

Reputation improves for those who give without calculation

July 19 2016, by Bill Hathaway



Credit: Kar Tr – stock.adobe.com

We often help others without weighing the costs and benefits—agreeing immediately to grant favors to friends, or taking on our romantic partners' burdens without question. People even risk their own lives for a stranger, acting without considering the danger.

This presents an evolutionary puzzle, because such uncalculating cooperation seems to ignore self-interest. So why do [people](#) help others without calculating, even when doing so might come at a great cost?

New experiments conducted by researchers at Yale and Harvard help to demonstrate a new answer to this puzzle. "There are reputational benefits to being uncalculating," said David Rand, senior author of the paper published July 18 in the journal *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

"People who are observed being generous without thought are viewed as more trustworthy than those who want to know the cost."

And participants were less likely to calculate the cost of helping another if they knew they were being observed.

"This shows that wanting to maintain a good reputation can motivate uncalculating cooperation," said Jillian Jordan, first author on the paper.

More information: Uncalculating cooperation is used to signal trustworthiness, *PNAS*, www.pnas.org/cgi/doi/10.1073/pnas.1601280113

Provided by Yale University

Citation: Reputation improves for those who give without calculation (2016, July 19) retrieved 23 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2016-07-reputation.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.