b>95% CI</b>
<b>Intercept</b>	-0.442	[-0.625,-0.259]	0.643	[0.535,0.772]
<b>Peer praise for empathy</b>	0.182	[0.025,0.339]	1.200	[1.025,1.404]

Table F.9: Peer praise for empathy effect on choosing FEEL in main choice task.

**Study 3 Attrition** Attrition evaluation plot for Study 3 is presented in Figure F.18.



**Figure F.18: Attrition across survey questions:** X axis denotes survey questions in chronological order. Blue vertical lines mark outcome questions: open-ended, three short words, and a feeling thermometer, which followed the choice tasks. Orange vertical line represents pre-treatment practice rounds, administered before the choice tasks. Red vertical lines mark randomization of peer praise. Y axis is the proportion of total n attrited, calculated as number of attrited respondents / total n.

A total of 75 respondents attrited from the survey. Of those, 18.7% attrited during the first set of instructions, 34.7% attrited during the practice round, and 21.3% attrited during the post task questions. Attrition is not associated with praise treatment, or randomization of images. Respondents who randomly given the peer praise for empathy were 0.5% less likely to attrite (baseline is 0.01) than compared to respondents who received the Control. This finding is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.1$ ). Respondents who saw an image with a black person, were 1.8% less likely to attrite (baseline is 0.55) than compared to respondents who received an image with a white person. This finding is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.4$ ). Respondents who saw an image with an angry person, were 0.4% less likely to attrite (baseline is 0.517) than compared to respondents who received an image with a fearful person. This finding is not statistically significant ( $p = 0.8$ ).

**Study 3 Robustness checks** It could be that respondents who are peer praised into selecting the empathy task are in fact simply doing a less good job (so responding to the peer praise and then selecting to do less work afterwards). Here, we conduct a few empirical (observational) tests to try to see if respondents are indeed taking “short cuts”. In our first test, we check if respondents who chose the empathy task under the peer praise treatment are similarly likely in using diverse (unique) words (“Unique tokens”) compared with respondents who chose the empathy task under the control treatment. In our second test, we consider if respondents who chose the empathy task under treatment are more likely to use words from the peer praise wordcloud (“Proportion of wordcloud”) – which would suggest short-cutting as well through simply applying words presented. In our last test, we check if the sentiment of words written in the empathy task is similar in the peer-praise group compared to the control group; if the former set of words are less positive, then it might suggest that respondents are actually not actually conducting the empathy task in the same manner. Our findings from the three tests are presented in Table F.10 and suggest that there does not seem to be evidence of shortcutting.

DV: Unique tokens			DV: Proportion of wordcloud			DV: Text sentiment		
Estimate	s.e.	p	Estimate	s.e.	p	Estimate	s.e.	p
Intercept	5.438	0.165	7.56e-237	0.164	0.013	1.03e-35	-0.2	0.028
Peer praise	0.102	0.142	0.473	0.009	0.013	0.48	-0.016	0.032

Table F.10: Testing for shortcutting.

## **G Study 4: Peer praise increases reported happiness**

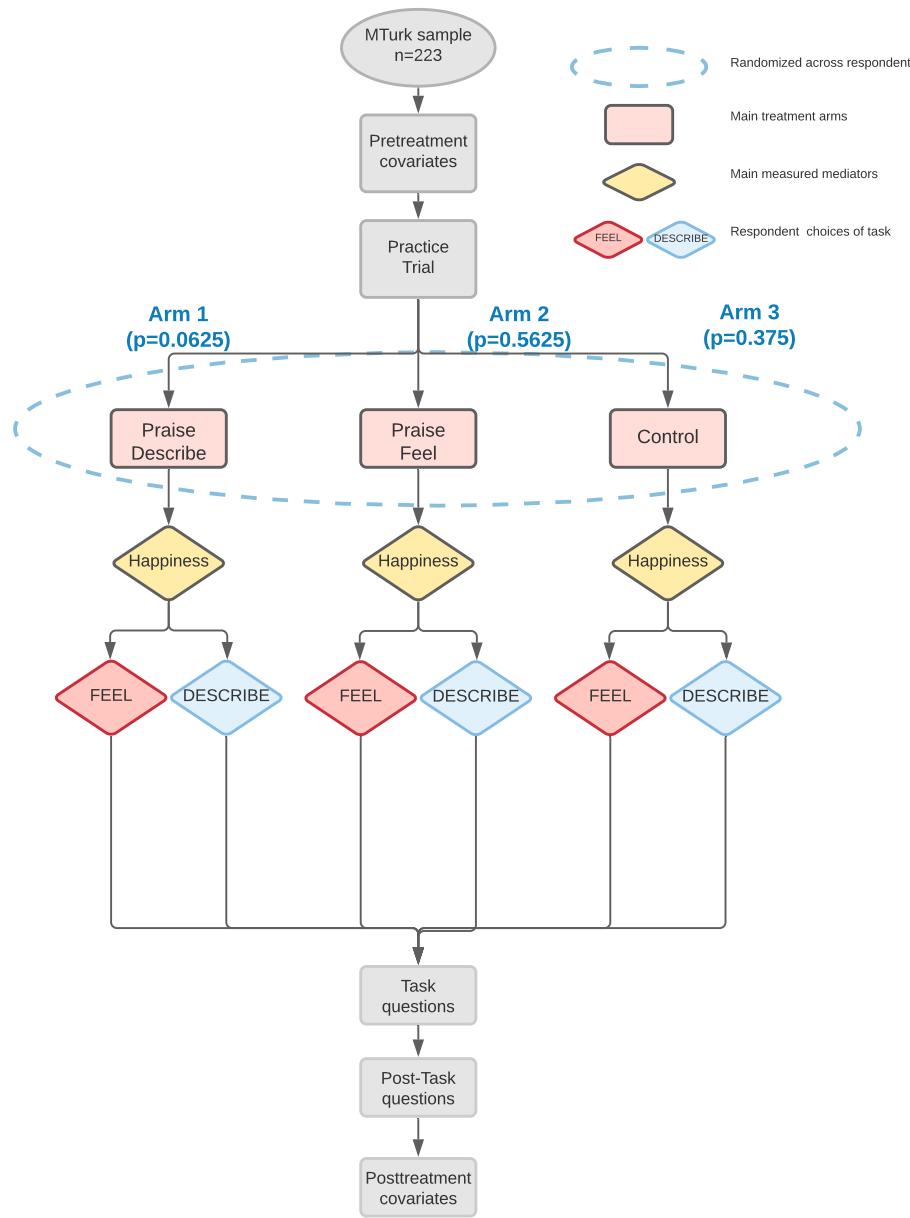
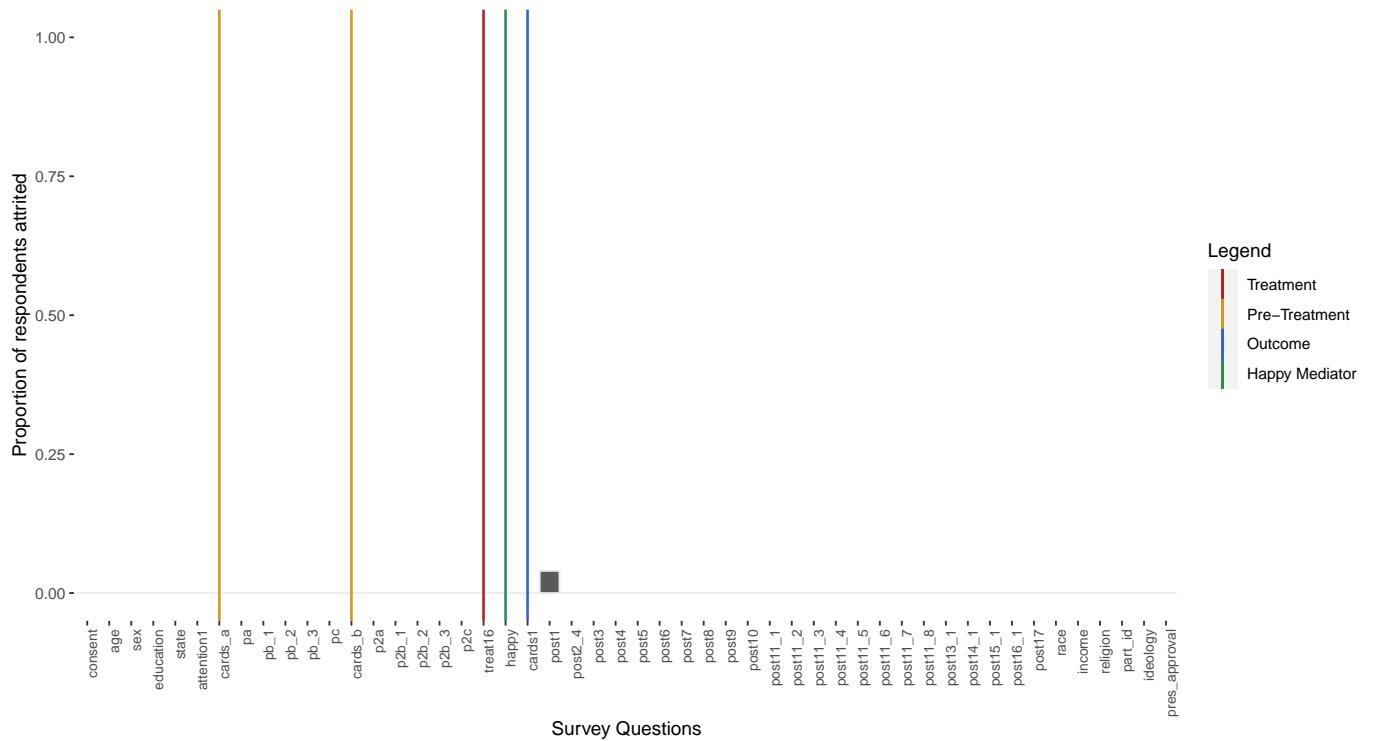


Figure G.19: **Study 4 Consort diagram.** Main arms labeled with probability of assignment in parentheses (probability out of total assignment).

	Level	N	%
Sex	Female	96	43.0
	Male	126	56.5
	other	1	0.4
Party	Democrat	62	27.8
	Independent	30	13.5
Ideology	Lean Democrat	19	8.5
	Lean Republican	9	4.0
	Republican	35	15.7
	Strong Democrat	33	14.8
	Strong Republican	24	10.8
Race	Missing	11	4.9
	Conservative	31	13.9
	Liberal	58	26.0
	Moderate	34	15.2
	Slightly conservative	14	6.3
Education	Slightly liberal	21	9.4
	Very conservative	14	6.3
	Very liberal	40	17.9
	Missing	11	4.9
	White	156	70.0
Income	Asian	2	0.9
	Black or African American	29	13.0
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	15	6.7
	Other	9	4.0
	Missing	12	5.4
Religion	Associate degree	14	6.3
	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	126	56.5
	High school or equivalent (GED)	21	9.4
	Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)	38	17.0
	Some college, but did not complete a degree	22	9.9
Religion	Some high school, but did not graduate	2	0.9
	100k or more	10	4.5
	25k to less than 50k	66	29.6
	50k to less than 75k	78	35.0
	75k to less than 100k	33	14.8
Religion	Less than 25k	25	11.2
	Missing	11	4.9
	Atheist/agnostic	41	18.4
	Buddhist	4	1.8
	Hindu	1	0.4
Religion	Jewish	3	1.3
	Mormon	3	1.3
	Muslim	3	1.3
	Nothing in particular	29	13.0
	Protestant	38	17.0
Age	Roman Catholic	90	40.4
	Missing	11	4.9
		N	Mean
		SD	Min
		Q1	Median
		Q3	Max
Age		223	37.04
		10.05	20
		30	35
		42	69

Table G.11: **Study 4 Respondents (Summarizing covariates).** Total number of respondents 223.

**Study 4 Attrition** Attrition evaluation plot for Study 4 is presented in Figure G.20.



**Figure G.20: Attrition across survey questions:** X axis denotes survey questions in chronological order. Orange vertical lines mark pre-treatment practice rounds of choice tasks. Red vertical line marks peer praise treatment. Green vertical line marks the Discrete Emotions Questionnaire questions on happiness. Blue vertical line marks outcome questions: open-ended, three short words, and a feeling thermometer, which followed the choice tasks. Y axis is the proportion of total n attrited, calculated as number of attrited respondents / total n.

Study 4 collected information on respondent happiness as well as pride (one after the other in the survey). To measure pride, respondents were asked the following set of questions also from the PANAS scale:

- (Emotions) This scale consists of a number of words that describe feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to the word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way RIGHT NOW.

[scale: very slightly or not at all/ a little/ moderately/ quite a bit/ extremely]

[emotions: satisfied/ proud/ accomplished/ fulfilled ]

A similar index for pride is created as in the happiness index; Figure G.21 presents the distribution of the pride index for peer praise for empathy versus control groups, along with their difference in means. Respondents in the peer praise for empathy group had an average of 0.487 units bump upwards in the pride index compared to the control group respondents.

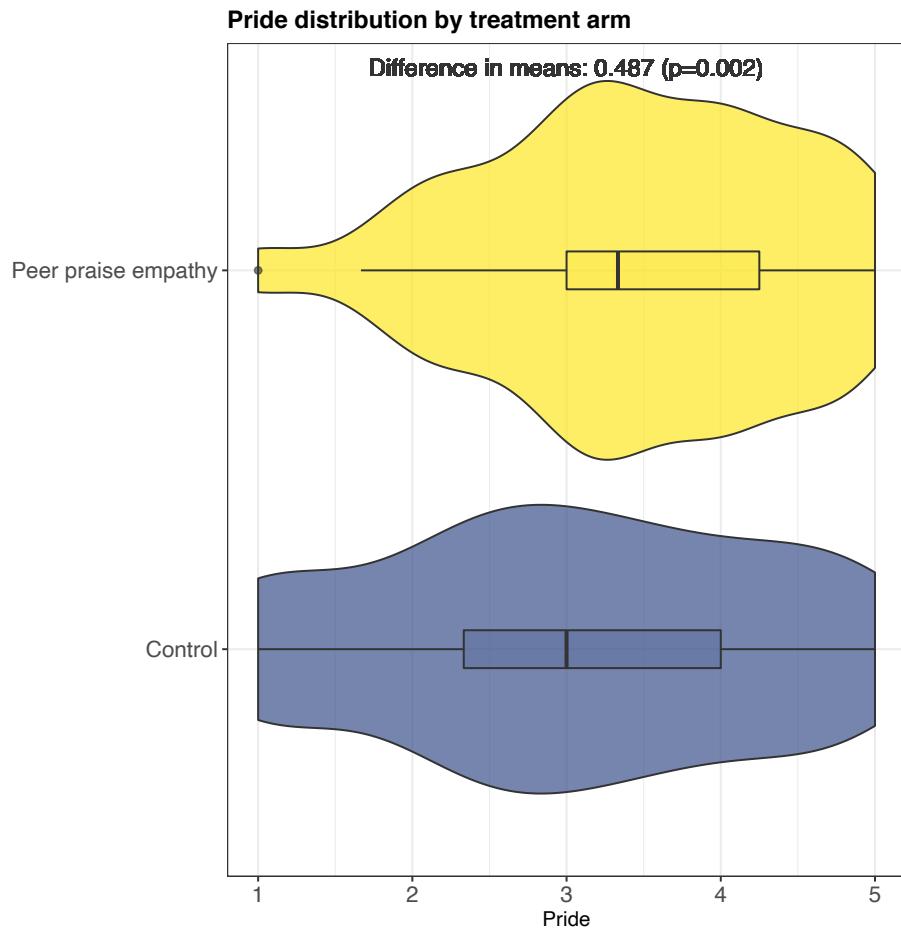


Figure G.21: Pride of respondents in peer praise (for empathy) and control groups.

## H Study 5: Peer praise increases likelihood of empathy task through increased happiness

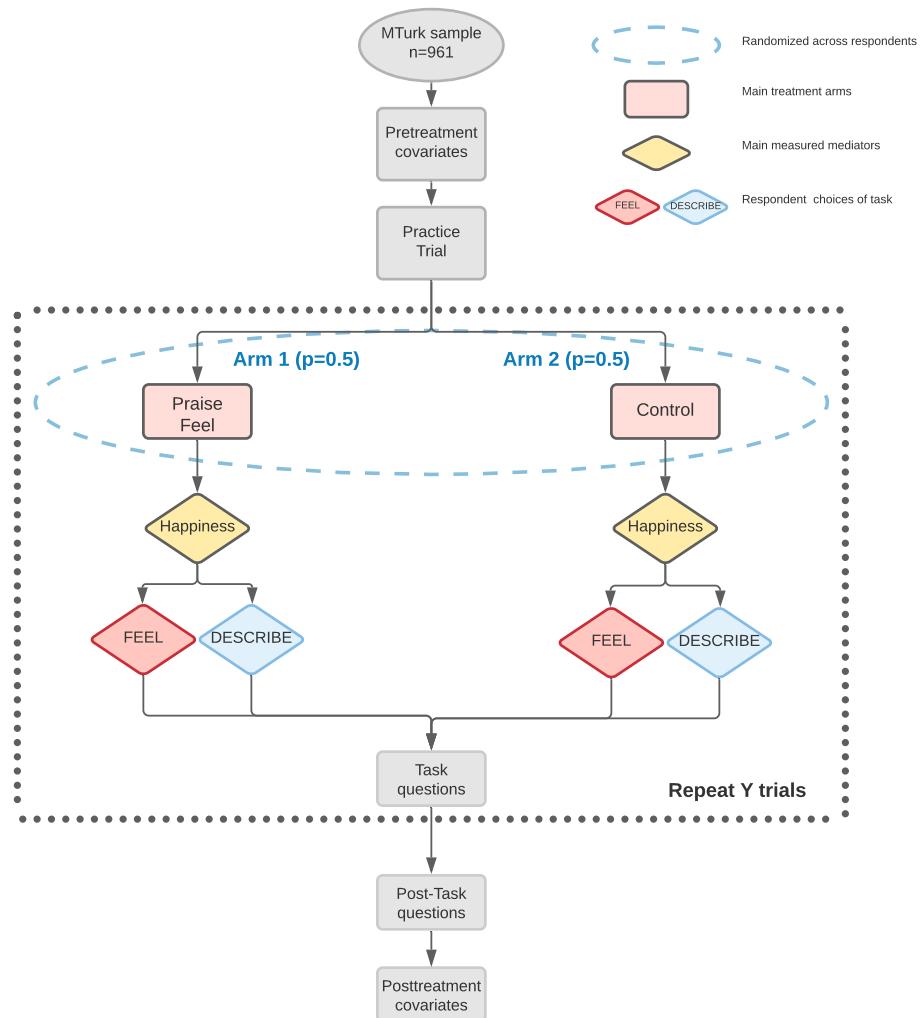


Figure H.22: **Study 5 Consort diagram.** Main arms labeled with probability of assignment in parentheses (probability out of total assignment). Dotted gray space encapsulates the main task, which is repeated for Y trials for each respondent, where for Study 5A Y is 20, while for Study 5B Y is 3.

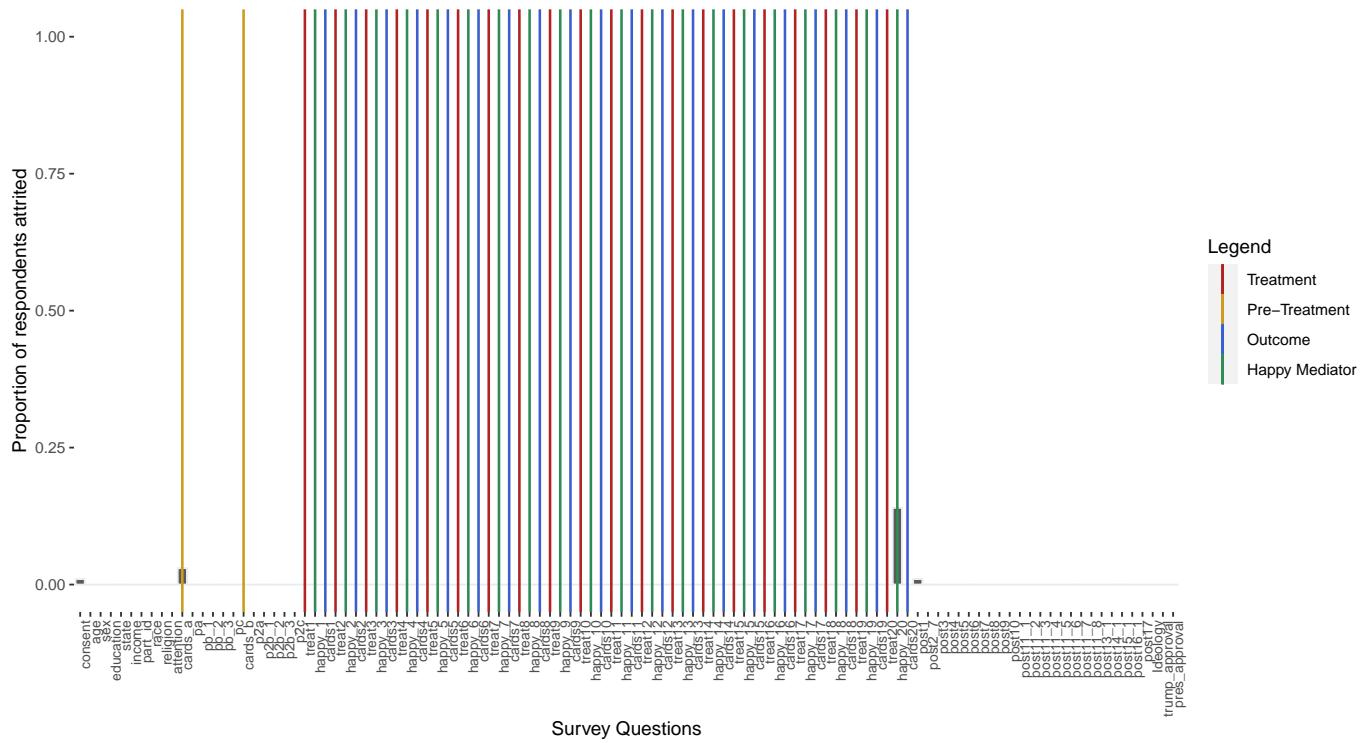
	Level	N	%						
Sex	Female	120	35.6						
	Male	213	63.2						
	other	1	0.3						
	Missing	3	0.9						
Party	Democrat	101	30.0						
	Independent	49	14.5						
	Lean Democrat	39	11.6						
	Lean Republican	23	6.8						
	Republican	35	10.4						
	Strong Democrat	55	16.3						
	Strong Republican	32	9.5						
Ideology	Missing	3	0.9						
	Conservative	39	11.6						
	Liberal	66	19.6						
	Moderate	53	15.7						
Race	Slightly conservative	21	6.2						
	Slightly liberal	36	10.7						
	Very conservative	32	9.5						
	Very liberal	29	8.6						
	Missing	61	18.1						
Education	Black or African American	74	22.0						
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	14	4.2						
	Other	20	5.9						
	White	218	64.7						
	Missing	11	3.3						
Income	Associate degree	23	6.8						
	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	164	48.7						
	High school or equivalent (GED)	26	7.7						
	Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)	66	19.6						
	Medical (MD), law (JD) or other doctoral degree (PhD)	2	0.6						
Religion	Some college, but did not complete a degree	52	15.4						
	Some high school, but did not graduate	1	0.3						
	Missing	3	0.9						
	100k or more	37	11.0						
	25k to less than 50k	94	27.9						
Religion	50k to less than 75k	127	37.7						
	75k to less than 100k	38	11.3						
	Less than 25k	38	11.3						
	Missing	3	0.9						
	Atheist/agnostic	75	22.3						
Religion	Buddhist	4	1.2						
	Hindu	1	0.3						
	Jewish	11	3.3						
	Mormon	1	0.3						
	Muslim	2	0.6						
Religion	Nothing in particular	39	11.6						
	Orthodox (Greek or Russian)	3	0.9						
	Protestant	54	16.0						
	Roman Catholic	137	40.7						
	Missing	10	3.0						
	N	Missing	Mean	SD	Min	Q1	Median	Q3	Max
Age	334	3	37.23	10.16	22	30	35	42	72

Table H.12: **Study 5A Respondents (Summarizing covariates).** Total number of respondents 337.

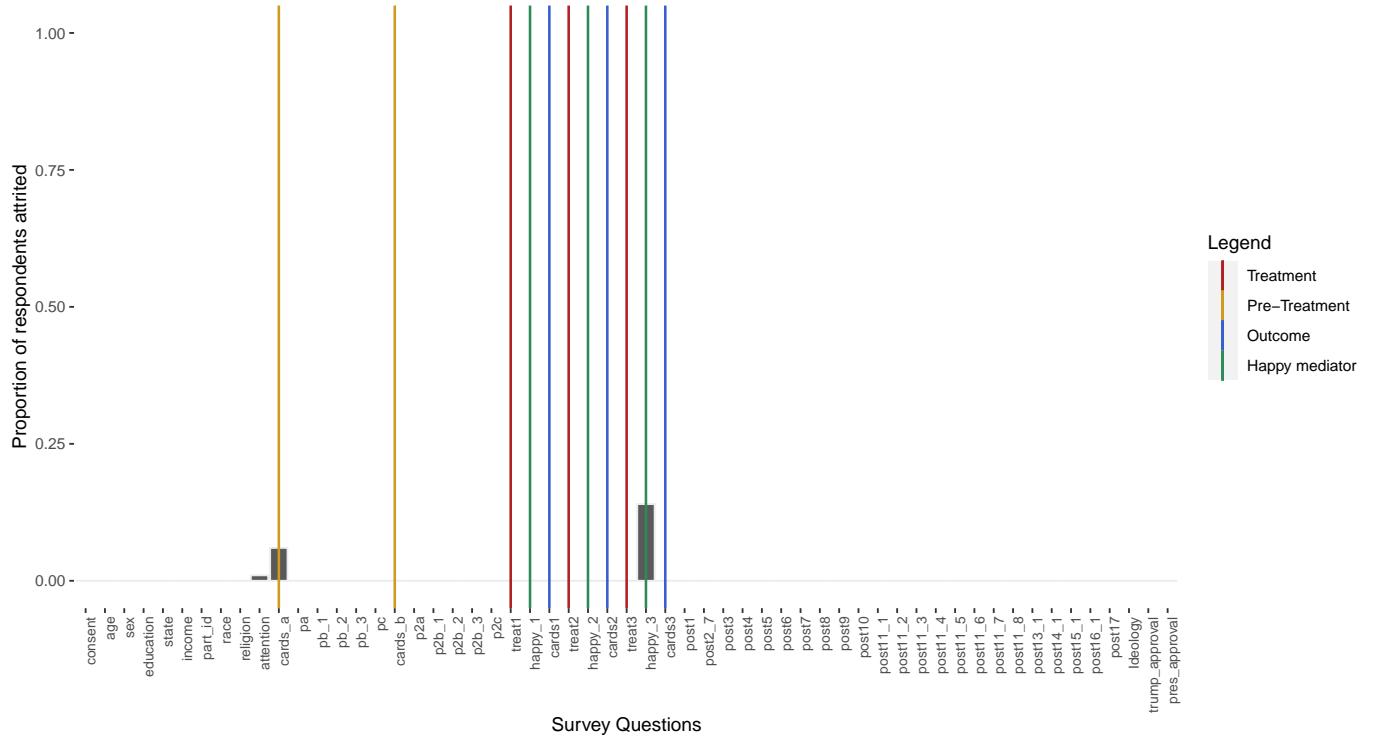
	Level	N	%
Sex	Female	227	36.4
	Male	391	62.7
	other	3	0.5
	Missing	3	0.5
Party	Democrat	111	17.8
	Independent	99	15.9
	Lean Democrat	80	12.8
	Lean Republican	60	9.6
	Republican	84	13.5
	Strong Democrat	109	17.5
	Strong Republican	78	12.5
Ideology	Missing	3	0.5
	Conservative	76	12.2
	Liberal	103	16.5
	Moderate	86	13.8
Race	Slightly conservative	47	7.5
	Slightly liberal	61	9.8
	Very conservative	55	8.8
	Very liberal	67	10.7
	Missing	129	20.7
Education	Asian	5	0.8
	Black or African American	96	15.4
	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	25	4.0
	Other	23	3.7
	White	455	72.9
Income	Missing	20	3.2
	Associate degree	48	7.7
	Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)	290	46.5
	High school or equivalent (GED)	61	9.8
	Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)	121	19.4
	Medical (MD), law (JD) or other doctoral degree (PhD)	9	1.4
	No schooling completed	1	0.2
Religion	Some college, but did not complete a degree	87	13.9
	Some high school, but did not graduate	4	0.6
	Missing	3	0.5
	100k or more	61	9.8
Age	25k to less than 50k	191	30.6
	50k to less than 75k	187	30.0
	75k to less than 100k	95	15.2
	Less than 25k	87	13.9
Religion	Missing	3	0.5
	Atheist/agnostic	129	20.7
	Buddhist	8	1.3
	Hindu	5	0.8
	Jewish	11	1.8
	Mormon	2	0.3
	Muslim	16	2.6
Age	Nothing in particular	84	13.5
	Orthodox (Greek or Russian)	4	0.6
	Protestant	117	18.8
	Roman Catholic	237	38.0
Age	Missing	11	1.8
	N	621	3
Age	Mean	37.62	10.49
	SD		
Age	Min	19	30
	Q1		
Age	Median	35	42
	Q3		
Age	Max	73	

Table H.13: **Study 5B Respondents (Summarizing covariates)**. Total number of respondents 624.

**Study 5 Attrition** Attrition evaluation plots for 5A and 5B are presented in Figures H.23 and H.24 respectively.



**Figure H.23: Study 5A: Attrition across survey questions:** X axis denotes survey questions in chronological order. Orange vertical lines mark pre-treatment practice rounds of choice tasks. Red vertical line marks peer praise treatment. Green vertical line marks the Discrete Emotions Questionnaire questions on happiness. Blue vertical line marks outcome questions: open-ended, three short words, and a feeling thermometer, which followed the choice tasks. Y axis is the proportion of total n attrited, calculated as number of attrited respondents / total n.



**Figure H.24: Study 5B: Attrition across survey questions:** X axis denotes survey questions in chronological order. Orange vertical lines mark pre-treatment practice rounds of choice tasks. Red vertical line marks peer praise treatment. Green vertical line marks the Discrete Emotions Questionnaire questions on happiness. Blue vertical line marks outcome questions: open-ended, three short words, and a feeling thermometer, which followed the choice tasks. Y axis is the proportion of total n attrited, calculated as number of attrited respondents / total n.

**Sensitivity analysis of mediation** We analyze the mediating effect of happiness on the choice task variable using Imai, Keele and Yamamoto (2010) approach for model-based causal mediation analysis; the key assumption required is sequential ignorability. Thus we focus on the sensitivity parameter  $\rho \equiv \text{Corr}(\epsilon_{i2}, \epsilon_{i3})$ ; sequential ignorability implies  $\rho = 0$ . We set  $\rho$  at different values and see how our ACME changes for our Study 5 (pooled) sample. This requires the following assumed usual equations relating outcome ( $Y$ ), treatment ( $T$ ) and mediator ( $M$ ) variables:

$$Y_i = \alpha_1 + \beta_1 T_i + \epsilon_{i1} \quad (1)$$

$$M_i = \alpha_2 + \beta_2 T_i + \epsilon_{i2} \quad (2)$$

$$Y_i = \alpha_3 + \beta_3 T_i + \gamma M_i + \epsilon_{i3} \quad (3)$$

We estimate that when  $\rho$  is around 0.12 the ACME becomes 0. Assume the unobserved (pre-treatment) confounder formulation:

$$\epsilon_{i2} = \lambda_2 U_i + \epsilon'_{i2} \quad (4)$$

and

$$\epsilon_{i3} = \lambda_3 U_i + \epsilon'_{i3} \quad (5)$$

How much does  $U_i$  have to explain for our results to go away? Figure H.25 presents the proportion of original variance explained by  $U_i$ .

We can reparameterize  $\rho$  using  $(\tilde{R}_M^2, \tilde{R}_Y^2)$ :

$$\rho = \frac{\text{sgn}(\lambda_2 \lambda_3) \tilde{R}_M \tilde{R}_Y}{\sqrt{(1 - \tilde{R}_M^2)(1 - \tilde{R}_Y^2)}} \quad (6)$$

where  $R_M^2$  and  $R_Y^2$  are from the original mediator/outcome models. We can set  $(\tilde{R}_M^2, \tilde{R}_Y^2)$  to different values and see how mediation effects change.

Figure H.26 assumes that the confounder influences both the mediator and outcome variables in the same direction.<sup>1</sup> The bold line represents the various combinations of  $R^2$  statistics where the ACME would be 0. In this case the product would have to be 0.014 for the ACME to become 0. Another way to say this is that when the product of the original variance explained by the omitted confounding is 0.014 the point estimate for ACME would be 0.

---

<sup>1</sup>This matters because the sensitivity analysis is in terms of the product of  $R^2$  statistics; we assume positive because it seems more likely that something positively affecting the Mediator and the Outcome is happening to create the positive finding for the ACME).

## Sensitivity Analysis (5 pooled)

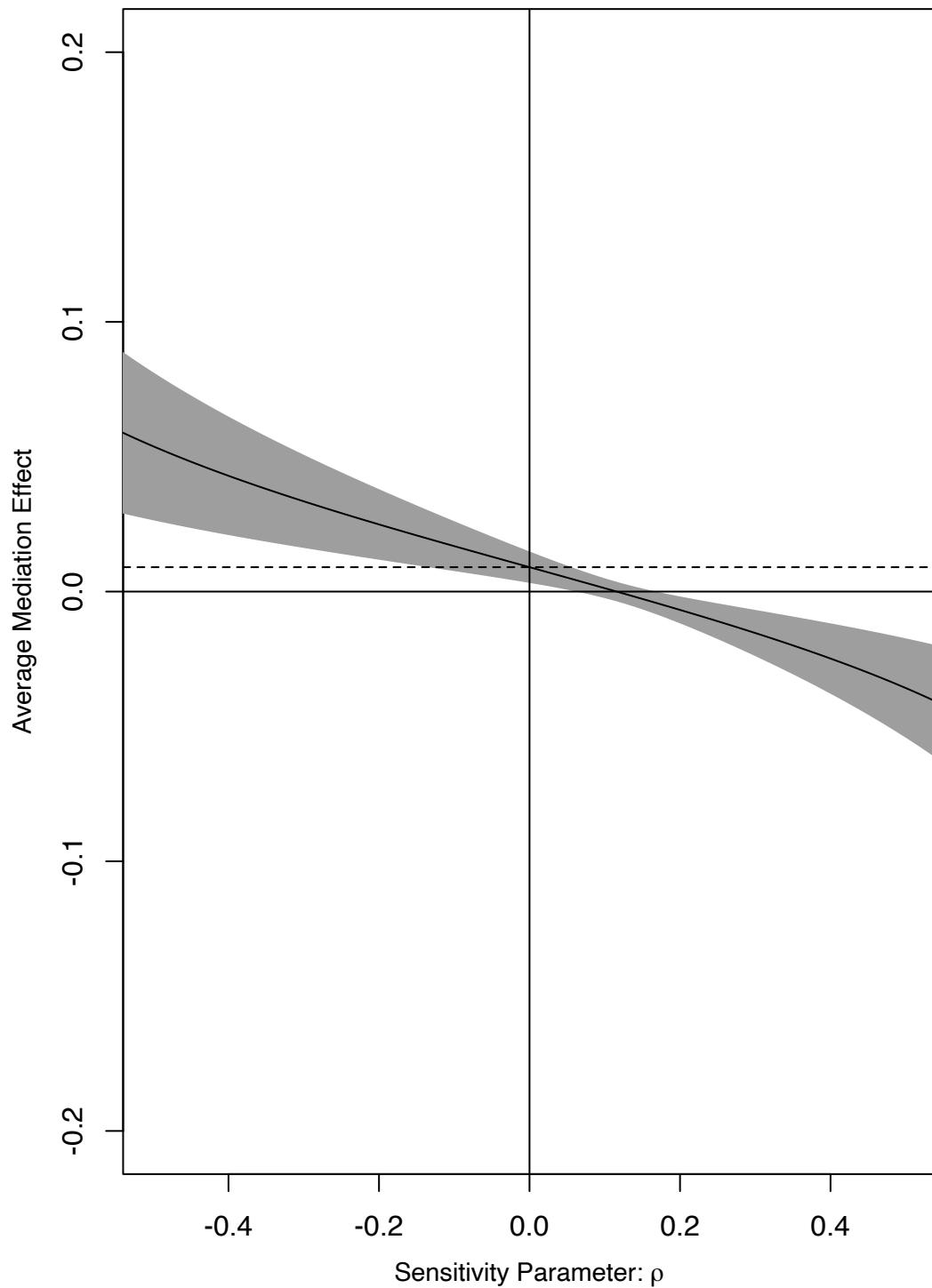


Figure H.25: Proportion of original variance explained by  $U_i$ .

## Sensitivity Analysis (5 pooled)

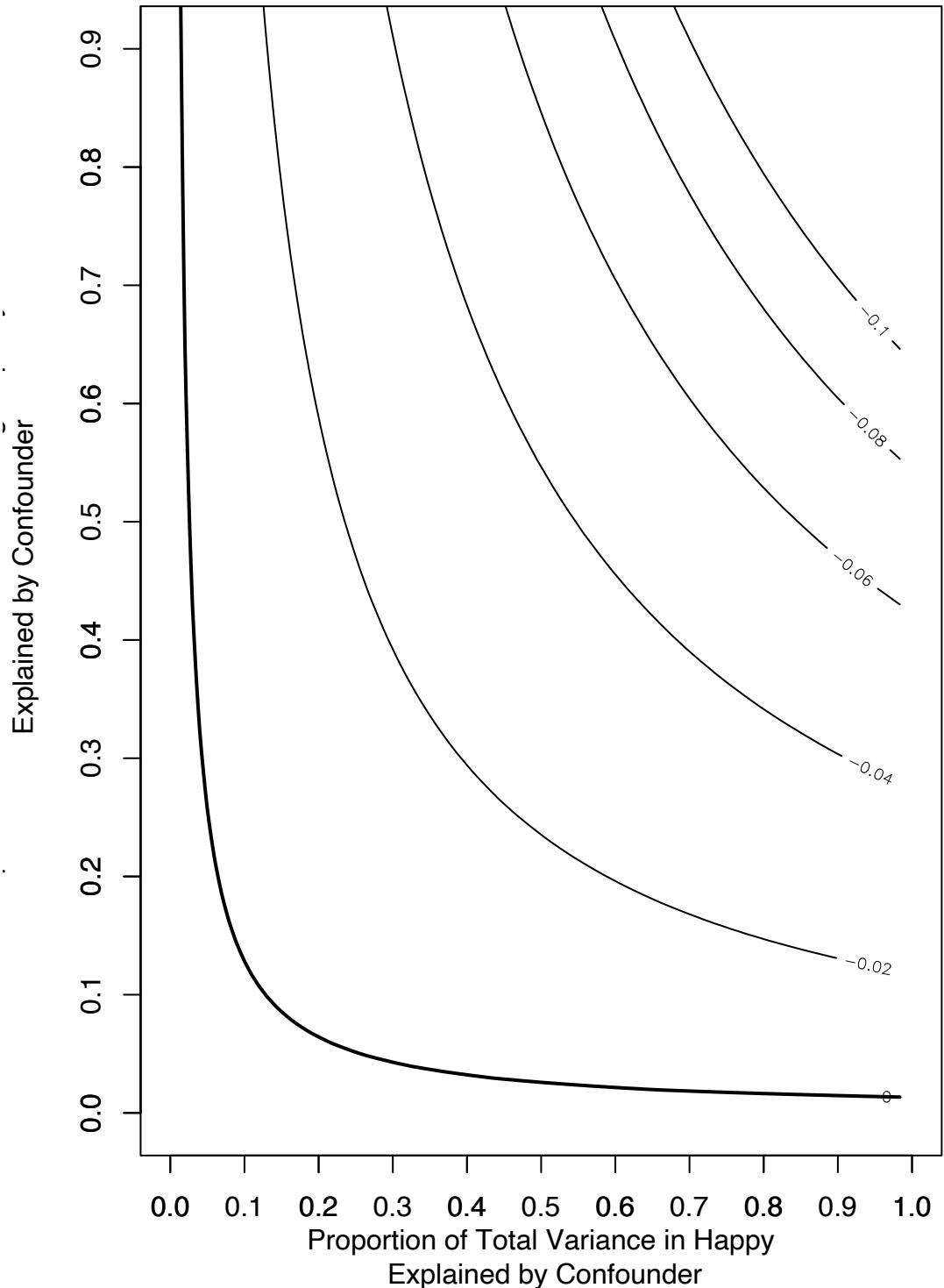


Figure H.26:  $R^2$  statistics for which ACME would be 0.

# I Scope of peer praise for empathy

Estimated standard errors are clustered at respondent levels and robust, and 90 and 95% confidence intervals are plotted throughout.

## I.1 Subgroup analyses

**by Party** Democrats comprise of respondents who reported themselves as “Lean Democrat”, “Democrat” and “Strong Democrat” while Republicans are respondents who reported themselves as “Lean Republican”, “Republican” and “Strong Republican”; Independents are those who reported themselves as “Independent”.

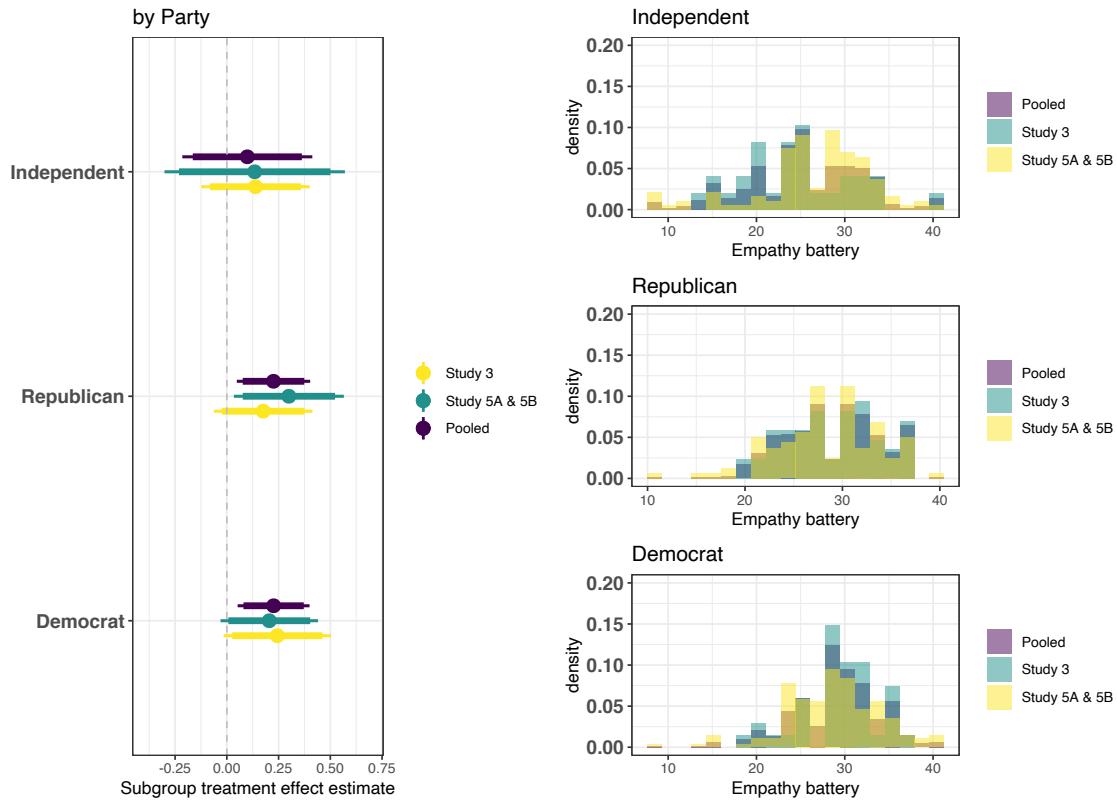


Figure I.27: Left panel: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by party subgroup. Right panel: density distribution of baseline empathy battery score by party subgroup.

**by Trump and Biden approval** Trump approval was measured in Study 3 under the question of presidential approval as Donald Trump was the then president-in-office; in Studies 5A and 5B to follow Joe Biden had taken office and so two questions were asked – one for presidential approval for Joe Biden, and a second on approval for former President Donald Trump. Figure I.28 presents subgroup analyses for Trump approval while Figure I.29 presents subgroup analyses for Biden approval.

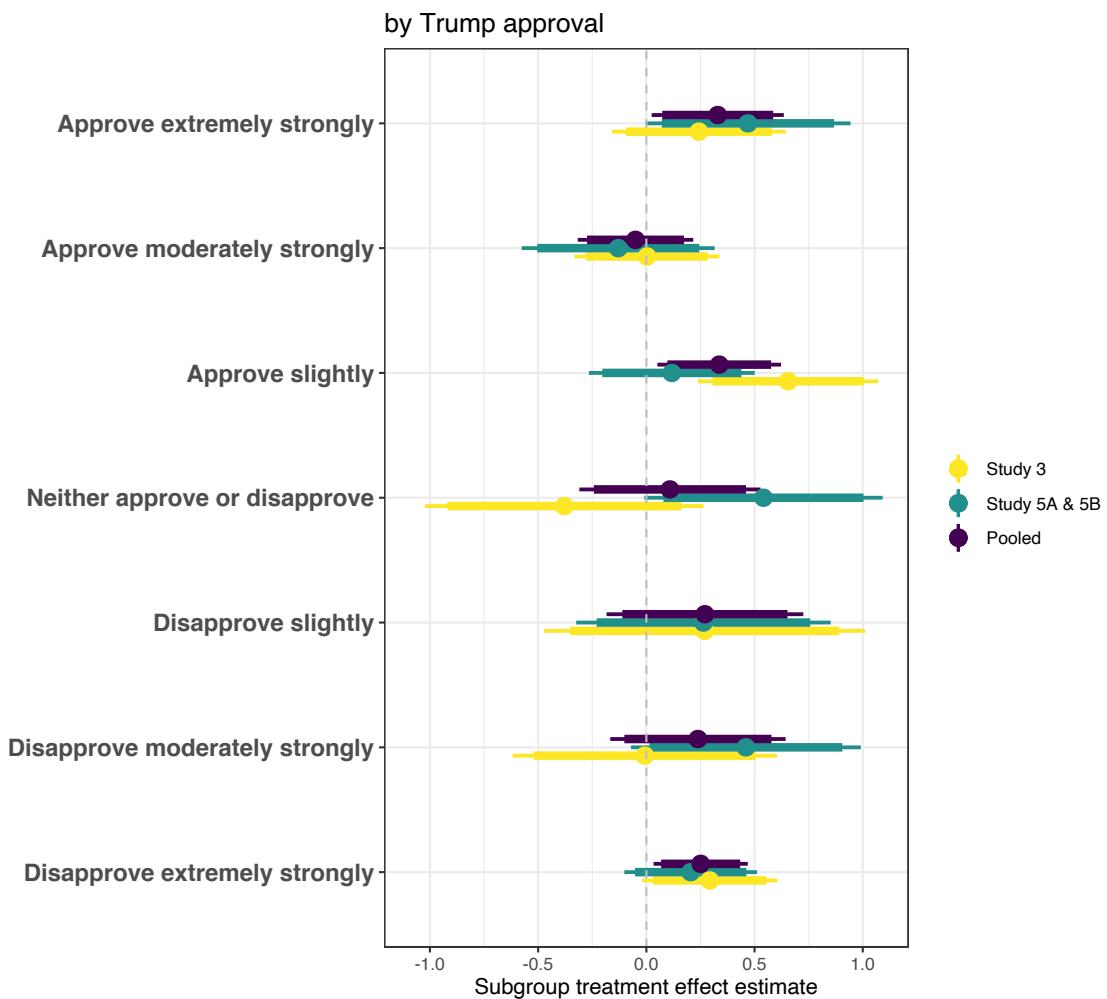


Figure I.28: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by Trump approval subgroup.

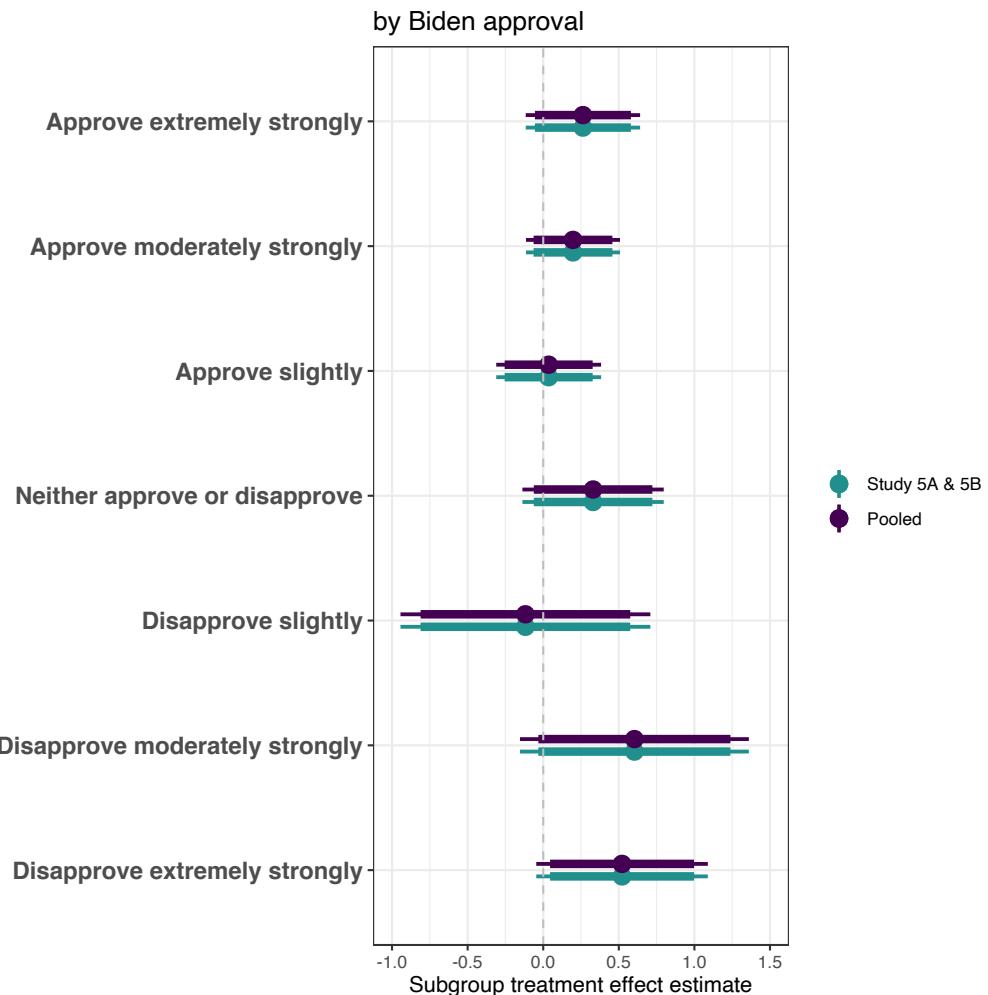


Figure I.29: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by Biden approval subgroup.

**by Race** Race subgroups presented are Black or African American (“Black”), White, and a combined grouping of Asian, Hispanic, Latinx, Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander and Other (“Other”) given the small sample sizes of the race subgroups. Figure I.30 presents subgroup analyses by race.

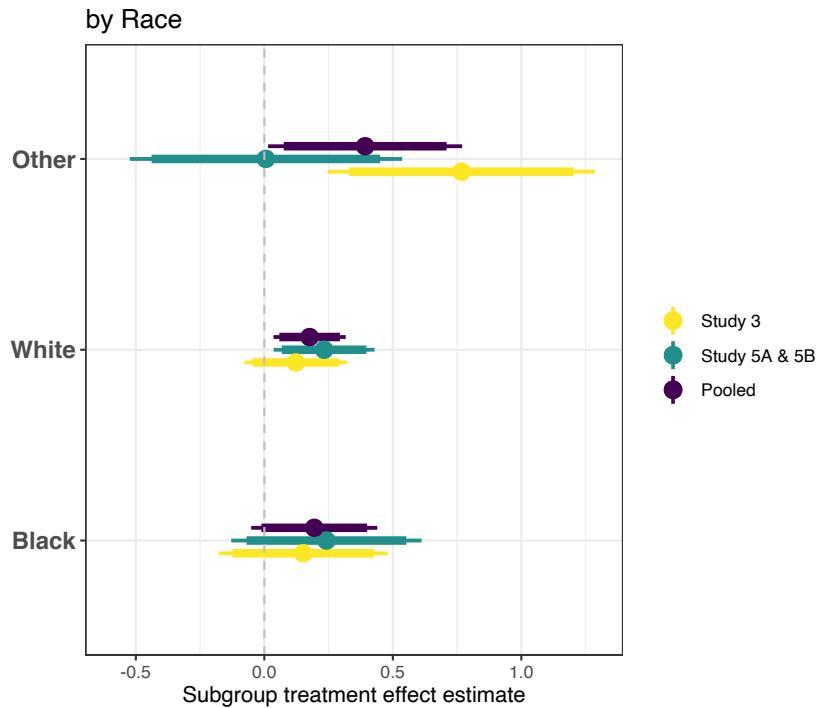


Figure I.30: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by race subgroup.

**by Education** Our most disaggregated coding for education level has too few observations for some categories for within-subgroup estimation of treatment effects, so we aggregate to three general categories, bundling "Some high school, but did not graduate" and "High school or equivalent (GED)" to "HS", combining "Some college, but did not complete a degree" and "Bachelor's degree (BA/BS)" and "Associate degree" to "College", and "Master's degree (MA/MS/MBA)" and "Medical (MD), law (JD) or other doctoral degree (PhD)" combined to "Postgrad". In Study 5B we had an extra category for "no schooling completed" but since this was a single respondent we drop this category throughout. Figure I.31 presents subgroup analyses by aggregated education level.

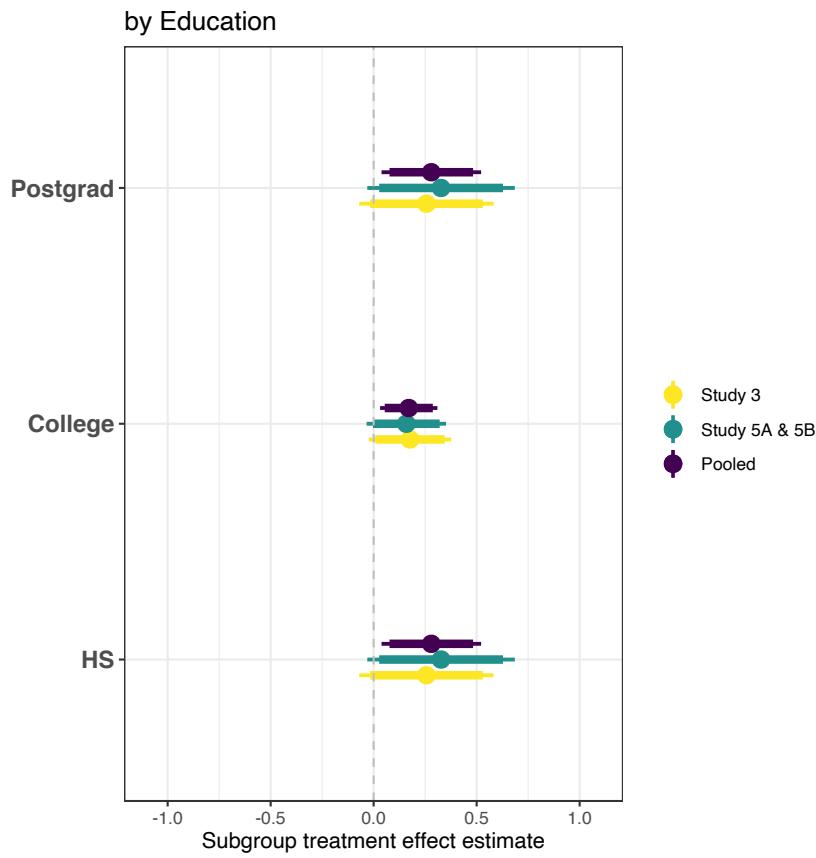


Figure I.31: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by education subgroup.

**by Sex** Figure I.32 presents subgroup analyses by respondent sex.

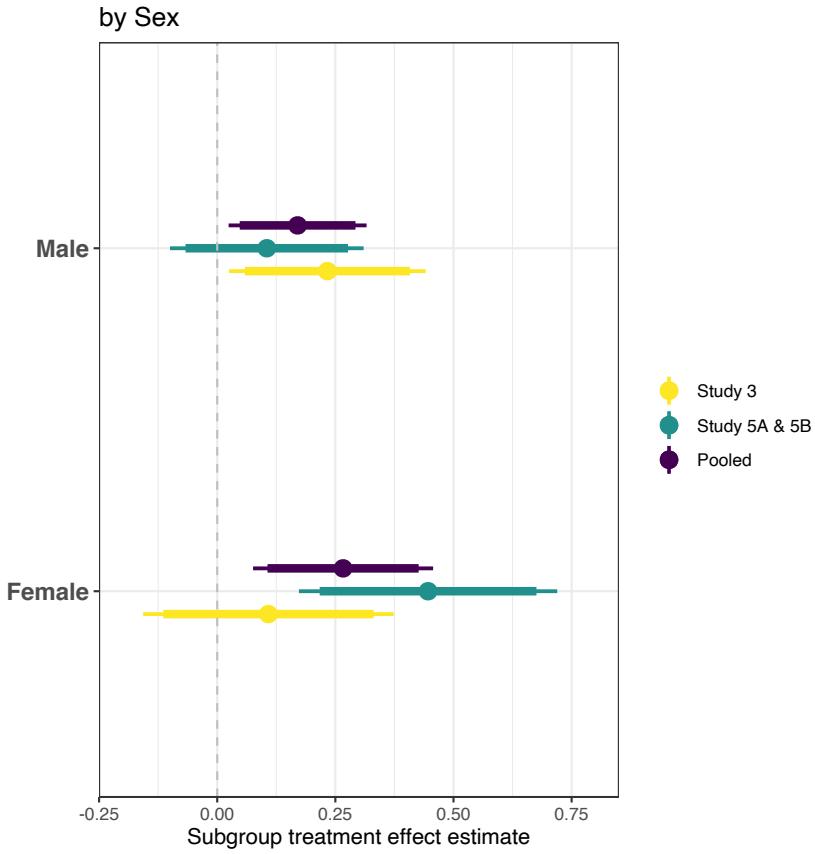


Figure I.32: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by respondent sex subgroup.

**by baseline empathy** In this section we consider subgroup effects of the peer praise treatment for baseline empathy. There are two reasons an exploration by baseline empathy is of interest; first, respondents who have high baseline measured *ability* or *practice* in being empathetic may be able to respond more to the treatment, but does this preclude individuals who score lower in this baseline? Second, measures of baseline empathy may also be capturing *proclivity* and general tendencies towards preferring empathy-oriented behaviors — a baseline “taste for empathy”. Are we simply moving respondents who display such a taste alone using peer praise? In short, we find suggestive evidence against both arguments – while respondents who score in the highest tercile for baseline empathy are able to respond to the peer praise for empathy treatment, this does not preclude respondents from the middle tercile from doing so as well. Estimates of correlations between treatment and outcome by baseline empathy battery terciles (low, medium and high) presented in Figure I.33.

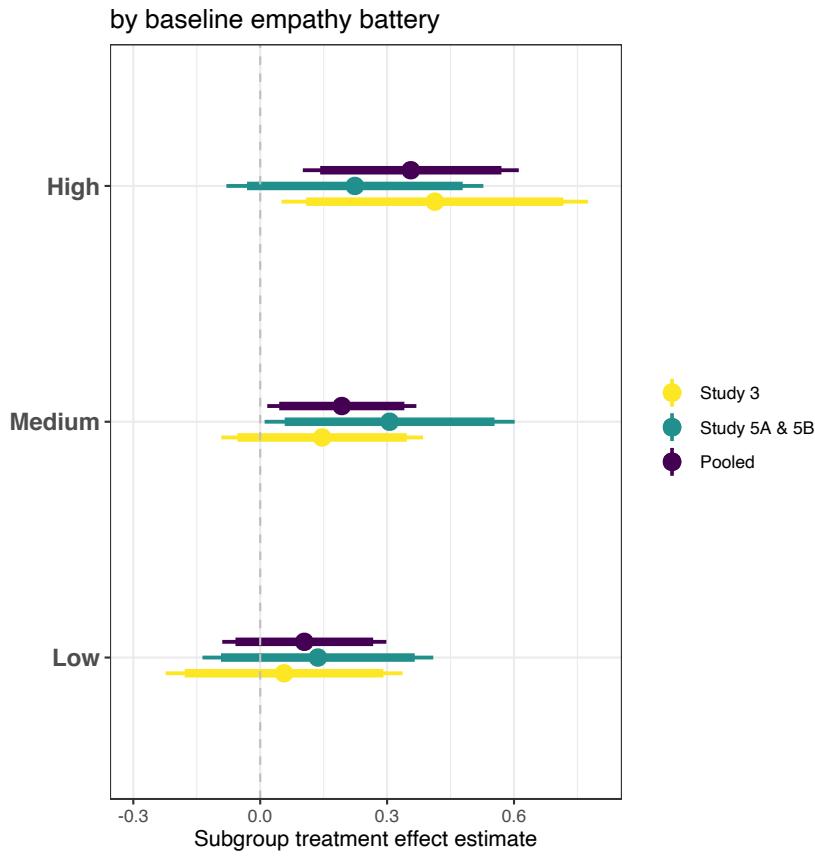


Figure I.33: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by respondent base empathy battery tercile.

**by Attentiveness** We look at subgroup effects by respondent attentiveness in Studies 5A and 5B (where the peer praise and task choice outcome are both measured for respondents over several trials) and look at attentive (respondents who pass the multiple choice attentionMC and grid attentionG attention checks), somewhat attentive (pass only attentionMC or attentionG but not both) and inattentive respondents (pass neither check). See Appendix Section B.4 for details. Figure I.34 presents estimated treatment effects of peer praise for empathy on choosing the empathy task within each of these subgroups.

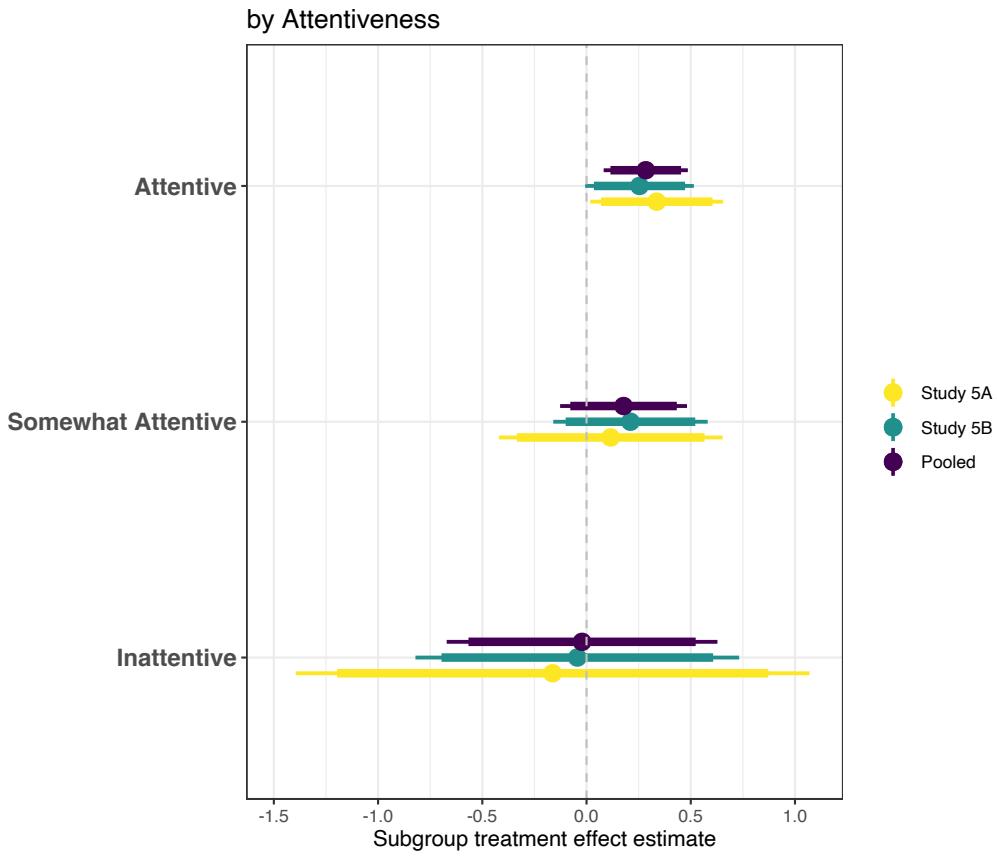


Figure I.34: Logistic regression estimated peer praise for empathy treatment effect on log likelihood of choosing empathy task, by respondent attentiveness.

Study 5 was composed of two days' worth of survey experiments, which we refer to throughout as 5A and 5B. 5A included 20 trials of the main task for all respondents, while 5B included 3. We additionally

## I.2 Fading effects of peer praise

Figure I.35 presents estimated average causal marginal effects (ACME) and total effects (TE) or peer praise for empathy (through happiness) over successive main task trials.

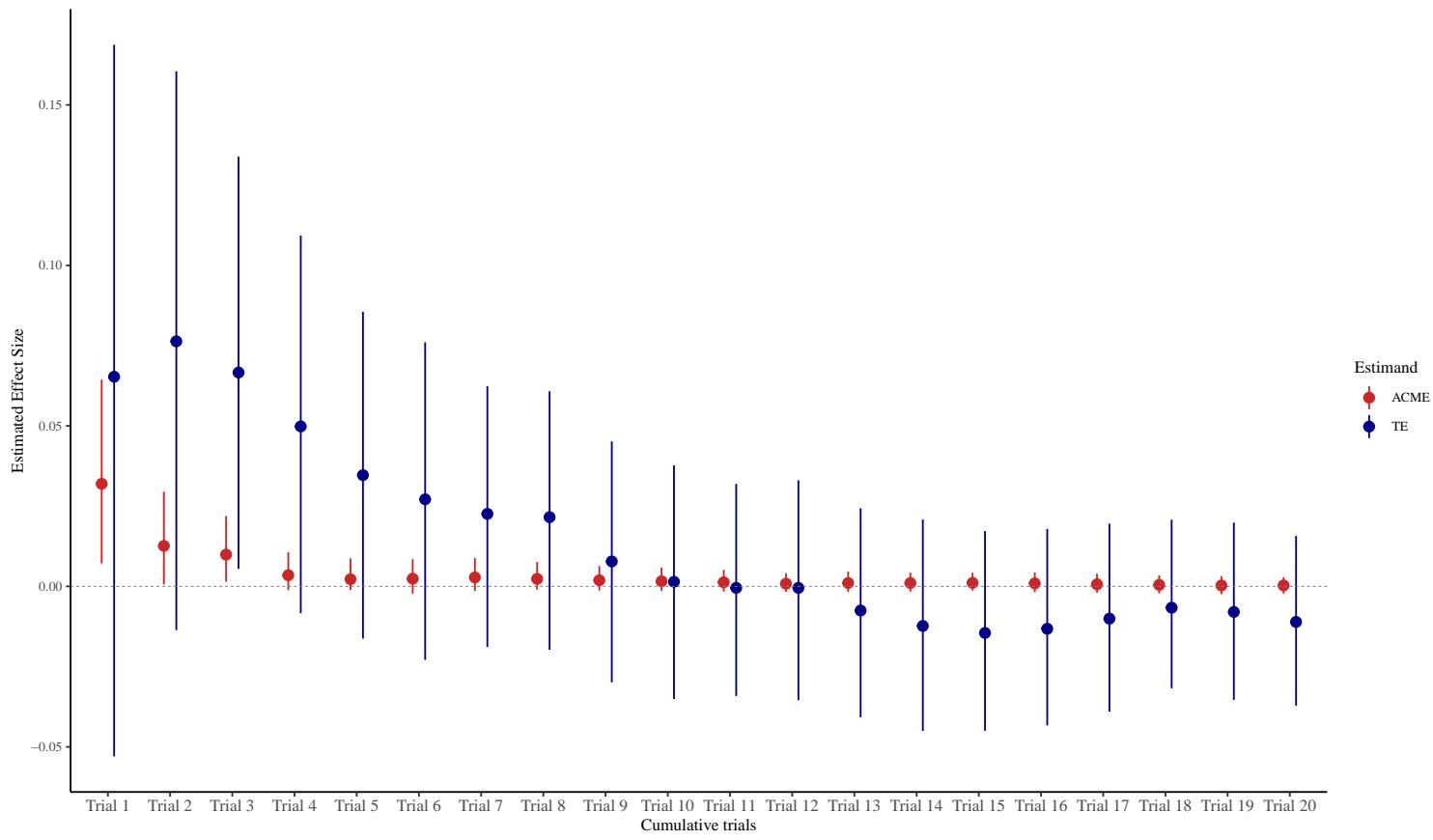


Figure I.35: ACME and TE effects of peer praise (through happiness) over successive trials.

## J Explorations of other mechanisms for peer praise on empathy

In a short follow up study to Study 3 we also measured respondent reported anxiety randomly either before or after the tasks (one main task, one reservation wage task). We consider the difference in measured anxiety for control group respondents who chose the empathy task each time with the respondents who chose the objective task each time. If respondents become more anxious after choosing the empathy task then we should see that their change in anxiety values should be higher than their colleagues who chose the objective task each time (change in anxiety was measured as pre minus post). As this is an observational exploration, we further control for respondent sex, age, education, race and party. Table J.14 reports this analysis, and suggests that there is no evidence in support of the empathy task correlating with an increase in anxiety (coefficient on “Choose Empathy over Objective” is not significantly different from zero).

	Estimate	s.e.	p
<b>Intercept</b>	0.8892	0.1896	0.0000
<b>Choose Empathy over Objective</b>	-0.0224	0.0732	0.7593

Table J.14: Change in **anxiety** after choosing Empathy or Objective

To see if respondents alleviate anxiety of empathy through peer praise, we further explored changes in reported anxiety among respondents who received either peer praise for empathy or control and who *only chose the empathy task* (comparing treatment effects on changes in anxiety while holding the task chosen constant). If it were the case that peer praise alleviates anxiety around the empathy task, we should see the peer praised group report higher changes in anxiety values compared to the second control. Again, this is an observational exploration, so we control for respondent sex, age, education, race and party. Table J.15 reports these findings, and suggests no evidence towards such a pathway.

	Estimate	s.e.	p
<b>Intercept</b>	0.5604	0.1623	0.0006
<b>Peer praise</b>	0.0589	0.0516	0.2536

Table J.15: Change in **anxiety** after peer praise for empathy

## K Ethical considerations

All of the studies conducted in this project received IRB approval and exemption through the University of Wisconsin Madison Educational and Social/Behavioral Science IRB (# 2020-0843-CP002).

**Fair wage** In establishing pay scales for each study, we conducted pilots to establish average times for pre-treatment, task and post task portions of each study design and paid based on the state with the highest minimum wage in mid 2020 (Washington, at \$13.50 per hour). Our intention was to offer fair wages especially in the context of work showing the median wage of MTurk workers is ~\$2/hour (Hara et al., 2018).

**Negative treatments and distress** In our studies we intentionally avoided negative affect in interactions as much as possible, by not providing negative peer feedback or emphasizing negative emotions when exploring mediators.

**No deception** Our studies incorporated a strict no-deception of respondents rule throughout, which in part motivated and necessitated Study 2 – garnering real peer praise and validating its authenticity.

## References

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