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Priming Parental Identity: Evidence from Experimental Data[1]

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Abstract

Identity is a person's sense of self, rooted in affiliations with social groups. It carries behavioral prescriptions and shapes decision-making. Only salient identities weigh in the decision-making at a given moment partially due to people's inattention to all their identities. Priming one identity over others can shift perceived payoffs to decisions and affect decision-making. This paper aims to understand how priming parental identity affects parents' decision-making among low-income parents with young children. In two different experiments, we prompt parents via text message to redeem the unredeemed gift card they owned for participating in past research studies. Results from these two experiments show: (1) a prompt highlighting what parents could purchase for their children with the gift card significantly increased the redemption rate by 45% compared to a generic reminder to redeem the gift card; (2) a prompt highlighting what parents could purchase for their children significantly increased the redemption rate by 39% compared to a message encouraging parents to think about what they could buy for themselves. Neither study has heterogeneity in treatment impact, aligning with the fact that parents value parental identity in all backgrounds. We interpret these treatment effects as the result of priming the parental identity and altering parental decision-making. Our findings underscore the importance of highly valued and salient identities in shaping decision-making.

Keywords: Identity, Parental Identity, Priming, Behavioral Economics, Randomized Controlled Trial.

[1] This study was registered on the AEA RCT Registry (AEARCTR-0013428; AEARCTR-0011206) and received approval from the Social and Behavioral Sciences IRB from the University of Chicago (IRB19-1642; IRB21-2002).

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1. Introduction

The study of identity in economics focuses on how an individual's social self-concept —their affiliations with social groups (e.g., gender, race, religion, occupation)—shapes their preferences and decision-making (Breger, 1974). Pioneering models, particularly those developed by Akerlof and Kranton (2000), incorporate identity into economic modeling, suggesting that individuals derive utility not only from material payoffs but also from actions that align with their identities. When an identity is tied to a specific group, members often conform to the group's norms by adhering to prescribed behaviors that differentiate them from other groups. This conformity reinforces their identity as a member of that social group. Failing to follow these behavioral prescriptions can lead to anxiety, discomfort, or even punishments from ingroup members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Since individuals possess multiple identities, any single decision may align with only a subset of these identities. This creates room for environmental stimuli, or "primes," to temporarily elevate the salience of a particular identity or social category at the moment of decision-making. When a previously overlooked yet meaningful identity is made salient through external (and often cost-free) primes, decision-makers place greater weight on the utility associated with that identity, which can lead to behavioral changes. Research demonstrates that priming identities to salience aligns individual behaviors more closely with the norms of the activated social category (Croizet & Claire, 1998; Croizet et al., 2004; Gonzales, Blanton, & Williams, 2002; Steele & Aronson, 1995).

Parental identity is highly valued by parents across economic and social backgrounds. A strong parental identity is strongly associated with both the time invested in children's development and beliefs about what it means to be a "good parent" (Kalil et al., 2022). However, limited economic research has examined how priming parental identity influences parental behavior. Our research addresses this gap by investigating how priming parental identity affects parents' decisions regarding the effort—measured in time and attention—they devote to a real-world task. Specifically, we focus on redeeming an online cash gift card. Using evidence from two experiments designed to encourage parents to redeem these gift cards, we find that invoking parental identity significantly increases the likelihood of task completion compared to either a generic reminder or a prompt emphasizing self-identity, which directs parents to focus on their own utility from using the gift card.

Our experiments draw on two large samples of Chicago parents who had previously received digital gift cards as compensation for participating in studies conducted by the University of Chicago Behavioral Insights and Parenting Lab (N = 769 for Experiment 1 and N = 283 for Experiment 2). Parents were randomized into groups, and each group received a specific weekly text message for four weeks to encourage gift card redemption. In both experiments, the treatment messages invoked parental identity by encouraging parents to redeem the gift card to purchase something for their children. The control group messages differed between the two experiments. In Experiment 1, the control group received a generic reminder to redeem their gift card. In Experiment 2, the control group messages mirrored the structure of the treatment messages but were designed to prime self-identity, encouraging parents to use the gift card for themselves.

Both experiments demonstrate a strong treatment effect of priming parental identity on gift card redemption at the end of the intervention. Experiment 1 shows that, compared to the generic reminder, messages invoking parental identity increased the likelihood of parents redeeming their gift card by 45%. Experiment 2 finds that parents who received parental identity messages were 39% more likely to redeem their gift card compared to those who received self-identity messages. Since we also observed the retail stores where parents redeemed the gift cards, we found descriptively that parents in the treatment group who received parental identity messages redeemed their gift cards at different stores compared to parents in the control group. This suggests that the impact of receiving a parental identity message extended beyond whether parents redeemed the gift card; it also influenced their decision on where to redeem it. However, since we lack data on the specific items purchased in these stores, we cannot directly show that parents who received parental identity messages were more likely to buy products for their children.

This paper contributes to the growing literature on how identity shapes decision-making. Empirical studies in economics illustrate that identity influences behavior through social norms and peer effects. For example, Bertrand et al. (2005) examine how identity-related stereotypes affect hiring decisions, showing that unconscious biases tied to identity markers influence both hiring outcomes and career progression. Fryer and Torelli (2010), building on longstanding ideas in social psychology about "stereotype threat" (Steele & Aronson, 1995), study racial identity and educational choices among Black students in the U.S. They find that identity pressures can lead students to make choices—such as avoiding high academic achievement—that align with peer norms but may conflict with long-term material benefits. Other studies focus on the role of gender identity in decision-making. Niederle and Vesterlund (2007) show that women are less likely than men to enter competitive environments, partly due to identity and social expectations surrounding gender roles. Similarly, Bursztyn et al. (2017) find that married women may avoid career-enhancing actions to maintain traditional gender roles within households. Relevant to the present study, Benjamin et al. (2010) demonstrate experimentally that priming racial, ethnic, or gender identity affects risk preferences, patience, and altruism, highlighting how identity influences decision-making in economically significant ways.

Despite this robust body of research, none of these studies in economics explore how parental identity shapes parents' decisions to invest in their children. This is a notable oversight, as parental identity is arguably the strongest of the multiple identities held by parents (Kalil et al., 2022). Moreover, the decisions that parents make on behalf of their children have profound consequences for children's development (Guryan, Hurst, & Kearney, 2008; Heckman & Masterov, 2004; Kalil, Ryan, & Corey, 2012). Our paper fills this gap by experimentally priming parental identity and examining if parents are willing to exert effort to complete a real-world task related to their children. To the best of our knowledge, this is the first experimental evidence illustrating the impact of parental identity on parents' decision-making.

This paper also integrates the concept of identity into the literature on limited attention and saliency from the lens of behavioral economics (e.g., Bordalo et al., 2012; Chetty et al., 2009; Conlisk, 1996; Gabaix, 2014; Maćkowiak et al., 2023). When individuals hold multiple identities, they may place different weights on them depending on the context. Decisions are made based on these weighted identities, with the most salient identity playing a larger role in

utility maximization. Less salient identities—though potentially important—may be overlooked or underweighted. Our experiment suggests that certain identities can be primed into salience, influencing decision-making and leading individuals to allocate greater weight to them. This empirical finding highlights the value of formalizing models that incorporate behavioral economics insights to account for the role of identities in decision-making processes.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. Sections 2 and 3 details the samples, experimental designs, and results for Experiment 1 and 2 respectively. Section 4 discusses our findings, highlights some caveats, and concludes.

2. Experiment 1

2.1. Sample Description and Experiment Design

The sample for Experiment 1 was drawn from the Early Investment Project (EIP), a survey study conducted during the 2021 school year. The EIP involved 1900 parents of kindergarten students from the Chicago Public Schools system, each of whom received a $20 gift card as compensation for completing a survey. The current experiment focuses on participants, who as of July 2023, had not yet redeemed their gift cards (N=769). We compared the demographic characteristics of the EIP sample by redemption status (See Appendix Table B1) and found that parents who did not redeem their gift cards were, on average, older and more likely to identify as Black compared to those who did. However, we observed no significant differences in parental education or family annual income.

Parents were randomly assigned to one of three groups: the parental identity group (N=257), the hourly wage group (N=256)[2], and the control group (N=256). Each group received weekly reminder text messages over four weeks (July 24th to August 14th, 2023) to remind them of redeeming the gift card. Parents in the parental identity group received a message encouraging them to buy something their children need with the gift card. The hourly wage group received messages framing the gift card redemption as a quick three-minute task, equivalent to a high hourly wage. The control message is a generic reminder about the gift card with no specific framing (see section A1 from Appendix A for message contents). Within a group, weekly text messages remained the same during the intervention. All messages were sent between 5 pm and 7 pm and, immediately after receiving it, participants also received an email with their gift-card redemption link. Participants who redeemed the gift-card before the end of the intervention period stopped receiving reminder messages.

2.2. Descriptive Analysis

Over the four-week intervention, only seven parents explicitly requested to stop receiving messages, resulting in an analytical sample of 762 parents for this study. Table 1 presents a balance test comparing baseline characteristics across the treatment groups. The last column reports the p-values for a test of the null hypothesis that the group means are equal. Only one significant difference ($p < 0.1$) was found, relating to the percentage of non-Hispanic White

[2] The hourly wage group is not the primary focus of this study. We treat this group as an additional control group to contrast with the treatment effect of the parental identity messages.

parents. Additionally, attrition rates were balanced across treatment groups (see Appendix Table B2).

Table 1: Balance table for Experiment 1 final sample

	(1) Control N=255	(2) Hourly wage N=253	(3) Parental identity N=254	(4) F-test p-val
Child girl	0.45	0.52	0.50	0.253
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	
Parent age	35.73	36.88	36.28	0.164
	(7.29)	(6.85)	(6.21)	
Parent female	0.94	0.92	0.95	0.515
	(0.24)	(0.26)	(0.22)	
HS degree	0.29	0.28	0.27	0.797
	(0.46)	(0.45)	(0.44)	
Associate degree or some college	0.26	0.29	0.28	0.698
	(0.44)	(0.46)	(0.45)	
BA degree or higher	0.28	0.30	0.30	0.900
	(0.45)	(0.46)	(0.46)	
Parent Hispanic	0.44	0.44	0.48	0.556
	(0.50)	(0.50)	(0.50)	
Parent White (non-Hispanic)	0.11	0.19	0.14	0.064
	(0.32)	(0.39)	(0.35)	
Parent Black (non-Hispanic)	0.35	0.31	0.32	0.596
	(0.48)	(0.47)	(0.47)	
Household income (Thousand $)	36.34	41.63	40.22	0.199
	(34.52)	(34.35)	(33.63)	
Household size	4.51	4.66	4.58	0.644
	(1.62)	(1.88)	(1.78)	

Notes: The table shows the mean of each variable for each group in the Experiment 1 final sample (N=762) and the standard deviation in parenthesis. Column (4) shows the p-value on a test with the null hypothesis of equal means across groups.

2.3. Treatment Effect of Parental Identity Against Generic Reminder

We estimate the following regression for each week since the start of the intervention:

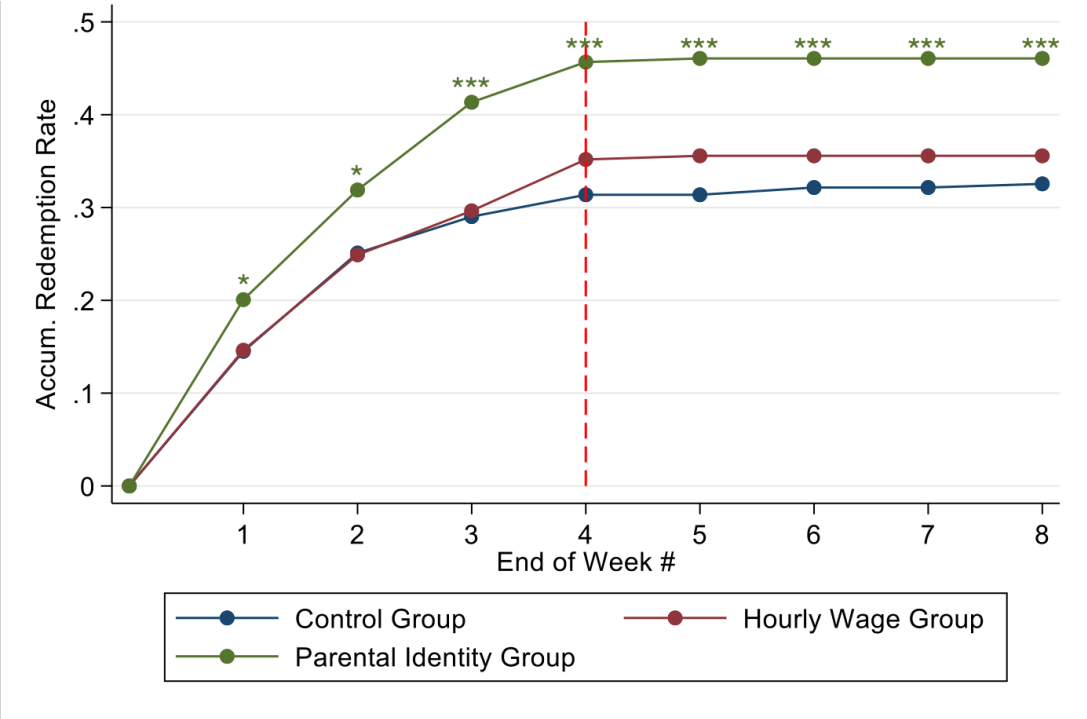
$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_i + \beta_2 H_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Where y_i is an indicator of whether parent i redeemed their gift card on a given week, P_i and H_i are indicators of parent i being assigned to the parental identity and hourly wage groups respectively, and ε_i is the error term.

Figure 1 shows the accumulated redemption rates by week for each treatment group. The redemption rates for all groups increased steadily throughout the intervention period, stabilizing by week 4, which marked the end of the intervention. The control group and the hourly wage group showed nearly identical redemption rate trajectories, whereas the parental identity group demonstrated a significantly faster rate of increase. Differences in redemption rates between the

parental identity group and both the control group and the hourly wage group were significant across all weeks (regression estimations are presented in Appendix Table B3). By the end of the intervention, the redemption rate of the parental identity group was 14 percentage points higher than that of the control group, representing s 45% increase due to the treatment. We also tested heterogenous treatment impacts for a set of pre-specified baseline characteristics, including demographic information (parent's education and household income), cognitive characteristics (stress, present bias and financial scarcity mindset), and parental identity. The results indicate no significant differential impacts based on these characteristics (see Appendix Tables B4 through B11).[3]

Figure 1: Redemption rate of gift cards by week and treatment group for Experiment 1



Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The asterisks represent the significance level of the redemption rate difference compared to the control group. The figure shows the cumulative redemption rate (y-axis) by the end of each week (x-axis) during and after the end of the intervention. Week 4 represents the end of the intervention. N = 762.

Additionally, we analyzed whether the choice of stores where parents redeemed their gift cards varied by treatment group. Stores were classified into 11 retail categories based on the North American Industry Classification System.[4] Appendix Figure B1 shows a figure plotting the percentage of parents in each treatment group that redeemed their gift cards in each retail category. It shows that parents in the parental identity group are more likely to redeem their gift cards in general merchandise stores compared to parents from the other groups. The figure also shows other store categories where, even though the difference is not significant, parents from

[3] The outcome of interest and the specifications for both the intention-to-treat and heterogeneous treatment effects follow the pre-analysis plan on the AEA registry website.

[4] We classified each of the stores in which parents redeemed their gift card into one of the categories from the North American Industry Classification System. Categories include furniture, vehicles, building supplies, electronics, food and beverage, personal care, clothing, sporting goods, general merchandise, miscellaneous, and non-store retail.

the treatment group are less likely to redeem their gift cards, such as food and personal care. These findings suggest that parents' consumption choices varied by treatment group, providing evidence that priming parental identity may influence decisions on where to spend the money.

3. Experiment 2

3.1. Sample Description and Experiment Design

The sample for this experiment was drawn from two prior research studies conducted as part of the About TIME math learning project. The first study involved 679 parents from 35 Chicago preschools who participated in a field experiment between October 2022 and June 2023. Each parent received a $25 gift card for completing a baseline survey and assessment, and a $75 gift card for completing an endline survey and assessment. By April 2024, 125 participants had not redeemed at least one of their gift cards. The second study included 546 parents with children aged 3–5 living in the Chicago area, who participated in a lab experiment between April and August 2022. Each parent received a $40 gift card for their participation, and by April 2024, 158 parents had not redeemed their gift cards. The final sample for Experiment 2 consists of 283 parents from both the field and lab experiments who had not redeemed their gift cards.

We compared the demographic characteristics of the About TIME samples by their gift card redemption status (see Appendix Table B12). The results indicate that parents who did not redeem at least one gift card were, on average, older, more likely to have a daughter, less likely to identify as Black, had higher household income, and were part of larger households. The only consistent pattern across Experiments 1 and 2 is that parents who did not redeem the gift card tended to be older.

One limitation of the design in Experiment 1 is that the framing of the parental identity message differs from that of the control message. Consequently, we cannot confidently attribute the significant effect on the redemption rate solely to the salience of parental identity primed by our treatment messages. Experiment 2 addresses this limitation by randomizing participants into two groups: parental identity (N=149) and self-identity (N=134). The text messages in both arms were nearly identical, differing by only one word. The parental identity message encouraged parents to "buy something [FOCAL CHILD] needs," while the self-identity message encouraged them "to buy something you need" (see section A2 from Appendix A for message contents). Since the only difference between the messages was whether parents were primed to think about their children, this design allows us to isolate and identify parental identity as the primary mechanism driving any treatment effects.

The rest of the intervention design in Experiment 2 closely mirrored that of Experiment 1. Every Monday between April 22nd and May 13th, 2024, participants received a text message, which was immediately followed by an email containing the gift card information.

3.2. Descriptive Analysis

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of our analytical sample of 275 parents, after 8 participants dropped out during the four-week intervention (out of the original 283). The table compares baseline characteristics across treatment groups, with the last column reporting p-

values for tests of the null hypothesis of equal means across groups. Only one significant difference ($p < 0.1$) was observed for the variable of child gender. Although attrition was low, it was found to differ significantly across groups (see Appendix Table B2), since significantly more people dropped out of the parental identity group. To address this differential attrition, the main results for this experiment were estimated both with and without inverse probability weighting.

Table 2: Balance table for Experiment 2 final sample

	(1) Self-identity N=133	(2) Parental identity N=142	(3) t-test p-val
Child girl	0.51	0.62	0.052
	(0.50)	(0.49)	
Parent age	37.84	37.20	0.496
	(8.18)	(7.13)	
Parent female	0.81	0.87	0.191
	(0.40)	(0.34)	
HS degree	0.14	0.20	0.130
	(0.34)	(0.40)	
Associate degree or some college	0.22	0.24	0.675
	(0.41)	(0.43)	
BA degree or higher	0.52	0.46	0.372
	(0.50)	(0.50)	
Parent Hispanic	0.41	0.41	0.933
	(0.49)	(0.49)	
Parent White (non-Hispanic)	0.27	0.29	0.734
	(0.44)	(0.45)	
Parent Black (non-Hispanic)	0.21	0.22	0.760
	(0.41)	(0.42)	
Household income (Thousand $)	56.23	58.99	0.543
	(36.79)	(36.58)	
Household size	4.41	4.23	0.311
	(1.42)	(1.48)	

Note: The table shows the mean of each variable for each group in the Experiment 2 final sample (N=275) and the standard deviation in parenthesis. Column (3) shows the p-value on a test with the null hypothesis of equal means across groups.

3.3. Treatment Effect of Parental Identity Against Self Identity

We estimate the following regression for each week since the start of the intervention:

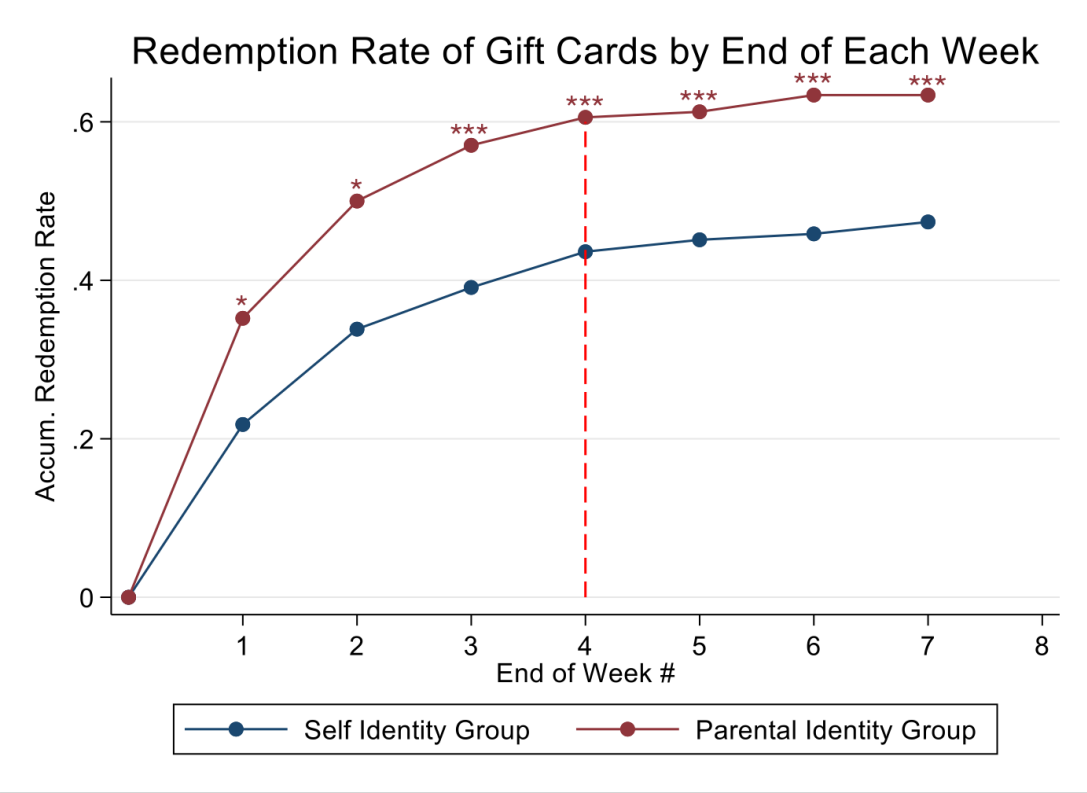
$$y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 P_i + \varepsilon_i \quad (2)$$

Where y_i is an indicator of whether parent i redeemed their gift card on a given week, P_i is an indicator of parent i being assigned to the parental identity group, and ε_i is the error term.

Figure 2 displays the accumulated redemption rates by week for each treatment group. Similar to the results of Experiment 1, the redemption rate in the parental identity group was significantly

higher across all weeks compared to the self-identity group (regression results can be found in Appendix Table B13). By the end of the intervention, the redemption rate of the parental identity group was 17 percentage points higher than that of the self-identity group, representing s 39% increase due to the treatment. To account for differential attrition in the sample, regressions were conducted using inverse probability weighting to determine the significance of the effects. As shown in Appendix Table B14, the significance levels remained unchanged. Heterogeneous treatment effects were also tested across the same subgroups analyzed in Experiment 1, except for baseline present bias and parental identity which weren't collected in this project's survey. The results indicate no differential impacts of the treatment (see Appendix Tables B4 through B11).[5]

Figure 2: Redemption rate of gift cards by week and treatment group for the About TIME sample



Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The asterisks represent the significance level of the redemption rate difference compared to the control group. The figure shows the accumulative redemption rate (y-axis) by the end of each week (x-axis) during and after the end of the intervention. Week 4 represents the end of the intervention. N = 275.

We applied the same method as in Experiment 1 to categorize stores in order to evaluate whether the treatment influenced the type of store where parents redeemed their gift cards. Appendix Figure B2 reveals differences in the types of stores where parents used their gift cards. Parents from the parental identity group are more likely to redeem their gift cards in personal care and

[5] The outcome of interest and the specifications for both the intention-to-treat and heterogeneous treatment effects follow the pre-analysis plan available on the AEA registry website.

miscellaneous stores. This suggests that priming parental identity also affect parents' consumption decisions compared to priming their self-identity.

4. Conclusion

This paper examines whether priming parental identity influences parents' behavior. We use two samples of parents who had been given gift cards as compensation for previous research but had not redeemed them by the time of this experiment. Over four weeks, we randomly sent these parents text message reminders to encourage gift card redemption, varying the content of the messages. In the first experiment, we compared a generic reminder message to a reminder message designed to prime parental identity. The results indicate that the parental identity-priming message increased the likelihood of gift card redemption by 45%. In the second experiment, we aimed to refine the estimate of the priming effect by contrasting two nearly identical messages that differed by only one word. The treatment message invoked parental identity, while the control message emphasized self-interest in redeeming the gift card. Despite the subtle difference, the parental identity message still led to a 39% increase in redemption rates compared to the control message.

Our experiments consistently demonstrate the malleability of parental identity salience and its influence on decision-making. Although alternative mechanisms could potentially explain these findings, we find them unlikely. The most commonly suggested explanation is that personalizing the treatment message with the child's name made it appear more trustworthy, thereby increasing parents' willingness to open the link and redeem the gift card. While we cannot entirely rule out this possibility, we note that all parents in our sample had previously interacted with our research team in person, were introduced to our research lab, or were recruited through the Chicago Public School system. This pre-existing relationship likely established a high baseline level of trust, making the marginal effect of mentioning the child's name minimal. Furthermore, it is unlikely that personalization of the child's name alone drove the observed effects, as parents in all groups received messages personalized with their own names.

Our findings underscore the power of identity-based interventions in shaping behavior, particularly among parents making decisions that affect their children. By demonstrating that parental identity can be effectively primed through low-cost messaging, this research contributes to a growing body of literature on identity and behavioral economics. These results hold promise for designing scalable interventions to encourage behaviors that promote child well-being, such as parental engagement, healthcare utilization, or savings for education. Future research could explore how identity priming interacts with other contextual factors, such as socioeconomic status or cultural norms, to better understand its potential applications across diverse settings. Additionally, studying the long-term effects of identity-based interventions would offer insights into whether the observed behavioral changes persist over time. By integrating these insights into policy design, we can better support parents in making decisions that benefit both themselves and their children.

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Appendix A. Intervention messages

A.1. Experiment 1 messages

Parental identity:

Hi [PARENT NAME]! Your $20 gift card is still waiting to be redeemed. Redeem your $20 to buy something [FOCAL CHILD] needs!

This gift card is for completing the CPS-UChicago Early Investments Project Survey. We just resent your gift card to [EMAIL] from noreply@tangocard.com with the subject line "Reward for participating in the EIP survey".

Hourly wage:

Hi [PARENT NAME]! Your $20 gift card is still waiting to be redeemed. It will only take you 3 minutes to redeem your $20. That's like making $400 an hour!

This gift card is for completing the CPS-UChicago Early Investments Project Survey. We just resent your gift card to [EMAIL] from noreply@tangocard.com with the subject line "Reward for participating in the EIP survey".

Control:

Hi [PARENT NAME]! Your $20 gift card is still waiting to be redeemed.

This gift card is for completing the CPS-UChicago Early Investments Project Survey. We just resent your gift card to [EMAIL] from noreply@tangocard.com with the subject line "Reward for participating in the EIP survey".

A.2. Experiment 2 messages

Parental identity:

Hi [PARENT NAME]! Your $[BALANCE] gift card is still waiting to be redeemed. Redeem your $[BALANCE] to buy something [FOCAL CHILD] needs!

This gift card is for participating in the UChicago About TIME Project. We will resent your gift card in a few minutes to [EMAIL] from noreply@tangocard.com with the subject line "Reward for Participating in the About TIME Project".

Self-identity:

Hi [PARENT NAME]! Your $[BALANCE] gift card is still waiting to be redeemed. Redeem your $[BALANCE] to buy something you need!

This gift card is for participating in the UChicago About TIME Project. We will resent your gift card in a few minutes to [EMAIL] from noreply@tangocard.com with the subject line "Reward for participating in the About TIME Project".

Appendix B. Supplemental tables and figures

Table B1: Descriptive statistics of the Experiment 1 sample

	(1) Final RCT sample (N=769)	(2) Parents who redeemed gift card (N=1131)	(3) Difference / p-value
Child girl	0.49	0.47	0.02
	(0.50)	(0.50)	0.472
Parent age	36.32	35.65	0.67**
	(6.82)	(6.46)	0.031
Parent female	0.94	0.93	0.01
	(0.24)	(0.25)	0.594
HS degree	0.28	0.25	0.03
	(0.45)	(0.44)	0.227
Associate degree or some college	0.27	0.28	-0.01
	(0.45)	(0.45)	0.944
BA degree or higher	0.30	0.32	-0.02
	(0.46)	(0.47)	0.218
Parent Hispanic	0.46	0.48	-0.02
	(0.50)	(0.50)	0.279
Parent White (non-Hispanic)	0.15	0.18	-0.03
	(0.36)	(0.39)	0.103
Parent Black (non-Hispanic)	0.33	0.26	0.07***
	(0.47)	(0.44)	0.002
Household income (Thousand $)	39.58	41.84	-2.26
	(34.24)	(34.98)	0.167
Household size	4.57	4.58	-0.01
	(1.76)	(1.68)	0.876

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Columns (1) and (2) show, for each variable, the mean and standard deviation in parenthesis. Column (3) displays the difference between groups and its significance level.

Table B2: Attrition across treatment groups for Experiments 1 and 2

	Experiment 1					Experiment 2		
	(1) Control	(2) Hourly wage	(3) Difference	(4) Parental identity	(5) Difference	(6) Self-identity	(7) Parental identity	(8) Difference
Percent attrition	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.04**
			(0.01)		(0.01)			(0.02)
N	256	256		257		134	149	

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The difference columns compare the attrition rates with the control group for the Experiment 1 sample and with the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 sample.

Table B3: Treatment effects on the redemption rate of gift cards for Experiment 1

	Outcomes: redemption rates by the end of each week							
	(1) Week 1	(2) Week 2	(3) Week 3	(4) Week 4	(5) Week 5	(6) Week 6	(7) Week 7	(8) Week 8
Hourly wage	0.00	-0.00	0.01	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Parental identity	0.06*	0.07*	0.12***	0.14***	0.15***	0.14***	0.14***	0.14***
	(0.03)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Constant	0.15***	0.25***	0.29***	0.31***	0.31***	0.32***	0.32***	0.33***
	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
Control mean	0.15	0.25	0.29	0.31	0.31	0.32	0.32	0.33
Control SD	0.35	0.43	0.45	0.46	0.46	0.47	0.47	0.47
N	762	762	762	762	762	762	762	762

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group. Standard error is robust.

Table B4: Heterogeneous treatment effects by parental education

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4	
	(1) Experiment 1	(2) Experiment 2
Hourly wage	0.05	
	(0.05)	
Parental identity	0.14***	0.11
	(0.05)	(0.08)
Parent BA	0.16**	0.12
	(0.07)	(0.09)
Hourly wage * Parent BA	-0.06	
	(0.09)	
Parental identity * Parent BA	0.00	0.14
	(0.10)	(0.12)
Constant	0.27***	0.37***
	(0.03)	(0.06)
Control mean	0.31	0.44
Control SD	0.46	0.50
N	762	275

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Table B5: Heterogeneous treatment effects by household income (continuous variable)

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4	
	(1)	(2)
	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
Hourly wage	0.03	
	(0.06)	
Parental identity	0.13**	0.06
	(0.06)	(0.11)
HH income	0.00**	0.00**
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Hourly wage * HH income	-0.00	
	(0.00)	
Parental identity * HH income	0.00	0.00
	(0.00)	(0.00)
Constant	0.23***	0.31***
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Control mean	0.31	0.45
Control SD	0.46	0.50
N	758	263

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Table B6: Heterogeneous treatment effects by household income (income above median)

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4	
	(1)	(2)
	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
Hourly wage	0.05	
	(0.06)	
Parental identity	0.16***	0.06
	(0.06)	(0.09)
High income	0.15**	0.14
	(0.06)	(0.09)
Hourly wage * High income	-0.03	
	(0.08)	
Parental identity * High income	-0.05	0.16
	(0.09)	(0.12)

Constant	0.24***	0.39***
	(0.04)	(0.06)
Control mean	0.31	0.45
Control SD	0.46	0.50
N	758	263

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Table B7: Heterogeneous treatment effects by parental stress (continuous variable)

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4	
	(1)	(2)
	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
Hourly wage	0.11	
	(0.08)	
Parental identity	0.10	-0.02
	(0.08)	(0.22)
Stress	0.02*	-0.04
	(0.01)	(0.03)
Hourly wage * Stress	-0.01	
	(0.01)	
Parental identity * Stress	0.01	0.05
	(0.02)	(0.04)
Constant	0.24***	0.67***
	(0.05)	(0.15)
Control mean	0.31	0.49
Control SD	0.47	0.51
N	754	105

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Table B8: Heterogeneous treatment effects by parental stress (stress over median)

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4	
	(1)	(2)
	Experiment 1	Experiment 2
Hourly wage	0.09	
	(0.06)	
Parental identity	0.14**	0.13

	(0.05)	(0.12)
High stress	0.07	-0.25
	(0.06)	(0.16)
Hourly wage * High stress	-0.12	
	(0.09)	
Parental identity * High stress	-0.00	0.19
	(0.09)	(0.20)
Constant	0.29***	0.56***
	(0.04)	(0.08)
Control mean	0.31	0.49
Control SD	0.47	0.51
N	754	105

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Table B9: Heterogeneous treatment effects by present bias

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4
	(1)
	Experiment 1
Hourly wage	0.06
	(0.05)
Parental identity	0.14***
	(0.05)
Present bias	-0.01
	(0.07)
Hourly wage * Present bias	-0.09
	(0.11)
Parental identity * Present bias	0.01
	(0.11)
Constant	0.31***
	(0.03)
Control mean	0.31
Control SD	0.46
N	754

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Table B10: Heterogeneous treatment effects by financial scarcity mindset

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4	
	(1) Experiment 1	(2) Experiment 2
Hourly wage	0.07	
	(0.05)	
Parental identity	0.14***	0.15
	(0.05)	(0.10)
Scarcity	0.01	0.07
	(0.07)	(0.19)
Hourly wage * Scarcity	-0.17	
	(0.11)	
Parental identity * Scarcity	0.03	-0.27
	(0.11)	(0.26)
Constant	0.31***	0.49***
	(0.03)	(0.08)
Control mean	0.31	0.50
Control SD	0.46	0.50
N	750	117

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

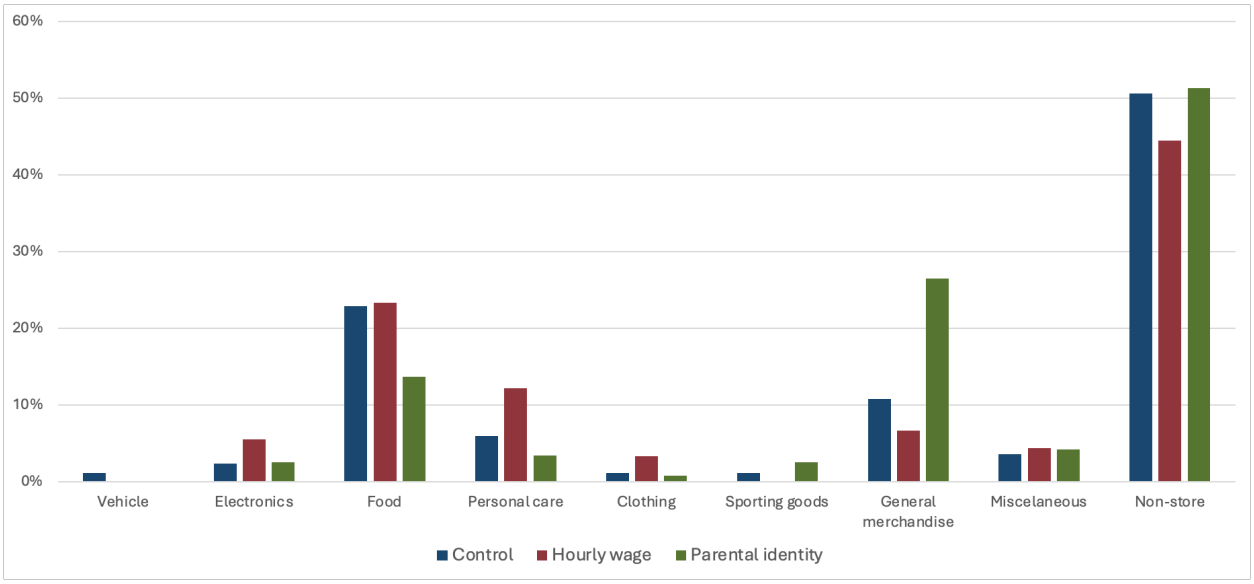
Table B11: Heterogeneous treatment effects by parental identity

	Outcome: redemption rate week 4
	(1) Experiment 1
Hourly wage	0.06
	(0.09)
Parental identity	0.18**
	(0.09)
High parental identity	0.10
	(0.07)
Hourly wage * High parental identity	-0.02
	(0.10)
Parental identity * High parental identity	-0.05
	(0.10)

Constant	0.24***
	(0.06)
Control mean	0.31
Control SD	0.46
N	758

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the control group for the Experiment 1 results, and the self-identity group for the Experiment 2 results. Standard error is robust.

Figure B1: Percentage of parents from experiment 1 who redeemed their gift card in each category of stores, by treatment group. (N=290)



Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Each bar shows the percentage of parents who redeemed their gift card in each store category, out of all parents who redeemed their gift card. The significance level compares each treatment group with the control group. This analysis uses the subsample of parents who redeemed their gift cards.

Table B12: Descriptive statistics of the Experiment 2 sample

	(1) Final RCT sample (N=283)	(2) Parents who redeemed gift card (N=943)	(3) Difference / p-value
Child girl	0.57	0.49	0.08**
	(0.50)	(0.50)	0.033
Parent age	37.58	35.39	2.19***
	(7.59)	(6.57)	<0.001
Parent female	0.84	0.87	-0.03
	(0.37)	(0.33)	0.142
HS degree	0.17	0.19	-0.02
	(0.37)	(0.39)	0.367
Associate degree or some college	0.23	0.24	-0.01
	(0.42)	(0.43)	0.845
BA degree or higher	0.49	0.46	0.03
	(0.50)	(0.50)	0.32
Parent Hispanic	0.41	0.37	0.04
	(0.49)	(0.48)	0.2
Parent White (non-Hispanic)	0.28	0.26	0.02
	(0.45)	(0.44)	0.55
Parent Black (non-Hispanic)	0.21	0.28	-0.07**
	(0.41)	(0.45)	0.019
Household income (Thousand $)	58.18	52.20	5.98**
	(36.61)	(36.23)	0.019
Household size	4.31	4.02	0.29***
	(1.44)	(1.38)	0.002

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Columns (1) and (2) show, for each variable, the mean and standard deviation in parenthesis. Column (3) displays the difference between groups and its significance level.

Table B13: Treatment effects on the redemption rate of gift cards for Experiment 2

	Outcomes: redemption rates by the end of each week						
	(1) Week 1	(2) Week 2	(3) Week 3	(4) Week 4	(5) Week 5	(6) Week 6	(7) Week 7
Parental identity	0.13**	0.16***	0.18***	0.17***	0.16***	0.18***	0.16***
	(0.05)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Constant	0.22***	0.34***	0.39***	0.44***	0.45***	0.46***	0.47***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
Control mean	0.22	0.34	0.39	0.44	0.45	0.46	0.47
Control SD	0.41	0.47	0.49	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
N	275	275	275	275	275	275	275

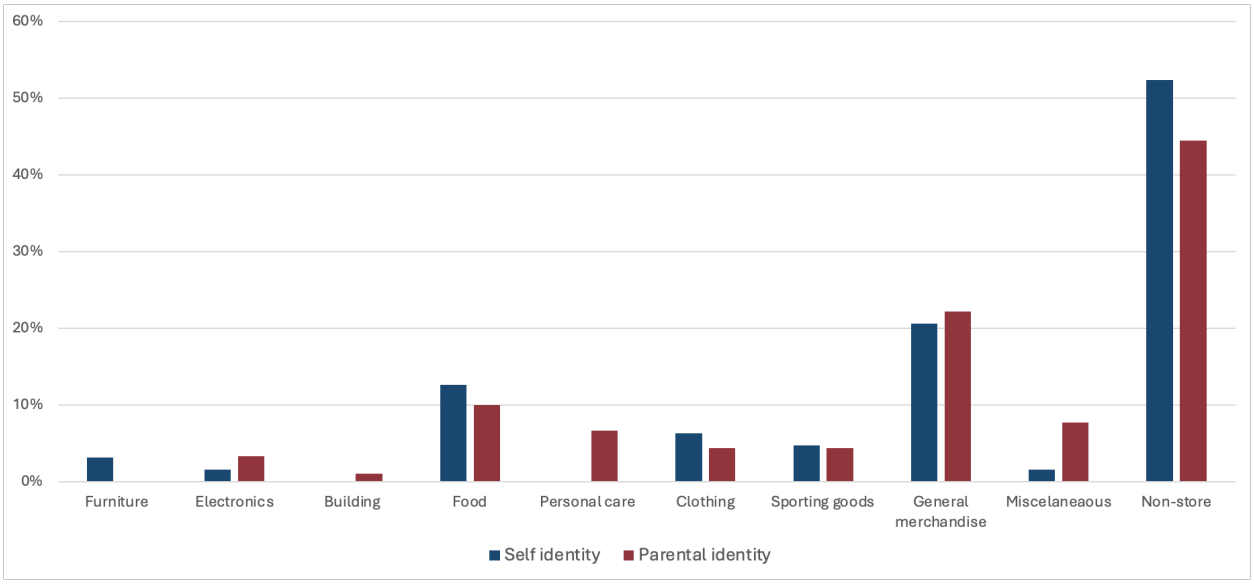
Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the self-identity group. Standard error is robust.

Table B14: Treatment effects for the Experiment 2 with inverse probability weighting (IPW)

	Outcomes: redemption rates by the end of each week						
	(1) Week 1	(2) Week 2	(3) Week 3	(4) Week 4	(5) Week 5	(6) Week 6	(7) Week 7
Parental identity	0.13**	0.15**	0.16**	0.15**	0.14**	0.16**	0.14**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
Constant	0.22***	0.35***	0.41***	0.45***	0.47***	0.47***	0.49***
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
Control mean	0.22	0.35	0.41	0.45	0.47	0.48	0.49
Control SD	0.41	0.48	0.49	0.50	0.50	0.50	0.50
N	255	255	255	255	255	255	255

Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. The omitted group is the self-identity group. Standard error is robust. Coefficients are adjusted for IPW using baseline characteristics: child's and parent's gender, parent's age, parent's education, parent's race, household income, and household size.

Figure B2: Percentage of parents from experiment 2 who redeemed their gift card in each category of stores, by treatment group. (N=153)



Notes: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01. Each bar shows the percentage of parents who redeemed their gift card in each store category, out of all parents who redeemed their gift card. The significance level compares the parental identity group with the self-identity group. This analysis uses the subsample of parents who redeemed their gift cards.