



Deserve and diverge: Feeling entitled makes people more creative[☆]

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HIGHLIGHTS

- We manipulated people's sense of entitlement in four experiments.
- People who felt more entitled were more creative.
- A need for uniqueness mediated the relationship between entitlement and creativity.

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ABSTRACT

Four studies demonstrated that making people feel more entitled leads them to be more creative. In Study 1, entitlement was manipulated through a writing prompt task, and entitled participants generated more creative uses for a common household object and drew more creative pictures than participants in the control condition did. In Study 2, the same manipulation was used, and entitled participants performed better than control participants on a task measuring creative performance but not on a task measuring non-creative performance. In Studies 3a and 3b, entitlement was manipulated through a sentence unscramble task, and entitled participants again were more creative than control participants. In Studies 2, 3a, and 3b, a need for uniqueness mediated the relationship between entitlement and creativity.

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Entitlement has recently become a major topic of interest to both the general public and many scholars. Some researchers have examined the sources, consequences, and correlates of a person's general sense of entitlement (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004; Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010), and other researchers have studied entitlement in certain groups, such as students (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008; Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011), consumers (Butori, 2010; Fisk & Neville, 2011), employees (Fisk, 2010; Harvey & Martinko, 2009), and Generation Y (Twenge, 2006). In general, entitlement is viewed as a bad thing that should be eliminated. Managers and professors spend considerable time thinking about how to deal with their entitled employees and students. Although there are many negative consequences of entitlement, in this paper, we take a novel approach and discuss one positive consequence—creativity.

Entitlement and its negative consequences

Psychological entitlement is the feeling that one is more deserving of positive outcomes than other people are (Campbell et al., 2004). Entitled individuals believe that they are owed valuable resources (e.g., a higher salary, more power, or a better grade) regardless of their effort or performance relative to others (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Entitlement is both a personality trait, in that people have different overall levels of entitlement, and a psychological state, in that a person's sense of entitlement can vary at different times (Tomlinson, 2013). People have reported increased state entitlement after recalling an unfair event (Zitek et al., 2010), being ostracized (Poon, Chen, & DeWall, 2013), and being exposed to entitled messages or entitlement-related words (O'Brien, Anastasio, & Bushman, 2011).

Entitlement has many negative consequences, both for people who interact with entitled individuals and for the entitled individuals themselves. For example, entitled individuals are more likely to treat their romantic partners in a selfish manner (Campbell et al., 2004), have hostility and conflict in their relationships (Moeller, Crocker, & Bushman, 2009), and behave opportunistically (Malhotra & Gino, 2011). They are also less likely to help others (Zitek et al., 2010), apologize for their mistakes (Howell, Dopko, Turowski, & Buro, 2011), or feel close to a person whose perspective they are trying to take (Strong & Martin, 2014). Entitled individuals want special privileges that others

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do not have, and they will complain if they do not get their way (Fisk & Neville, 2011). Moreover, entitled women are more likely to endorse benevolent sexism, believing that they are different from men and should be treated in a special manner (Hammond, Sibley, & Overall, 2014). Furthermore, entitled individuals are more likely to break rules and make unethical decisions (Burt, Donnellan, & Tackett, 2012; Greenberger et al., 2008; Tamborski, Brown, & Chowning, 2012). They are also more likely to be unhappy with their current situation; for example, they report reduced job satisfaction (Harvey & Martinko, 2009), perceive that they are being treated poorly by others (Harvey, Harris, Gillis, & Martinko, 2014), and believe that their time is being wasted (O'Brien et al., 2011).

However, as with anything else, it is unlikely that entitlement is all bad. One common theme across these negative consequences is that they demonstrate that entitled individuals place importance on being different from others (e.g., they believe that they deserve special treatment, that their needs are more important than the needs of others, and that rules do not apply to them). Consequently, elevated entitlement could be advantageous in situations in which a motivation to be different from others is important to success. This is the case when people are engaging in a creative task.

Creativity and a need for uniqueness

Creativity is the process of finding solutions that are both novel and appropriate (Amabile, 1983; Markman, Lindberg, Kray, & Galinsky, 2007), often through abstract, associative, and divergent thought processes (Gupta, Jang, Mednick, & Huber, 2012). Creativity is important in business and academia. For instance, creativity helps people solve complex problems (Newell & Simon, 1972), manage social conflicts and disputes (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008), and gain power (Slighte, De Dreu, & Nijstad, 2011). Therefore, it is critical to understand what leads people to be creative.

Creative solutions are unusual, infrequent, and potentially controversial (Moscovici, 1976), so the motivation to be unique, individualistic, and to stand out from others is beneficial for creativity (Goncalo & Krause, 2010; Goncalo & Staw, 2006). Indeed, research examining the antecedents of creativity has shown that exploring unusual ideas (Guilford, 1967) and breaking convention (Dollinger, 2007; Simonton, 1999) can increase the likelihood of reaching creative solutions. For example, individuals who perform well on creativity tasks such as the Remote Associates Test (RAT) do so because they are willing to consider low-frequency (rare) responses (Gupta et al., 2012). Furthermore, independence of judgment is correlated with creative achievement (Barron & Harrington, 1981). Being unique and being creative are closely connected as “to be creative means to experience life in one's own way” (Moustakas, 1967, p. 177).

Thus, the willingness to act differently than others and explore uncommon options promotes creativity. People high in a need for uniqueness have these tendencies—they want to be seen as different from others, and they try to demonstrate their differences by, for example, resisting majority influence (Imhoff & Erb, 2009), obtaining scarce products (Lynn, 1991), or giving less common responses in a word association test (Snyder & Fromkin, 1977). Another way to stand out is by being creative, and indeed, research has shown that a need for uniqueness is related to creativity (Dollinger, 2003; Kim, Vincent, & Goncalo, 2013).

Thus, because entitled individuals believe that they are special and expect others to treat them in this way (i.e., they value being different), it seems likely that increasing entitlement will increase a need for uniqueness. When people feel more entitled, they will think and act differently than others, and the more they do so, the more willing and able they will be to generate creative solutions. In sum, we propose that entitled individuals will be more creative as a result of their heightened need for uniqueness.

Current research

In four studies, we tested the hypothesis that making people feel more entitled will increase creativity. In Study 1, we manipulated entitlement with a writing prompt task and examined whether entitled participants generated more creative uses for a paperclip and more creative drawings than did participants in the control condition. In Study 2, using the same entitlement manipulation, we tested whether entitled participants performed better on a task measuring creativity (the RAT) but not on a task measuring non-creative performance (GRE items). We also examined whether a need for uniqueness mediated the relationship between entitlement and creativity. In Studies 3a and 3b, we manipulated entitlement with a sentence unscramble task and again tested whether entitled participants would provide more creative responses than control participants due to an increased desire to be different from others.

Study 1

The goal of this study was to determine whether increasing people's state entitlement causes them to be more creative in the uses they generate for a paperclip (Guilford, 1967) and in the aliens they draw (Ward, 1994).

Method

Participants. Ninety-nine undergraduates (45 men, 54 women, $M_{age} = 20$) participated in exchange for extra credit in a course.³

Manipulation. Participants were seated at a computer and began the writing prompt manipulation of entitlement (see Vincent, 2013). Participants had 5 min to write about why they should or should not feel more entitled than others. Specifically, participants in the entitled condition were asked to write three reasons each for why they should demand the best in life, why they deserve more than others, and why they should get their way in life. Participants in the control condition were asked to write three reasons each for why they should not demand the best in life, why they do not deserve more than others, and why they should not expect to get their own way in life. To check the effectiveness of the manipulation, participants completed the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell et al., 2004), the most common measure of entitlement, at the end of the study.

Creativity measures. After the writing prompt manipulation, participants completed two tasks that are commonly used to measure creativity. First, they were given an idea generation task (Guilford, 1967) in which they had 10 min to list different ways to use a paperclip. We examined the fluency, flexibility, and novelty of their responses (De Dreu & Nijstad, 2008; Goncalo, Flynn, & Kim, 2010). For fluency, we counted the number of distinct uses each participant generated. For flexibility, two raters (blind to condition) categorized each idea based on its general purpose (e.g., “make earrings” could be part of the jewelry category) and then counted the number of different categories that each participant generated. For novelty, the raters rated each idea on a 5-point scale (1 = *not at all novel*, 5 = *very novel*) after considering how the use deviated from the intended purpose of a paperclip and how different the response was from other ideas that participants generated. They then gave a novelty score to each participant that represented the average of the ratings for that participant's ideas. The mean flexibility ($\alpha = .96$) and novelty ($\alpha = .84$) scores across the two raters, as well as the fluency counts, were used in our analyses.

Next, participants completed the Structured Imagination Task, in which they were asked to draw an animal that is local to a planet that

³ In Studies 1 and 2, our sample size was determined by the number of students who were willing to take the study for extra credit. In Studies 3a and 3b, we requested 200 participants and ended up with around that number. In each study, we waited to analyze the data until it had all been collected.

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