

I am too good to be true: how self-enhancement motivations shape prosocial behavior of entitled individuals

Alexandra Polyakova
Toulouse Business School

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Abstract

In the past decade the level of prosocial behavior has raised some concerns. At the same time, an empathic concern, which is considered to be one of the main predictors of prosocial behavior, is decreasing. Lack of empathy and less forgiving attitudes are one of the main characteristics of entitlement. Entitlement, or feeling of deserving more than others, is negatively related to pro-social behavior (Campbell et al., 2004). We suggest that entitled individuals would engage in prosocial behavior more when there is an opportunity to self-enhance compared to when there is no opportunity to self-enhance. Since prosocial behavior is performed to benefit others rather than self, entitled individuals would be unlikely to behave in such a way unless they see a clear opportunity to benefit themselves in such a situation. H1: Entitled individuals will exhibit more prosocial behavior when such behavior provides an opportunity for self-enhancement (vs. when there is no opportunity for self-enhancement). Individuals act more prosocially in the public sphere than in private settings (Ariely et al., 2009). Since one of the main motivations of entitled individuals is to appear in a positive light in front of others and themselves, they would be even more inclined than other individuals to engage in prosocial behavior when such behavior is observable by others (i.e., public context) rather than when there are no witnesses (vs. private context): H2: Entitled individuals will exhibit more prosocial behavior when such behavior is performed in a public (vs. private) context. Previous research has demonstrated that entitled individuals are driven by a desire to attain status (Lange et al., 2019). Higher social status fulfills the desires of entitled individuals. Entitlement is correlated with the desire to have high-status symbols, such as a perfect romantic partner. We propose that entitled individuals will be attracted by other possibilities that allow them to feel they belong to a small group of high status people. H3: Entitled individuals will exhibit greater intention to donate to a charity cause/organization when the social status of other donors is high (vs. low). We test our predictions in three studies. We both manipulate (Studies 1 & 2) and measure entitlement (Study 3). Study 1. 140 US-based MTurk participants completed the study online. This study used a 2 (entitlement: yes vs. no) x 2 (self-enhancement opportunity: yes vs. no) between-subjects design. We adopted entitlement manipulation from Poon et al. (2013). Participants in the self-enhancement condition were told that they could make a donation that would highlight their unique personality: a donation in honor of their friends. Participants in the no_self-enhancement condition were told that their donation would help people in need. Participants indicated their likelihood to donate a portion of the money they would earn through MTurk to the charity. ANOVA results revealed a significant interaction of entitlement and self-enhancement on the likelihood to donate ($F(1, 136) = 10.84, p = .001$). In the self-enhancement condition, participants were more likely to donate when they were in the entitlement (vs. no_entitlement) condition, $M_{entitlement} = 3.31, SD = 1.92$ vs. $M_{no_entitlement} = 2.18, SD = 1.64, F(1, 136) = 6.73, p < .05$. We suggest that another way of increasing the amount of donations from entitled individuals is to give them a chance to make a donation in a public (vs. private) context, which was tested in Study 2. 116 MTurk US-based participants completed the study online. Study 2 had a 2 (entitlement: yes, no) x 2 (donation context: public, private) between-subjects design. Participants were assigned to public vs. private conditions. Then, participants indicated their likelihood to donate to support the charity. Study 2 results showed that participants in the entitlement public condition were more likely to make a donation ($M_{public} = 4.03, SD = 2.00$ vs. $M_{private} = 2.89, SD = 1.71, F(1, 112) = 4.41, p$

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