

Not all empathy is equal: How empathy affects charitable giving

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Presentation Overview

- Background and research question
- Data and methodologies
- Findings
- Discussion

What Is Empathy

- Definitions
 - “Affective reaction to another’s emotional experience”
 - or
 - “Sharing the perceived emotion of another”
(Unger & Thumhuri, 1997)

Dimensions of Empathy

Interpersonal Reactivity Index (Davis, 1980, 1983)

Component	Characteristic	Motive
Empathic Concern	Affective	Altruistic
Perspective Taking	Cognitive	Altruistic
Personal Distress	Affective	Egoistic

Empathic Concern

Components	Characteristic	Motive
Empathic Concern	Affective	Altruistic

- “I often have tender, concerned feelings for people less fortunate than me.”
- “I am often quite touched by things that I see happen.”
- “I would describe myself as a pretty soft-hearted person.”

Perspective Taking

Components	Characteristic	Motive
Perspective Taking	Cognitive	Altruistic

- “When I'm upset at someone, I usually try to "put myself in their shoes" for a while.”
- “I sometimes try to understand my friends better by imagining how things look from their perspective.”
- “I try to look at everybody’s side of a disagreement before I make a decision.”

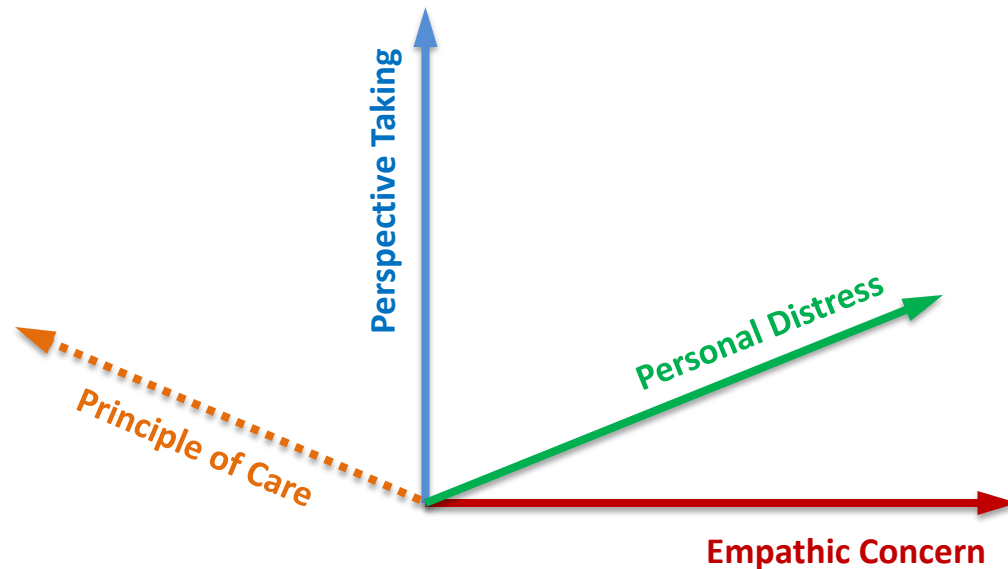
Personal Distress

Components	Characteristic	Motive
Personal Distress	Affective	Egoistic

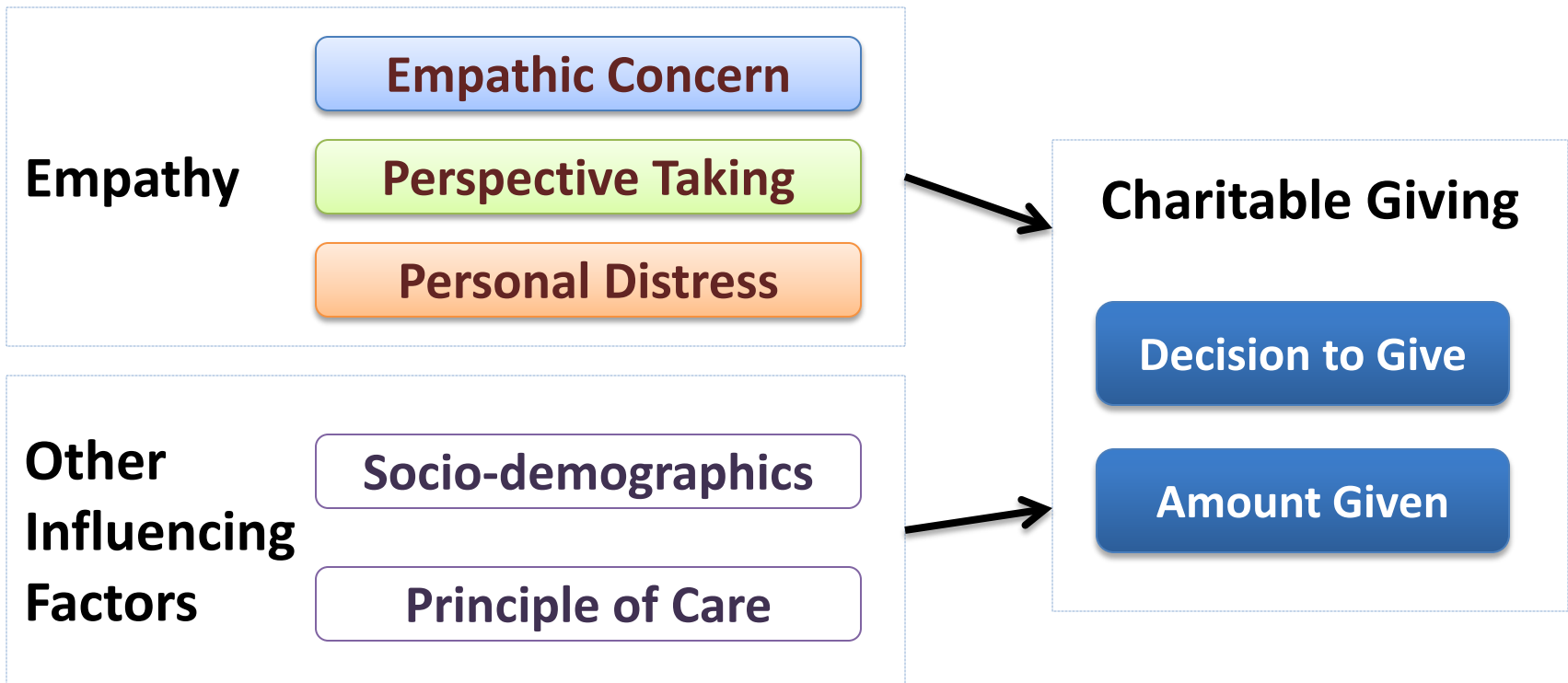
- “When I see someone who badly needs help in an emergency, I go to pieces.”
- “Being in a tense emotional situation scares me.”
- “I tend to lose control during emergencies.”

Research Question

What roles do different dimensions of empathy play in charitable giving?



Conceptual Framework



Principle of care:

E.g. "People should be willing to help others who are less fortunate."

Hypotheses

- H1: Higher *empathic concern* **increases** both the likelihood and the amount of charitable giving.
- H2: Higher *perspective taking* **increases** both the likelihood and the amount of charitable giving.
- H3: Higher *personal distress* **increases** the likelihood of charitable giving, but **does not influence** the amount donated to charities.

Data

- Data: 22nd wave of the 2008-2009 American National Election Studies (ANES) Panel Study
- Survey questions include:
 - Charitable giving
 - Empathy
 - Principle of care
 - Religious similarity and giving
- Sample: 2,266 respondents aged 18+

Methodology

- Analyses:
 - Factor analysis
 - Probit regression
 - Tobit regression
- Dependent variables:
 - Charitable giving: % of giving, \$ donated
- Independent variables:
 - Empathic concern
 - Perspective taking
 - Personal distress

Methodology

- Control variables:
 - Gender, Age
 - Ethnicity
 - Religious affiliation and attendance
 - Education, Marital status
 - Household income, Home ownership
 - Principle of care

Descriptive Statistics

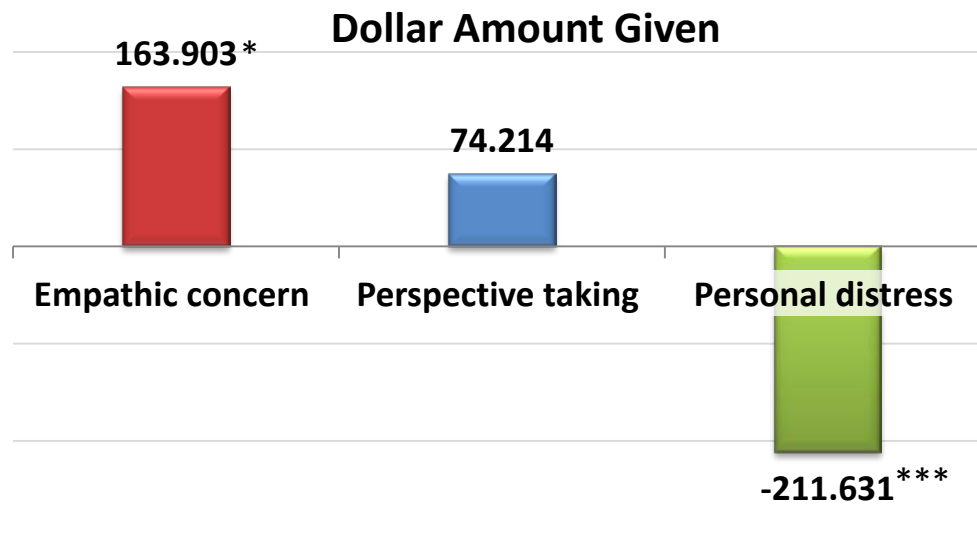
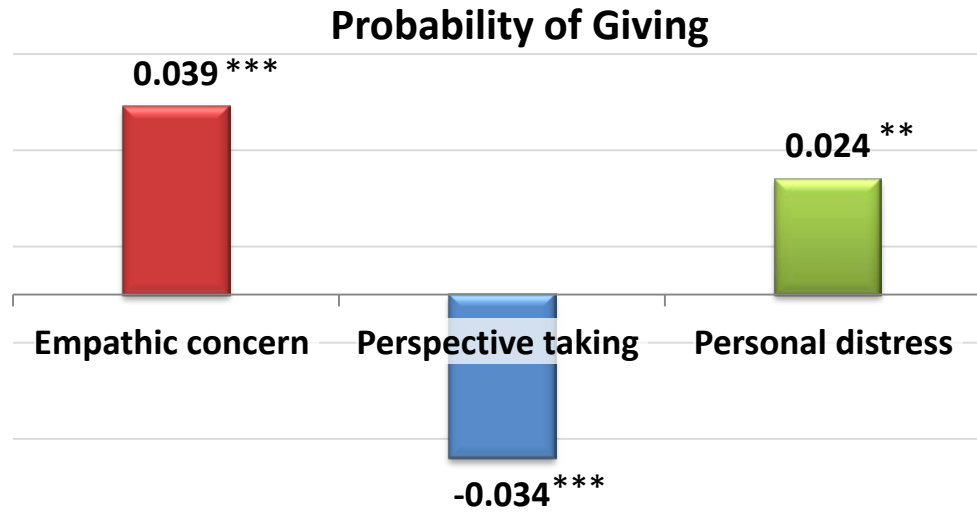
Respondent Profile (N=2,266)

Female	59%	Married	54%
Religious	83%	White	86%
College graduate or above	55%	HH income (\$50K - \$100K)	53%

Charitable Giving

Probability %	87%
Average \$ (if > \$0)	\$1,667
Median \$ (if > \$0)	\$700

Empathy and Total Giving



Notes:

Marginal effects are estimated with conditional marginal effect. Tobit regressions are examined with donors only. Outliers for total giving were excluded.

Probit N = 2,034; Tobit N = 1,849.

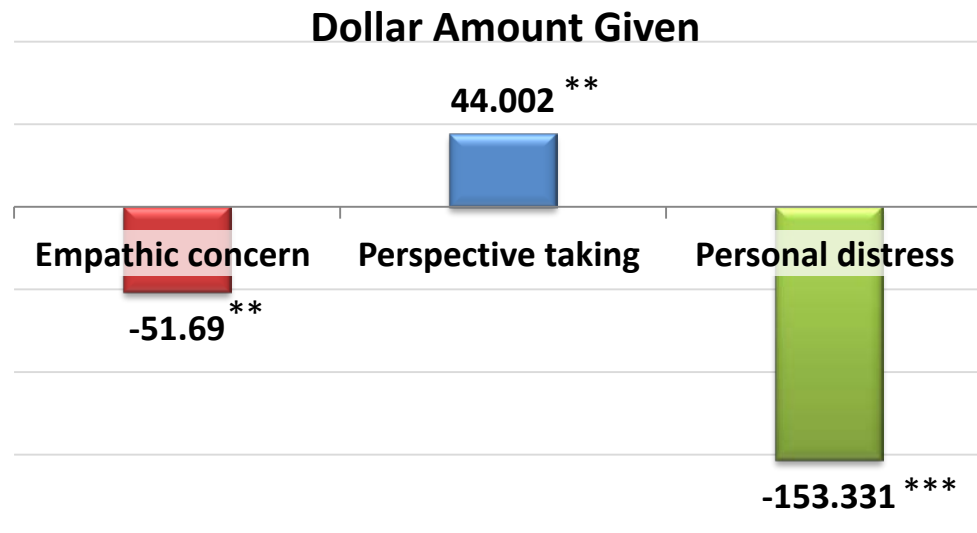
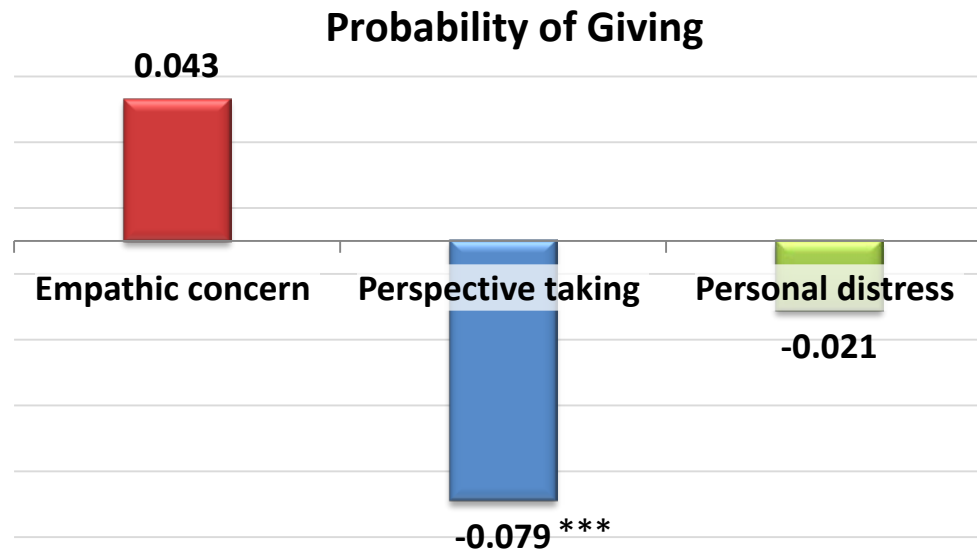
Significance levels:

*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10.

Research Question

Does the impact of empathy on giving vary across different types of nonprofits?

Empathy and Giving to Basic Needs



Notes:

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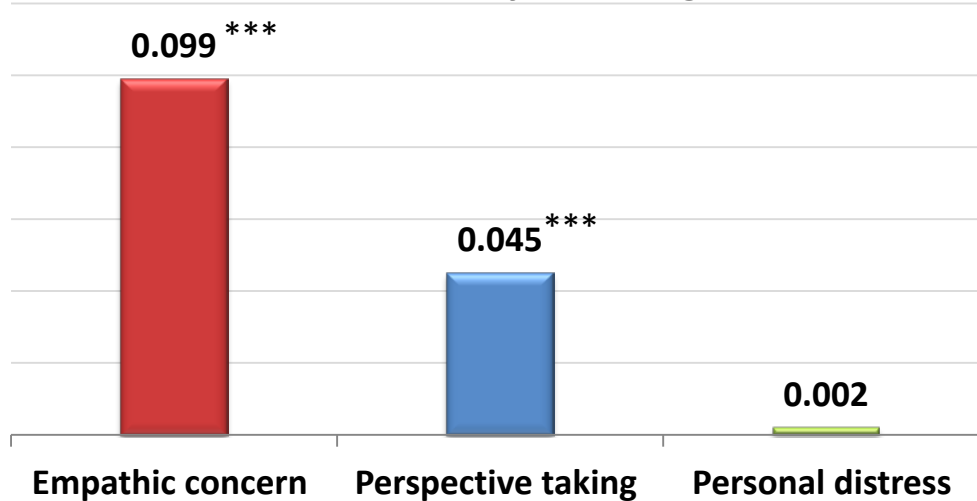
Probit N = 2,034; Tobit N = 1,849.

Significance levels:

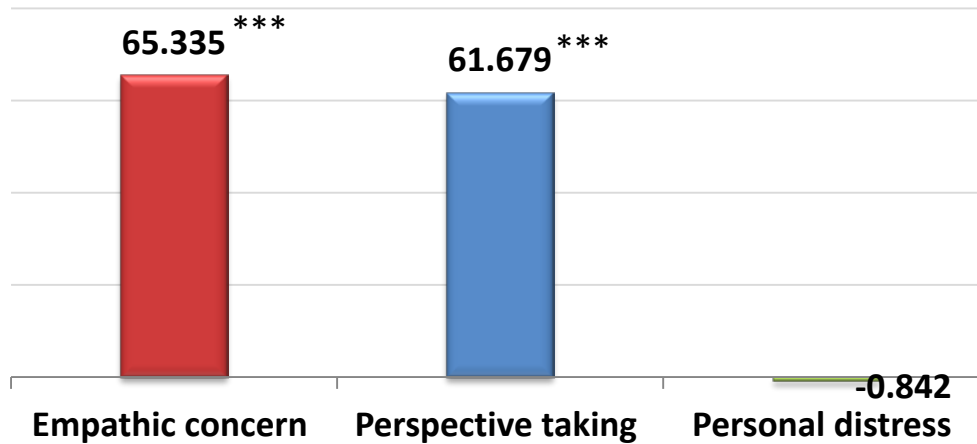
*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10.

Empathy and Giving to Education

Probability of Giving



Dollar Amount Given



Notes:

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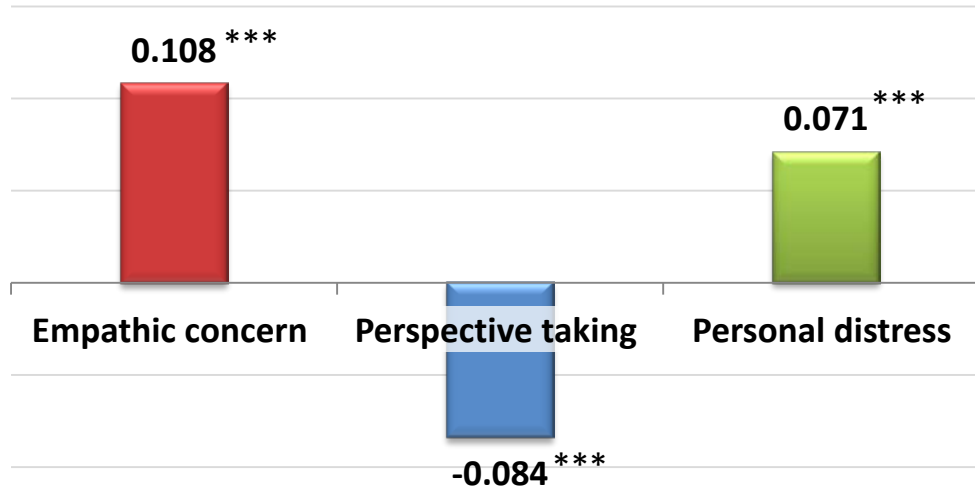
Probit N = 2,034; Tobit N = 1,849.

Significance levels:

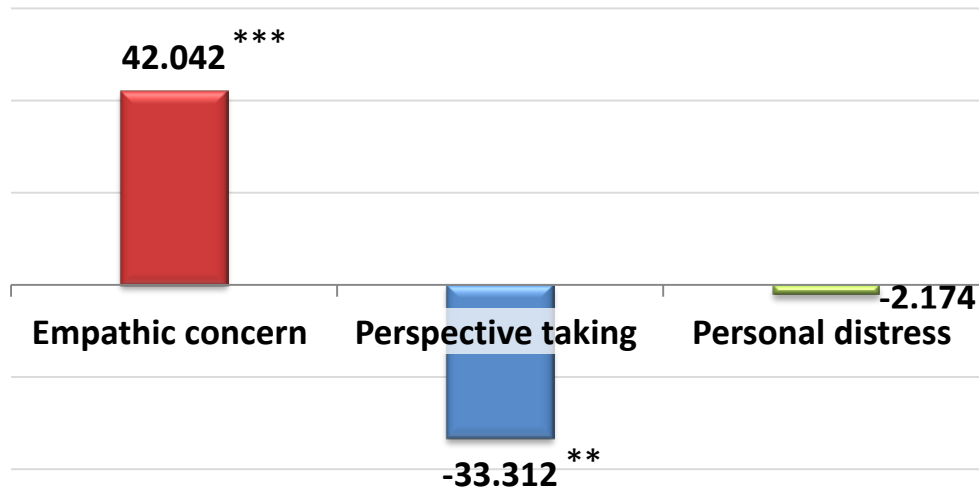
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Empathy and Giving to Health

Probability of Giving



Dollar Amount Given



Notes:

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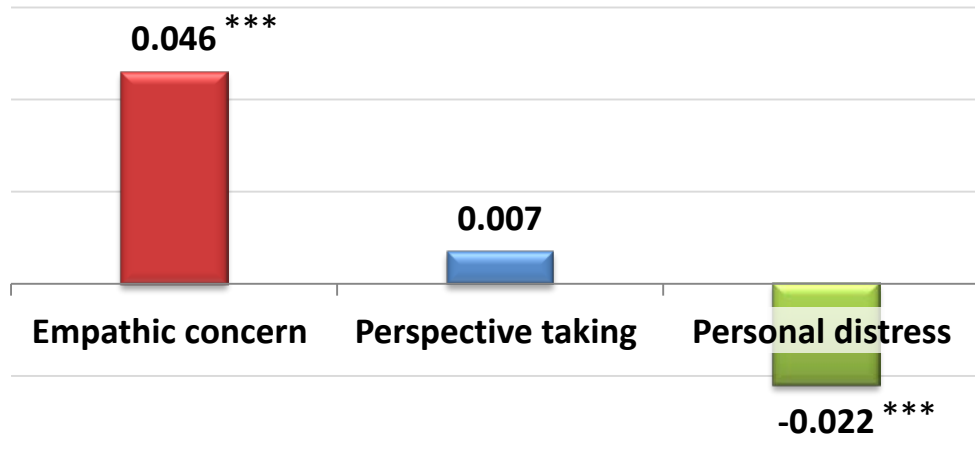
Probit N = 2,034; Tobit N = 1,849.

Significance levels:

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Empathy and Giving to Environment

Probability of Giving



Dollar Amount Given



Notes:

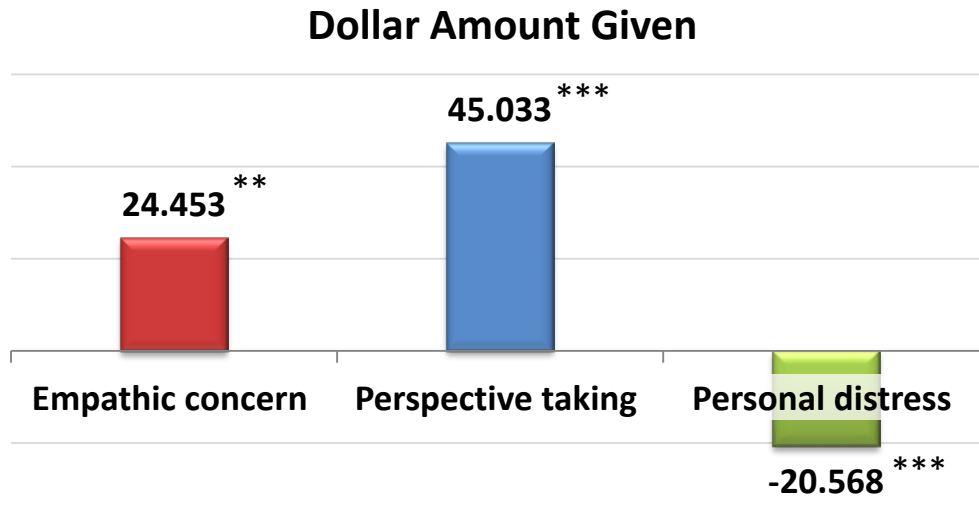
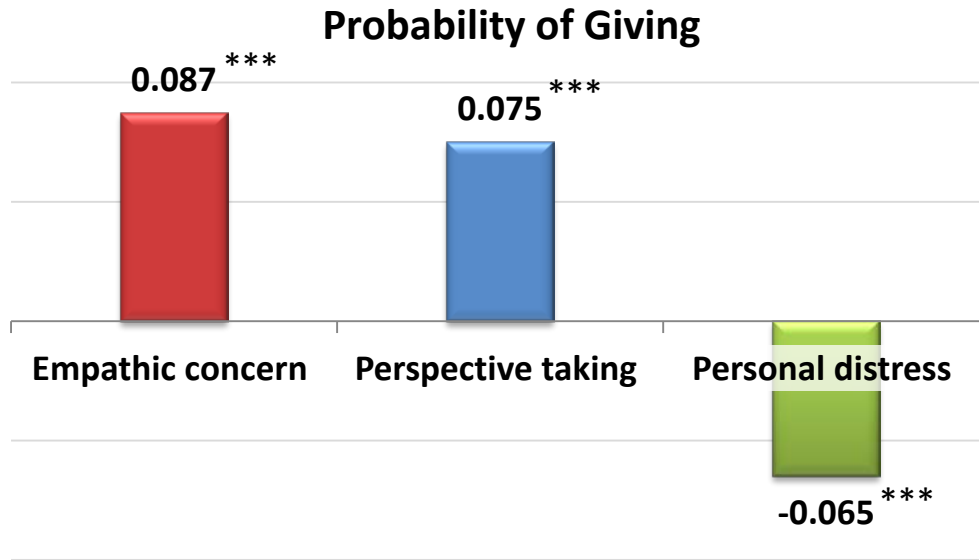
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Empathy and Giving to Youth/Family



Notes:

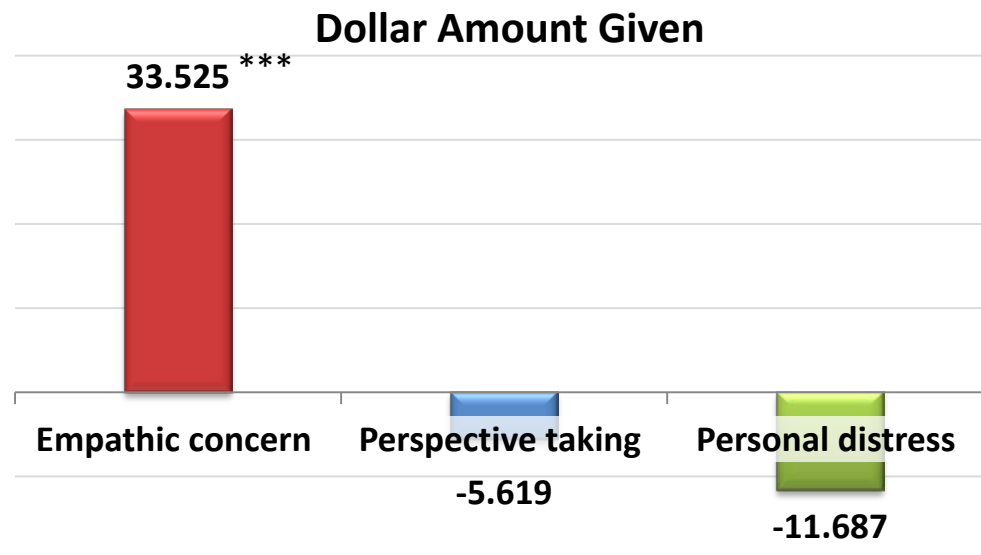
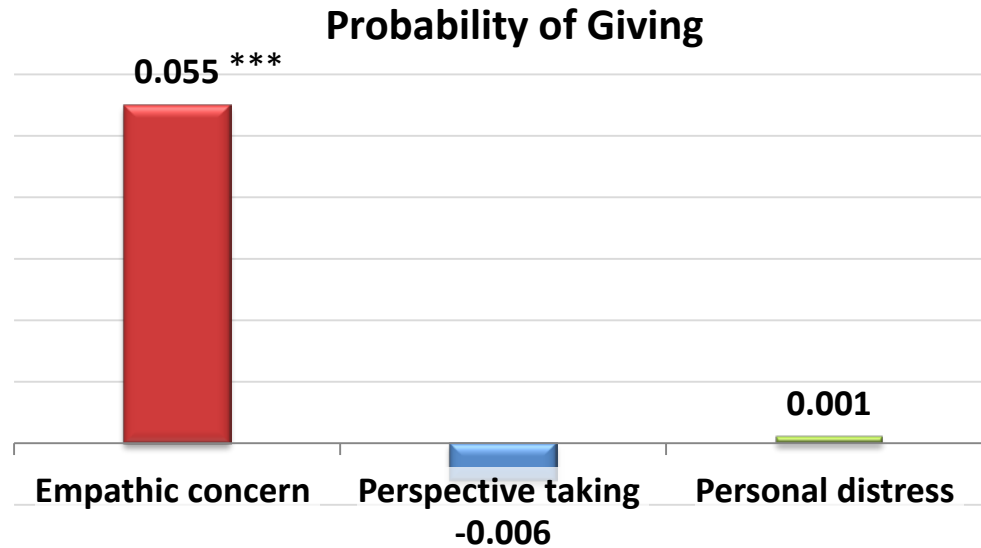
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Empathy and Giving to Arts



Notes:

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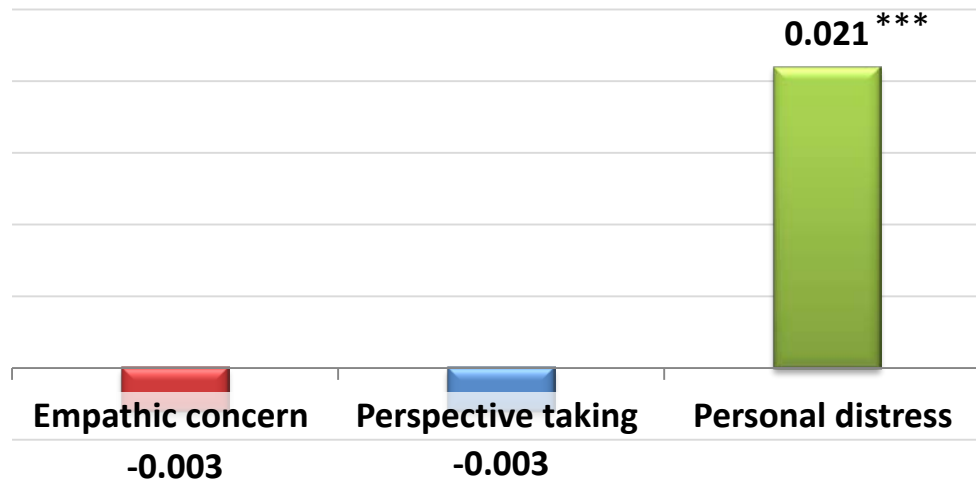
Probit N = 2,034; Tobit N = 1,849.

Significance levels:

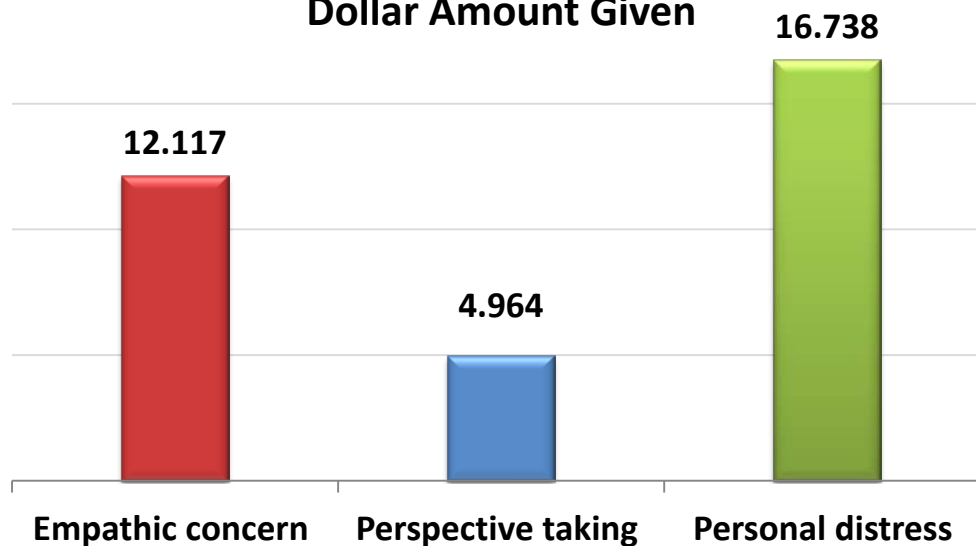
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Empathy and Giving to International

Probability of Giving



Dollar Amount Given



Notes:

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Significance levels:

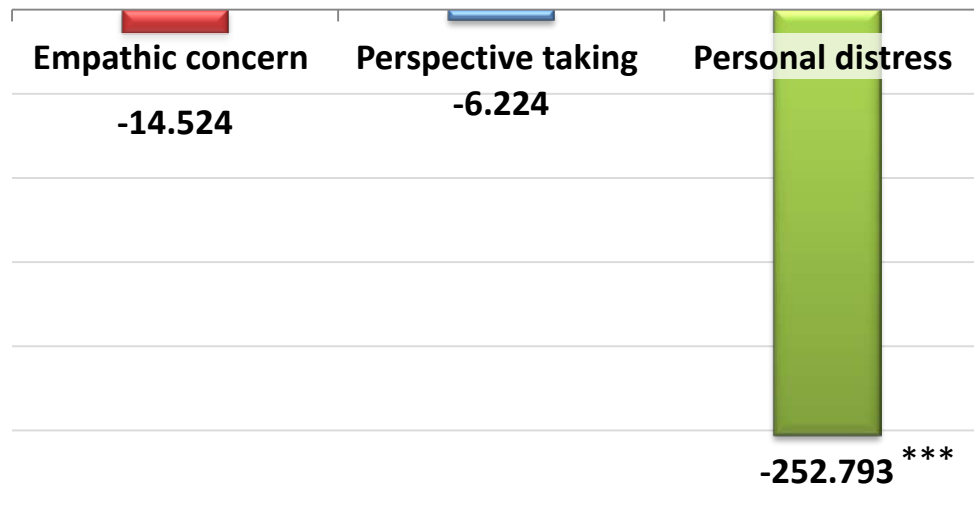
*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10.

Empathy and Giving to Religion

Probability of Giving



Dollar Amount Given



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Probit N = 2,034; Tobit N = 1,849.

Significance levels:

*** P<0.01, ** P<0.05, * P<0.10.

Summary of Key Findings

Not all empathy is equal

Discussion

- Implications for fundraising
- Limitations: self-report survey data

Thank you!

Questions and Comments?