

Hello again! Good to have you with us on "As It Is," from VOA Learning English. I'm Steve Ember in Washington.

Today we tell you about a new study on how wealth and power can affect human behavior.

"How do different levels of privilege and different levels of wealth between people in everyday life shape how they behave toward others and how they see the world."

That was American researcher Paul Piff. We will hear more from him later in our program. But first, we tell about a brave young woman.

16 Year Old Activist Malala Yousafzai Addresses U-N; Urges Children's Rights

Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan became world famous after she was shot in the head by Taliban gunmen. She was attacked for publicly expressing support for the education of girls.

Last Friday, Malala Yousafzai marked her 16th birthday by speaking at United Nations headquarters in New York City. She said that gunmen could not silence her because knowledge and education is more powerful than their bullets.

The event was called “Malala Day.” However, the Pakistani schoolgirl noted that the cause of children’s rights is bigger than just one person.

“Do remember one thing. ‘Malala Day’ is not my day. Today is the day of every woman, every boy, and every girl who have raised their voice for their rights.”

Malala Yousafzai was seriously wounded nine months ago. Taliban gunmen in Pakistan killed two of her friends. But she said even such violence would not silence her.

“The terrorists thought they would change my aims and stop my ambitions. But nothing changed in my life except this: weakness, fear and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born. I am the same Malala.”

The young activist came to New York to give a petition to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon. The petition has the signatures of more than four million people. It calls on the UN General Assembly to provide money for new teachers, schools and books. The document also urges governments to require and provide free education worldwide for every child.

Malala Yousafzai called for an international campaign against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism.

“Let us pick up our books and our pens. They are our most powerful weapons. One child, one teacher, one book and one pen can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education first!”

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said 57 million children around the world do not attend primary or elementary school. Many of them live in conflict areas, and most are girls. He also noted several attacks on schools, most recently in Nigeria, where 29 students were killed.

“No children should have to die for going to school. Nowhere should teachers fear to teach or children fear to learn. Together, we can change this picture.”

Last September, the UN official launched the Global Education First Initiative. The goal of the campaign is to put every child in school and improve the quality of learning.

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Do Power and Money Make Us Rude?

A new study has shown that the more power and money some people have, the less they care about others.

Paul Piff works in the psychology department at the University of California at Berkeley. He wanted to test his observations that people with more money or social position behave rudely, that their behavior shows less concern for the feelings of others.

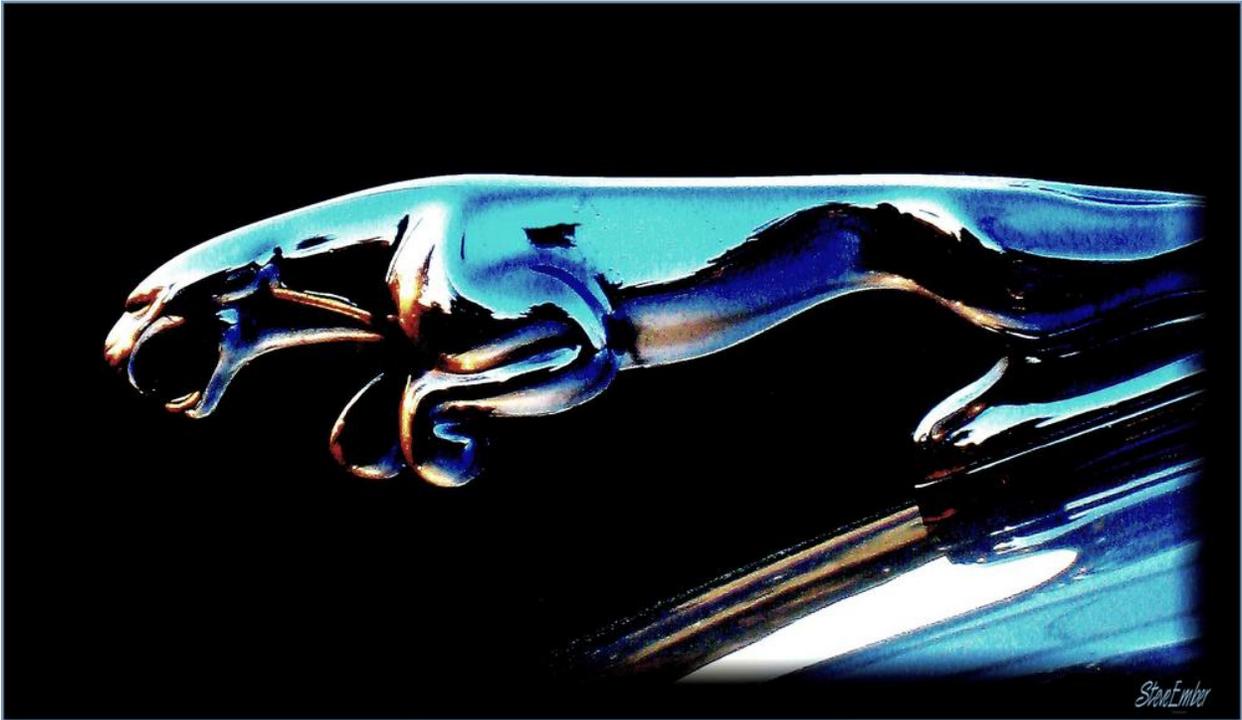
“I got really interested in the question of how do different levels of privilege and different levels of wealth between people in everyday life shape how they behave toward others and how they see the world.”

Paul Piff designed an experiment to study the behavior of strangers who were meeting for the first time. During these meetings, volunteers who had described themselves as wealthier did not seem interested in getting to know the other person. People who had identified themselves as not wealthy were more likely to listen to and look at the stranger. They laughed more. They seemed to enjoy the get-together.

Working with other Berkeley researchers, Paul Piff designed more than thirty experiments to study how wealth and social position affect behavior.

[Traffic Noise]

One experiment studied the actions of drivers on a busy street.



Are drivers of cars like this one less likely to stop for pedestrians? Are they more likely to disobey traffic laws? Tell us what you think at learningenglish.voanews.com

The researchers found that people driving pricey cars were less likely to stop for people trying to walk across the street. These drivers ignored traffic laws more often than drivers of older or less costly cars.

Mr. Piff says this field of social science helps in understanding the causes of corruption among the powerful.

“It’s not just our work, but that of others that finds it is the more powerful individuals in society, the more privileged, the wealthier individuals in society that are more likely to break the rules.”

He says the research suggests that for many people power and money can have a corrupting influence on social behavior. He is concerned that as wealth inequality increases in society, there is a strong pressure for people who care about fairness and equality to violate their own rules of good behavior.

“Who are the people that don’t do that?”

He is interested in learning about people who resist the corrupting influence of power or wealth -- those who do not cheat or lie to get more for themselves.

“And the question I want to answer is, what are the effects of social class on everyday life?”

He says the experiments do not show that some people are good and some people are bad.

“It’s not the case that if you are wealthy you are necessarily anti-social, selfish or corrupt, at all. That’s not what we document.”

Paul Piff says it does show that for some people, increased wealth and power and status can change their behavior. He says the attention to self at the expense of others can be costly to society.

The research at Berkeley has been done with North Americans from many ethnic groups and all races. Paul Piff says he and his colleagues are interested in working with researchers in other countries. They want to try to understand how wealth affects human behavior around the world.

“I’m always interested in creating collaborations with interested and curious investigators. There is just so much yet to uncover.”

[Music: “Try a Little Tenderness”]

We would love to hear from you. And we know you’ll be polite!

To contact us, go to our website at learningenglish.voanews.com and click on “Contact Us.” And that’s our program for today. Steve Ember here.

Thanks for joining us. We’ll talk to you next time.
