

Effect of power on conspicuous prosocial behavior

YAO Qi¹, WU Zhangjian¹, ZHANG Changqing², FU Guoqun³

(¹ School of Economics and Management, Chongqing Jiaotong University, Chongqing 400074, China)
(² School of Economics and Business Administration, Chongqing University, Chongqing 400044, China)
(³ Guanghua School of Management, Peking University, Beijing 100871, China)

Abstract

Conspicuous prosocial behavior refers to prosocial behaviors that are publicly displayed to enhance the image of the helper in the eyes of others. The existing researches suggest that sense of power simultaneously generates self-interested behaviors and inhibits individual prosocial behavior. However, an increased number of recent researches indicate that several personal traits and environmental factors encourage individuals with power to conduct more prosocial behaviors. Moreover, few researches have been conducted to explore the relationship between power and conspicuous prosocial behavior. The present study proposes that high-power-sense (vs. low-power-sense) individuals are more willing to engage in conspicuous prosocial behaviors with self-presentation as a mediating variable.

Five experiments (Experiments 1, 2a, 2b, 3, and 4) were performed to test the hypotheses. Experiments 1 and 3 explored the relationship between power and conspicuous prosocial behaviors using the class role imagination task to manipulate sense of power. Participants of Experiment 1 (139 adults, 50 men) were provided with information about two backpacks. Participants of Experiment 3 (237 adults, 121 men) were shown an advertisement. Participants of Experiment 2a (147 adults, 75 men) were high and low power-sense individuals who were instructed to report donation willingness and amount under two conditions, namely, public acknowledgment and control. Experiment 2b was a field study in which participants (210 adults, 93 men) who completed a recall task decided whether to write down their e-mail after perusing the information about a public service advertisement. Lastly, Experiment 4 examined the mediating role of self-presentation, and 117 adults were asked to indicate their sense of power, self-presentation motivation, and willingness to participate in blatant benevolence by a random sequence.

Experiment 1 indicated that the high-power-sense (vs. low-power-sense) individuals tended to buy conspicuous green products with clear environmental labels. Experiment 2a demonstrated that individuals with a high sense of power displayed higher levels of willingness to donate and donate more compared with the powerless and under the public acknowledgment condition. Experiment 2b revealed that people with a high (vs. low) sense of power tended to write down their e-mail under the public acknowledgment condition. Experiment 3 provided evidence that a strongly conspicuous inclination among high-power-sense participants was not attributed to a general tendency to show off when engaging in prosocial behaviors. Finally, Experiment 4 not only replicated the effect of power on conspicuous prosocial behaviors, but also established the mediating role of self-presentation.

The current study demonstrates the relationship between power and conspicuous prosocial behaviors. That is, individuals with high (vs. low) power are more willing to engage in conspicuous prosocial behaviors with self-presentation as a mediating factor. The findings of this work have important practical significance for marketing managers in terms of the utilization of sense of power to effectively guide individuals to engage in prosocial behaviors.

Key words sense of power, conspicuous prosocial behaviors, public acknowledgement, self-presentation.

1 Research questions

Since ancient times, cultural values have promoted the expectation that those with resources and positions of power will have high contributions to society, or that those with status and power will engage in prosocial behavior. Examples include “In ancient times, people gain their ambition and benefit the people” (guzhiren, dezhi, zejiayumin) and “In success, one tries to let others be benefited” (da ze jianji tianxia) (“Mencius, Heart Chapter”). People with power or status tend to have a high sense of power, which has a subtle influence on people’s cognition, emotion, and behavior (Zhai, 2015). Then, do high-power individuals engage in high prosocial behavior as expected?

Previous studies have generally concluded that high-sense-

of-power leads to self-serving behavior and inhibits prosocial behavior (Cai et al., 2016). However, an increasing body of evidence shows that individuals in positions of power exhibit positive prosocial behavior. For examples, cash donations from the 100 entrepreneurs on the 2018 China philanthropy list totaled RMB 17.31 billion, sharply up 66 percent from the previous year. Furthermore, empirical studies have shown that sense of power helps to amplify people’s inherent altruistic traits (Galinsky et al., 2011; Caprara et al., 2012). Situational factors also regulate the influence of power on prosocial behavior, making individuals with power inclined to participate in prosocial behavior (Lammers & Galinsky, 2009; Overbeck & Park, 2001).

In conclusion, the relationship between power and prosocial

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Corresponding author: WU Zhangjian, E-mail: wzj404987253@163.com

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behavior is worth discussing. Furthermore, examining existing researches in the field, most of them focus on consumers' psychological variables and changes in situations (Chen et al., 2001; Vescio & Guinote, 2010). However, little attention has been paid to the effects of prosocial behavior's features on the prosocial behavior of people with different senses of power. Some researchers have begun to focus on the conspicuous characteristics of prosocial behavior from the signal attribute of behavior. Examples include conspicuous consumption (Johnson et al., 2018), conspicuous donation behavior (Grace & Griffin, 2009), and blatant benevolence (Griskevicius et al., 2007). Therefore, based on costly signal theory, the research takes the conspicuous characteristic of behavior as the breakthrough point. Three specific forms of behavior, namely, purchase green products, donation behavior, and benevolence, were used to explore the effects and mechanisms of power on prosocial behavior. Different from previous studies, this research, from the perspective of impression management, reveals that the conspicuous trait of behavior is a new motivation to push individuals with power into prosocial behavior through self-presentation.

1.1 Relationship between power and prosocial behavior

Power, considered asymmetrical control over valuable resources, is seen as central to social relationships (Rucker et al., 2012). Perceived power is a subjective sense of possession or lack of power (Galinsky et al., 2014). The inhibitory effect of power sense on prosocial behavior is mainly due to the difference of self-focus caused by power (Rucker et al., 2012). The agentic-communal model of power determines the self-orientation of people with a high sense of power, making them tend to think highly of their own value and benefit (Rucker et al., 2011), make self-interested decisions about resource allocation and valuation, be insensitive to the feelings of others, and be indifferent and impersonal to the suffering of an audience (Lammers & Stapel, 2011). The agency orientation also increases the interpersonal distance of those with high-sense-of-power, making people with high sense of power act independently and keep others at arm's length, thereby decreasing their likelihood to cooperate and help others (van Kleef et al., 2004). In addition, the self-focus of high-power people sometimes prompts them to misinterpret the kindness of others as self-serving, thereby inhibiting the gratitude and reward behavior of high-power people (Inesi et al., 2012).

By contrast, the positive effect of power on prosocial behavior is due to the influence of personality traits and situational factors. First, individuals with altruistic traits tend to be more altruistic when they possess power. For example, high-powered people with high agreeableness are better at identifying other people's emotional needs and are more likely to be of service to others (Caprara et al., 2012). Higher levels of empathic accuracy were found in people with high levels of pro-social power (Côté et al., 2011). High-power individuals with high moral identity exhibit significant organizational citizenship behavior (Decelles et al., 2012). Second, the situational factors also promote the prosocial behavior of the high power. Studies have found that high-power individuals' prosocial behavior is also promoted when the outside world has accountability goals, their power sources are unstable, or the other party does not pose a threat to their power (Lammers & Galinsky, 2009; Overbeck & Park, 2001).

Researchers have also discussed why the power shows two opposite effects on prosocial behavior. The powerful have cog-

nitive flexibility (Guinote, 2007) that allows them to adjust their behavioral tendencies to their current primary goals, such as focusing on long-term interests or reducing social distance, which are prosocial (Eyal & Liberman, 2012). Previous studies mainly focus on the role of personal power sense and its boundary conditions, but literature is scant on the characteristics of prosocial behavior to determine the factors that affect the prosocial tendency of people with different power. This direction is the one that the research attempts to expand.

1.2 Conspicuous prosocial behavior

Based on conspicuous consumption theory, West (2004) proposed the concept of conspicuous compassion as a way to enhance an individual's image in the eyes of others. In the case of donation, the behavior is shown by acts such as wearing a sympathy ribbon. Grace and Griffin (2006) defined conspicuous donation as "an individual's show of support to charitable causes through the purchase of merchandise that is overtly displayed on the individual's person or possessions." This definition suggests that the key to conspicuousness is visibility and public perception (Grace & Griffin, 2009). Therefore, we consider conspicuous prosocial behavior to be prosocial behavior that can be openly exhibited to others, helping to enhance an individual's image in the eyes of others (Johnson et al., 2018).

Research shows that consumers with strong status motivation are more likely to buy less-luxurious and poorer performing green products in public rather than more-luxurious and better performing non-green products, and they favor expensive green products (Grisevicius et al., 2010). Grisevicius et al. (2007) found that romantic motivation tends to make women (vs. men) more likely to engage in publicly blatant benevolence (such as volunteering at a children's hospital), showing that they have the qualities of an ideal mate (such as kindness). However, men are likely to engage in these behaviors when these behaviors demonstrate heroism and dominance. The findings suggest that individuals believe that they can signal to others that they are prosocial and willing to sacrifice themselves by engaging in conspicuous prosocial behavior (such as buying green products and donating to charity) to shape their image in the eyes of others.

1.3 Sense of power and conspicuous prosocial behavior

According to costly signal theory, altruistic behavior is a communicative signal that conveys not only a person's prosocial nature but also an individual's ability to bear the cost (Bird & Smith, 2005), that is, altruistic behavior shows that individuals are willing and able to bear the cost of self-sacrifice for the common good (Grisevicius et al., 2010). Studies have shown that engaging in pro-social behavior can build a pro-social reputation (Semmann et al., 2005) and that people with a reputation for being helpful are seen as more trustworthy (Barclay, 2004) and more deserving of being friends, allies, and romantic partners (Iredale et al., 2008). Conspicuous prosocial behavior helps the actors to communicate to others that they are prosocial and has the willingness and ability to engage in prosocial behavior, which helps the actor raise their profile in the eyes of others and reap certain benefits (such as prestige and status). Thus, conspicuous prosocial behavior is a self-presentation behavior that takes the form of self-sacrifice and has the nature of egocentric motivation (Choi et al., 2018; Grisevicius et al., 2007).

How does prosocial behavior with conspicuous signaling affect the behavioral tendencies of individuals with different sense of power? The research holds that when the value and

benefit of prosocial behavior, which is an altruistic behavior, are prominent and beneficial to themselves, people with a high sense of power will give up the pure egoistic behavior and engage in competitive altruism. The following existing studies provide evidence for our speculations. First, according to the agentic-communal model, individuals with a high (vs. low) sense of power tend to generate agency orientation, promote self-focus, and pay more attention to “self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion” (Rucker et al., 2012). Individuals with a high (vs. low) sense of power are more likely to focus on themselves, think highly of their interests and values, are more willing to spend money for themselves rather than for others, and pay more attention to the satisfaction of their own needs and the pursuit of their own goals (Rucker et al., 2011). Therefore, whether the target interest is beneficial to oneself becomes the criterion of the behavior of the high-sense-of-power. Secondly, according to situated focus theory, high-sense-of-power individuals have an advantage over low-sense-of-power individuals in their ability to balance target interests and adjust their attention, so they can give selective attention to those targets they can benefit from (Guinote, 2007). Moreover, people with a high sense of power tend to have high levels of construction, an abstract way of thinking that helps impulse control and delay gratification, a better focus on long-term goals, and inhibit short-sighted behavior (Lammers & Stapel, 2009). When the long-term benefit of impression management becomes the main goal, the high power-sense person can be inferred to give up their short-term pure self-interest motive and flexibly “sacrifice oneself to help others.”

In conclusion, we believe that when prosocial behavior is characterized by conspicuous behavior, it helps individuals maintain a good image in public, building and maintaining a costly pro-social reputation (Miller, 2000) and other intangible rewards associated with public acknowledgment. Individuals who exhibit prosocial behavior in public settings contribute to the social status and reputation of the actors in the group (Willer, 2009), and help those with a high sense of power correct stereotypes (Caza et al., 2011), adapt to accountability (Keltner et al., 2003) and social norms, and satisfy the inner psychological motivation, thereby realizing their self-improvement and creating a good social image of “both competence and warmth.” The present research makes the following assumptions.

H1: High-sense-of-power individuals are more likely to engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior than low-sense-of-power individuals.

1.4 Mediating role of self-presentation motivation

Self-presentation was proposed by Goffman (1959) as a symbolic interactionism metaphor to explain the way people express themselves in different contexts. According to the principle of “perception is reality,” self-presentation is the process of self-construction of an individual. By emphasizing and hiding something related to themselves, people strategically present a certain impression to their audience and let others perceive that they possess certain qualities, thereby gaining social recognition and material rewards (Jones & Nisbett, 1971).

Self-presentation originates from one of two key motivations: the desire to be liked and admired and the desire to be respected and to express competence (Baryła, 2014; Bergsieker et al., 2010). Individuals tend to display strategy of focusing on others, such as recognizing others and showing empathy, to satisfy the motivation of being liked (Zivnuska et al., 2004).

However, “the degree of liking depends mostly on how his behaviors influence interests and well-being of the attitude holder” (Baryła, 2014). By contrast, individuals often exhibit self-promotion strategies that emphasize positive personality traits and attributes to gain respect (Leary et al., 2011). Research has shown that these strategies can help individuals demonstrate competence, enhance status perception, and earn the respect of others (Bergsieker et al., 2010).

In addition, the agency orientation leads high-sense-of-power individuals to focus on “self-protection, self-assertion, and self-expansion” (Rucker et al., 2012), and shapes their ideal selves in a variety of ways. Self-presentation can be achieved by correcting stereotypes (Caza et al., 2011), responding to social norms (Leary et al., 2011), and taking social responsibility (Keltner et al., 2003). As a result, people with a high sense of power are more likely to present prosocial and self-sacrificing spirit to others, show their willingness and ability to participate in prosocial behavior, and thus obtain a prosocial reputation and social reward. Second, the *de facto* effect of engaging in conspicuous prosocial behavior is that it promotes the interests and wellbeing of others and is as effective as generally prosocial behavior. Then, the degree of being liked and admired of individuals who engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior will be enhanced at least among some groups of people (i.e., the potential recipients of conspicuous prosocial behavior). Conspicuous prosocial behavior thus not only helps the actor demonstrate competence and gain respect, but also increases the actor’s level of being liked and favored. Finally, people with a high sense of power have a strong cognitive coordination ability and can change the way they process information according to the needs of the current situation to make their attitudes and behavior in line with the current situation (Guinote, 2007), which further illustrates that when impression management becomes the main goal, those with a high sense of power will change from self-interest to altruism to satisfy their self-presentation motivation. Conspicuous prosocial behavior is a self-presentation behavior that has the nature of egoistic motivation (Choi et al., 2018). Therefore, individuals with high self-presentation tend to engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior to shape their altruistic image and achieve self-fulfilling goals.

We predict that high (vs. low) power-sense individuals are eagerer to show ability and win respect or are eagerer to improve the degree of being liked and favored in order to create a pro-social image of “both competence and willingness,” and show and maintain the current state of power. As a result, high (vs. low) power-sense individuals have a higher willingness to self-presentation and a greater preference for engaging in “visible” prosocial behavior. The present study makes the following assumptions.

H2: The effect of a sense of power on conspicuous prosocial behavior is mediated by self-presentation motivation.

2 Experiment 1: Sense of Power and purchase intention of conspicuous prosocial products

Experiment 1 tested the influence of the sense of power on the purchase intention of conspicuous prosocial products. First, we conducted two independent pretests and selected the most conspicuous prosocial product from 11 products as the experimental stimulus for the formal experiment. Then, the participants’ power state was activated, and the relationship between power and conspicuous prosocial behavior was tested by comparing

their willingness to purchase conspicuous prosocial products.

2.1 Pretest

This pretest is a two-step process to determine the formal research stimulus. The most prosocial products (those with a higher than average prosocial score) were identified from 11 prosocial products, and then the most conspicuous prosocial products were selected from these products.

Prosocial nature of products. A total of 60 participants (32 of whom were women) took part in the experiment online. Participants were asked to rate the prosocial nature of 11 products (Griskevicius et al., 2010), using a nine-point Likert scale (“the extent to which the person who owned this product was (a) nice, (b) caring, and (c) altruistic”) ($\alpha = 0.92$). We identified six products for the second pretest, namely, charity T-shirts ($M = 7.87$, $SD = 1.51$), reusable shopping bags ($M = 7.90$, $SD = 1.07$), hybrid cars ($M = 7.87$, $SD = 1.07$), natural household cleaners ($M = 7.85$, $SD = 1.12$), pink ribbon bracelets ($M = 7.82$, $SD = 1.44$), and eco-friendly living backpacks ($M = 7.72$, $SD = 1.13$).

Conspicuousness of prosocial products. A total of 62 participants (38 of whom were women) participated in the online experiment. We asked participants to rate the conspicuousness of six pro-social products using a nine-point Likert scale adapted from Grace and Griffin (2009), for example, “by using or wearing the product, I can show people my prosocial behavior” (prosocial behavior is a behavior that is beneficial to others and society, such as environmental protection and donation) ($\alpha = 0.95$). The results showed that the most conspicuous prosocial product was an eco-friendly backpack made of recycled materials with a recycling logo ($M = 6.43$, $SD = 1.61$). The least conspicuous prosocial product was a natural household cleaner ($M = 5.31$, $SD = 1.86$; $t(61) = -8.05$, paired $p < 0.001$). Thus, we used the eco-living backpack as a stimulus for Experiment 1.

2.2 Research design and process

Experiment 1 was a one-factor, two-level (power: high vs. low) between-subjects design. A total of 145 participants were recruited through the “marketing lab” to participate in the online experiment. The final valid sample was 139 (six participants’ responses were deleted due to lots of inconsistent extreme options), 89 of whom were women (64.03%), and the average age of the participants was 26.29 ($SD = 4.21$), ranging from 18 to 45 years old. At the end of the experiment, RMB 2 was paid to each participant as a reward for the experiment.

First, participants randomly assigned to high- and low-power-sense conditions were initiated power perception by class role imagination (Rucker et al., 2011). Participants in the high (low) sense power conditions imagined themselves as the boss (employee) of a large company and read a passage about the role of the boss (employee), wrote down what they thought about when they were in the role of a boss (employee), and reported their current power and emotional state.

The participants’ product preferences were then measured. Two environmentally friendly backpack designs were presented to participants through a text description (Wu et al., 2013). The cover story used in the survey was as follows: “M Company, a company that produces and sells backpacks, is planning to launch two eco-friendly backpacks made of sustainable materials such as organic fibers and recycled materials such as polyester. Waste generation, toxic emissions, and resource consumption are minimized during the manufacturing process. Backpacks can be recycled and returned to nature safely upon end of life. The price is RMB 268. The Product Development Depart-

ment proposed two product design alternatives. The only difference between the two options is that the backpack B comes with a recycling logo, meaning that the product is good for the environment and the planet.” The logo is obviously, meaning that backpack B is more conspicuous.

Purchase intention. Participants were asked to report the likelihood of purchase using a seven-point Likert scale ($\alpha = 0.96$) (Wu et al., 2013). The closer the score was to 1, the more likely they were to prefer non-conspicuous prosocial products. The closer the score was to 7, the more likely they were to prefer conspicuous prosocial products. Demographic statistical variables were also collected in this session.

2.3 Results and discussion

Manipulation tests. After the power sense manipulation, participants were asked to report the extent to which they believed they had power and their current emotional state. The results showed that the participants’ sense of power was activated successfully. The mean in high power sense condition was 6.17 ($SD = 0.97$), and the mean in low power sense condition was 3.46 ($SD = 2.04$). A significant difference was found between the two conditions, $F(1, 137) = 99.97$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.42$. No significant difference was found between the high and low power sense conditions in the overall emotional dimension ($M_{high} = 5.30$, $SD = 1.48$; $M_{low} = 4.85$, $SD = 1.52$), $F(1, 137) = 3.05$, $p = 0.083$. Empirical studies have repeatedly shown that power sense manipulation has little or no effect on mood (Smith & Trope, 2006). Therefore, the effects of emotion would not be discussed in the next experiment that manipulated the sense of power.

Purchase intention. A one-way ANOVA of purchase intention yielded an independent variable with co-variables, such as gender, age, monthly income (monthly consumption for students), and whether they were full-time students, $F(1, 133) = 12.41$, $p = 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.09$. The results showed that the purchase intention of participants with a high sense of power ($M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.27$) was higher than that of participants with a low sense of power ($M = 5.18$, $SD = 1.76$), and a significant difference was found between them. Except for whether they were full-time students ($F(1, 133) = 3.29$, $p = 0.072$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$), the other co-variables did not affect the preference for conspicuous prosocial products ($ps > 0.1$).

The results of Experiment 1 showed that individuals with differently perceived power were significantly different in their willingness to purchase conspicuous prosocial products, and high power-sense individuals were more willing to purchase conspicuous prosocial products than low power-sense individuals. Therefore, Experiment 1 initially tested H1 from the perspective of conspicuous prosocial products. However, conspicuous prosocial product purchases are only one form of conspicuous prosocial behavior. To test the generality of our results, Experiments 2a and 2b used a power priming approach different from Experiment 1, and H1 was tested again from the perspective of public acknowledgment of donation. The reason for this perspective is that when donations are publicly acknowledged, the behavior becomes conspicuous (Grace & Griffin, 2009), helping to verify that conspicuous behavior motivates people with high sense of power to engage in prosocial behavior.

3 Experiment 2a: Power, public acknowledgment, and willingness to donate

Experiment 2a used another conspicuous way to test H1 again

from the perspective of donating money. Researches show that when donations are publicly acknowledged, people are given a conspicuous status, reputation, and other intangible rewards (Grace & Griffin, 2009; Willer, 2009). In the present research, we examined the interaction of perceived power and public acknowledgment on donation to further validate H1.

3.1 Research design and process

Experiment 2a used a 2 (power: high vs. low) $\times$ 2 (public acknowledgment: public vs. non-public) between-subjects design. A total of 160 participants were recruited through the “marketing lab” to participate in the online experiment. The final valid sample was 147 (13 of them did not complete the recall task as required). Similarly, at the end of the experiment, RMB 3 was paid to each participant, of whom 72 were women, accounting for 48.98%. The average age of the participants was 23.05 ($SD = 3.02$) years old, ranging from 18 to 37 years old.

First, participants’ sense of power was manipulated using a recall task (Rucker et al., 2011), that participants were randomly assigned to high- or low-power-sense conditions. In the high-power-sense condition, participants were asked to recall a situation in which they had power over another person, whereas in the low-power-sense condition, participants were asked to recall a situation in which another person had authority over them. Participants in both conditions were asked to record their recollections.

Second, the willingness to donate and the amount of donations were measured. All participants were asked to imagine that, when using a mobile phone, they came across a charity donation item from Tencent Holdings called “caring package, students’ dream come true.” In the public acknowledgment condition, participants were told that as long as they donated, their names would be displayed on Tencent’s public welfare website in appreciation of their contributions to charity work (Han et al., 2010). Afterward, participants reported how much they were willing to donate and were then asked, “Assuming you have RMB 100 at your disposal, how much would you be willing to donate?” In the non-public acknowledgment condition, after reading a charitable donation item, the participants directly reported their willingness to donate and the amount of donation. Finally, demographic information was gathered and gratitude was expressed.

3.2 Results and discussion

Manipulation test. After the recall task was completed, we tested the effectiveness of power sense manipulation in the same way as in Experiment 1. The results showed that the participants’ sense of power ($M_{high} = 5.16$, $SD = 1.52$; $M_{low} = 2.64$, $SD = 1.52$), $F(1, 145) = 101.15$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.41$) were effectively manipulated.

Donation willingness. An ANOVA on donation willingness revealed that the main effects of power ($F(1, 139) < 0.01$, $p = 0.98$) and public acknowledgment ($F(1, 139) = 0.22$, $p = 0.64$), respectively, on willingness to donate were not significant. However, more importantly, the main effect was qualified by a power $\times$ public acknowledgment interaction ($F(1, 139) = 6.81$, $p = 0.010$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$). Specifically, the high-power-sense participants’ willingness to donate ($M = 5.30$, $SD = 1.34$) was greater than that of the low-power-sense participants ($M = 4.69$, $SD = 1.37$), and a significant difference was found between them, $F(1, 139) = 3.93$, $p = 0.050$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.03$. By contrast, the influence of the sense of power on the willingness to donate was weaker in the non-public acknowledgment condition ($M_{high} = 4.71$, $SD = 1.13$; $M_{low} = 5.44$, $SD = 1.03$), $F(1, 139) = 3.13$, $p = 0.071$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$, as shown in Figure 1. However, the influence of the co-variables, namely, monthly income (students’ monthly consumption), age, gender, and whether they are full-time students, on the willingness to donate were not significant ($ps > 0.1$).

Donation amounts. An ANOVA on donation amounts revealed that the main effects of power ($F(1, 139) = 0.35$, $p = 0.56$) and public acknowledgment ($F(1, 139) = 2.55$, $p = 0.113$), respectively, on the dependence variable were not significant. However, the main effect was qualified by a power $\times$ public acknowledgment interaction ($F(1, 139) = 8.93$, $p = 0.003$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.06$). Specifically, in the public acknowledgment condition, the amounts that high-power-sense participants donated were significantly higher than the amounts that those of low-power-sense participants ($M_{high} = 50.09$, $SD = 28.69$; $M_{low} = 34.14$, $SD = 26.72$), $F(1, 139) = 7.10$, $p = 0.009$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.05$. By contrast, the amounts that high-power-sense participants donated ($M = 42.00$, $SD = 21.47$) were significantly lower than those of low-power-sense participants ($M = 55.42$, $SD = 28.26$, $F(1, 139) = 2.94$, $p = 0.089$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$, as shown in Figure 1). Monthly income (students’ monthly consumption) significantly influenced the amounts of donation ($F(1, 139) = 6.22$, $p = 0.014$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$). The marginal effect of age on the amounts of donation was significant, $F(1, 139) = 2.81$, $p = 0.096$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$. However, gender and whether full-time students or not had no significant effect on donation amounts ($ps > 0.1$).

The results of Experiment 2a showed that public acknowledgment moderated the influence of power on an individual’s willingness to donate and the amount of donation. As predicted, individuals with high power sense of were more likely to donate and give more money than those with low power sense of when being publicly acknowledged. By contrast, under the non-public acknowledgment condition, the influence of power

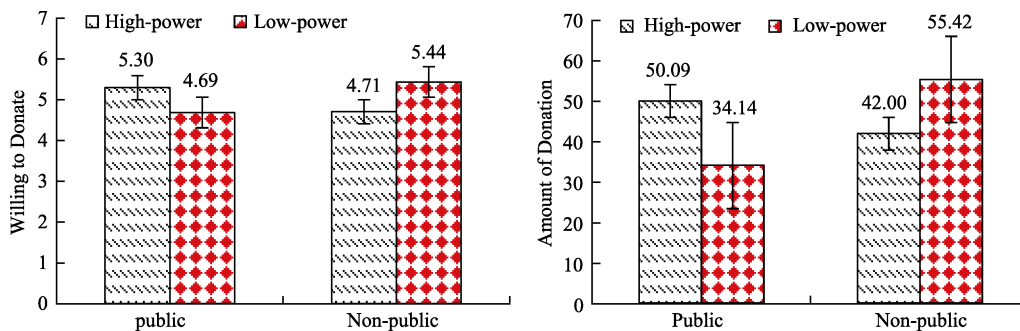


Figure 1. In Experiment 2 A, the influence of power and public acknowledgment on willingness and amount of donation.

on charitable donation was repeated in previous studies (Liu, 2019), that is, low-power individuals had a higher willingness to donate and gave more than high power individuals. As noted above, public acknowledgment endues the act of donating with conspicuous nature. Thus, high (vs. low) power-sense individuals may be more likely to engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior. Experiment 2a examined H1 in another way.

4 Experiment 2b: Power and hematopoietic stem cells donation

Real behavior was used as the dependent variable to test the main effect again to enhance the ecological validity of the results. Besides, a strong link occurs between the sense of power and status (Rucker et al., 2012), and conspicuous prosocial behavior helps actors gain status (Griskevicius et al., 2010). Therefore, status maintenance may be the alternative mechanism by which the sense of power affects conspicuous prosocial behavior. The aim of this experiment is also to eliminate this competing explanation.

4.1 Research design and process

Experiment 2b was a between-subjects design of 3 (power: high vs. low vs. control) $\times$ 2 (public acknowledgment: public vs. non-public). Of the 240 participants recruited through the “marketing lab,” 19 were hematopoietic stem cell volunteers who did not qualify for the study and 11 failed the attention check. The final valid sample was 210, and each participant was paid RMB 3 as an experimental reward. Among them, 117 (55.71%) were female, and the average age was 24.77 ($SD = 5.06$) and ranged from 18 to 45 years old.

The method and process used in the present research are similar to Experiment 2a, but some differences should be noted. First, a control condition was added apart from the sense of power being manipulated. In the control condition, participants were asked to recall yesterday’s experience and write it down in detail (Wu et al., 2013). Second, the experimental setting was donating hematopoietic stem cells. After being briefed on hematopoietic stem cells and hematopoietic stem cell transplants, participants were asked to report whether they had been a hematopoietic stem cell volunteer. We then told participants who were not volunteers that as of January 31, 2020, more than 80,000 hematopoietic stem cell patients had yet to find a match. Thus, as many individuals as possible were expected to engage in the China Marrow Donor Program. Then, participants were presented with a picture of a public service advertisement to call for becoming a volunteer. The related data and information in this experiment are all from the official website of the China Marrow Donor Program. Third, the participants were told, in a non-public acknowledgment condition, that becoming a volunteer would increase the likelihood of patient finding matching hematopoietic stem cells. Conspicuous manipulation was tested for both conditions, such as “becoming a volunteer donor, I was able to show people my prosocial behavior” (Grace & Griffin, 2009). Fourth, the dependent variable was whether the participant left emails instead of reporting willingness to donate. Participants were asked to leave their email address if they were willing to be a voluntary donor so that we could send the Voluntary Donation of Hematopoietic Stem Cells consent form and other information to them and help them to make an appointment for a blood sample collection at the nearest donor site. Fifth, all participants were asked to report their need for status (Eastman et al., 1999). For example, “I was willing to engage

in prosocial behaviors that contributed to my status and prestige” ($\alpha = 0.80$).

4.2 Results and discussion

Manipulation tests. After the recall task was completed, the participants were asked to report their sense of power to test the effectiveness of power-sense manipulation. The results showed significant differences in power status between high-power-sense condition ($M = 5.32$, $SD = 1.47$), low-power-sense condition ($M = 3.04$, $SD = 1.72$) and control condition ($M = 4.20$, $SD = 1.52$), $F(2, 207) = 36.52$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.26$. The sense of power was manipulated. To test the effectiveness of conspicuous manipulation, participants reported conspicuous prosocial behavior in public or private after completing the “will you leave your email address” task. The results showed that prosocial behavior was more conspicuous in public ($M = 5.14$, $SD = 0.10$) than in private ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 0.10$, $F(2, 208) = 8.39$, $p = 0.004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$).

Donation. Overall, 122 of the 210 respondents, comprising 58.10 percent, (42 in the high-power-sense condition, 43 in the low-power-sense condition, and 37 in the control condition) said they would volunteer to be a hematopoietic stem cell donor. A logistic regression analysis was used to examine the influence of the sense of power on conspicuous prosocial behavior and add demographic variables to the regression model. The results showed the main effect of donation yielded by a power $\times$ public acknowledgment interaction was marginal significance (Wald = 3.39, $p = 0.065$, $Exp(B) = 1.95$). Demographic variables such as gender did not affect whether an individual left an email address ($ps > 0.1$). Furthermore, a chi-square test showed that, with donation publicly acknowledged, individuals in high-power-sense condition had a higher proportion of leaving their email addresses than individuals in the low-power-sense condition and the control condition, 78.79% (26) vs. 53.33% (16) vs. 52.50% (21), Pearson $\chi^2(2) = 6.35$, $p = 0.042$. However, with donation non-publicly acknowledged, individuals in the low-power-sense condition had higher rates of email retention than those of high-power-sense condition and the control condition, 71.10% (27) vs. 42.11% (16) vs. 51.61% (16), Pearson $\chi^2(2) = 6.66$, $p = 0.036$. H1 is again validated, as shown in Figure 2.

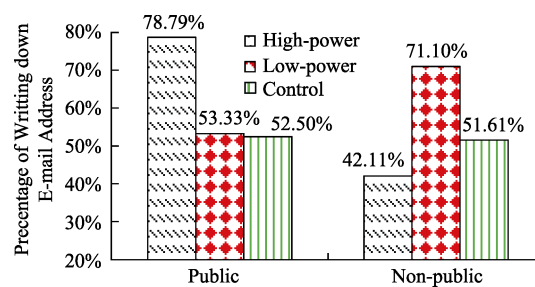


Figure 2. Effect of perceived power on donation behavior in Experiment 2B

Need for status. The moderated intermediary analysis method recommended by Muller and colleagues (2005) was used for regression analysis to test whether need of status mediates the interaction between the sense of power and public acknowledgment on leaving e-mail address. First, the sense of power, public acknowledgment, and their interactions were used to predict the dependent variable, namely leaving an email address, and the interaction between the sense of power and public acknowledgment significantly predicted the behavior of

leaving email addresses ($B = 0.76$, $S.E. = 0.35$, $Wald = 4.65$, $p = 0.031$). Second, the sense of power, public acknowledgment, and their interaction items were used to predict the need for status. The interaction had no significant effect on need for status ($B = -0.14$, $S.E. = 0.15$, $t = -0.92$, $p = 0.361$). The results suggest that the need for status was not the mediating role of the effects.

The results of Experiment 2b showed that when their donation was publicly acknowledged, high-power-sense participants were more likely to donate than individuals in the low-power-sense condition and the control condition. By contrast with non-public acknowledgment, participants in the low-power condition rather than in the control condition or the high-power-sense condition were more likely to donate. Thus, H1 was supported, that is, high-power-sense individuals were more likely to engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior. Moreover, the mediating role of the need for status in the interaction between the sense of power and public acknowledgment was not significant, that is, the need for status did not play a mediating role in the result. So this alternative explanation was excluded. Experiments 1, 2a, and 2b demonstrated the influence of the sense of power on conspicuous prosocial behavior by using different means to prime the sense of power and different ways of conspicuousness, but the three experiments could not indicate whether the high-power-sense individuals' conspicuous tendencies were of a general nature. Experiment 3 will explore this question.

5 Experiment 3: Power and conspicuous tendencies

The first three experiments confirmed that high- (vs. low-) power-sense individuals are more prone to conspicuous prosocial behavior. However, is this effect caused by general tendency to conspicuous behavior of high-power-sense individual or only in prosocial situations? Although previous research has shown that individuals with a low sense of power prefer conspicuous consumption (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009), this finding is insufficient to answer this question. Therefore, the goal of Experiment 3 was to explore whether high-power individuals have a general tendency to show off. Second, high-power-sense individuals engage in certain behaviors to maintain their power status (Garbinsky et al., 2014). As previously noted, one benefit of engaging in conspicuous prosocial behavior is to help the actor obtain social rewards. Power maintenance seems to be an intrinsic mechanism of high-power-sense individuals engaging in conspicuous prosocial behavior. Thus, another purpose of this experiment is to exclude this alternative interpretation.

5.1 Research design and process

Experiment 3 was a between-subjects design of 2 (power: high vs. low) $\times$ 2 (conspicuous dimension of product: prosocial vs. non-prosocial). A total of 240 participants took part in the study through the "marketing lab." A total of 237 participants (three of 240 failed the attention check) were offered RMB 2 as payment for the experiment, including 116 women (48.95%). The average age was 24.93 ($SD = 5.27$) and ranged from 16 to 45 years old.

The participants' sense of power was primed first, identical to Experiment 1. Participants then reported whether they owned an Apple Watch Series 5, and if they did, they were ineligible to participate in the experiment. Participants were then asked to imagine buying a smart-watch and were presented with an Apple Watch Series 5 advertisement. Among them, in the proso-

cial condition, the prosocial nature of the conspicuous product was emphasized by telling participants that the product was made of recycled materials and the slogan "show your commonweal 'core'." In the non-prosocial condition, the non-prosocial nature of the conspicuous product was emphasized by telling the participants of the product's robust data recording function and the slogan "show your digital intelligence 'core'." Participants' willingness to buy the watch was then measured, and power maintenance tendencies were measured, drawing on research by Garbinsky et al. (2014). Examples include "I want my current power status to stay the way that it is" ($\alpha = 0.88$). Also brand familiarity (Zhou et al., 2010) and brand loyalty were measured (Chiou & Droge, 2006), for example, "the Apple brand is very unfamiliar to me." ($\alpha = 0.82$), and "if I plan to buy a smart-watch, I will choose Apple" ($\alpha = 0.74$). All metrics were measured on a seven-point scale. Demographic variables were also collected.

5.2 Results and discussion

Manipulation checks. After the imagined task was completed, participants reported their sense of power, as in Experiment 1. The results showed that the participants' sense of power ($M_{high} = 5.47$, $SD = 1.54$; $M_{low} = 3.36$, $SD = 1.68$, $F(1, 235) = 96.66$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.29$) were successfully manipulated.

Purchase intention. An ANOVA on purchase intention revealed that the main effects of the sense of power ($F(1, 233) = 1.37$, $p = 0.243$) and conspicuous dimension ($F(1, 233) = 0.12$, $p = 0.733$), respectively, on the purchase intention were not significant. However, the interaction between the sense of power and conspicuous dimension of product significantly affected purchase intention, $F(1, 228) = 8.49$, $p = 0.004$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$. In particular, high-power-sense individuals showed stronger willingness to purchase conspicuous prosocial products ($M = 5.25$, $SD = 1.19$) than did the low-power-sense ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.49$), $F(1, 228) = 8.18$, $p = 0.005$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.04$. In terms of conspicuous but non-prosocial products, no significant difference was found between the high-power-sense and the low-power-sense ($M_{low} = 4.66$, $SD = 1.12$; $M_{high} = 4.66$, $SD = 1.46$, $F(1, 228) = 1.61$, $p = 0.205$). Figure 3 shows details. Monthly income (monthly consumption of students) significantly influenced purchase intention ($F(1, 228) = 4.23$, $p = 0.041$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.02$), but other co-variables did not affect the preference for conspicuous prosocial products ($ps > 0.1$).

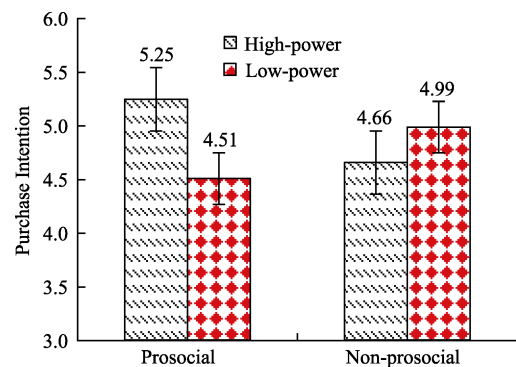


Figure 3. In Experiment 3, the power and the purchase intention of different conspicuous dimension products.

Power maintenance. The bootstrap method proposed by Hayes (2013) is used to test whether power maintenance is the

mediator of the results. Here, the interaction between the sense of power and product's conspicuous dimension are used as independent variables, power maintenance as a mediator variable, and purchase intention as a dependent variable. Models 4 and a sample of 5,000 were analyzed with co-variables, such as gender, age, monthly income, and educated level. The results showed that power maintenance significantly influenced the purchase intention ($B = 0.10$, $S.E. = 0.05$, $p = 0.049$). The direct effect of the interaction between the sense of power and product's conspicuous dimension on purchase intention is 0.39, 95% CI: $[-0.04, 0.81]$ including zero, indicating that the direct effect is not significant, the indirect effect is 0.11, 95% CI: $[-0.004, 0.26]$ containing zero, indicating that the indirect effect is not significant. Therefore, power maintenance plays no mediating role in the results.

The results of Experiment 3 showed that high- (vs. low-) power-sense individuals were more willing to purchase when the conspicuous dimension of the product was prosocial, whereas once the conspicuous dimension was non-prosocial, they had no difference in willingness. As a result, high-power-sense individuals do not have an extensive tendency to show off, and high-power-sense individuals prefer to show off in prosocial behavior. The results of the present study do not conflict with low-power-sense consumers' preference for conspicuous consumption because conspicuous products are symbolized as providing status (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009), while the conspicuous dimension in Experiment 3 did not involve status attributes. In addition, the experiment also revealed that power maintenance cannot explain the intrinsic mechanism of power perception affecting individuals to engage in prosocial behavior, thereby excluding the alternative explanation of power maintenance. The next experiment will explore the underlying mechanisms of effects and put the research into the context of a third form of prosocial behavior, namely, benevolence, to further test the robustness of the conclusion.

6 Experiment 4: The mediating role of self-presentation motivation

The main purposes of Experiment 4 were as follows. First, to test H2, we examined whether the self-presentation motivation mediates the influence of the sense of power on conspicuous prosocial behavior. Second, the robustness of the results was examined based on the perspective of benevolence and the individual's chronic power.

6.1 Pretest

The goal of this pretest was to identify the stimulus of Experiment 4, namely, blatant benevolence. Drawing on the blatant benevolence defined by Griskevicius and colleagues (2007), and integrating the context of China, we pre-selected three types of blatant benevolence (such as volunteering at a nursing home) and three types of non-blatant benevolence (such as frequent short showers to save water).

A total of 117 participants (76 of whom were women) took part in the pretest and were each paid RMB 1 for the experiment. Participants were asked to rate the conspicuousness of each benevolence (Griskevicius et al., 2007), for example, "to what extent do you think the following acts are public and visible to others" ($\alpha = 0.84$). Six types of benevolence were randomly arranged.

The results showed that the benevolence in the conspicuous condition were perceived as more public and more visible ($M =$

5.89, $SD = 0.92$) than those in the non-conspicuous condition ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 1.25$), $t(116) = 16.32$, paired $p < 0.01$. Compared with the benevolence in the non-conspicuous condition ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.31$), people were more likely to tell others that they had done the good deed in the conspicuous condition ($M = 5.40$, $SD = 1.30$), $t(116) = 14.19$, paired $p < 0.01$). Thus, the pretest confirmed that the benevolence in the conspicuous condition was more conspicuous than those in the non-conspicuous condition.

6.2 Experimental design and process

In Experiment 4, 213 participants were recruited through the "marketing lab" to carry out the online experiment. The final valid questionnaire was 206 (7 participants failed the attention check), and each participant was paid RMB 2 as payment for the experiment. Among them, 109 were female (52.91%), with an average age of 23.33 ($SD = 3.86$) and a range of 18~48 years.

The questionnaire is divided into four parts, and the first three parts appear in random order. The first part measures an individual's sense of power with eight items, adapted from Anderson et al.'s (2012) power scale, including "I can get him/her/them listen to what I say" ($\alpha = 0.93$). The second part measures the self-presentation motivation (Hewitt & Flett, 1993), "It's important for me to always be the best" and three other items ($\alpha = 0.88$). Part 3 measures the tendency to engage in three types of blatant benevolence ($\alpha = 0.78$) derived from the pretest. Demographic information was collected and gratitude was expressed.

6.3 Results and discussion

Willingness to engage. A linear regression model verified that the blatant benevolence type of willingness to engage was yielded by power with other co-variables. The results demonstrated that perceived power significantly influenced participants' willingness to participate in blatant benevolence ($B = 0.26$, $S.E. = 0.07$, $t(201) = 3.55$, $p < 0.001$). The co-variables (such as gender and age) had no significant effect on the willingness to engage ($ps > 0.1$).

Self-presentation motivation. With demographics variables such as gender introduced in a linear regression analysis, we used the regression model to verify the effect of power perception on the self-presentation motivation. The results showed that the sense of power had a significant positive effect on the self-presentation motivation ($B = 0.36$, $S.E. = 0.07$, $t(201) = 4.93$, $p < 0.001$). However, the other variables had no significant effect on self-presentation motivation ($ps > 0.1$).

We use the bootstrap method proposed by Hayes (2013) and a PROCESS plug-in to test the mediating effect of the results, with the sense of power considered as an independent variable, self-presentation motivation as a mediating variable, and willingness to engage as a dependent variable. Models 4 and a sample of 5,000 were analyzed with the co-variables, such as gender, age, monthly income (student monthly consumption), and educated level. The results demonstrated that self-presentation motivation significantly influenced participants' willingness to participate in blatant benevolence ($B = 0.20$, $S.E. = 0.07$, $p = 0.003$). The direct effect of the sense of power on participation willingness of blatant benevolence was 0.18, 95% CI: $[0.03, 0.32]$ without zero, indicating that the direct effect was significant. In addition, the indirect effect was 0.07, 95% CI: $[0.03, 0.14]$ without zero, indicating that the indirect effect is significant, as shown in Figure 4. Therefore, the self-presen-

tation motivation played a mediating role in the influence of power perception on the participation willingness of blatant benevolence. The results supported H2.

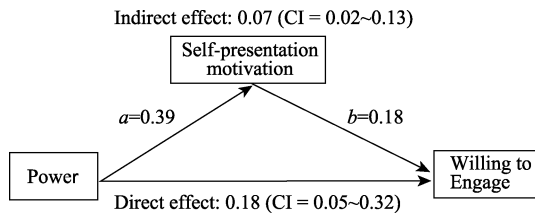


Figure 4. Mediation of self-presentation in Experiment 4.

The results of Experiment 4 showed that the sense of power affected the participants' willingness to participate in blatant benevolence. The higher the sense of power, the more willing the participants were to engage in blatant benevolence. More importantly, Experiment 4 also showed that the self-presentation motivation played a mediating role in the effect, and H2 was supported.

7 General discussion

7.1 Conclusions

The purpose of the present research is to investigate the influence of the sense of power on conspicuous prosocial behavior and its underlying mechanism. Five experiments were conducted to examine the influence through three types of behavior, namely, "pro-social product purchase," "donation," and "benevolence." High-power-sense individuals were more willing to purchase conspicuous prosocial products than low-power-sense individuals (Experiments 1 and 3). With donation publicly acknowledged, high-power-sense individuals were more likely than low-power-sense individuals to donate (Experiments 2a and 2b) and to donate more (Experiment 2a). Given that public acknowledgment confers the trait of conspicuous donation (Grace & Griffin, 2009), the results demonstrated that high-power-sense individuals prefer engaging in conspicuous prosocial behaviors. Compared with low-power-sense individuals, high-power-sense individuals were more willing to participate in the blatant benevolence (Experiment 4). Overall, the results of the five experiments revealed that high (vs. low) power-sense individuals are more likely to engage in conspicuous prosocial behaviors. The results of Experiment 4 also showed that self-presentation motivation played a mediating role in the results.

7.2 Discussion

Our conclusion is the embodiment of the costly signal theory (Grafen, 1990). According to this theory, altruism is a communicative signal that conveys not only a person's prosocial nature but also a person's ability to bear costs (Bird & Smith, 2005). In other words, in addition to showing that a person is prosocial, altruism can also indicate that a person has sufficient time, energy, money, or other valuable resources. Thus, high-powered-sense individuals are willing to engage in visible and conspicuous prosocial behaviors.

Previous research has shown that prosocial behavior results in warm feelings to individuals (Ali & Bodur, 2020) and promotes social harmony. Low-power-sense individuals are thought to not only have a preference for warmth-related information but are also easily persuaded by such information (Dubois et al., 2016). We believe that this finding is not inconsistent

with the conclusions of the present research. First, the conspicuous nature of the behavior may reduce the expression of purely altruistic motives. Low-power-sense individuals who are dominated by altruistic motivation may feel less warm inside by engaging in conspicuous prosocial behavior or even lose warmth when they realize the behavior has a utilitarian purpose. Second, participating prosocial behavior can also emphasize the individuals' attributes of competence. For example, in good cause-related marketing, there are not only ads that highlight the warm attributes of prosocial behavior (being kind to environmental life), but also that highlight the competence attributes (direct economic benefits) (Lu & Sinha, 2017). Especially in the context of consumption green products for oneself, consumers may not be able to feel the warmth value of their behavior very directly. By contrast, conspicuous traits help the actor to show others that they are capable and willing to engage in prosocial behavior. As a result, high-power-sense individuals who are sensitive to ability attributes are more willing to engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior.

In addition, the present study is related to other studies in the fields of prosocial behavior, morality, and self-interest and altruistic behavior, but many differences are found. For example, some researchers discuss the influence of social comparison on prosocial behavior (Zheng et al., 2015). However, social comparison and the sense of power are two concepts with different connotations and denotations. Social comparison is the process of acquiring self-knowledge and discovering the true self through up-down or horizontal comparison (Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). Social comparison can be a broad comparison of aspects (such as achievement) between the individual and the referent or a comparison of mutual power. Although social comparison and the sense of power are two different variables, previous studies also suggest that when a social comparison of power is made, the downward comparison may lead to the perception of power, thereby enhancing the performance of prosocial behavior.

Research on resource scarcity, for example, has found that when information suggests resource scarcity, people will focus on their self-interest (such as leading to selfish behavior), at the expense of others' interests. Satisfy oneself indirectly through altruistic means (e.g., generosity) is also possible (Roux et al., 2015). This conclusion seems to be the opposite of the study of prosocial behavior and the sense of power because lack of power is often due to lack of control over valuable resources, and scarcity of resources also leads to a low sense of power. However, why do previous studies generally agree that lack of power promotes prosocial behavior? This inconsistency motivates us to further explore the mechanism of the influence of power perception on prosocial behavior. However, the present research, consistent with previous research, concludes that competitive altruism (van Vugt et al., 2007) tends to dominate behavioral tendencies when resource scarcity prompts individuals to focus on their interests (Roux et al., 2015).

The influence of power motive and social existence on prosocial behavior has been previously discussed. Power motivation and the sense of power discussed in this article are two concepts with different connotations. Power motivation focuses on people's seeking power, which is the inner desire for power and is a relatively stable personality trait (Wang and Dai, 2020), but high (low) power motivation is not equal to high (low) sense of power. Individuals with a low sense of power may

have high power motivation because of their desire for power, whereas individuals with a high sense of power may have high power motivation because of their high power motivation. Showing high power motivation because of the perceived instability of power is also possible. Compared with power motive, power is a relatively static state of mind, which is the result of individuals having power or lacking power. The power motive is often inner desire and expectation of the power state when individuals are at the forefront of seeking power. In summary, power motivation and the sense of power are two variables related to power, but each has its emphasis. Previous studies on power motivation and social clues (Wang and Dai, 2020) have been cited in the present research from one aspect: when power motivation is strong and social clues exist, prosocial behavior will be promoted. The present research also expands the conclusion of the existing researches from another angle, that is, for impression management, even those who have a high sense of power will engage in prosocial behavior.

Finally, the influence of power on morality (Lammers et al., 2015) and selfishness (Dubois et al., 2015) has been examined in previous literature, and the prosocial behavior discussed in this article is not identical to morality or selfishness. Morality refers to the disciplines and norms of human behavior that everyone should follow (Lammers et al., 2015), whereas prosocial behavior is voluntary and non-required positive behavior (Eisenberg et al., 2006). Prosocial behavior can be a type of moral behavior, but it is not the proper behavior required by moral norms. Moreover, although selfishness and immorality can sometimes occur together, selfishness is not necessarily immoral (Dubois et al., 2015). Selfishness emphasizes the individual's self-interest or pleasure in the first place, and unethical behavior refers specifically to behavior that is illegal, morally unacceptable to the general population or dishonest (Mazar et al., 2008), including cheating and lying. Therefore, moral, non-selfish, and pro-social behavior cannot simply be equated because pro-social behavior (such as buying green products) can be motivated by either self-interest or altruistic motives. Whether the behavior is pro-social is not an absolute indicator to judge morality and immorality.

7.3 Research contributions

The theoretical contribution of the present research is mainly reflected in the following aspects. First, the present study examined the relationship between the sense of power and conspicuous prosocial behavior from three types of prosocial behavior. According to Cai and colleagues (2016), previous studies focus on how the sense of power affects prosocial behavior from the perspectives of individual traits, situational factors, and power connotation. However, this study is based on the conspicuous characteristics of prosocial behavior to explore the influence of the sense of power on an individual's prosocial behavior. Therefore, the conclusions of this research enrich the literature on prosocial behavior. By contrast, the research finds out the new factors that make the high-power-sense individuals participate in prosocial behavior and then provides a new perspective to re-examine the influence of power on consumer behavior. The behavior of consumers with a different sense of power may be a signal to the outside world to shape a certain image. For example, individuals with a high (low) sense of power tend to pay more attention to competence-related (warmth-related) information and are more persuaded by competence-related (warmth-related) information (Dubois et al.,

2016). This finding can also be interpreted as that high- (low-) power-sense individuals build their own competent (warm, approachable) image in front of their "audience". Consumers with a low sense of power can also create a status image in front of their "audience" by purchasing conspicuous products (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009).

Second, this study explains the intrinsic mechanism of the results. Previous studies have focused on the concept, measurement means, motivation and positive effects of self-presentation. Examples include helping individuals achieve self-realization, boosting self-esteem, improving self-evaluation, and generating positive emotions (Sezer et al., 2018). However, previous studies didn't deal with the influence of the sense of power on self-presentation and the self-presentation value of conspicuous prosocial behavior. The study proved that the sense of power is one of the antecedents of self-presentation, and the activation of self-presentation motivation helps individuals to engage in visible prosocial behavior. Therefore, the present research is the enrichment and improvement of the existing literature in the field of self-presentation. At the same time, the research also expands the related research of foreground behavior. Goffman (1959) distinguished the behavior of all social roles in the process of social interaction into foreground and background behavior. Foreground behavior is an act of selective display that the public sees and receives a particular meaning from it. Among them, altruistic foreground behavior is characterized by unrequited help to others (Avolio & Locke, 2002). Previous studies have focused on the forms of entrepreneurial foreground behavior (Huang et al., 2013) and their effect on corporate brand and performance (Zhu et al., 2014). In the present study, the prosocial influence of foreground behavior is generalized from entrepreneurs to general individuals with a high sense of power. Therefore, our conclusion is also a useful supplement to the social dramatic theory.

Third, because social class is one of the sources of power, this study is also a supplement to the research on the relationship between social class and prosocial behavior. Previous studies have suggested that social class and power have similar effects. They have also found that individuals from higher social classes tend to engage in egoistically unethical behavior, while those from lower social classes tend to engage in altruistically unethical behavior because perceived power mediates the relationship between social class and unethical behavior (Dubois et al., 2015). This finding demonstrates that the rise of social class and sense of power will promote individuals to pay attention to their interests. However, social class and power are two related but distinct concepts (Rucker et al., 2012). A person with low power can have high status, or a person can have high power but not necessarily high social class. Furthermore, prosocial behavior and moral (immoral) behavior are two different concepts. From the perspective of the sense of power, the research develops the research conclusion about the influence of social class on prosocial behavior.

7.4 Managerial implication

First, the present study is of great significance for how to effectively guide high-power-sense individuals to participate in pro-social undertakings. The results reveal that individuals with a high sense of power are more willing to participate in prosocial behavior with conspicuous characteristics, and marketing practitioners can give visibility to prosocial behaviors to meet the needs of high-power-sense individuals to show themselves

to others and establish a pro-social reputation, thereby encouraging them to engage in pro-social behavior. For example, companies can increase the conspicuousness of pro-social products by adding green logos to green products, promoting the willingness of high-power-sense individuals to buy their products. Charitable organizations can effectively persuade high-power-sense individuals to engage in pro-social behavior such as benevolence or donation.

Second, the results of the present study will help to guide marketing practitioners to effectively carry out pro-social marketing activities. In persuading individuals with high (low) power-sense to engage in prosocial behavior, marketing practitioners should highlight (avoid highlighting) the conspicuous features of prosocial behavior. Marketing practitioners can also change individuals' sense of power by playing heavy or light bass music (± 15 dB) or by controlling environmental smells (cold or warm) (Hsu et al., 2015; Madzharov et al., 2015), matching high- (low-) power sense with conspicuous (non-conspicuous) prosocial behavior. This finding will help marketing practitioners to achieve the effective persuasion of individuals to engage in pro-social behavior.

7.5 Limitations and future research

The theoretical hypothesis of the present research has been verified, but some limitations remain. First, the present research focuses on the reasons why high-power-sense individuals engage in conspicuous prosocial behavior but not on the reasons why low-power-sense individuals dislike conspicuous prosocial behavior. Future research can further explore the mechanism of its effect. In addition, the deep-seated purpose that causes the high-power-sense individuals to have high self-presentation motivation may be a desire for competence and respect, or a desire to be liked, or both. Future research can further differentiate and measure the motivation for self-presentation.

Second, although the present research verified the influence of the sense of power on individuals' participation in conspicuous prosocial behavior and its internal mechanism, it did not explore its boundary conditions. Future studies may explore the moderating factors of this effect, such as whether the signals conveyed by high-power-sense individuals can be correctly received by their "audience," which may be a potential boundary condition to be further explored.

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