

Paper But Not Plastic: Consistency of Recycling and Conservation Behaviors across Setting

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Introduction

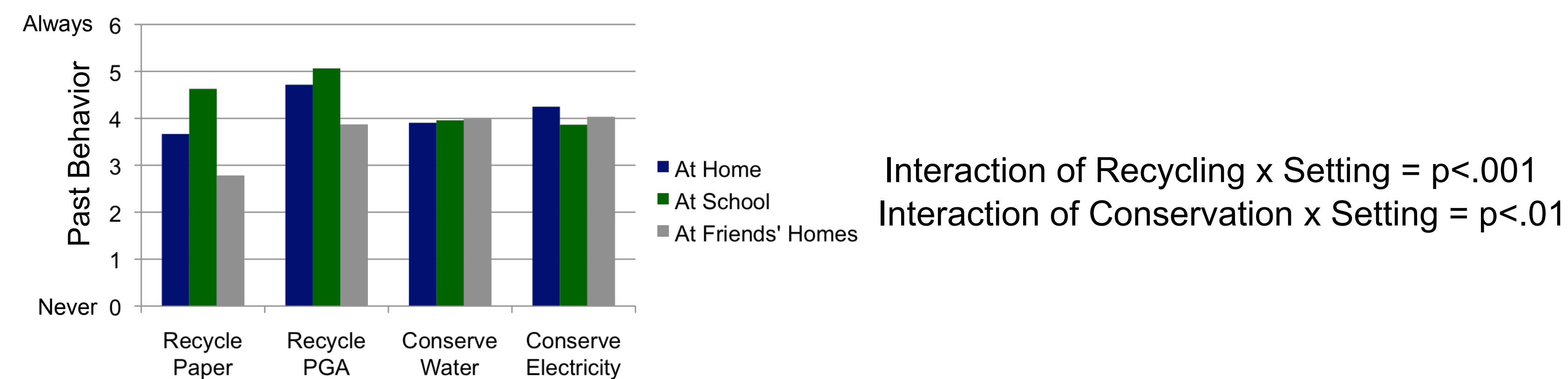
- Do the predictors of recycling and conservation behaviors vary according to the setting (e.g., might norms predict recycling of paper at home, but attitudes predict conserving energy at school)?
- Prior research has examined correlations between types of environmentally friendly behaviors (EFBs; Thøgersen & Ölander, 2006) and shown that attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control tend to predict intentions to engage in EFBs (Harland, Staats, & Wilke, 1999). However, little is known about how these behaviors vary across setting and whether or not their determinants vary by setting.
- Our study aimed to understand how predictors of intentions to engage in recycling and conservation behaviors vary across settings.

Methods

- Participants from the University of Minnesota completed online surveys that had them report on their own EFBs (N= 191).
- Participants provided data on four types of EFBs: recycling paper, recycling plastic, glass and aluminum (PGA), conserving water, and conserving electricity; all across three settings: at their home, at school, and at friends' homes.
- Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) constructs were measured for each EFB x Setting: attitude toward behavior, norms, perceived behavioral control, and intentions to engage in the EFB in the following month.
- Measures were also completed that captured past EFB behavior in the last month, and beliefs about the importance of engaging in the behavior.

Results: Predicting Intentions and Behavior

- Two-way ANOVAs reveal that people's EFBs vary across setting:



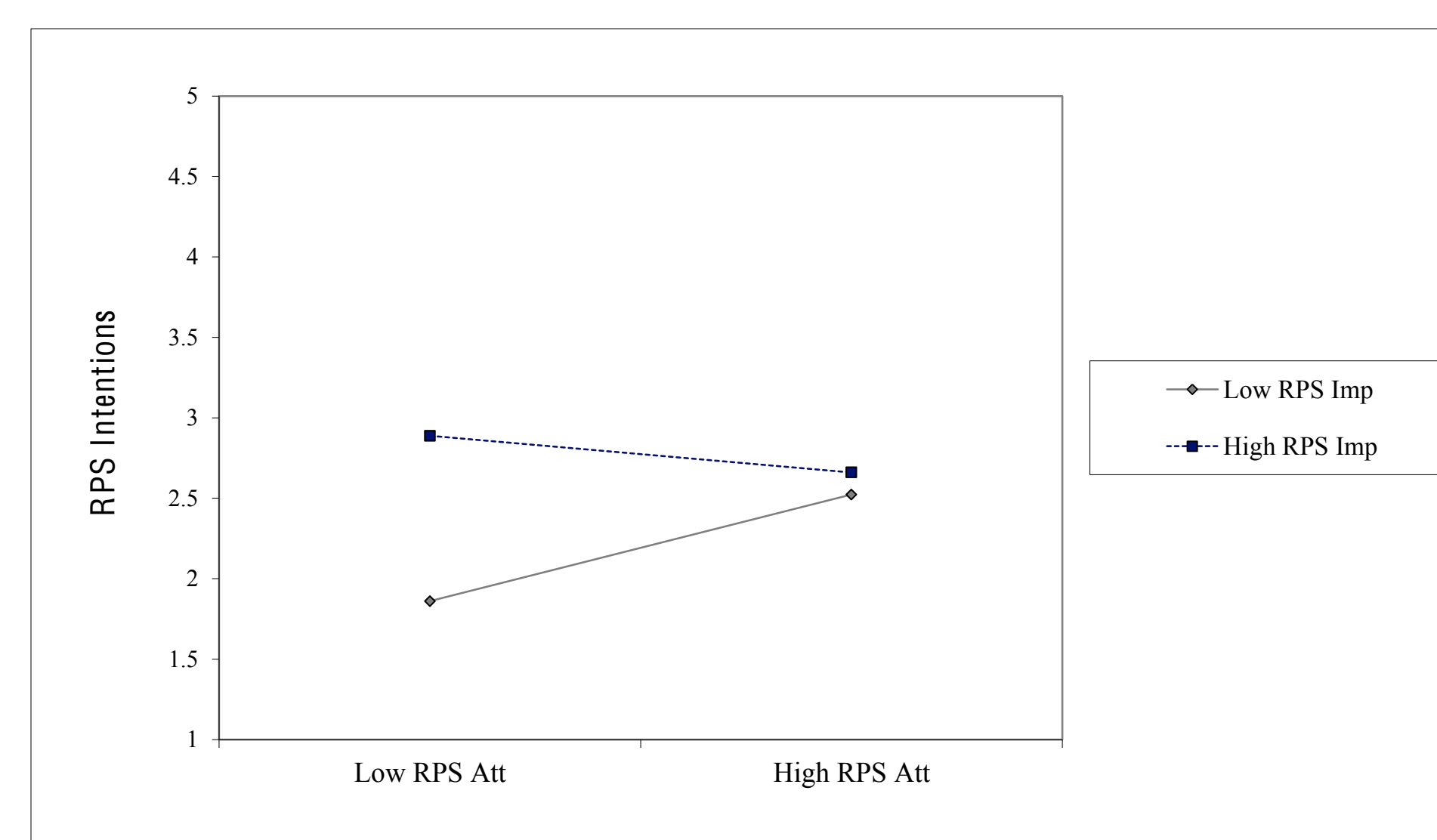
- Regression analyses indicate that attitudes were a consistent predictor of intentions to engage in EFBs, but other predictors depended on both the type of EFB and the setting.
- For example, whereas perceived behavioral control predicts intentions to conserve electricity at school, social norms predicts intentions to recycle plastic, glass, and aluminum at home.
- Below is a chart that summarizes which predictors of intentions were significant for each EFB x Setting, including relevant interactions. The pattern of the interactions are illustrated in the two figures below.

Behavior and Setting/ Predictor	Past Behavior	Norm	Attitudes	Importance	PBC	Att x Imp	Att x PBC
Recycle Paper @ Home	*		*	*		*	
Recycle Paper @ School	*		*	*		*	
Recycle Paper @ Friends' Homes	*		*		*		
Recycle PGA @ Home	*	*	*			*	
Recycle PGA @ School	*		*	*		*	*
Recycle PGA @ Friends' Homes	*	*	*		*		
Conserve Water @ Home	*		*	*		*	*
Conserve Water @ School	*		*	*		*	
Conserve Water @ Friends' Homes	*		*	*		*	*
Conserve Electricity @ Home	*		*	*		*	
Conserve Electricity @ School	*		*	*	*	*	
Conserve Electricity @ Friends' Homes	*		*		*		*

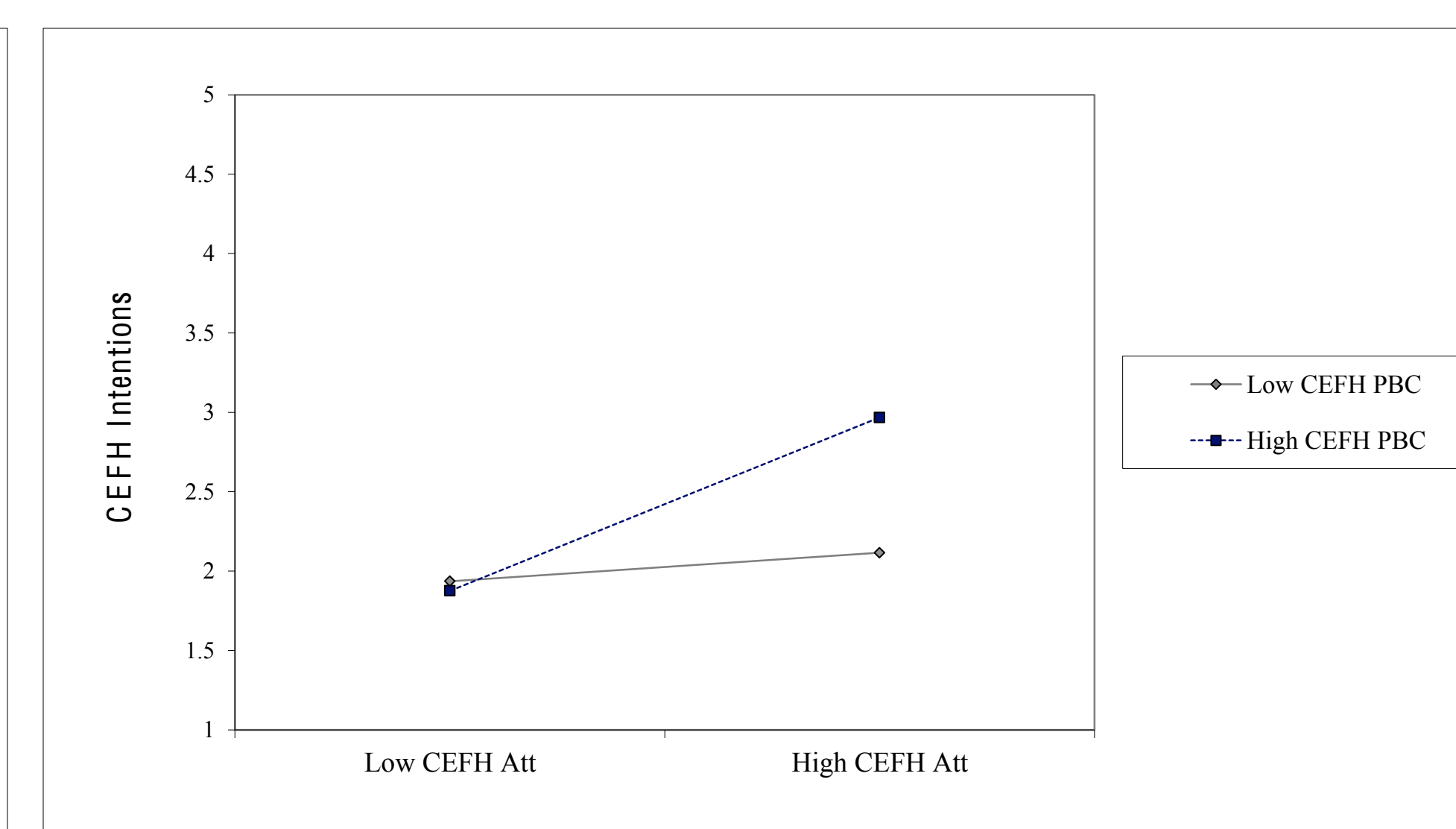
* significant at $p < .05$

Graphs of Typical Interactions

Recycling Paper at School (RPS):
Attitudes x Importance Exemplar



Conserving Electricity at Friends' Homes (CEFH):
Attitudes x PBC Exemplar



Conclusion

- Survey results suggest that the type of recycling or conservation activity and the setting interact to determine behavior.
- Results of analyses indicate that people need to either believe an EFB is important or they must have a positive attitude of the behavior to intend to engage in the behavior
- For some conservation behaviors in some settings, it is also important that people are high in perceived behavioral control
- Interventions aimed at increasing rates of EFBs need to consider both the type of behavior targeted as well as the setting in which it will be performed.

References

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- Harland, P., Staats, H., & Wilke, H. A. M. (1999). Explaining Proenvironmental Intention and Behavior by Personal Norms and the Theory of Planned Behavior. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 29*, 12, 2505-2528.
- Thøgersen, J. & Ölander, F. (2006). To What Degree Are Environmentally Beneficial Choices Reflective Of A General Conservation Stance? *Environment and Behavior 38*, 4, 550-569.

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