



LUND UNIVERSITY

Feeling or calculating in helping situations: Induced mindset influence both helping intentions and money allocations

Erlandsson, Arvid; Ivan, Cristina-Elena

2015

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Erlandsson, A., & Ivan, C.-E. (2015). *Feeling or calculating in helping situations: Induced mindset influence both helping intentions and money allocations*. Abstract from 36th annual meeting of Society of Judgment and Decision Making.

Total number of authors:

2

General rights

Unless other specific re-use rights are stated the following general rights apply:

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Read more about Creative commons licenses: <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/>

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

LUND UNIVERSITY

PO Box 117
221 00 Lund
+46 46-222 00 00

Feeling or calculating in helping situations: Induced mindset influence both helping intentions and money allocations



Arvid Erlandsson^{1,2} & Cristina-Elena Ivan²

¹ Linköping University, Department of Behavioral Sciences and Learning, ² Lund University, Department of Psychology

Summary

We induced people with either an emotional or a calculative mindset in an ostensibly unrelated study. We then asked them to make a helping decision. The decision was either about their intention to donate to charity (Study 1) or about how to allocate resources between two helping organizations (Study 2). The results suggest that an induced emotional mindset make us more likely to help, but that an induced calculative mindset make us more likely to allocate to an organization helping many statistical out-group victims rather than few identified in-group victims. The results are in line with the suggestion made by Cryder and Loewenstein (2011) saying that people should rely on their emotional reactions for decisions about whether to help but to rely on reason for decisions about how to help.

Background

There is an ongoing debate whether emotions or analytical thinking is preferable for decision making in helping-situations (e.g. Vohs et al, 2007; Loewenstein & Small, 2007; Slovic, 2007).

Emotions are preferable:

- Priming people to focus on their feelings or providing high cognitive load and time pressure increase helping intentions (Dickert et al., 2011; Rand et al., 2012; 2014, but see Tinghög et al., 2013).
- Inducing a deliberative mindset reduce helping to identified victims (Small & Loewenstein & Slovic, 2007).
- Deliberation, and specifically calculation, crowd out moral intuitions and make people share less in dictator games (Zhong, 2011; Wang et al. ,2014).

Analytic thinking is preferable:

- People are scope-sensitive when primed with calculation but scope-insensitive when primed with feelings (Hsee & Rottenstreich, 2004).
- Only people with high emotional understanding display the singularity effect bias (Hasford et al., 2015).
- Feeling compassion toward specific victims can make us disregard grand-scale consequences and fairness aspects in helping situations (Batson et al., 1995; Oceja, 2008).

Importantly, there are several types of decisions related to helping: A) Likelihood: Whether to help or not?, B) Magnitude: How much to help?, C) Allocation: How to divide resources among victims? Most research emphasizing the positive aspects of emotion focus on likelihood & magnitude. Most research emphasizing the negative aspects of emotion focus on allocation.

Predictions

1. People primed with emotion will be more willing to donate money to charity than people primed with calculation.
2. People primed with calculation will allocate money in a more rational "utilitarian" manner than people primed with emotion.

Priming emotion & calculation

We primed participants with an emotional or a calculative mindset (Study 1a, 2) or with an emotional or a calculative concept (Study 1b; Bargh & Chartrand, 2000).

The priming task was unrelated to the subsequent helping decisions meaning that the induced mindset/concept was *incidental* rather than *integral*.

Also, the priming was perceptible rather than subtle. Participants was thus conscious of the induced mindset and could easily attribute it to a specific task.

Study 1 - Method

Participants ($n = 104$ in both studies) were asked to participate in a study testing the relation between hand-writing and personality. Participants could win a gift-card worth 500SEK (\approx \$55).

Page 1: Participants were told to write 30-60 words by hand. Half of the participants read the emotion-prime instructions. The other half read the calculation-prime instructions.

Page 2: Ostensibly an obligatory break before the personality test. During the break participants were asked to estimate how much they would spend on necessities, entertainment and charity if they won 500SEK on the lottery. The DV of interest was the estimated spending on charity.

Page 3: Participants first reported how they felt during the hand-writing task (manipulation check, see Table 1). Second, they answered two questions about their handwriting and four unrelated personality-questions.

Participants received a funneled debriefing where they were initially asked about the hypothesis of the studies, participants who guessed the hypothesis or did not complete the estimation-task were excluded (three in Study 1a, seven in Study 1b).

Study 1a (Mindset-priming)

Previous research has shown that the personal characteristics of the handwriting appears the most when the writer (*is emotionally moved by something and experiencing strong emotions directed at someone else*) [*think very objectively and not consider their own feelings too much*]. Therefore, we want you (*to think of a situation in your life when you felt strong emotions for any other living creature. Describe the situation and try to put into words the feelings you experienced*). [*to in your own words describe how you arrive at the answer to the following question: A restaurant bill is made up of the following: 132.50 SEK for an appetizer, main dish for 280.50 SEK and 87 SEK for dessert, plus 15% tax. How large is the total bill?*]

Study 1b (Concept-priming)

Your task is to transcribe (copy) the paragraph below by hand.

Compassion is the feeling of empathy for others. The etymology of "compassion" is Latin, meaning "co-suffering." Compassion commonly gives rise to an active desire to alleviate another's suffering. Compassion is considered in almost all tradition as amongst the greatest of virtues. Rationality is the quality or state of being reasonable, based on facts or reason. A rational decision is one that is not just reasoned, but is also optimal for achieving a goal or solving a problem. Rationality is considered in almost all traditions as amongst the greatest of virtues.

Study 1 - Results

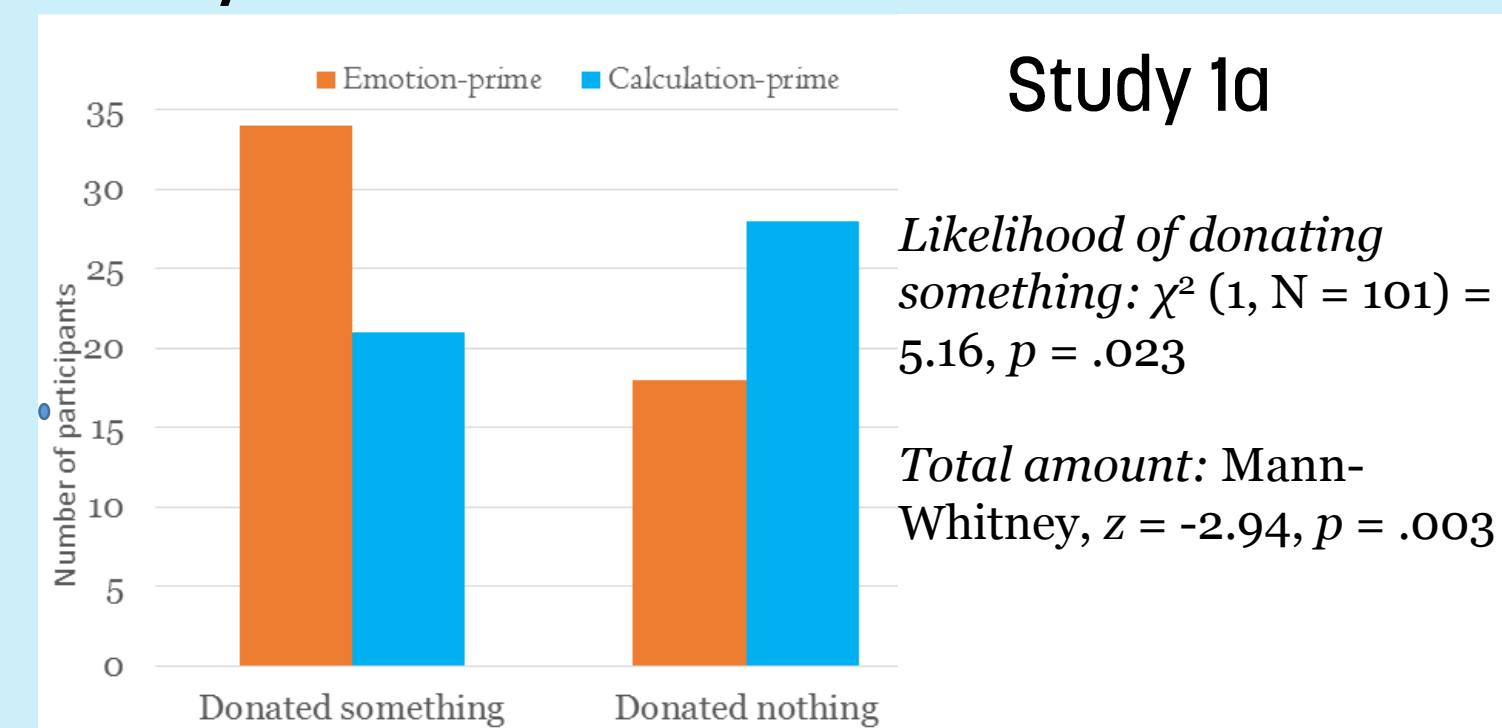


Figure 1. Number of participants induced with emotional or calculating mindset intending to donate something to charity in Study 1a.

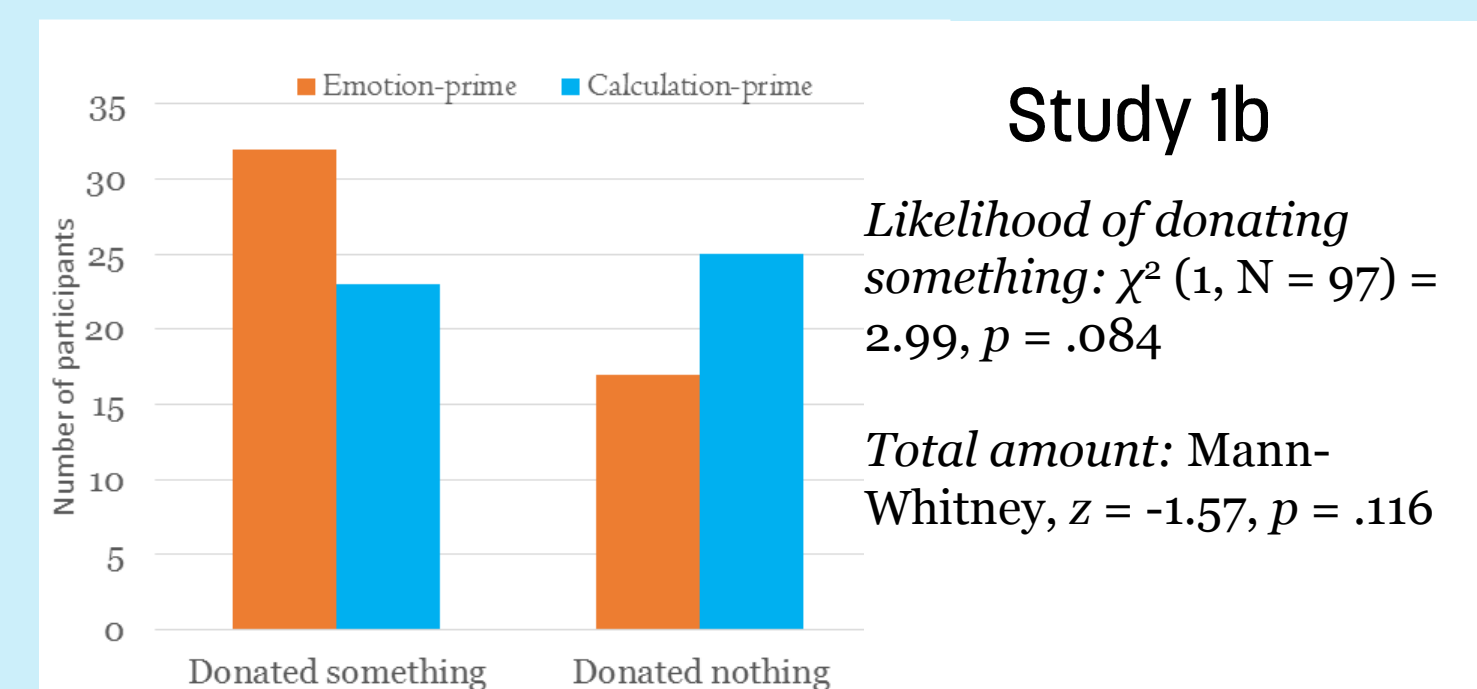


Figure 2. Number of participants induced with an emotional concept or a calculating concept intending to donate something to charity in Study 1b.

	Study 1a (Mindset prime)		Study 1b (Concept prime)		Study 2 (Mindset prime)	
	Emotion	Calculation	Emotion	Calculation	Emotion	Calculation
Bored	2.45 (1.32)	< 3.37 (1.81)	3.51 (1.70)	≈ 3.54 (1.61)	2.73 (1.63)	< 3.65 (1.48)
Emotional	4.59 (1.44)	> 1.81 (1.26)	2.20 (1.46)	≈ 2.17 (1.21)	4.35 (1.41)	> 2.00 (1.24)
Analytic	3.33 (1.51)	< 4.48 (1.57)	3.73 (1.82)	≈ 3.25 (1.64)	2.65 (1.35)	< 3.98 (1.45)
Happy	2.61 (1.43)	< 3.68 (1.43)	3.80 (1.32)	≈ 4.06 (1.36)	2.86 (1.63)	≈ 3.35 (1.28)
Kind	3.59 (1.64)	≈ 3.81 (1.75)	4.22 (1.64)	≈ 3.92 (1.60)	3.98 (1.60)	≈ 3.91 (1.64)
Calculating	2.82 (1.38)	< 4.98 (1.71)	3.24 (1.90)	≈ 3.02 (1.68)	2.61 (1.53)	< 4.45 (1.73)

Table 1. Results from the manipulation-check in the three studies. "</>" denotes significant differences.

Study 2 - Method

Same as Study 1, but instead of having a chance to win money, participants ($n = 105$) were told that 10 SEK would be donated to charity on their behalf.

Page 1: Same as in Study 1a (mindset-priming)

Page 2: Ostensibly an obligatory break before the personality test. During the break participants were asked to choose which organization they wished to donate their 10 SEK to.

The "utilitarian" choice was "The world infection fund" – a Swedish charity organization focusing their efforts on the infectious diseases of the world's poor. The "non-utilitarian" choice was the Swedish equivalent of Make-a-wish foundation, focusing their efforts on a few identified children in Sweden.

Page 3: Same as Study 1. Same funneled debriefing as in Study 1. Participants who guessed the hypothesis were excluded ($n = 4$).

Study 2 - Results

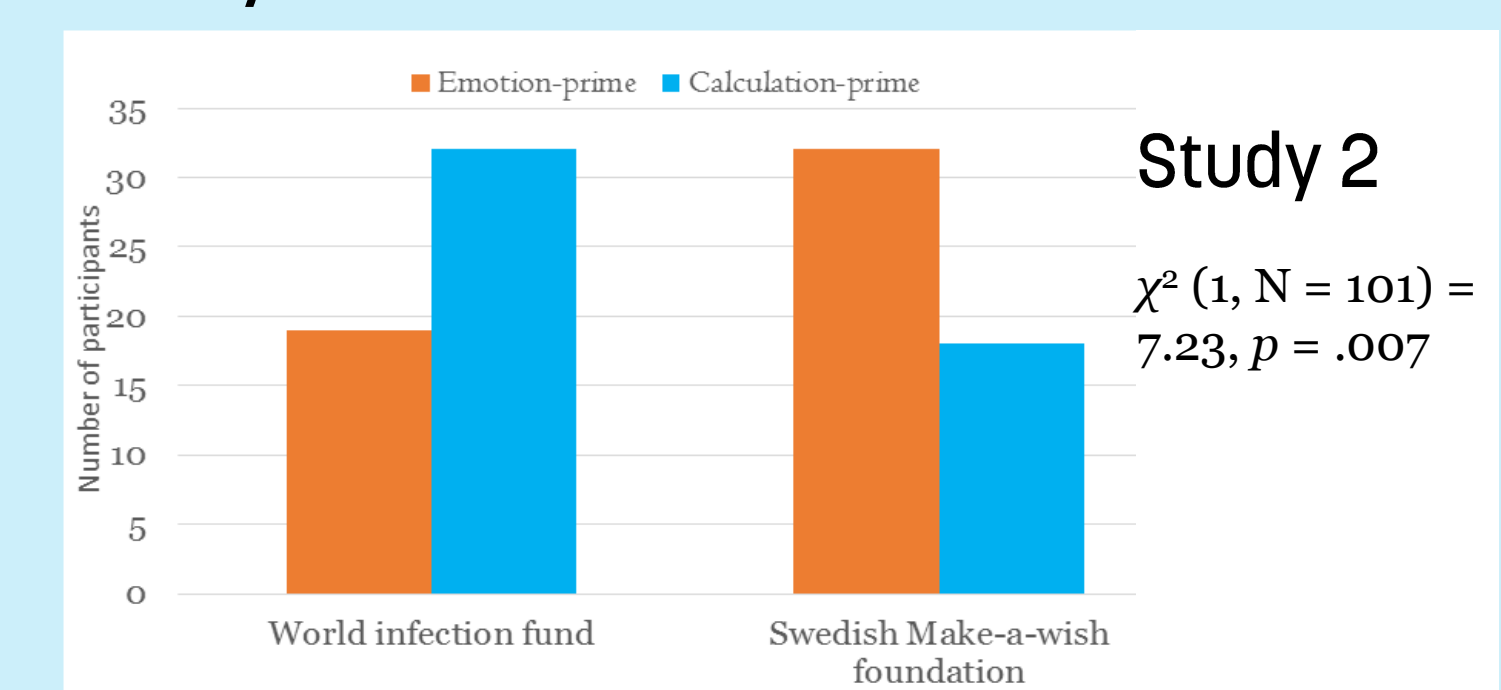


Figure 3. Number of participants induced with an emotional or calculating mindset allocating to World infection fund and Swedish Make-a-wish foundation in Study 2.