The behavioral foundations of donations in politics

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Working paper

Abstract

This study aims at understanding how persuasion effects are used to solicit campaign contributions. Campaign contributions take an essential role in elections, and often are a key factor in deciding the outcome. However, research is scarce insofar as measuring the effectiveness of techniques used on the ground. Specifically, I seek to study the effectiveness of social pressure in email solicitation by the use of nudging, one of the most commonly used techniques to alter behavior. To do so, I run two survey experiments and one field experiment partnering with a municipal political party in Canada. Preliminary analyses demonstrate that using social pressure in a message can increase the probability of donating by 9 percentage points. These results are especially interesting given the low cost of the treatment. Simply by formulating messages differently, political parties can drastically improve their chances of winning an election.

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Money matters in politics, but how money is spent matters more.

Theda Skocpol

In an interview with the Annual Review of Political Science, Theda Skocpol argues that the power the Koch Brothers gained over decades is due to their strategic *spending* in politics (Skocpol and Schickler 2019). Indeed, money in politics is especially important because of the enormous influence that comes with it. However, how one collects financial resources is equally important to gain power in politics. This question is somewhat trivial in the private sector; corporations collect money from their private enterprise. However, this question remains unanswered for political parties. Given that political parties require money to thrive as an organization and eventually govern, how can they earn money? I argue that the system by which a political party raises financial resources is crucial to their success and the key factor for effective power control in electoral democracies. If political parties are unable to effectively fund their organization, they will never claim enough seats to be remotely influential in the political process.

Political donations are also important because they play a key role in political representation. Campaign contributions allow ordinary citizens to gain access to a form a political power. Research suggests that political elites vote in accordance with the preferences of donors (Canes-Wrone and Miller 2021) and are more likely to meet with donors (Kalla and Broockman 2016). These findings lead us to believe that an increase donations leads to an increase in political representation for the electorate. If political parties are able to expand their donors base, they are not only contributing to their own financial success, but also expanding political power in the electorate. Higher donation rates lead to a higher quality of democracy.

Although the evidence is clear on the importance of donations in politics, our understanding of its behavioral motivations is ambiguous. Contributing to a political campaign is a costly behavior and does not make sense under a Downsian framework of political behavior. So why do voters donate to their preferred political party? A large body of work has investigated the

role of numerous factors such as civic duty to explain costly behavior such as turnout and protests (Blais 2000; Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). However, these behavioral outcomes are only costly in time and information. We have yet to understand why people are ready to *pay* for a political action. To that end, it is crucial to build a general behavioral theory to explain why citizens donate to political parties. We should seek to understand the cognitive motivations which predict why ordinary citizens donate to their political party.

To answer the question of *why* voters donate, I test the effectiveness of different nudges. If we know what nudges work and which do not, we will have a better understanding of the underlying motivations when voters donate. Therefore, I focus on the motivations that can be modified. This limits the scope of this study as many motivations are difficult to nudge. To that end, I propose two theoretical suppositions that explain why voters donate: the power of social pressure and the relative financial circumstances of the political party. I test these motivations using two survey experiments and a field experiment partnering with a municipal party in Canada.

The role of donations in politics

If there is one common feature of North American campaigns where all political candidates would agree on, it would be that small donors are the focus of any election. In the United States, elections cost an estimated $14 billion. In 2020, small donors make up for 22% of total fundraising, up from 15% in 2016 (Gratzinger 2020). Small donations not only allow political parties and candidates to emerge during an election cycle, but also give them the 'common people's' brand. This type of branding is sought after by both ideological sides, as association with elites are increasingly unpopular in the current populist climate. The influence of small donors on the success of a party is thus much greater than commonly thought. Not only do they offer financial resources needed for campaigning, but also contribute to the image of the party.

Past work in political science has largely focused on the democratic implications of campaign contributions (Brunell 2005; Johnston and Pattie 2007; Ewing and Ghaleigh 2007). Kalla and Broockman (2016) demonstrate that policymakers express preferential treatment towards financial contributors. In fact, policymakers declared their intention to meet with contributors between three to four times more than non-contributors. Outside of the United States, Boas, Hidalgo, and Richardson (2014) study the implications of campaign donations from corporations on the procurement of government contracts in Brazil. They find that firms specializing in public-works projects receive the equivalent of 14 times the value of their contribution when they donate to a political party which subsequently wins the election.

It is clear that political scientists have sought to unveil the unintended consequences of campaign contributions on the electoral apparatus. This goal is indeed worthwhile and presents important implications for society and our democratic institutions. However, past work overlooks the behavioral foundations of political donations. So, before political donations generates its downstream effects in society, how do they originate?

Figure 1 illustrates the logical timeline of political donations. The first stage explains what psychological factors lead citizens to donate[1]. The second stage explains the democratic consequences of donations on policy, government and the behavior of political elites. Research in political science has mostly overlooked stage 1 to focus solely on stage 2. In this article, I focus on stage 1. I limit the definition of behavioral foundations to motivations that are alterable. This does not include every predictor that explains charitable behavior. For example, research has identified wealth as a key driver for voters to donate. However, I disregard such characteristic given its inability to be nudged.

Studying variable behavior, as opposed to static characteristics, is crucial given our goal to increase such behavior. For example, Ponce and Scarrow (2011) find that partisanship predicts

1. Although economic and sociological factors may also explain why individuals donate, I focus on its psychological foundations. A psychological understanding of donations can be achieved through behavioral interventions, while it would be impossible, for example, to adjust the income of voters or to change the culture of charitable giving to increase donations.

Figure 1: The timeline of donations

political giving using survey data. These findings reveal theoretical insight pertinent to stage 1. However, partisanship cannot be nudged to promote political donations. Alike partisanship, other psychological factors may in fact fit in stage 1, but are put aside in this study for reasons outlined above.

What factors predict charitable behavior?

The act of donating has an extensive empirical and theoretical bedrock established in behavioral economics (Andreoni 1998; Frey and Meier 2004), social psychology (Simon, Stürmer, and Steffens 2000, Betancourt 1990) and marketing research (Louie and Obermiller 2000; Krishna 2011). Past work has clearly identified numerous factors that explain why people donate, not only to political parties, but to charities and NGOs. Indeed, stage 1 of the donations timeline is a common denominator across all contexts: the same behavioral mechanisms may explain why citizens donate to different organizations, political or humanitarian, regardless of their intent. However, I will argue that established factors might not be applicable to explain political attitudes such that the behavioral foundations of donations in politics are unknown. Moreover, many of these factors cannot be used to nudge voters.

Psychological Foundations

What drives people to donate? A considerable body of work argue that emotional and rational psychological factors explain why citizens donate. Donors typically demonstrate high levels of pro-social behaviors. Individuals exhibit prosocial behavior when they consciously intend to benefit another by means of helping, cooperating, sharing and donating (Andreoni 1995). The economics literature associates prosocial behavior with altruism in a number of differ-

ent empirical settings, notably in game-related laboratory experiments (Henrich et al. 2001). Moreover, donors demonstrate higher levels of altruistic behavior when they are capable of identifying the victim (Small, Loewenstein, and Slovic 2007). Many have further argued that individuals ultimately engage in altruistic behaviors with the intent of promoting their self-image and confidence (Khan and Dhar 2006). Following a rational mechanism, individuals give money to a cause when they weigh the financial cost as lower than the personal benefits associated with their morale (Dunn, Aknin, and Norton 2008; Ariely, Bracha, and Meier 2009). Harbaugh, Mayr, and Burghart (2007) go as far as associating an increase in neural activity in the region processing concrete rewards (such as food and money) with altruistic behavior. This suggests that our incentive to donate originates from the same neurological foundations as humans' basic needs. In sum, these pieces of evidence lead to a Downsian understanding of charitable giving, where individuals donate to essentially feel good about themselves.

The literature also provides strong support for the association between demographic features and charitable giving. Individuals with higher levels of education (Wunderink 2002), women (Mesch et al. 2011) and married (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011b) are more likely to donate. Wealthy and older citizens also donate more often, though not more in proportion to their income (Bekkers and Wiepking 2011a; Pharoah and Tanner 1997).

Incentives and Nudging

What can organizations do to encourage donations? Besides the underlying psychological and demographic factors that motivate citizens to donate, we can also investigate how organizations incentivize giving. The incentives behind the motivation to donate can in turn be used to increase such behavior. First, organizations and charities can offer to match the donations of their counterparts (Gee and Schreck 2018; Gneezy, Keenan, and Gneezy 2014). Public support from other organizations or governments also leads to an increase donations (De Wit, Bekkers, and Groenou 2017). However, these techniques are not likely to be applied to an electoral context either given their high cost or their rarity. A more effective and low-cost incentive is the use of nudges. In a field experiment with a humanitarian organization providing medical

support to victims of war, Capraro et al. (2019) find that moral nudges increase donations by 44%. It is important to note that these types of incentives are only effective when applied to socially desirable situations. In fact, a considerable amount of studies have focused on applying nudges to hint donating as a socially desirable feature (Carlsson, Johansson-Stenman, and Khanh Nam 2015; Martin and Randal 2008).

Can altruism predict political donations?

Although the literature has been driven by the role of altruistic and prosocial behavior in predicting donations, the relationship is not clear in the context of politics. Indeed, there is reason to believe that citizens do not view political donations as socially desirable for fairly obvious reasons. Given the need for donors to promote their self-image, publicly claiming their charitable donations is beneficial to their wellbeing. Indeed, most people prefer to be transparent and public about their charitable giving to ameliorate their social reputation (Andreoni and Petrie 2004; Alpizar, Carlsson, and Johansson-Stenman 2008; Clark 2002). However, there are less reasons to believe that donating to political candidates and parties leads to a better reputation amongst peers. In fact, one can make the argument that political donations are sometimes associated with the darker side of politics by which the wealthy seek to gain influence on potential policymakers (Boas, Hidalgo, and Richardson 2014).

The notion of privacy is also mixed when comparing charity and political donations. The feeling of being observed is associated with much higher rates of charitable giving following the need to maintain a social reputation (Yoeli et al. 2013). Powell, Roberts, and Nettle (2012) find that the probability of donating in a supermarket increases by 48% when individuals know they are being watched. At the same time, La Raja (2014) shows that individuals avoid making small campaign contributions to prevent disclosing their identities. Political behavior is far from being sought to be publicly acclaimed. In fact, research in political science has even identified cases of wanting to hold political beliefs private, such as vote choice (Gerber et al. 2013). Although political behavior might want to be kept private, social pressure seems to remain an effective incentive to promote prosocial attitudes (Holbrook 2011). So while al-

truism and the need to ameliorate one's prosocial reputation strongly predicts why citizens donate to charity, empirical priors are mixed when evaluating if the same mechanisms drive citizens to donate in politics. Further investigation is thus needed to know whether political donations are socially desirable.

The role of social pressure

Social pressure acts as an incentive to sought after behavioral outcomes in political science (Gerber, Green, and Larimer 2008). However, the theoretical expectations of the role of social pressure when donating to political parties is unclear. First, we might expect citizens to be more likely to donate if they believe others have done so (Wiepking and Heijnen 2011). In this case, I expect social pressure to act as an incentive encouraging donations to political parties. Furthermore, voters should not only feel pressured to donate, but also to donate a socially desirable amount. This amount may be specified by past donations, or the donations by their companions (Croson and Shang 2008). Following this logic, we should observe a linear relationship between the amount of past donations and the given donation from the party supporter. Social pressure should be especially prevalent when incentives are applied from within the party, promoting the in-group membership one may feel within a political party (Hysenbelli, Rubaltelli, and Rumiati 2013).

However, we also have reasons to believe that voters might not feel pressured given that their behavior is private. Past research has indeed demonstrated the key role that 'publicly available' actions play in social behavior. Although donor lists are publicly available in most Western countries, it is rarely of interest to the public. This may be explained by the fact that voters are not interested in the donation history of their counterparts. Following this logic, priming social norms would not lead to higher donation rates. Voters who donate might simply just be more partisan and have an urge to express their contentment financially rather than with a simple vote.

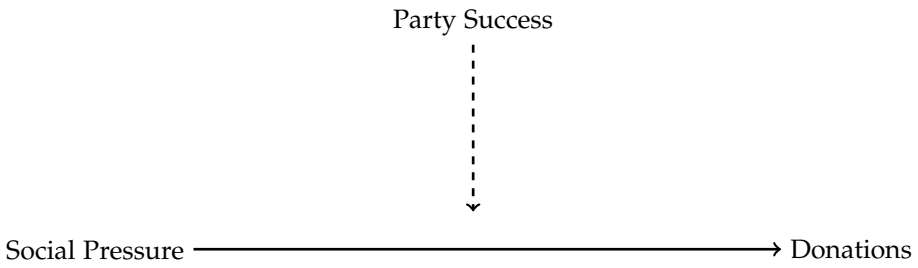

Figure 2: **Moderation effect of party success on causal relationship between social pressure and likelihood to donate**

The moderating role of party success in the causal relationship

There is reason to believe that the financial situation of the political party might act as a moderator in the social pressure – donation relationship. Cryder and Loewenstein (2010) show that in the context of charitable organizations, people are more likely to donate when their financial goals are approaching than when they are far from expectations. Extending this finding to politics, are parties more likely to receive donations when they are not doing well? There are strong reasons to expect both sides of the relationship. Party supporters might feel hopeless if their party is not up to par. They might abandon their political engagement altogether since they expect a loss in the election leading to a demobilization effect. If supporters feel that their donation will make a small impact, they might feel less altruistic since their contribution is unlikely to change anything. Inversely, (strong) party supporters might feel rather guilty that their party is not doing as well as expected (Hibbert et al. 2007). This strongly felt negative emotion may lead them to feel an obligation to donate, as if they felt obligated to help a hurt loved one (Small and Verrochi 2009; Weisbuch and Ambady 2008).

Moreover, we might expect party supporters to free ride when their political party is doing well with donations. Citizens might seek to benefit from the donations of their peers. Ultimately, they envision a situation where they enjoy the success of their party without the need to contribute. The most pertinent feature of this conditional expectation is perhaps its interaction with social pressure. Assessing the counterfactual to be a solicitation without a social pressure nudge, we might expect a different relationship between the probability of donating

		Party Success	
		Yes	No
Social Pressure	Yes	Bandwagon effect: +	Guilty effect: ++
	No	Free rider effect: - -	Placebo: -

Table 1: **Conditional expectations of donations based on party success and social pressure**

and social pressure when the party is doing well versus not. I expect that party supporters will be less likely to donate when their party is doing well, but more likely when nudged with social pressure.

I illustrate these conditional expectation in Table 1. In the first cell (top left), we can expect what I call a *Bandwagon effect*. Here, voters feel pressured to follow the 'trend' of donation since everyone else seems to be donating. They will have a higher probability to contribute, but will give a rather low amount since it is only to be part of a larger social fad, but nothing more. In the second cell (top right), I expect a *guilty effect*. Voters feel bad about the their preferred party's financial situation. Not only do they feel pressured, but need to act in solidarity leading to a higher donation amount. In the third cell (bottom left), I expect a *free rider* effect. Here, the voter is simply asked to donate, but the party is already doing well. From their point the view, the voter does not have any reason to contribute. They can benefit from their preferred party's success without personal contributions. Finally, the fourth cell (bottom right) is the case in which the voter is simply asked to donate. Although some voters might donate, I expect a lower rate compared to the aforementioned situations.

The theoretical contributions based on social pressure and relative party success have important implications in the way campaigns solicit contributions. Political campaigns have proposed little innovations in understanding the underlying mechanisms leading party supporters to donate. This is a key factor to study since different persuasion effects might lead to unexpected interactions. In sum, theoretical expectations leads to ambivalent predictions about the effect of social pressure and party success on donations. This is due to the lack of

theoretical insights we have within the discipline of political science, as the vast majority of research in charitable giving is in the fields of economics, management and marketing. In the next section, I propose two survey experiments and one field experiment to shed more light on this puzzle.

Study 1: Survey Experiments

Study 1 will be separated in two survey experiments. The first experiment will test the social pressure hypothesis. The goal of this experiment is to know if voters can be socially pressured to donate to their preferred political party even if their behavior is private. The second experiment will test the party success hypothesis. Given a relationship between social pressure and likelihood to donate, how can the level of party success change this. Furthermore, the survey experiments will pre-test persuasion messages that will be fielded in Study 2. If certain messages turn out to be particularly non-efficient in increasing donations, I will not include them in the field.

Both survey experiments will be fielded on MTurk on a random sample of Canadian participants. Respondents will answer demographic and other basic questions (party ID, ideology, vote choice, etc.).

Survey Experiment 1: Social Pressure

This experiment contains three types of treatments which all draw from social pressure persuasion techniques.

First, I model social pressure effects as a function of geographic proximity. I expect the message to be most persuasive when social pressure feels close to the respondent. The second and third treatment refers to the proximity pressure treatment. In the second treatment, I include the average donation amount of other party supporters in the riding. In the third

treatment, I include the average donation amount of their neighbours. I expect respondents to feel social pressure because of the geographic proximity of the donation amount. Following this logic, I expect the third treatment to induce higher effects than the second treatment because the respondent should feel more pressure from neighbours than the riding.

The first treatment is meant to induce social pressure with an assertion about the donations of another city. I include another city as a 'geographic outgroup' which I expect to lead respondent to compare their financial behavior to those of another city. For example, if the respondent is from Montreal, they will read a statement about the donation amount for another political party in Toronto or Vancouver.

Finally, the fourth treatment is meant to capture the effect of variation in average donation amount on the probability of donating. I expect that smaller donation amounts will lead to more donations. I expect this be the case since many do not donate given the high cost of contributing. Donating to political parties is often thought of as reserved to the elite and wealthy. If respondents notice that donating to a party actually costs much less than expected, they might be more inclined to donate.

In the first experiment (social pressure), respondents will read one of the following five messages:

1. **Control:** Would you donate to the [Preferred] party?
2. **Outgroup pressure Treatment:** Would you donate to the [Preferred] party? The average municipal party contribution of [Other City] could be: 50$
3. **Proximity pressure Treatment:** Would you donate to the [Preferred] party? The average contribution of your riding could be: 50$
4. **Proximity pressure Treatment 2:** Would you donate to the [Preferred] party? The average contribution of your close neighbours could be: 50$

5. **Amount Treatment:** Would you donate to the [Preferred] party? The average contribution of your close neighbours could be: 100$

To determine the preferred party of the respondent, I embed the choice they made earlier in the survey when asked to choose their preferred party. Moreover, the reason why I use the term 'could be' is because I cannot actually know the average contribution amount for any MTurker. This phrasing is meant to test messages while not lying to participants.

Survey Experiment 2: Party Success

To test the party success hypothesis, I will field two treatments using vignettes. In the first vignette, respondents will be told that the party is doing well in terms of donations. In the second, they will read that the party is **not** doing well with donations. After reading the prompt, they will be asked if they are willing to donate.

1. **Vignette 1:** "Your favorite political party had significant **success** in raising money for the past few months. But we really need one last push!"

2. **Vignette 2:** "Your favorite political party had significant **difficulty** in raising money for the past few months. But with one last push we can do it!"

The outcome is measured with the following question: "Would you donate to your favorite political party today?" Response Categories: Yes, No, Maybe.

Study 2: Field Experiment

This study randomizes the content of emails sent from a political party to their party supporters that solicitate a financial contribution. The population of interest is individuals that are on the email list of the political party. The minimum number of participants (emails sent) depends on the baseline rate of donation via emails in the given political party, thus will be determined based on the information provided by the political party. In this study, mentions

of the average contribution amounts will be based on real data given by the political party.

Social Pressure Experiment

The political party will field five different types of emails, plus one control group who will not receive any email. The following treatments follow the same logic as the treatments in the survey experiment.

1. **Control:** No email sent to political party supporters.
2. **Placebo:** The default email sent by the political party simply asking for a donation.
3. **Outgroup pressure Treatment:** Default email + mention of the average contribution of municipal donations in Toronto.
4. **Proximity pressure Treatment:** Default email + mention of the average contribution of the riding
5. **Proximity pressure Treatment 2:** Default email + mention of the average contribution of their neighbours (closest 20 addresses to the party supporter's house)
6. **Amount Treatment:** Default email + mention of the average contribution of a random sample of 5 neighbours (out of the closest 20 addresses) (N is twice as big to capture enough variation)

The default email (placebo) will be provided by the political party. This message is the usual email that is sent to their supporters asking for a donation.

Party Success Experiment

This part of the field experiment can be thought of as a quasi-adaptive experiment. I will choose the two treatment arms that performed the best in the first field experiment and field it again. However, they will now be combined with either of two party success vignettes. In the first vignette, respondents will read that the political party is doing well in terms of donations. Then, they will be presented with one of three messages on social pressure. One of the same

three messages will be presented to respondents with the second vignette, which states that the political party is *not* doing well. This is a 2 x 3 factorial experiment with a total of 6 groups.

1. **Vignette 1:** "Projet Montréal has been doing very well with donations for the past few months. They are past expectations."
   (a) **Placebo**: Would you donate to Projet Montréal?
   (b) **Treatment 1**: Last week, fellow party supporters donated an average of 50$. Would you donate to Projet Montréal?
   (c) **Treatment 2**: Last week, fellow party supporters in [neighborhood] donated an average of 50$. Would you donate to Projet Montréal?
2. **Vignette 2:** "Projet Montréal has not been doing well with donations for the past few months. They are far from expectations."
   (a) **Placebo**: Would you donate to Projet Montréal?
   (b) **Treatment 1**: Last week, fellow party supporters donated an average of 50$. Would you donate to Projet Montréal?
   (c) **Treatment 2**: Last week, fellow party supporters in [neighborhood] donated an average of 50$. Would you donate to Projet Montréal?

Here, treatment 1 and treatment 2 in vignette 1 correspond to the bandwagon effect. The placebo in vignette 1 corresponds to the free-rider effect. In vignette 2, the placebo corresponds to the 'no incentive' case and the treatment groups correspond to the guilty effect.

Results

In this section, I present preliminary results from a pilot study I conducted in March of 2021. This experiment was designed as a 2 x 3 factorial experiment, with two factors and three groups. Respondents were assigned to the control group or either of two treatment groups. These groups tested the social pressure messages. In these messages, I mention the amount the

respondents' neighbours give to their preferred party. All respondents were told this amount was 50$. To increase the legitimacy of this number, I ask about the respondent's postal code before. Although I did not actually do this, asking about their postal code could seem as if this amount was tailored to their neighborhood. To determine which party is included in the question, I use the same party they declared as their preferred one earlier in the survey. So, if respondents said that they consider themselves a Republican, they will be told that the average donation amount of 50$ is for Republicans. Then, I split the sample into two factors based on asking the respondent about their income. Half of respondents were asked their income before treatment assignment, and the others were not.

The outcome questions for each group were the following:

1. **Control:** "Would you donate to the [Preferred Party] today?"

2. **Treatment 1:** "The average contribution to the [Preferred Party] of your close neighbours could be 50$. Would you donate to the [Preferred Party] party today?"

3. **Treatment 2:** "Suppose your neighbour donated 50$ to the [Preferred Party]. Would you donate to the [Preferred Party] today?"

The goal of this pilot study was three fold. First, I wanted to test the effectiveness of the Proximity pressure treatment 2 from Study 1. Second, I wanted to compare different wordings of the treatment. In the first treatment, I avoid setting up the question as a hypothetical scenario. In the second treatment, I set up the question as a hypothetical scenario, hence the 'Suppose'. Third, I test the effect of asking about the respondent's income before the donations question. My expectation is that when asked about their income, respondents have a higher probability of donating.

Each respondent had an equal probability of being assigned to either of 3 groups. Out of 1,146 respondents, 393 were assigned to the first treatment, 374 to the second treatment and

379 to the control group. Respondents who were assigned to either treatment thus comprised about 66% of the sample. Then, I split the sample once to determine the factorial groups. About 50% percent of respondents were asked about their income before answering the outcome question. The balance and attrition tables in the Appendix show no demonstration of unbalanced samples between groups based on observed covariates.

I present the results of OLS[2] models in Table 2. The first model estimates the effect of stating the average donation amount of the respondent's neighbours on the probability of donating. The independent variable is coded 1 if the respondent received either Treatment 1 or Treatment 2, and coded 0 if they were in the control group. We see that the treatment has a 9 percentage point effect on the probability of donating. This means that when respondents were told that their neighbours gave 50$ to their preferred party, they have a 9% increased probability of wanting to donate. The constant term indicates the probability of donating in the control group. About 13% of respondents wanted to donate in the control group, whereas 22% wanted to donate in the treatment group.

The second model estimates the effect of the first treatment ('Average') on the probability of donating. We see that the treatment effect is non-significant at the 0.05 level. The third model estimates the effect of the second treatment ('Suppose') on donating. We see that the effect is significant. This indicates that the main effect of model 1 is driven by this treatment. We see this by summing the coefficients of model 2 and 3 which gives the exact coefficient of model 1. Therefore, I will use the 'Suppose' treatment wording when formulating the outcome question in the final study.

In the fourth model, I test the effect of the income factor with an interaction between treatment (referring to the 'Overall' treatment) and income. Here, income is coded 1 when the respondent was asked about their income before the outcome question, and 0 if not. So, the coefficient uncovers the effect of asking about income on the probability of donating when the respondent receives treatment. The effect is about 8 percentage points, which although is

2. I use ordinary least squares, but in fact these are linear probability models.

Table 2: OLS models

	Dependent variable:						
	Outcome: If respondent would donate (1/0)						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Overall Treatment	0.090*** (0.042, 0.137)				0.090*** (0.042, 0.137)	0.086*** (0.039, 0.133)	0.086*** (0.039, 0.133)
"Average" Treatment		0.018 (−0.030, 0.065)					
"Suppose" Treatment			0.072*** (0.024, 0.120)				
Income x Treatment				0.079*** (0.031, 0.126)			
Income Control					0.020 (−0.024, 0.065)		
Party ID - GOP						−0.140*** (−0.193, −0.086)	
Party ID - Independ.						−0.038 (−0.092, 0.017)	
Political interest							0.103*** (0.068, 0.138)
Constant	0.127*** (0.088, 0.166)	0.181*** (0.153, 0.208)	0.163*** (0.136, 0.191)	0.160*** (0.133, 0.188)	0.116*** (0.072, 0.161)	0.178*** (0.132, 0.224)	−0.101** (−0.188, −0.015)
Observations	1,146	1,146	1,146	1,146	1,146	1,146	1,146
R^2	0.012	0.0005	0.008	0.009	0.012	0.034	0.040

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

high still recovers a lower effect than the main effect from model 1. Therefore, I can reject the possibility of persuading voters to donate at a higher rate when I ask about income.

Finally, I control for a series of covariates in the 5th, 6th and 7th models. These controls do not change much to the main effect.

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Appendix

A Instrumentation

1. Generally speaking, do you usually consider yourself a Democrat, a Republican or an Independent?
   Response categories: Democrat, Republican, Independent
2. How interested are you in politics and public affairs?
   Response Categories: Very interested, Somewhat interested, Not interested
3. How old are you? Simply type the number of your age.
4. What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?
5. **Attention check:** What is your favorite ice cream flavor? Please select the second option in order for your response to be valid.
   Response Categories: Vanilla, Chocolate, Caramel

B Balance and Attrition Tests

Table 3: Balance Table: Overall Treatment

Overall treatment	0		1		
Variable	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Test
Attention	389		767		X2= 0.175
... Caramel	5	1.3%	11	1.4%	
... Chocolate	369	94.9%	723	94.3%	
... Vanilla	15	3.9%	33	4.3%	
Party ID	389		767		X2= 1.57
... Democratic	173	44.5%	355	46.3%	
... Independent	118	30.3%	206	26.9%	
... Republican	98	25.2%	206	26.9%	
Political Interest	389		767		X2= 1.582
... Not at all interested	49	12.6%	79	10.3%	
... Somewhat interested	211	54.2%	417	54.4%	
... Very interested	129	33.2%	271	35.3%	

Statistical significance markers: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 4: Balance Table: First treatment

'Average' treatment	0		1		
Variable	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Test
Attention	763		393		X2= 4.036
... Caramel	7	0.9%	9	2.3%	
... Chocolate	722	94.6%	370	94.1%	
... Vanilla	34	4.5%	14	3.6%	
Party ID	763		393		X2= 1.353
... Democratic	348	45.6%	180	45.8%	
... Independent	221	29%	103	26.2%	
... Republican	194	25.4%	110	28%	
Political Interest	763		393		X2= 1.384
... Not at all interested	86	11.3%	42	10.7%	
... Somewhat interested	422	55.3%	206	52.4%	
... Very interested	255	33.4%	145	36.9%	

Statistical significance markers: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 5: Balance Table: Second Treatment

'Suppose' treatment	0		1		
Variable	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Test
Attention	782		374		X2= 4.028
... Caramel	14	1.8%	2	0.5%	
... Chocolate	739	94.5%	353	94.4%	
... Vanilla	29	3.7%	19	5.1%	
Party ID	782		374		X2= 0.281
... Democratic	353	45.1%	175	46.8%	
... Independent	221	28.3%	103	27.5%	
... Republican	208	26.6%	96	25.7%	
Interest	782		374		X2= 1.273
... Not at all interested	91	11.6%	37	9.9%	
... Somewhat interested	417	53.3%	211	56.4%	
... Very interested	274	35%	126	33.7%	

Statistical significance markers: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 6: Balance Table: Income treatment

Income Treatment	0		1		
Variable	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Test
Attention	583		573		X2= 1.056
... Caramel	10	1.7%	6	1%	
... Chocolate	550	94.3%	542	94.6%	
... Vanilla	23	3.9%	25	4.4%	
Party ID	583		573		X2= 2.235
... Democratic	254	43.6%	274	47.8%	
... Independent	172	29.5%	152	26.5%	
... Republican	157	26.9%	147	25.7%	
Political interest	583		573		X2= 0.08
... Not at all interested	64	11%	64	11.2%	
... Somewhat interested	315	54%	313	54.6%	
... Very interested	204	35%	196	34.2%	

Statistical significance markers: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Table 7: Attrition Table

Attrition	No		Yes		
Variable	Sum	Mean	Sum	Mean	Test
Attention	1146		10		X2= 6.464**
... Caramel	15	1.3%	1	10%	
... Chocolate	1084	94.6%	8	80%	
... Vanilla	47	4.1%	1	10%	
Party ID	1146		10		X2= 1.111
... Democratic	525	45.8%	3	30%	
... Independent	320	27.9%	4	40%	
... Republican	301	26.3%	3	30%	
Political interest	1146		10		X2= 1.407
... Not at all interested	126	11%	2	20%	
... Somewhat interested	622	54.3%	6	60%	
... Very interested	398	34.7%	2	20%	

Statistical significance markers: * p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01