



Self-respect and responsibility: Understanding individuals' entitlement beliefs and their association with concern for others' rights

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ABSTRACT

People differ in their understanding of the (civic) rights they are endowed with in modern societies. Whereas a perception of having more rights than others has been linked to over-individualistic attitudes and negative interpersonal behavior, a perception of having the same rights as others (i.e., self-respect) can be assumed to facilitate a balance between concern for one's own and others' rights. In two cross-sectional studies, we showed that self-respect was associated with concern for human rights and with concern for the rights of future generations even when controlling for other entitlement beliefs. The results also showed that a feeling of social responsibility mediated these relationships. The broader consequence for balancing rights and duties to achieve social harmony are discussed.

1. Introduction

Modern societies endow individuals with personal rights and freedoms in basic laws and constitutions. Individual freedom is also at the core of influential theories of justice (Honneth, 2014; Rawls, 1971). However, an exclusive focus on the individual's ability to secure their own rights and to ensure that they cannot be restricted by others (Passini & Emiliani, 2009) can lead to an individualistic view of the concept of rights (Passini, 2011). According to Passini and Emiliani (2009), such an understanding is mainly found among people who hold predominantly individualistic attitudes and values, and this leads to a self-centered perspective on the relationship with society and its members. In psychological research, this type of entitlement belief has been described as psychological entitlement (cf. Campbell et al., 2004) or excessive entitlement (Fisk, 2010). It describes an exaggerated entitlement belief of deserving more than others, which has been associated with more aggressive claiming of rights, unethical behavior (Lee et al., 2019), negative attitudes towards societal outgroups (Anastasio & Rose, 2014), and interpersonal conflict and hostility (Moeller et al., 2009).

Such a one-sided individual entitlement belief negates the relational aspects in the concept of rights and the connection to concern for others'

rights, and the individual with their rights is seen in a social vacuum (Passini, 2011). Such self-perceptions can contribute to endangering social harmony and cohesion in a society. In this research, we take a closer look at an entitlement concept that focuses on *equal* rights and entitlements (i.e., self-respect; see Honneth, 1995; Renger, 2018; Renger et al., 2020; Renger et al., 2023) and suggest that, unlike other self-evaluations, self-respect is connected to concern for one's own *and* others' rights.

1.1. A sense of equal entitlement

Self-respect,¹ defined as a person's perception of having the same rights as others, has been suggested in the philosophical literature (Boxill, 1976; Darwall, 1977; Feinberg, 1970; Honneth, 1995; Presbey, 2003), but has only recently received attention in the psychological literature (Renger, 2018; Renger et al., 2020). Self-respect is formed and internalized by the treatment of others as an equal counterpart who is respected and taken seriously (Möller & Danermark, 2007; Renger et al., 2020) and can be hindered through discrimination or social injustice (e.g., Augoustinos & Reynolds, 2001; Brooks, 2019; Martiny et al., 2023; Peterman, 2018; Sisselman-Borgia et al., 2021; Sue et al., 2007).

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¹ Note that another definition of self-respect has been suggested in the psychological literature. Clucas (2020) for example examines appraisal self-respect which is defined as an individual's appraisal of their adherence to own moral standards (see also Clucas et al. (2022)), that is having an honorable character of high quality (Kumashiro et al. (2002)).

1.2. Self-respect and concern for others' rights

As a sense of equal entitlement, self-respect has been found to predict assertive behavior but not aggressive reactions in contexts of unjust treatment (Renger, 2018). Similarly, disadvantaged group members' self-respect has been associated with normative but not with non-normative (e.g., violent) collective action intentions (Renger et al., 2020). In contrast to psychological entitlement (Campbell et al., 2004) or excessive entitlement (Fisk, 2010) which have been linked to aggressive claim-making regardless of others (Anastasio & Rose, 2014; Lee et al., 2019), self-respect thus appears to be limited to claiming equal rights without violating the rights of others. In other words, if I have the same rights as others, then others have the same rights as me. Following Tomlinson (2013), people with high self-respect can be described as having a legitimate entitlement belief (in contrast to an over-entitlement belief). Whereas legitimate entitlement refers to rightful claims, for example regarding rights based on one's status as a citizen or human being, over-entitlement refers to claims that exceed what is deemed appropriate (based on one's human status or norms) (Tomlinson, 2013).

1.3. Entitlement beliefs and human rights attitudes

Individuals differ in the extent to which they endorse human rights and accept restrictions of human rights in specific situations (Cohrs et al., 2007; McFarland, 2010). Human rights endorsement is strongly predicted positively by a sense of identification with all humanity, principled moral reasoning, benevolence, and dispositional empathy (McFarland, 2010). It is negatively predicted by generalized prejudice, authoritarianism, social dominance orientation, and right-wing political ideology (Cohrs et al., 2007; McFarland, 2015).

To our knowledge, there is no prior psychological research on a connection between self-views or individual entitlement beliefs with positive or negative attitudes towards human rights. Based on prior findings that over-entitlement beliefs, such as psychological entitlement, are connected to aggressiveness and negative attitudes towards societal outgroups (Anastasio & Rose, 2014; Lee et al., 2019), and findings that group entitlement (which has been conceptualized as an application of individual entitlement to the group level) predicts lower support for democratic rights for outgroup members compared with ingroup members (Endevelt et al., 2021), we assumed that a perception of having more rights than others should be negatively connected to concern for others' rights.

Past research has shown that self-respect (i.e., a perception of having the same rights as others) is neither linked to aggressive forms of protest (Renger, 2018) nor to non-normative collective action intentions (Renger et al., 2020). In particular, findings have revealed that people with high self-respect engage in socially acceptable protest but only up to the point where others' rights would be violated. This research has provided the first *indirect* evidence that self-respect might also be associated with a concern for others' rights. In the present research, however, we investigate this concern *directly* and test whether self-respect positively predicts positive attitudes towards others' rights.

1.4. The present research

In Study 1, we investigated individuals' perception of having the same rights (i.e., self-respect), of having more rights, and of having fewer rights than others. The latter concept was added to see if a sense of equal entitlement (i.e., self-respect) can be distinguished from both a perception of having more rights and of having fewer rights than others. We then tested associations between the three entitlement beliefs and human rights attitudes (i.e., human rights endorsement and acceptance of human rights restrictions; Studies 1 and 2). We hypothesized that whereas a perception of having more rights than others should be negatively associated with human rights endorsement and positively with acceptance of human rights restrictions, self-respect as a perception

of having the same rights as others should be positively connected to human rights endorsement and negatively to acceptance of human rights restrictions. No specific hypothesis was advanced regarding the perception of having fewer rights.

In Study 2, we additionally included a more future-related concept of concern for others' rights, namely social generativity (Morselli & Passini, 2015). Social generativity refers to consideration of future generations and therefore to a concern for future generations' rights. We also investigated social responsibility as a mediator for the relationship between entitlement beliefs (same/more/less) and both human rights attitudes and social generativity. As Berkowitz and Lutterman (1968); see also Trnka & Trundle, 2017) pointed out, social responsibility can be described as the inclination to display care for the well-being of others, and adopting an attitude that leads to actions benefiting collective welfare.

Ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the first author's institution. Participants in all studies gave their informed consent prior to their participation and agreed to data protection declarations concerning collection, storage, and publication of their data.

2. Study 1

Whereas in past research over-entitlement and psychological entitlement have been conceptualized as including different contexts, such as expectations of getting good grades despite of low performance, or of deserving more rights or special treatment (e.g., Campbell et al., 2004), in the present research we focused exclusively on expectations of possessing more basic rights than others. Study 1 had two aims: First, we investigated whether entitlement beliefs regarding same (i.e., self-respect), more, and fewer rights represent distinct entitlement beliefs and can be empirically distinguished. Second, we tested associations with human rights endorsement and willingness to restrict human rights.

2.1. Methods

2.1.1. Participants

The participants were contacted online (e.g., via social media), using an Internet questionnaire constructed using Limesurvey, a survey-generating tool (<http://www.limesurvey.org>). Respondents were advised that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. They were able to participate in a lottery to win one of three 50 Euro vouchers. The scales were drafted in German and were part of larger questionnaire. The data for the self-respect scale of Study 1 has been used in another article investigating income as *antecedent* of self-respect (Renger et al., 2024). In contrast, the present paper focuses on *consequences* of self-respect. Scales for perception of having more/fewer rights as well as for human rights attitudes (endorsement/restriction) from this data set have not been used or reported elsewhere.

A total of 298 people (66.8 % women) completed the questionnaire. Participants' age ranged from 18 to 80 years ($M = 33.69$, $SD = 16.14$). Regarding their education level, 34.6 % reported having a university degree (diploma, BA, MA), 41.9 % had the Abitur (high school diploma that qualifies for university entrance in Germany), 18.8 % reported having a lower school diploma, and 0.7 % had no school diploma (4.0 % missing values). Job-wise, 46.3 % stated that they were employed (or within their apprenticeship), 39.3 % were university students, 3.0 % high school students, 1.3 % unemployed, and, 5.7 % retired (4.4 % missing values). Finally, 40 people (13.4 %) indicated that they (or their parents or grandparents) have a migration background.

2.1.2. Measures

All measures employed a seven-point response scale (ranging from 1 = not true at all to 7 = completely true). Means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach's alpha are shown in Table 1.

Table 1
Means, standard deviations, pearson correlation coefficients, and Cronbach's Alpha (Study 1).

| Variable | M | SD | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|-------------------------|-------|-------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|--------|
| 1. Self-respect | 5.85 | 1.05 | <i>0.82</i> | | | | | | |
| 2. More rights | 1.69 | 1.02 | -0.15** | <i>0.74</i> | | | | | |
| 3. Fewer rights | 1.73 | 1.06 | -0.44*** | 0.19*** | <i>0.84</i> | | | | |
| 4. Rights endorsement | 5.70 | 0.90 | 0.21*** | -0.05 | -0.13* | <i>0.69</i> | | | |
| 5. Rights restriction | 2.32 | 0.81 | -0.19*** | 0.03 | 0.19*** | -0.34*** | <i>0.70</i> | | |
| 6. Gender | 1.33 | 0.47 | -0.03 | 0.02 | 0.15** | -0.17** | -0.07 | - | |
| 7. Age | 33.69 | 16.14 | 0.03 | -0.19*** | 0.09 | 0.07 | -0.15** | 0.12* | - |
| 8. Migration background | 0.14 | 0.34 | -0.13* | 0.12* | 0.09 | -0.08 | 0.19*** | 0.02 | -0.13* |

Note. All the variables extended from 1 to 7 except for gender (1 = female, 2 = male), age (from 18 to 80), and migration background (0 = no, 1 = yes). Cronbach's α in italics on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$.
** $p < .01$.
*** $p < .001$.

2.1.2.1. Perception of having the same rights as others (i.e., self-respect). Participants' perception of having the same rights as others was measured with Renger's (2018) four-item self-respect scale ($\alpha = 0.82$; e.g., "In everyday life I always see myself as a person with equal rights;" all items and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis loadings are listed in Table 2).

2.1.2.2. Perception of having more rights than others. In order to tap participants' perception of having more rights than others we developed four items ($\alpha = 0.74$; e.g. "I am definitely entitled to more rights than others;" all items and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis loadings are listed in Table 2).

2.1.2.3. Perception of having fewer rights than others. To measure

Table 2
Exploratory factor analysis (Study 1) and confirmatory factor analysis (Study 2) on perception of having the same (i.e., self-respect), more or fewer rights.

| | Study 1 | | | Study 2 |
|--|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------|
| | EFA-F1 | EFA-F2 | EFA-F3 | CFA |
| Self-respect | | | | |
| If I look at myself, I see a person who is equally worthy compared with others | 0.74 | -0.08 | -0.33 | 0.64 |
| I am always aware that I have the same dignity as all other human beings | 0.73 | -0.15 | -0.34 | 0.74 |
| In everyday life I always see myself as a person with equal rights | 0.67 | -0.16 | -0.45 | 0.70 |
| I always see myself as a person of equal worth compared with other people in my life | 0.76 | -0.20 | -0.38 | 0.70 |
| Perception of having more rights than others | | | | |
| I am definitely entitled to more rights than others | 0.16 | 0.60 | 0.15 | 0.82 |
| I think I am entitled to more than my fellow human beings | 0.19 | 0.68 | 0.26 | 0.49 |
| I sometimes think that I have more basic rights than others | 0.02 | 0.69 | 0.10 | 0.85 |
| I think I am entitled to more rights compared to the rest of the population | 0.14 | 0.63 | 0.15 | 0.87 |
| Perception of having fewer rights than others | | | | |
| I think I am entitled to less than my peers | 0.46 | 0.20 | 0.73 | 0.85 |
| I sometimes think I have fewer rights than others | 0.40 | 0.11 | 0.87 | 0.85 |
| Sometimes I feel that I am entitled to fewer basic rights than others | 0.38 | 0.21 | 0.78 | 0.85 |
| I believe that I am entitled to fewer rights compared to the rest of the population | 0.30 | 0.21 | 0.63 | 0.88 |

Note. Bold type indicates highest loadings. EFA-F1, -F2, -F3 means Exploratory Factor Analysis Factor 1, Factor 2, Factor 3, respectively.

participants' perception of having fewer rights than others we developed four items ($\alpha = 0.84$; e.g. "I believe that I am entitled to fewer rights compared to the rest of the population;" all items and exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis loadings are listed in Table 2).

2.1.2.4. Human Rights Attitudes. We used the endorsement and importance of human rights scale by Cohrs et al. (2007; five items, $\alpha = .69$; e.g., "Human rights are of concern to all of us, so everyone should consider how he or she can be committed to the adherence of human rights"). Additionally, we used the restriction of human rights/civil liberties scale (Cohrs et al., 2007; seven items, $\alpha = 0.70$; e.g., "There are times when people should be kept from expressing their opinion"). All items are listed in the Supplementary Material – Section 1.

2.1.3. Data analysis

First, in order to verify the distinction of the concept of self-respect in relation to the perception of having more and fewer rights than others, we performed an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Second, after reporting bivariate correlations, we used structural equation modelling (SEM) to analyze the association of self-respect, perception of having more rights or fewer rights with human rights attitudes. The SEM was estimated via maximum likelihood using the Mplus 8 software program (Muthén & Muthén, 2012) and was conducted with latent variable modelling. Model fit was assessed using the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and Standardized Root Mean Squared Residual (SRMR). Consistent with the recommendations of Hu and Bentler (1999), goodness-of-fit criteria were used to quantify acceptable (CFI and TLI > 0.90, SRMR <0.10, RMSEA <0.08), and excellent fit (CFI and TLI > 0.95, SRMR <0.08, RMSEA <0.06). Moreover, we used bootstrapping techniques to test the effects (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). Each 95 % confidence interval (CI) was bias corrected and based on a 10,000 bootstrap sample. Statistical post-hoc power analysis, conducted using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) revealed an 80 % chance (two-tailed) of detecting an effect size of $r = |0.14|$ with the current sample size. As concerns SEM, treating the path model as a multiple linear regression analysis with three predictors of human rights attitudes confirmed that the current sample size had sufficient statistical power (power $[1-\beta] = 0.999$) to detect $b > |0.10|$.

2.2. Results

Bivariate correlations showed that self-respect was negatively related to both a perception of having more and fewer rights. Self-respect was positively correlated to human rights endorsement and negatively to the acceptance of human rights restrictions, while a perception of having fewer rights was significantly correlated to these variables in the reverse direction. Perception of having more rights was not significantly correlated with either.

As concerns the distinction between self-respect and perception of having more or fewer rights, the scree plot of the EFA (maximum likelihood with oblimin rotation criteria) suggested three factors with eigenvalues greater than one: 4.06, 2.06, 1.50, 0.71, 0.64, etc. Loadings were all >0.40 (see Table 2).

We then regressed the two human rights attitude dimensions simultaneously on the three entitlement beliefs (self-respect and perception of possessing more and fewer rights), using latent variable modelling. Modification indices suggested correlating two error terms, both between error terms of items referring to the same latent variable. The SEM acceptably fit the data: CFI = 0.93, TLI = 0.92, RMSEA = 0.04, SRMR = 0.05. All items loaded on the intended latent variable with significant factor loadings ($p < .001$; for items and factor loadings see Supplementary Material – Section 1). As can be seen in Fig. 1, path coefficients revealed that both human rights endorsement ($b = 0.30$, $CI_{95\%} = [0.13; 0.46]$, $p = .003$, with a variance explained of 9 %) and acceptance of human rights restriction ($b = -0.32$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.52; -0.12]$, $p = .01$, with a variance explained of 17 %) were just predicted by self-respect, but not by perception of having more or fewer rights. The same model was tested adding gender, age, and migration background as control variables. All the significant paths remained, and no paths either gained or lost statistical significance (see Supplementary Material – Section 2 for all the path coefficients). Gender (coded as 1 = female, 2 = male) negatively predicted human rights endorsement ($b = -0.20$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.33; -0.09]$, $p = .002$), while age and migration background (coded as 0 = no, 1 = yes) did not predict any variable.

3. Study 2

Study 1 showed that the different perceptions of rights entitlement (same/more/less) can be empirically distinguished. Both self-respect (feeling entitled to the same rights) and perception of having fewer rights than others were (bivariately) related to human rights endorsement and willingness to restrict human rights (with opposite signs). When including all three entitlement beliefs, only self-respect emerged as a significant predictor. In Study 2, we aimed to replicate that the different entitlement beliefs can be empirically distinguished. Regarding criterion variables, we additionally focused on concern for ensuring rights for future generations (i.e., generativity). Based on the seminal work by Erikson (1950), social generativity encompasses a deep understanding and recognition of the interconnection between our current actions, the welfare of future generations and the fundamental rights of people yet to be born (Morselli & Passini, 2015). In this sense, we expected that the more people are aware that they possess the same rights as others, the more they will be respectful of rights in an extended time perspective.

In addition, we looked at social responsibility as a potential mediator between self-respect and the outcome variables. A perception of having the same rights as others should be associated with feelings of social responsibility and further translate into respect for others' rights. As studies (e.g., Cohrs et al., 2007) have shown, feeling socially responsible is linked to greater attention to the rights of other people and to more altruistic and pro-social behaviors.

3.1. Methods

3.1.1. Participants

The participants were contacted online, using an Internet questionnaire constructed using Limesurvey. The participants were recruited by means of a snowballing procedure. Specifically, graduate students were asked to recruit adult individuals. Respondents were advised that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would remain anonymous and confidential. No compensation was offered. The questionnaire was drafted in Italian.

A total of 402 Italians (65.9 % women) responded by accessing the website and filling out the questionnaire. Participant ages ranged from

18 to 76 years ($M = 34.88$, $SD = 14.35$). As regards their level of education, 3.8 % declared they had completed middle school, 43.5 % declared they had earned a high school diploma, 47.5 % had a Bachelor's degree and 5.3 % a Master's or Ph.D. qualification. Job-wise, 43 % stated they were employees, 21.9 % university students, 16.2 % student workers, 10.7 % self-employed, 3.8 % unemployed, and, 3.8 % retired.

3.1.2. Measures

The same measures as in Study 1 were used. In addition, participants completed the following measures, both on a seven-point response scale (ranging from 1 = not at all to 7 = very much). Reliabilities are shown in Table 3.

3.1.2.1. Social responsibility. Four items from the Social Responsibility Scale (Berkowitz & Lutterman, 1968) were used to measure individual likelihood of contributing to the greater good of one's own society. A sample item is "I think we should all try to enhance the welfare of others through our actions" (all items are listed in the Supplementary Material – Section 1).

3.1.2.2. Generativity. The 6-item generativity scale by Morselli and Passini (2015) was used. A sample item is "I think that I am responsible for ensuring a state of well-being for future generations" (all items are listed in Supplementary Materials – Section 1).

3.1.3. Data analysis

In order to verify the distinction of the concept of self-respect in relation to the perception of having more and fewer rights than others, we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). We used the same model fit indices as for the SEM in Study 1. We then tested a mediation model with self-respect, perception of having more rights and perception of having fewer rights as predictors, social responsibility as mediator and human rights endorsement, acceptance of human rights restrictions, and generativity as criteria (see Fig. 2) using latent variable modelling. The significance of indirect effects via social responsibility was evaluated with Mplus (Delta Method; Taylor et al., 2008). Statistical post-hoc power analysis revealed an 80 % chance (two-tailed) of detecting an effect size of $r = |0.12|$ with the current sample size and sufficient statistical power (power $[1-\beta] = 0.999$) to detect $b > |0.10|$ in SEM.

3.2. Results

CFA with maximum likelihood estimation was used to verify the fit of the three-factor solution (self-respect, perception of possessing more and fewer rights than others). The model fit the data in an acceptable way: CFI = 0.98, TLI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.05.² Factor loadings of exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis are shown in Table 2 and were all significant at $p < .001$. For means, standard deviations, bivariate correlations, and Cronbach's Alpha see Table 3. Self-respect was positively correlated with social responsibility, while perception of having more rights and perception of having fewer rights were both negatively correlated with social responsibility. Social responsibility was positively correlated with human rights endorsement and with generativity and negatively with acceptance of human rights restrictions.

² We also tested a one-factor and a two-factor solution (with the items of perception of possessing more and fewer rights than others loading on the same latent variable). In both cases, the fits were not acceptable (one-factor: CFI = 0.58, TLI = 0.48, RMSEA = 0.22, SRMR = 0.16; two-factor: CFI = 0.72, TLI = 0.65, RMSEA = 0.18, SRMR = 0.13). In addition, looking at the saturations of the two-factor model, the values of the items of fewer rights were all between 0.84 and 0.89 while the values of the items of the more rights were between .32 and .39, suggesting that these items load on two different latent dimensions.

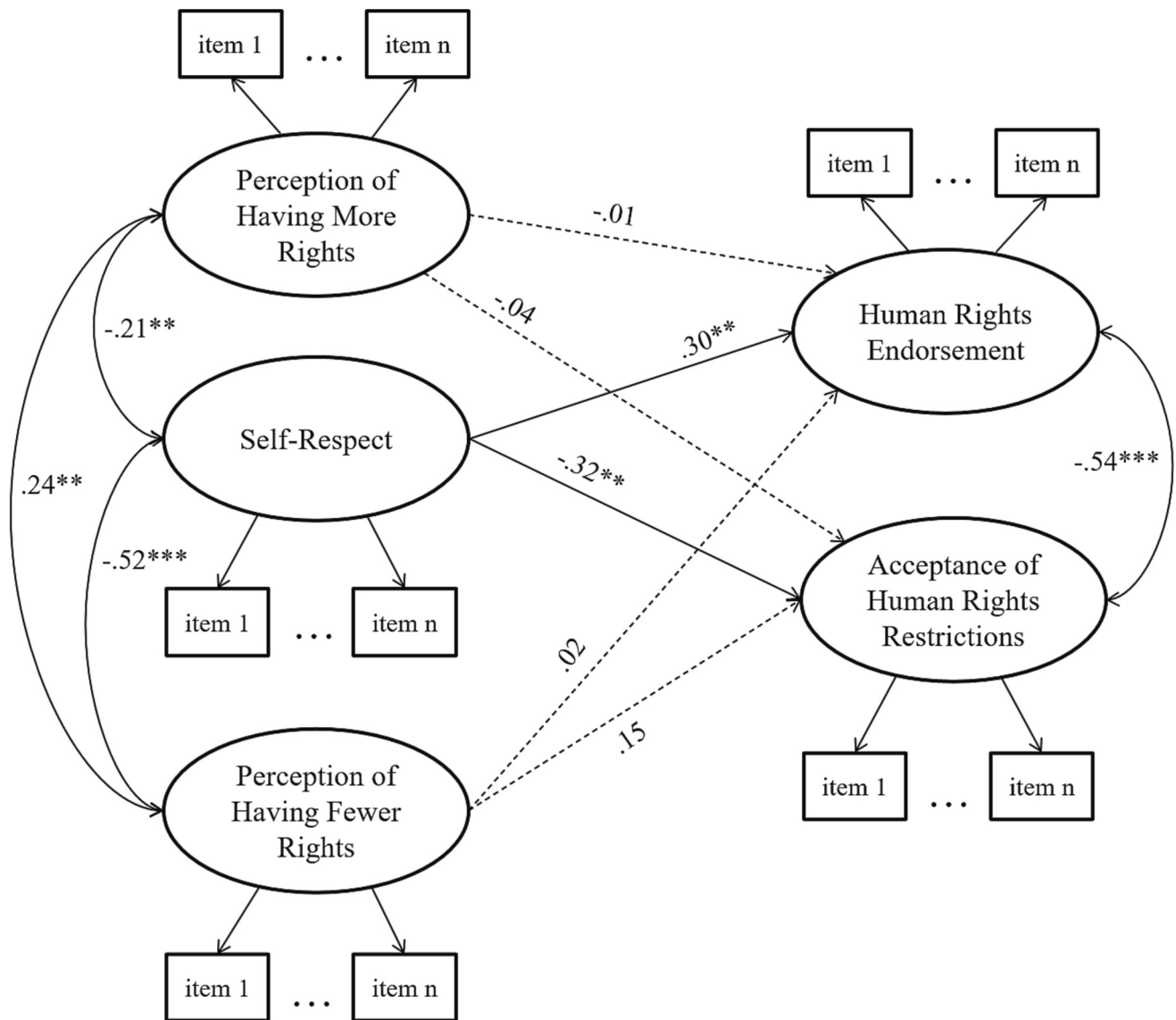


Fig. 1. Structural Equation Model in Study 1. Note. Reported coefficients are standardized. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Table 3
Means, Standard Deviations, Pearson Correlation Coefficients, and Cronbach's Alpha (Study 2).

| Variable | <i>M</i> | <i>SD</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 |
|-----------------------|----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------|
| 1. Self-respect | 5.40 | 1.18 | <i>0.79</i> | | | | | | | |
| 2. More rights | 2.01 | 1.32 | -0.22*** | <i>0.84</i> | | | | | | |
| 3. Fewer rights | 1.85 | 1.16 | -0.29*** | 0.35*** | <i>0.92</i> | | | | | |
| 4. Responsibility | 5.63 | 1.05 | 0.22*** | -0.13** | -0.10* | <i>0.84</i> | | | | |
| 5. Generativity | 4.20 | 1.15 | 0.11* | 0.05 | -0.00 | 0.54*** | <i>0.76</i> | | | |
| 6. Rights endorsement | 5.71 | 0.91 | 0.13** | -0.19*** | -0.19*** | 0.43*** | 0.35*** | <i>0.69</i> | | |
| 7. Rights restriction | 2.58 | 0.82 | -0.14** | 0.09 | 0.17*** | -0.20*** | -0.18*** | -0.54*** | <i>0.71</i> | |
| 8. Gender | 1.34 | 0.47 | 0.01 | 0.09 | 0.09 | -0.18*** | -0.06 | -0.26*** | 0.10* | - |
| 9. Age | 34.88 | 14.35 | 0.22*** | -0.12** | -0.09 | 0.14** | 0.13** | 0.17*** | -0.12* | -0.02 |

Note. All the variables extended from 1 to 7 except for gender (1 = female, 2 = male) and age (from 18 to 76). Cronbach's α in italics on the diagonal.

* $p < .05$.
 ** $p < .01$.
 *** $p < .001$.

The mediation model was computed using latent variable modelling. Modification indices suggested correlating three error terms, all between error terms of items referring to the same latent variable. The SEM acceptably fit the model: CFI = 0.92, TLI = 0.91, RMSEA = 0.05, SRMR = 0.07. All items loaded on the intended latent variable with significant

factor loadings ($p < .001$; for items and factor loadings see Supplementary Material – Section 1). As can be seen in Fig. 2, only self-respect was a significant predictor of social responsibility ($b = 0.23$, $CI_{95\%} = [0.11; 0.35]$, $p = .001$). The perception of having more or fewer rights did not significantly predict this variable ($b = -0.02$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.12;$

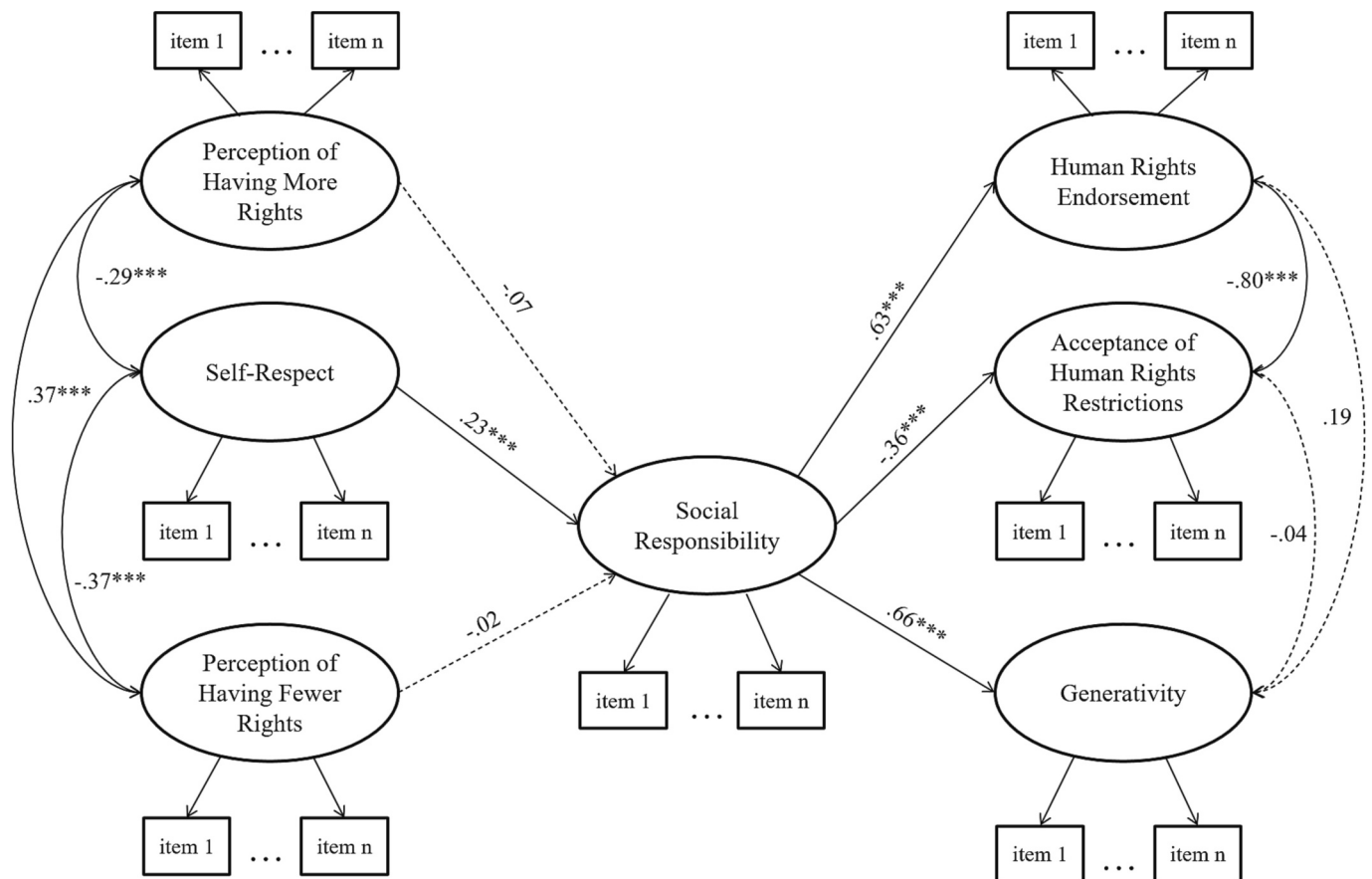


Fig. 2. Structural Equation Model in Study 2. Note. Reported coefficients are standardized. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

0.08]; $p = .75$, $b = -0.07$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.19; 0.04]$, $p = .29$, respectively). Social responsibility positively predicted human rights endorsement and generativity and negatively predicted acceptance of human rights restrictions. All indirect paths from self-respect via social responsibility to human rights endorsement ($b = 0.15$, $CI_{95\%} = [0.06; 0.23]$, $p = .004$), to human rights restriction ($b = -0.08$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.14; -0.03]$, $p = .01$), and to generativity ($b = 0.16$, $CI_{95\%} = [0.08; 0.24]$, $p = .001$) were significant. All the significant paths remained, and no paths either gained or lost statistical significance, after adding gender and age as control variables (see Supplementary Material – Section 3 for all the path coefficients). Gender (coded as 1 = female, 2 = male) negatively predicted human rights endorsement ($b = -0.19$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.28; -0.10]$, $p < .001$) and responsibility ($b = -0.21$, $CI_{95\%} = [-0.29; -0.12]$, $p < .001$), while age positively predicted responsibility ($b = 0.12$, $CI_{95\%} = [0.04; 0.19]$, $p = .01$).

4. Discussion

The possession of civic rights can be interpreted quite differently by individuals and leads to different understandings of one's entitlement (e. g., Campbell et al., 2004; Major, 1994; Tomlinson, 2013). The aim of the present research was to explore the concept of equal entitlement (i.e., self-respect, Renger, 2018) and in particular to understand whether perceiving oneself as a person with equal rights is related to a concern for the rights of other people. Firstly, across both studies we demonstrated that a perception of having the same rights as others can be empirically distinguished from a perception of having more or fewer rights. Secondly, path analyses showed that solely self-respect positively predicted human rights endorsement and generativity and negatively predicted acceptance of human rights restrictions and that these relationships were mediated via social responsibility. The results of two

studies have thus underlined that there is an association between a personal concept such as self-respect and relational attitudes towards others, in terms of respect for human rights and the freedoms of others and in terms of concern for the future generations.

In our studies, we observed a positive bivariate correlation between the perception of having more and fewer rights. Although this might appear odd at first sight, it is in line with research suggesting that over- and under-entitlement beliefs can occur simultaneously. For example, Moses and Moses-Hrushovski (1990) describe people with an ambivalent entitlement belief. Such people feel, on the one hand, that they are especially deserving and must be given what they lack; on the other hand, they strongly feel that they do not deserve what they so passionately demand. A similar pattern has also been found in research on grandiose (characterized by dominance, self-assurance, immodesty) and vulnerable narcissism (characterized by introversion, negative emotions, need for recognition) (Miller et al., 2012). Gore and Widiger (2016) have suggested that people fluctuate between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism, meaning that feelings of superiority and inferiority can go hand in hand.

Also pointing to ambivalence, over-entitlement beliefs have been associated with lower levels of global self-esteem (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) and with a low internal locus of control (Carnes & Knotts, 2018). This makes sense in view of the fact that over-entitlement beliefs regarding special treatment and rights are often formed by experiences of deprivation or victimhood (and thus by contexts where people have fewer (rights) than others) (Zitek et al., 2010). Altogether, our findings emphasize that it is worth differentiating between the perception of having more rights than others and the perception of having fewer rights than others and that they should not be regarded as two opposite poles of a one-dimensional concept.

This is also emphasized by our finding that people who perceive that

they possess more rights and people who perceive that they possess fewer rights both score lower on the self-respect scale. This indicates that high values on the self-respect scale capture people's sense of equal entitlement whereas low values describe a perception of not feeling equal which can either mean perceiving more or fewer rights.

Combining past findings that self-respect enables individuals' assertiveness and protest in contexts of injustice (Renger, 2018; Renger et al., 2020) with the present findings on self-respect's positive association with human rights endorsement and social responsibility, suggests that self-respect fulfills a dual role: it is associated with a concern for one's own and others' rights. In other words, self-respect promotes the empowerment of the individual without compromising social ties to the community (see also Kagitçibasi, 2005), which has often been considered incompatible (Wright & Lubensky, 2009). Confirming previous studies (Renger, 2018; Renger et al., 2020), self-respect would thus identify a person's perception of the concept of rights in which the awareness of possessing them would stand alongside the conviction that individual freedoms are in any case limited by respect for others' freedoms.

The fact that both individuals' perception of having more rights and perception of having fewer rights was negatively correlated with social responsibility strongly suggests that societies should actively seek ways to achieve a balanced sense of entitlement among citizens. Self-respect can be fostered through equality-based respect (i.e., treating others as persons of equal worth and taking them seriously) (Honneth, 1995; Martiny et al., 2023; Renger et al., 2020). This can be supported by programs (e.g., in schools or organizations) such as citizenship education programs, diversity training, antiracism programs, or implicit bias training (e.g., Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014; Beelmann & Lutterbach, 2020; Fitzgerald et al., 2021).

This study has some limitations that should be borne in mind for future research. Firstly, since the data are correlational, the direction of the effects from self-respect to respect for others can only be inferred. Although it is possible that respect for others' rights may also raise awareness concerning one's own rights, based on past research and theory, we have assumed that it is self-respect that is a predictor of respect for others. Longitudinal studies may confirm this hypothesis in the future. Secondly, and related to that point, future research should include other dependent variables tapping into the practical consequences of respect for others (e.g., tolerance for people with differing opinions, lifestyles, cf. Simon et al., 2019). Such research could further confirm that self-respect is not related to the individualization of rights or identify what variables may mediate the feeling of being entitled to rights and the respect or disrespect for others' rights. Finally, a possible line of research for the future might involve a deepening of the more rights and fewer rights scales. Firstly, as both scales had rather low means, further studies should investigate possible reasons for this (e.g., inattentive responding). Secondly, for a deeper understanding and further development of the scales, participants could be asked what rights they think they and other people currently have and what rights they think they ought to have. This could provide a better understanding of which categories of rights are related to the more rights and fewer rights scales and what relationship there is between these categories and self-respect.

The results of the present research suggest that the concept of self-respect does not include an individualistic view of the concept of rights and a prioritization of rights over duties – as the proclaimed “age of rights” (Finkel & Moghaddam, 2005) implies – but instead is linked to a certain shouldering of responsibility. In this regard, Study 2 actually adds the concept of responsibility as the link between awareness of possessing own rights and respect for the others' rights. The concept of responsibility is in this sense promising for deepening the balance between rights and duties that underlies today's democratic societies and protects democratic values from degenerating into individualistic materialism (Moghaddam, 2016; Passini, 2017). Social responsibility is opposed to a sort of over-individualistic responsibility by means of

which people solely pursue their own interests and do not feel responsible for the consequences of their actions on others (see also Giddens, 2013).

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CRediT authorship contribution statement

Daniela Renger: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. **Stefano Passini:** Data curation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing, Software.

Declaration of competing interest

None.

Data availability

Data will be made available on request.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jpaid.2024.112549>.

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