



The Do-Gooder Dilemma: A Self/Other Asymmetry in the Shame and Embarrassment of Self-Reporting Good Deeds

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ABSTRACT

Recent research in which individuals are encouraged to share stories of their own charitable giving on social media suggests that such sharing facilitates perceptions of prosocial norms and increases charitable donations. However, we predicted that sharing one's own good deeds might also incur unforeseen hedonic costs, diminishing the "warm glow" of altruism.

METHODS

4 Preregistered Prolific Studies (N = 2839)

Study 1: Recall one of your (personal achievements/good deeds). How would you feel sharing your (achievement, deed) by telling (none, a friend, posting on social media)?

Study 2: Imagine a good deed (self or other). How would (you/they) feel telling (none, a friend, posting on social media)?

Study 3: Imagine a(n) (achievement/deed) committed by (self/other), how would you/they feel (not sharing/telling a friend)?

Study 4b: Imagine (self/other) voluntarily or compelled to share good deed on social media.

Dependent Variable:

11-point Likert scale for how happy, proud, ashamed, embarrassed they would feel (happy + proud) – (ashamed + embarrassed).

STIMULI EXAMPLES

S1: "Please take a moment to think of one of your personal [achievements/good deeds]. By [personal achievements/good deeds], we mean something like "I ran a half-marathon within my goal time", or "I bought dinner for a homeless person".

S2: "You are going into your local grocery store when you see a homeless person outside the store asking for food money. [You/Mandy] give(s) them \$10. [You/she] tell(s) no one about what you did [tell a friend, post on social media]".

S3: "Newsha just donated money to a local animal rescue shelter and told a friend about it"

RESULTS

Study 1

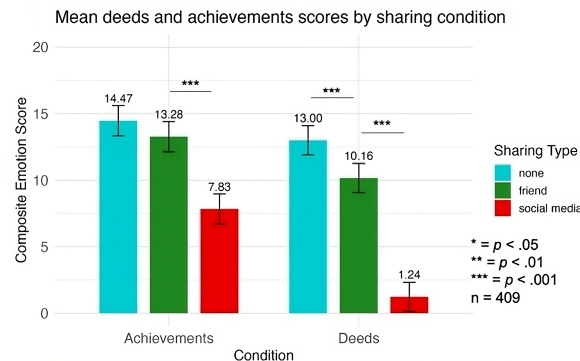


Figure 1. Mean composite scores based on sharing condition (none, telling a friend, or posting on social media) by condition (achievement or deed). None is how respondents feel about their act. Friend is how they would feel telling a friend about their act. Social media is how they would feel posting their act on social media. Error bars indicate 95% CI.

Study 2

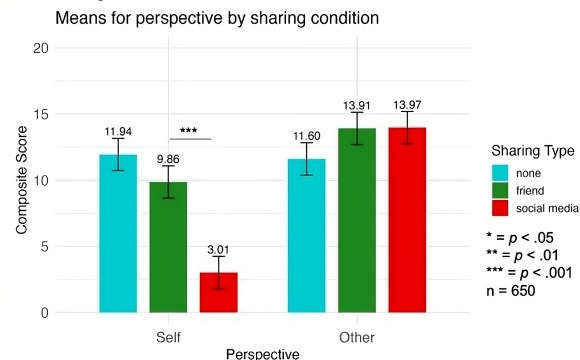


Figure 2. Mean composite scores based on sharing condition (none, telling a friend, or posting on social media) by perspective (first or third). None is how respondents feel about their good deed. Friend is how they would feel telling a friend about their deed. Social media is how they would feel posting about their good deed on social media. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Study 3

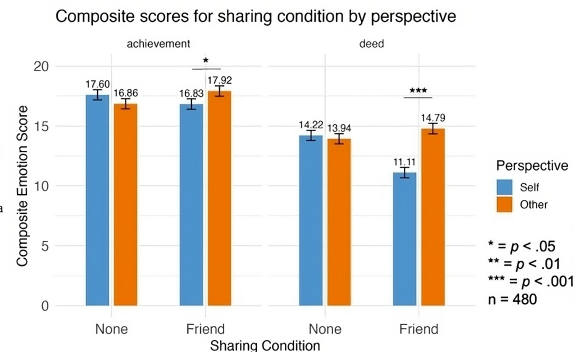


Figure 3. Mean composite scores for act (achievement, deed) by sharing type (none, telling a friend) by perspective (self or other). The none/friend difference for achievements loses significance when eliminating those who report realism = 0 for this question. Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

Study 4b

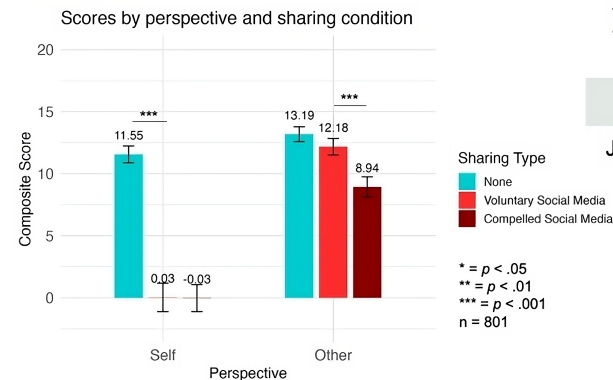


Figure 4. Mean composite scores for good deeds by sharing type (none, voluntarily posting on social media, compelled posting on social media). Error bars indicate 95% confidence intervals.

DISCUSSION

People predict that self-reporting their good deeds will leave them feeling worse than self-reporting their achievements, but that others will not suffer similar negative emotions. Other research has found that people want their good deeds to be known, but this evidence suggests that they don't want to be the ones to share them.

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