

# Psychological Entitlement: Interpersonal Consequences and Validation of a Self-Report Measure

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Nine studies were conducted with the goal of developing a self-report measure of psychological entitlement and assessing its interpersonal consequences. The Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES) was found to be reliable and valid (Study 1, 2), not associated with social desirability (Study 2), stable across time (Study 3), and correlated negatively with two of the Big Five factors: agreeableness and emotional stability (Study 4). The validity of the PES was confirmed in studies that assessed willingness to take candy designated for children (Study 5) and reported deservingness of pay in a hypothetical employment setting (Study 6). Finally, the PES was linked to important interpersonal consequences including competitive choices in a commons dilemma (Study 7), selfish approaches to romantic relationships (Study 8), and aggression following ego threat (Study 9). Psychological entitlement has a pervasive and largely unconstructive impact on social behavior.

Entitlement is at the heart of many questions concerning the distribution of resources in society, from tax breaks and social welfare to university enrollments and even access to good seats for football games. This is perhaps the reason why psychological entitlement has become a frequent topic of discussion in the public forum. LexisNexis™ (2003), for example, noted roughly 400 mentions of “sense of entitlement” in major newspapers over the last year. Recent press coverage has noted entitlement in a range of groups, from chief ex-

ecutive officers (Samuelson, 2003) and other corporate executives (Fowler & Goldberg, 2003) to workers in their 20s (Waters, 2003), teenage employees (Nichols, 2003), and union members (Pigg, 2003). The wealthy (Harden, 2003), the celebrated (Carey, 2003), and professional athletes (Sullivan, 2003) are often seen as entitled as are criminals who prey on the weak (Hasz, 2003). Members of both minority (Rodriguez, 2003) and majority (Barras, 2002) groups are sometimes perceived as entitled. Academic institutions are

not immune to the label of entitlement either. Students entering college (Liebmann-Smith, 2001), parents of student athletes (Edds, 2003), and even faculty (Rupp, 2003) are occasionally deemed to be entitled. Psychological entitlement is clearly perceived to be a curse potentially affecting a wide range of individuals.

The awareness of psychological entitlement has existed for at least several generations. For example, the 1970s have been referred to in the United States as the “Me Decade,” the 1980s as the “Greed Decade,” and the 1990s as the “New Gilded Age.” There is a popular impression that entitlement has dramatically increased in society, and those periods when entitlement was seen to give way to more egalitarian behavior (e.g., in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks) are viewed in a very positive light.

The importance of entitlement has not gone unnoticed by social psychologists. Several researchers have made entitlement central to their thoughts regarding values and social justice (e.g., Lerner, 1987; Lerner & Mikula, 1994; for a recent review, see Feather, 1999a). A compelling body of research has documented that evaluations of others and rewards and punishments desired for others hinge on whether those others are judged to deserve their outcomes. Although there are important complexities in this analysis, rewards are typically reserved for those who are deserving (Feather, 1999a, 1999b).

Despite the importance of the concept of entitlement to social psychology generally, psychologists who study the self and those who study personality have not shown a great deal of interest in the study of psychological entitlement as an individual difference variable. Psychologists have, however, found great success by focusing on a wide range of self variables including self-esteem and narcissism as well as several interpersonal or interdependence-based variables (e.g., Van Lange, Otten, De Bruin, & Joireman, 1997). We contend that psychological entitlement fits nicely into current interests in the self-concept and interpersonal functioning in dyads, small groups, and society. Our goals in this research were to (a) develop and test a self-report measure of psychological entitlement that may be useful to academic psychologists and other researchers and (b) use this measure to demonstrate several important interpersonal consequences of entitlement.

### PREVIOUS EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON ENTITLEMENT AS AN INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCE

The most relevant empirical research on entitlement emerges out of the narcissism literature (for reviews, see Emmons, 1984; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). The most popular measure of narcissism in normal populations is the 40 forced-choice item Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Exploratory factor analysis revealed that the NPI contained seven factors: authority (8 items; e.g., “I like

to have authority over other people” vs. “I don’t mind following orders”), entitlement (6 items; e.g., “If I ruled the world it would be a much better place” vs. “The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me”), exhibitionism (7 items; e.g., “I like to be the center of attention” vs. “I prefer to blend in with the crowd”), exploitativeness (5 items; e.g., “I find it easy to manipulate people” vs. “I don’t like it when I find myself manipulating people”), self-sufficiency (6 items; e.g., “I am more capable than other people” vs. “There is a lot I can learn from other people”), superiority (5 items; e.g., “I am an extraordinary person” vs. “I am much like everybody else”), and vanity (3 items; e.g., “I like to display my body” vs. “My body is nothing special”). The 6-item Entitlement subscale include items such as “If I ruled the world it would be a better place” versus “The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me”; “I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve” versus “I will take my satisfactions as they come”; and “I have a strong will to power” versus “Power for its own sake doesn’t interest me.”

Entitlement is clearly a component of narcissism, either as a single factor or as part of a larger factor. However, there are four problems with using the NPI entitlement subscale as a stand-alone measure of psychological entitlement. First, the subscale lacks face validity: some items (e.g., “I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve”) sound like entitlement; other items (e.g., “I have a strong will to power; If I ruled the world it would be a better place”) sound more like power seeking or dominance. There have also been few if any efforts to empirically validate the Entitlement scale as a stand-alone measure, although the total NPI scale has been validated extensively. Second, the scale has relatively few items, and they are presented in a forced choice format. This may lead to a restriction of range problem with many individuals reporting scores of zero on the scale. Third, the subscale lacks the degree of reliability desired for self-report measures, with alphas often far below .80. For example, in the data from Study 1 reported following, the Entitlement subscale had an alpha of .49 and a mean of 1.5 with a potential range of 0 to 6. Fourth, the entitlement factor was not identified in a commonly used analysis of the NPI. Instead, an exploitativeness/entitlement factor was uncovered (Emmons, 1984).

It is important to note that the preceding is not meant as a criticism of the NPI. The entire scale is reliable, valid, and theoretically important. Indeed, we have conducted several separate research programs using the NPI. The data simply do not support the use of the NPI Entitlement subscale as the ideal measure for assessing psychological entitlement.

### OUR APPROACH TO PSYCHOLOGICAL ENTITLEMENT AND THIS RESEARCH

It is important to state explicitly our approach to psychological entitlement. We conceptualize psychological entitlement

as a stable and pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others. This sense of entitlement will also be reflected in desired or actual behaviors. Our concept of psychological entitlement is intrapsychically pervasive or global; it does not necessarily refer to entitlement that results from a specific situation (e.g., “I am entitled to social security because I paid into the system,” or “I deserve an ‘A’ because I performed well in class”). Rather, psychological entitlement is a sense of entitlement that is experienced across situations. Furthermore, our concept of psychological entitlement includes both the experience of being deserving and entitled. These two concepts are often used interchangeably in common discourse. The NPI entitlement subscale noted previously, for example, has an item that uses the term *deserve* but not an item that mentions entitlement or any of its derivatives. These terms, however, can have distinct meanings (cf. Feather, 1999b). Both terms suggest that a reward or other positive outcome is owed to the self, but the source of the outcome differs. Notably, deservingness typically reflects the expectation of a reward in exchange for one’s own efforts or character, whereas entitlement typically reflects the expectation of a reward as a result of a social contract. For example, it would be more appropriate to say that one is entitled to social security payments than to say one is deserving of social security payments. Likewise, it would be more appropriate to say that one is deserving of a good salary because of one’s hard work than to say one is entitled to a high salary because of hard work. However, if an individual in these situations says that he or she deserves social security benefits or that she or he is entitled to a high salary, the meaning is largely preserved. Thus, we include both the terms entitlement and deservingness in our measure (and, to presage briefly our empirical results, both terms load similarly onto a single factor).

Given the importance of psychological entitlement to society and to social scientists, a valid and reliable measure of psychological entitlement may be desirable. Our goal in this article was to develop and validate a measure of psychological entitlement as well as look at some potential interpersonal consequences of entitlement. In the process, we gain a better theoretical understanding of the construct.

In Studies 1 through 4, we present our Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES), test its internal reliability and test–retest reliability, preliminarily demonstrate its validity, assess its relationship with the Big Five (and show that the PES is not simply a restatement of a Big Five factor), and, more important, demonstrate that the PES is distinct from the NPI Entitlement subscale. This latter process is done in several ways, including (a) confirmatory factor analysis, (b) examining association of the two scales with the Big Five, and (c) demonstrating that the PES still predicts the theoretically relevant outcome variables when the Entitlement subscale of the NPI is controlled for statistically. In Studies 5 to 6, we provide additional tests of the validity of the PES. Finally, in Studies 7 through 9, we focus on the PES and interpersonal behavior.

Specifically, in Study 7, we examined entitlement and behavior in a commons dilemma; in Study 8, we examined the link between entitlement and behavior in dating relationships; and in Study 9, we examined the links between entitlement, ego threat, and aggression.

## STUDY 1: SCALE CONSTRUCTION AND INITIAL CONSTRUCT VALIDATION

The goals of Study 1 were two-fold. First, we wanted to select the final items for the Entitlement scale from an original ( $n = 57$ ) item pool.<sup>1</sup> Second, we wanted to examine the construct validity of the scale by correlating it with conceptually related measures (e.g., narcissism, self-esteem, a visual measure we developed). We expected the PES to correlate positively with all of these measures. Finally, we also wanted to begin the process of discriminating the PES from the NPI Entitlement subscale.

### Method

#### *Participants*

Participants were 262 University of Georgia undergraduate students (40 men, 222 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

#### *Materials and Procedure*

Participants reported to the laboratory in groups of 5 to 15, but they worked independently on questionnaires. After completing a consent form, participants completed a series of personality scales. Participants first completed the initial 57 Entitlement scale items. Items were scored on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*strong disagreement*) to 7 (*strong agreement*). They also completed the Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965) and the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988).

Finally, they completed a measure we developed, the Me Versus Other Scale (see Appendix A) that assesses the view of self versus others in a visual, nonverbal, way (similar to that used by the Inclusion of Other in Self Scale; Aron & Aron, 1986; Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). The Me Versus Other Scale has 7 images; each image displays 4 circles, one labeled “me” and three labeled “other.” The size of the me circle varies in size, from much smaller than the others (Appendix A, Number 1) to much larger than the others (Appendix A, Number 7). The size of the circles representing the others does not vary in size. After completing the personality scales, participants were debriefed and thanked.

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<sup>1</sup>These initial items were generated by us as well as (quite generously) by the members of the Baumeister/Tice research group at Case Western Reserve University. All items were generated to measure psychological entitlement.

## Results and Discussion

We began paring down the PES by removing items that had poor item-total correlations. The goal was to create a reliable, single-factor measure of psychological entitlement. This process was completed in stages, from 57 items, to 17 items, 12 items, and 9 items. The 9-item scale was the final scale (see Appendix B for the complete scale). The descriptive statistics for these nine items are presented in Table 1. Principal components factor analysis of this scale yielded a one-factor solution (based on examination of the scree plot as well as on Kaiser's rule that only factors with eigenvalues greater than 1 are extracted). The eigenvalue for Factor 1 was 4.10. The single unobserved factor accounted for 46% of the variance in the 9 items. Because factor coefficients are highly dependent on sample characteristics (Dawes, 1979; Wainer, 1976), the 9 items were summed to form a composite measure. The correlation between items combined using factor weights and items combined using unit weights was  $r = 1.0$ . The alpha coefficient for the composite measure was .85. We also performed separate factor analyses for men and women. As expected, one-factor solutions were obtained for both groups

There were no significant gender differences in the sample; for men,  $M = 29.4$  ( $SD = 9.27$ ) and for women,  $M = 28.3$  ( $SD = 10.22$ ),  $t(260) = 0.68$ , *ns*,  $d = .08$ . Nevertheless, given the small gender differences found on measures of narcissism and self-esteem, we would not have been surprised if men reported slightly greater entitlement in the following studies.

We next correlated the PES with the other measures as an initial test of its validity. The results are presented in Table 2. The results were consistent with a valid scale. The PES was most highly correlated with narcissism and especially the Entitlement subscale of the NPI. The correlation with self-esteem was smaller. Also, the correlation with the nonverbal Me Versus Other Scale was significant and positive. More important, the correlation of the PES with the Me Versus Other Scale remained significant even when the NPI Entitlement subscale was partialled out,  $r = .17$ ,  $p < .05$ , suggesting that the NPI entitlement subscale and the PES are not redundant.

In summary, Study 1 demonstrated that the PES is a single-factor and internally consistent measure. Correlations

with narcissism, self-esteem, and the Me Versus Other Scale also lent convergent validity to the measure.

## STUDY 2: CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS AND SOCIAL DESIRABILITY

The goal of Study 2 was to confirm the factor analytic structure of the PES in a larger sample as well as to demonstrate that the NPI Entitlement subscale is best considered as a separate factor from the PES. In Study 2, we also examined the association between the PES and social desirability. We wanted to demonstrate that low scores on the PES were not simply a reflection of social desirability.

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 918 Iowa State University undergraduate students (417 men, 501 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

#### Procedure

Participants completed the PES, the Entitlement subscale of the NPI, and the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding (Paulhus, 1991) as part of a battery of tests given in mass-testing sessions. The Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding is a valid and reliable measure of socially desirable responding (Paulhus, 1991).

### Results and Discussion

#### Descriptive Statistics

The mean PES score for all 918 participants was 31.0 ( $SD = 8.8$ ). PES scores did not differ for men ( $M = 31.5$ ,  $SD = 9.4$ ) and women ( $M = 30.7$ ,  $SD = 8.1$ ),  $t(916) = 1.53$ , *ns*,  $d = .10$ . The alpha coefficient for the PES was .87. The correlation between the PES and the Entitlement subscale of the NPI was  $r = .33$ ,  $p < .0001$ .

**TABLE 1**  
Description of Psychological Entitlement Scale Items (Study 1)

PES	PES2	PES3	PES4	PES5	PES6	PES7	PES8	PES9	M	SD	Item-Total r
PES1	.27	.42	.32	.44	.47	.34	.31	.54	2.1	1.44	.57
PES2	—	.35	.46	.31	.44	.34	.46	.36	3.36	1.58	.55
PES3	.35	—	.40	.34	.33	.37	.35	.51	2.53	1.57	.56
PES4	.46	.40	—	.36	.32	.32	.34	.42	3.77	1.76	.53
PES5	.31	.34	.36	—	.33	.35	.25	.44	2.75	1.40	.51
PES6	.44	.33	.32	.33	—	.46	.36	.48	3.17	1.57	.59
PES7	.34	.37	.32	.34	.46	—	.42	.50	3.45	1.71	.57
PES8	.46	.35	.34	.25	.36	.42	—	.42	3.63	1.52	.54
PES9	.36	.51	.42	.44	.48	.50	.42	—	2.71	1.41	.69

Note. All correlations are significant at  $p < .01$ . Reversed items are reverse scored. Item-total correlations are corrected. PES = Psychological Entitlement Scale.

**TABLE 2**  
Validity of the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Study 1)

Measure	PES
Self-esteem	.13*
Narcissism	.50**
Authority	.26**
Exhibitionism	.26**
Superiority	.26**
Entitlement	.54**
Exploitativeness	.32**
Self-sufficiency	.26**
Vanity	.26**
Me versus Other	.29**

Note. PES = Psychological Entitlement Scale.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ .

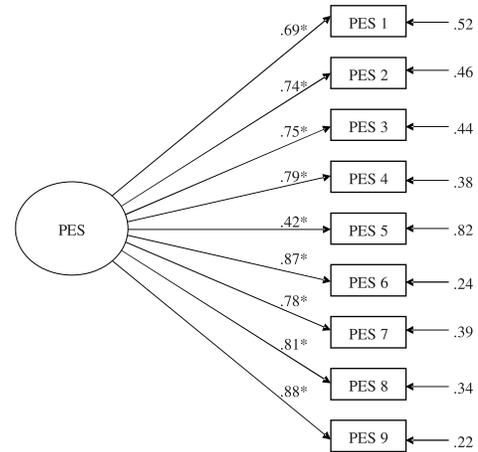
*Confirmatory Factor Analyses*

Our goals in conducting the confirmatory factor analyses were twofold. First, we wanted to confirm that a single-factor solution to the PES, as found in Study 1, provided a good fit for the data. Second, we wanted to demonstrate that the PES and the NPI entitlement subscale were better modeled as two separate factors than as a single factor.

As a preliminary step, single-factor models for both the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES items were estimated using LISREL Version 8.3. This analysis was conducted using weighted least squares (WLS) estimation, which analyzes information from both the polychoric correlation and asymptotic covariance matrices (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). Model results from the estimation of a single-factor model for the PES items indicated a poor fit to the data when evaluated by the chi-square statistic,  $\chi^2(27, N = 918) = 227.26, p < .001$ . However, the chi-square statistic is extremely sensitive to sample size such that values become increasingly large as sample size becomes large. Thus, assessment of model fit requires examination of various indexes such as the goodness-of-fit index (GFI), comparative fit index (CFI), and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) that are less sensitive to variations in sample size. Hu and Bentler (1999) asserted that a given model adequately fits the data if values for the GFI and CFI equal or exceed .95 and values for the SRMR are close to .08. These additional fit indexes indicated that a single-factor model provides a good fit to the data (GFI = .98; CFI = .98; SRMR = .13). Figure 1 (Panel A) presents the final one-factor model of the PES items.

Model results for the NPI Entitlement subscale items also indicated a poor fit with the data when evaluated with the chi-square goodness-of-fit statistic,  $\chi^2(9, N = 918) = 172.09, p < .001$ . Examination of additional fit indexes indicated that a single-factor model for the NPI Entitlement subscale items does not provide an exceptionally good fit to the data (GFI = .97; CFI = .90; SRMR = .084). The single-factor model for NPI items is presented in Panel B of Figure 1.

Panel A



Panel B

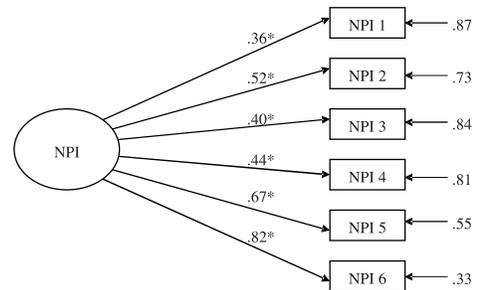


FIGURE 1 Single-factor models for the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Panel A) and Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) Entitlement subscale (Panel B) items. Asterisks indicate significant factor loadings. All factor loadings and estimates of residual variances are standardized values.

Following estimation of single-factor models for the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES items, a model was specified in which the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES items were allowed to load only on respective latent variables. In addition, the model estimated the correlation between the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES latent variables. Because of the dichotomous response format used with the NPI items, estimation of the two-factor model required using the WLS estimator and the polychoric correlations between items from both scales.<sup>2</sup> Polychoric correlations, means, and stan-

<sup>2</sup>Muthén and Muthén (1998) detailed an alternative approach to analyzing dichotomous data within a latent variable framework using the Mplus program. Analysis of the two-factor model using Mplus indicated generally poor fits to the data for both the unconstrained,  $\chi^2(89, N = 918) = 488.23, p < .001$  (CFI = .48), and constrained,  $\chi^2(90, N = 918) = 550.52, p < .001$  (CFI = .40) models. However, substantive results from these analyses were generally consistent with those obtained using LISREL. That is, constraining the correlation between the latent NPI Entitlement subscale and PES variables significantly degraded the model,  $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 918) = 62.29, p < .001$ . The estimated correlation between the latent NPI Entitle-

**TABLE 3**  
**Polychoric Correlations, Means, and Standard Deviations for NPI and PES Items**

Item	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)
NPI1 (1)	1.00														
NPI2 (2)	0.03	1.00													
NPI3 (3)	0.00	0.12	1.00												
NPI4 (4)	0.02	0.16	0.01	1.00											
NPI5 (5)	0.09	0.23	0.14	0.15	1.00										
NPI6 (6)	0.23	0.14	0.18	0.15	0.23	1.00									
PES1 (7)	0.18	0.15	0.09	0.09	0.23	0.17	1.00								
PES2 (8)	0.09	0.10	0.14	0.07	0.13	0.16	0.43	1.00							
PES3 (9)	0.10	0.10	-0.01	0.13	0.14	0.09	0.44	0.33	1.00						
PES4 (10)	0.12	0.16	0.09	0.15	0.15	0.17	0.36	0.50	0.46	1.00					
PES5 (11)	0.10	0.07	0.05	0.08	-0.03	0.13	0.28	0.18	0.33	0.19	1.00				
PES6 (12)	0.11	0.14	0.09	0.13	0.21	0.16	0.44	0.48	0.44	0.49	0.26	1.00			
PES7 (13)	0.13	0.06	0.02	0.10	0.13	0.08	0.42	0.42	0.34	0.34	0.26	0.61	1.00		
PES8 (14)	0.15	0.10	0.06	0.12	0.19	0.17	0.44	0.52	0.34	0.43	0.21	0.54	0.52	1.00	
PES9 (15)	0.15	0.14	0.07	0.14	0.22	0.22	0.48	0.39	0.47	0.43	0.39	0.58	0.53	0.56	1.00
<i>M</i>	0.41	0.19	0.43	0.18	0.14	0.39	3.18	4.35	2.70	3.86	2.72	3.63	3.75	3.84	3.10
<i>SD</i>	0.49	0.39	0.50	0.38	0.35	0.50	1.54	1.40	1.45	1.58	0.95	1.35	1.43	1.39	1.39

Note.  $N = 918$ . Correlations and descriptive statistics computed from raw data using PRELIS Version 2.30. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory; PES = Psychological Entitlement Scale.

standard deviations used in the analyses are presented in Table 3. Results indicated that the two-factor model offered only a reasonable fit to the data when evaluated by the chi-square statistic,  $\chi^2(89, N = 918) = 858.55, p < .001$  and fit indexes (GFI = .96; CFI = .93; SRMR = .15). Although the model did not provide a good fit to the data, the correlation between the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES latent variables ( $r = .60$ ) suggests the scales do not correlate perfectly.

In a next step, examination of the standardized residuals from the two-factor model indicated moderate residual correlations between Items 1 and 6 of the NPI Entitlement subscale and Item 5 of the NPI Entitlement subscale (“I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve” vs. “I will take my satisfactions as they come”) and Item 5 of the PES (“I do not necessarily deserve special treatment”). A modified two-factor model that included these two residual correlations was then analyzed. Addition of the residual correlations significantly improved the fit of the two-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2(2, N = 918) = 270.16, p < .001$ . Adding these residual correlations altered the correlation between the latent NPI Entitlement subscale and PES variables only slightly from .60 to .64.

To assess the discriminate validity of the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES scales, an additional model was specified in which the correlation between the latent NPI Entitlement

subscale and PES variables ( $r = .54$ ) was consistent with that obtained from the LISREL analysis ( $r = .64$ ). Mplus also provides a robust version of the WLS estimator (WLSMV) designed to adjust the chi-square statistic and standard errors for departures from multivariate normality in the data. Although the chi-square obtained using the WLSMV estimator is not amenable to difference testing, results indicate that the correlation between the latent NPI Entitlement subscale and PES variables ( $r = .52$ ) was not noticeably affected by nonnormality in the data.

subscale and PES variables was constrained to equal 1.00.<sup>3</sup> Imposing this constraint significantly degraded the fit of the two-factor model,  $\Delta\chi^2(1, N = 918) = 217.05, p < .001$ . Results from the constrained model indicate that the two-factor model estimating the correlation between the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES latent variables provided the best fit to the data,  $\chi^2(87, N = 918) = 588.39, p < .001$ ; GFI = .97; CFI = .95; and SRMR = .13. Figure 2 presents the unconstrained two-factor model in which all NPI Entitlement subscale and PES items loaded significantly on the respective latent variables. In addition, the correlation between the latent NPI Entitlement subscale and PES variables ( $r = .64$ ) provides evidence for the discriminate validity of the NPI Entitlement subscale and PES scales.

In sum, consistent with the results of Study 1, a one-factor solution provides a good fit for the PES. Additionally, the PES and the NPI Entitlement subscale are better modeled as reflecting two related factors rather than a single factor.

### *The PES and Social Desirability*

The PES was not correlated with global social desirability (even with 918 participants),  $r = -.06, ns$ . Thus, the PES is not related to an overall level of socially desirable responding. Examination of the two subscales of the Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding revealed that social desirability was not related to self-deceptive enhancement,  $r = .06, ns$ .

<sup>3</sup>An alternative method of assessing discriminate validity involves specifying a single-factor model on which all items are then loaded. This single-factor model is then tested against a two-factor model. Evidence for discriminate validity exists if the two-factor model provides a better fit to the data than does the single-factor solution. It is important to note that with only two latent variables in the model, this approach and our approach yield identical results.

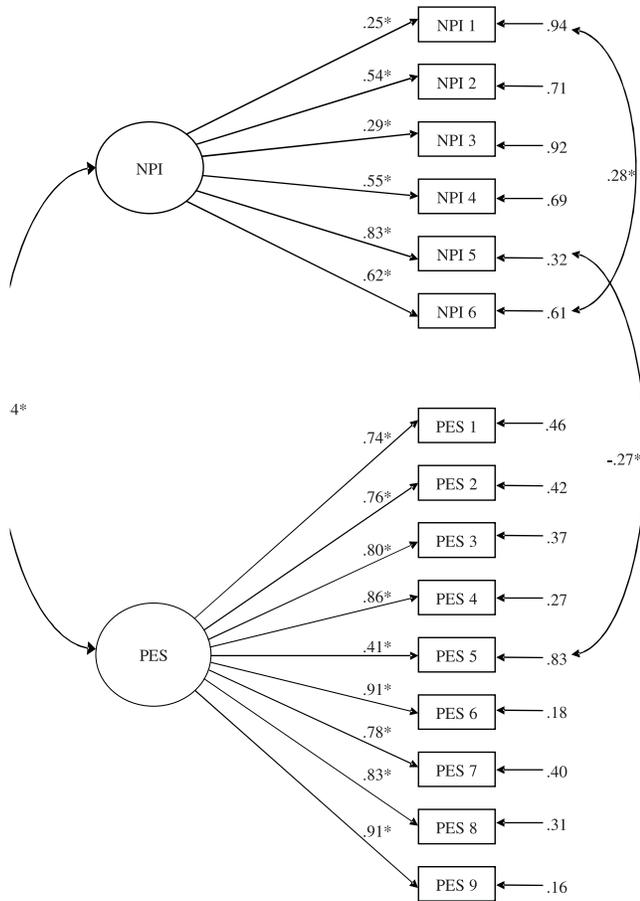


FIGURE 2 Final two-factor model with freely estimated correlation between Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI) Entitlement subscale and the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES) latent variables. Asterisks indicate significant factor loadings and correlations. Standardized values obtained using the weighted least squares estimator in LISREL Version 8.3.

There was a statistically significant association between the PES and impression management,  $r = -.16, p < .0001$ , but the magnitude of this association was small and nonsubstantive.

**Summary**

A study with a large sample ( $n > 900$ ) of participants confirmed the single factor structure of the PES and further discriminated the PES from the NPI Entitlement subscale. Importantly, this study also found no link between the PES and social desirability.

**STUDY 3: TEST-RETEST RELIABILITY**

In Studies 1 and 2, we demonstrated that the PES was internally reliable. The goal of Study 3 was to demonstrate the test-retest reliability of the PES. This is particularly important to demonstrate given our theoretical approach to psychological entitlement. Notably, we consider psychological enti-

tlement to reflect a chronic or stable disposition rather than a response to a specific social situation. If we are correct in our assumption, response to the PES should be relatively stable over time. If we are incorrect, there should only be a small correlation over time.

**Method**

*Participants*

Two independent samples of Iowa State University undergraduate students were used to examine the test-retest reliability of the PES over 1-month (Sample 1) and 2-month (Sample 2) time periods. Sample 1 consisted of 97 students (50 men, 47 women). Sample 2 consisted of 458 students (201 men, 257 women). Participants received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

**Results and Discussion**

*Descriptive Statistics*

**Sample 1.** The mean PES score was 28.8 ( $SD = 9.02$ ) at baseline and 30.3 ( $SD = 8.22$ ) 1 month later. At Time 1, PES scores were higher for men ( $M = 29.14, SD = 9.55$ ) than for women ( $M = 26.72, SD = 9.46$ ),  $t(456) = 2.70, p < .05, d = .25$ . The alpha coefficient was .85 at baseline and .83 one month later.

**Sample 2.** The mean PES score was 27.7 ( $SD = 9.53$ ) at baseline and 30.6 ( $SD = 9.17$ ) 2 months later. At Time 1, PES scores did not differ for men ( $M = 29.50, SD = 8.77$ ) and women ( $M = 28.23, SD = 9.39$ ),  $t(95) = .69, ns, d = .14$ . The alpha coefficient was .88 at baseline and .88 two months later.

**Test-retest analyses.** The 1-month test-retest correlation for the PES was  $r = .72, p < .0001$ . The 2-month test-retest correlation for the PES was  $r = .70, p < .0001$ . Thus, the PES is stable over time.

**Summary**

Consistent with our theoretical approach to psychological entitlement, the PES was found to be reliable across both 1- and 2-month time periods. In addition, the internal consistency of the PES was further confirmed in two samples (all alphas  $> .80$ ).

**STUDY 4: CORRELATIONS WITH THE BIG FIVE PERSONALITY FACTORS**

The goal of Study 4 was to assess the correlations of the PES and the NPI Entitlement subscale with the factors representing the Big Five personality traits. We wanted to demonstrate that the PES was not redundant with a single Big Five trait or a sim-

ple combination of these traits. We also wanted to use the Big Five to discriminate further between the PES and NPI Entitlement subscale. This would be the case if the PES and NPI Entitlement subscale were associated with different patterns of Big Five traits. Finally, by associating the PES with the Big Five, we desired to forge an important link between a self variable like the PES and higher order personality factors derived from natural language as represented by the Big Five.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 500 Iowa State University undergraduate students (197 men, 303 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

### Procedure

Participants completed the PES, the Entitlement subscale of the NPI, and a measure of the Big Five personality structure (Goldberg, 1992).

## Results and Discussion

### Descriptive Statistics

The mean PES score for all 500 participants was 29.6 ( $SD = 9.0$ ). PES scores were higher for men ( $M = 30.90$ ,  $SD = 9.1$ ) than for women ( $M = 28.73$ ,  $SD = 9.0$ ),  $t(498) = 2.62$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $d = .23$ . The alpha coefficient for the PES was .87. Other alphas were as follows: Surgency (Extroversion),  $\alpha = .88$ ; Agreeableness,  $\alpha = .90$ ; Conscientiousness,  $\alpha = .88$ ; Emotional Stability (Neuroticism),  $\alpha = .82$ ; Intellect (Openness),  $\alpha = .85$ ; and NPI Entitlement,  $\alpha = .56$ . The NPI Entitlement subscale and the PES correlated significantly,  $r = .31$ ,  $p < .05$ .

### Correlations

As is clear from Table 4, the PES was not redundant with the Big Five. The PES was associated significantly with two factors;  $r = -.19$  with Agreeableness and  $r = -.16$  with Emotional Stability. In contrast, the NPI Entitlement subscale differed from the PES in that the NPI Entitlement subscale correlated positively with Surgency,  $r = .20$ , and did not correlate significantly with Emotional Stability,  $r = -.05$ . Both scales had similar negative correlations with Agreeableness,  $r = -.18$ , for the NPI subscale.

### Summary

Consistent with our predictions, the PES was found to be nonredundant with any one or any simple combination of the Big Five factors. No correlation was greater than .20. The PES

**TABLE 4**  
Correlations of the PES and NPI Entitlement Subscale With the Big Five (Study 4)

Measure	NPI Entitlement	PES
Surgency (Extraversion)	.20*	.02
Agreeableness	-.18*	-.19*
Conscientiousness	-.02	-.07
Emotional stability (neuroticism)	-.05	-.16*
Intellect (Openness)	.04	.02

Note. PES = Psychological Entitlement Scale; NPI = Narcissistic Personality Scale.

\* $p < .05$ .

reflected elements of low agreeableness and low emotional stability. Importantly, these results helped to further discriminate the PES from the NPI Entitlement subscale. Both scales correlated negatively with agreeableness but differed in that the NPI subscale also correlated with surgency (extraversion), whereas the PES correlated with low emotional stability (i.e., neuroticism). It is now clear from a variety of findings (e.g., correlations with Me Versus Other Scale, confirmatory factor analysis, and correlations with Big Five) that the PES and NPI Entitlement subscale are not redundant.

## STUDY 5: TAKING CANDY FROM CHILDREN

The initial efforts to validate the PES compared scores of the PES to self-reports on related individual difference measures. In the following two studies, Studies 5 and 6, we validated the PES using a behavioral measure (Study 5) and self-reported behaviors in a hypothetical situation (Study 6).

The goal of Study 5 was to validate the PES using a behavioral measure. Specifically, participants were offered the opportunity to take as much candy as they thought that they deserved from a bowl of Halloween candy designated for children in the Developmental Laboratory. We predicted that higher entitlement scores would be associated with taking more pieces of candy.

## Method

### Participants

Participants included 75 University of Georgia undergraduate students (12 men, 63 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

### Materials and Procedures

Participants reported to the study ("Understanding Personality") in groups of four. They were seated in separate cubicles so that they could not observe each other. They were presented with a consent form followed by a questionnaire packet. This packet included the PES, the Entitlement subscale of the NPI for use as a control as well as several un-

related questionnaires that were included to disguise the study's true purpose. After completing the questionnaire, the experimenter stated that she had a bucket of Halloween candy that she was going to take to the children in the Developmental Laboratory. She then announced that she would let participants take "as much candy as you think that you deserve." The tone of voice was intentionally light and good natured—the idea was for the candy offer to appear as an afterthought rather than a planned part of the study.

Each student was then presented with the candy bucket individually by the experimenter. No student knew how much candy, if any, was taken by other students. The bucket itself was store bought and decorated with Halloween imagery. There was a hand-written sign on the bucket that read "Child Development Lab." For realism, there was also a "post-it note" on the bucket that read, "Please take to the Dev. Lab—Dr. C." The candy included Hershey Kisses™, Jolly Ranchers™, and Tootsie Rolls™. These are similar in size but vary in terms of taste. The bucket was kept roughly two-thirds filled for all sessions.

After the students took candy, the experimenter asked them to record the number of pieces of candy that they took. This number was confirmed by a visual inspection by the experimenter. Participants were then debriefed and the reason for the deception was explained to them. Students were thanked and left with the candy.

## Results and Discussion

The mean entitlement score was 29.7 ( $SD = 8.7$ ). PES scores did not differ for men ( $M = 33.8$ ,  $SD = 8.7$ ) and women ( $M = 28.9$ ,  $SD = 8.5$ ),  $t(73) = 1.83$ , *ns*,  $d = .43$ . The mean pieces of candy taken was 2.5 ( $SD = 1.7$ ). There was no significant difference between the amount of candy taken by men and women.

As predicted, individuals with higher entitlement scores took more candy,  $r = .24$ ,  $p < .05$ . This association was still marginally significant when gender was controlled in a simultaneous regression. Entitlement,  $\beta = .22$ ,  $t(72) = 1.85$ ,  $p = .07$ , predicted marginally candy taken, whereas gender did not,  $\beta = .11$ ,  $t(72) = .913$ , *ns*. The partial correlation of entitlement controlling for gender was  $r = .21$ ,  $p = .07$ . This effect may have been marginal because slightly more power was needed to detect a behavioral outcome variable (i.e., taking candy), especially when trying to predict this behavior above and beyond gender. There was an ordinal gender interaction that found a greater association between entitlement score and candy taken for men than for women, but because there were many more women than men (5:1) and because gender interactions were not noted in the other studies, this interaction should be interpreted with caution.

Finally, we examined the link between the PES and mean pieces of candy taken when the NPI Entitlement subscale was controlled for statistically. The association remained marginally significant,  $r = .20$ ,  $p = .08$ . The simple correla-

tion between mean pieces of candy taken and the entitlement subscale of the NPI was not significant,  $r = .17$ .

In sum, Study 5 provided further validation of the PES using a behavioral measure of entitlement.

## STUDY 6: SALARY AT WORK

The goal of Study 6 was to validate the PES using a different outcome variable. Specifically, participants were asked to imagine that they were workers in a company facing a cost-cutting situation. After thinking about the situation, participants reported how much salary they thought they deserved vis-à-vis other employees. We predicted that entitlement scores would correlate positively with reported deserved salary.

### Method

#### *Participants*

Participants included 71 University of Georgia undergraduate students (23 men, 48 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

#### *Materials and Procedures*

Participants reported to the study in groups of 5 to 15, but they worked independently on tasks. They were presented with booklets for two "unrelated" studies. (This was done to prevent participants from linking the entitlement questionnaire with the vignette.) The first was a personality study. This included the PES, the Entitlement subscale of the NPI as well as additional measures to further disguise the predictions of the study.

The second part of the study was the vignette. Participants were told to imagine that they and six other employees worked for an Internet company ("Gopher"). Consultants state that Gopher needs to cut employee salaries to help the bottom line. Each participant was told that he or she would need to suggest salary cuts to the consultants. Participants then rated on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*I deserve much more than this person*) to 7 (*I deserve much less than this person*) how much salary they deserved relative to the other six employees. These six scores were averaged to create one score that reflected the amount of salary deserved by the self.

### Results and Discussion

The mean entitlement score was 29.5 ( $SD = 8.7$ ). PES scores did not differ for men ( $M = 30.2$ ,  $SD = 11.7$ ) and women ( $M = 29.1$ ,  $SD = 10.4$ ),  $t(69) = .40$ , *ns*,  $d = .10$ . The average rating of amount of salary deserved was 4.4 ( $SD = .62$ ).

As predicted, individuals with higher entitlement scores reported that they deserved more salary than their peers,  $r = .30$ ,  $p < .05$ . Men reported deserving marginally more salary than did women,  $r = .22$ ,  $p = .06$ . The association between entitlement

and salary deserved was still significant when gender was controlled in a simultaneous regression. Entitlement,  $\beta = .29, t(68) = 2.53, p < .05$ , predicted reported deserved salary, and gender did marginally,  $\beta = .21, t(68) = 1.86, p = .07$ . There was no gender interaction. Controlling for gender, the partial correlation between entitlement and desiring more was  $r = .29, p < .05$ .

As in the previous study, we statistically controlled for the NPI Entitlement subscale and the association between the PES and deserved salary remained significant,  $r = .25, p < .05$ . The simple correlation between the NPI Entitlement subscale and deserved salary was not significant,  $r = .18, ns$ .

## STUDIES 7 TO 9

Studies 7 to 9 involve more than assessing reliability, validity, and distinctiveness of the PES. In Studies 7 to 9, we examined the workings of entitlement in more complex interpersonal contexts. We assessed the consequences of psychological entitlement for social and societal life. In Study 7, we examined an important potential societal impact of psychological entitlement, behavior in the commons dilemma; In Study 8, we focused on entitlement in the context of romantic relationships; and in Study 9, we focused on entitlement and aggression in response to ego threat.

### STUDY 7: TRAGEDY OF THE COMMONS

The goal of Study 7 was to examine the PES in the context of a classic social psychological context, the commons dilemma. Typically, participants are presented with the opportunity to harvest from a renewable resource (e.g., the sea, a forest). There are also other individuals harvesting, and this leads to a dilemma between using a greedy, competitive response that destroys the resource but maximizes short-term individual gains or a cooperative response that maintains the resource and maximizes long-term gains.

In Study 7, individuals had the opportunity to harvest trees from a forest. They were also told that there are 3 other “companies” harvesting from this resource (see Sheldon & McGregor, 2000). The dilemma is between (a) harvesting as much of the resource as possible to maximize their own short-term gains but risk completely depleting the resource and (b) refraining from harvesting the resource so that it can renew itself but risk having the other companies harvest the resource. Choice A is the competitive choice; Choice B is the cooperative choice. We predicted that entitlement would be linked to making competitive or selfish choices when faced with a commons dilemma.

#### Method

##### *Participants*

Participants were 150 University of Georgia undergraduate students (42 men, 108 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation.

#### *Materials and Procedures*

Participants completed the study individually. After giving informed consent, they completed booklets for two “unrelated” studies. (This was done to prevent participants from linking the entitlement questionnaire with the commons dilemma.) The first was a personality study. This included the PES as well as additional measures to further disguise the predictions of the study.<sup>4</sup>

The second was the commons dilemma. This was taken from a procedure used and validated previously (Sheldon & McGregor, 2000). Participants were told to imagine that they and three other companies were able to harvest from a forest (up to 10 hectares [ha] per year). The total amount of forest was 200 ha and it regenerated at a rate of 10% after each annual harvest. Participants were then asked to answer three questions:

1. How much they wanted to profit more than the other companies. This was done on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) in which 7 denoted greater profit. This measure can be referred to as “greed.”
2. How much they thought that the other companies want to profit more than them. This measure can be referred to as fear. This was done on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) in which 7 denoted greater “fear.”
3. The number of hectares (0 to 10) that they would cut in the first year.

After completing the study, participants were thanked and debriefed.

#### Results and Discussion

The mean entitlement score was 30.8 ( $SD = 9.1$ ). PES scores did not differ for men ( $M = 31.9, SD = 8.8$ ) and women ( $M = 30.4, SD = 9.3$ ),  $t(148) = .89, ns, d = .15$ . The mean greed rating was 5.2 ( $SD = 1.30$ ). The mean fear rating was 5.2 ( $SD = 1.47$ ). The mean number of hectares cut was 5.8 ( $SD = 2.00$ ).

As predicted, individuals with higher entitlement scores reported greater greed,  $r = .22, p < .05$ . This association was still significant when gender was controlled in a simultaneous regression. Entitlement,  $\beta = .21, t(147) = 2.63, p < .05$  predicted greed, and gender did not,  $\beta = .11, t(147) = 1.34, ns$ . There were no gender main effects or interactions on greed or on either of the other dependent measures. The partial correlation with entitlement controlling for gender was  $r = .21, p < .05$ .

There was no link between entitlement and fear,  $r = -.02, ns$ . The partial correlation with entitlement controlling for

<sup>4</sup>Data from the NPI Entitlement subscale were not collected from this study.

gender was  $r = -.02$ , *ns*. This finding is important because it suggests that individuals high in entitlement are motivated by acquisitive desires rather than self-protection (Sheldon & McGregor, 2000).

Also consistent with predictions, individuals with higher entitlement scores desired to harvest marginally more trees in the first round,  $r = .14$ ,  $p < .10$ . This association was still marginally significant when gender was controlled in a simultaneous regression. Entitlement,  $\beta = .14$ ,  $t(147) = 1.65$ ,  $p = .10$  predicted harvest, and gender did not,  $\beta = .09$ ,  $t(147) = 1.65$ ,  $p = .26$ . The partial correlation with entitlement controlling for gender was  $r = .13$ ,  $p = .10$ . As in Study 5, it appears that somewhat greater power is necessary to predict behavior (or, as in this case, hypothetical behavior). This is especially true when gender is taken into account.

In sum, high entitled individuals report more selfish, competitive (in contrast to cooperative) responses to a commons dilemma. This response reflected acquisitive rather than defensive or protective concerns on the part of the entitled individuals.

## STUDY 8: RELATIONSHIP PROCESSES

It is likely that the selfish approach to life taken by individuals high in psychological entitlement will have a largely negative impact on their romantic relationships, especially in areas in which the needs of the self are weighed against the needs of the partner. In Study 8, we examined a group of romantically involved participants. We predicted that entitlement would be linked to a range of negative relationship outcomes reflecting increased focus on own needs and less concern with partner needs. The key variables used to assess this trend included (a) attachment style, (b) accommodation, (c) empathy, (d) perspective taking, (e) respect, and (f) love.

### Method

#### *Participants*

Participants included 108 University of Georgia undergraduate students (34 men, 74 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation. All students were currently involved in an ongoing romantic relationship.

#### *Materials and Procedure*

Romantically involved participants completed several questionnaires as part of a larger study of self and relationships (some results from this data set have been published previously; Campbell & Foster, 2002). The questionnaires included the PES and NPI Entitlement subscale as well as a list of common relationship measures. Attachment style was assessed with a four-item measure (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). Accommodation was measured with a 16-item measure (see Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, &

Lipkus, 1991). This scale assesses four elements of accommodation: voice, loyalty, exit, and neglect. An overall accommodation score was calculated by subtracting exit + neglect from voice + loyalty. Empathy and Perspective Taking were two subscales derived from Davis's (1983) interpersonal reactivity index for use with couples. Respect for the partner was assessed with a 17-item measure of respect (Green & Horton, 2002). Finally, love was assessed with a slightly modified version of the Love Attitudes Scale (Hendrick & Hendrick, 1986, 1990). This scale contained 41 items assessing love styles experienced by the participant in their present romantic relationships.

### Results

The mean entitlement score was 27.3 ( $SD = 8.7$ ). PES scores did not differ for men ( $M = 28.5$ ,  $SD = 9.2$ ) and women ( $M = 26.6$ ,  $SD = 8.5$ ),  $t(106) = 1.05$ , *ns*,  $d = .20$ .

The correlations between entitlement and each measure were examined. These results are presented in Table 5. To summarize, entitlement is linked to dismissing attachment (valuing the self but not others); decreased accommodation, particularly on active accommodating processes (entitlement is linked to less positive accommodating behaviors); lower empathy and perspective taking; less respect for the partner; and love associated primarily with game playing (ludus) and selfishness (less agape). When the NPI Entitlement subscale was controlled for statistically, half of these effects remained significant, including lesser loyalty, empathy, perspective taking, and greater mania and game playing. In short, entitled individuals report being essentially more selfish in their romantic relationships.

## STUDY 9: AGGRESSION

Individuals high in entitlement can be selfish, but can they also be aggressive? We predict that this might be the case if entitled individuals are criticized and then are given the opportunity to aggress against the individual who criticized them. There are two reasons for this prediction, one theoretical and one empirical. From the theoretical perspective, it is plausible that individuals high in entitlement not only feel that they deserve a disproportional amount of resources (e.g., Studies 5 through 7) but also success and favorable treatment from others (similar to the results of Study 8). Criticism may violate these assumptions of deservingness. Furthermore, because the needs of the other (i.e., the criticizer) do not reside centrally in entitled individuals' self-views, aggression against the other would be an appropriate and available response. From the empirical perspective, narcissism is linked to aggression following criticism. For example, researchers have found that individuals high in narcissism respond aggressively to criticism (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, & Baumeister, in press). Because entitlement is associated with narcissism, we might expect it to be linked to aggression following criticism.

**TABLE 5**  
**Correlations Between Entitlement and**  
**Romantic Relationship Outcomes (Study 8)**

Measure	Psychological Entitlement Scale	
	Correlation	Partial Correlation
Attachment		
Secure	.02	.10
Dismissing	.27***	.16
Preoccupied	.02	.09
Anxious	.16	.11
Accommodation		
Exit	.05	-.08
Voice	-.18*	-.13
Loyalty	-.27**	-.17*
Neglect	.12	-.05
Overall	-.20**	-.08
Empathy	-.24**	-.16*
Perspective Taking	-.43***	-.32***
Respect	-.22**	-.11
Love Attitude Scale		
Eros	.00	-.02
Ludus	.28***	.22**
Storge	-.04	.03
Pragma	-.09	-.11
Mania	.19*	.20**
Agape	-.22**	-.09

Note. NPI = Narcissistic Personality Inventory.

\* $p < .10$ . \*\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .01$ . Partial correlations have NPI Entitlement subscale controlled for statistically.

In Study 9, we predicted that individuals high in psychological entitlement would be more aggressive against those who criticize them than would be individuals low in psychological entitlement. Importantly, we also predicted that these differences would not be seen in conditions in which there is no ego threat.

## Method

### Participants

Participants were 111 Iowa State University undergraduate students (55 men, 56 women) who received extra course credit in exchange for their voluntary participation. They were selected at random from a large group of students who completed the PES and NPI Entitlement subscale as part of a battery of questionnaires given in mass-testing sessions.

### Procedures

All participants were tested individually. However, they were led to believe that there was another participant of the same sex who would be their partner during the experiment.

After obtaining informed consent, the experimenter explained that the purpose of the study was to form an impression of their partner. Participants learned they would complete several tasks with this partner, including writing an essay and playing a competitive game, to form an accurate impression.

First, participants were given 5 min to write an essay on a noncontroversial topic. After finishing, the participant's essay was taken away to be shown to the other participant (who was in fact nonexistent) for evaluation. Meanwhile, the participant was permitted to evaluate the partner's essay.<sup>5</sup> A short time later, the experimenter brought the participant's own essay back with comments ostensibly made by the other participant. These comments constituted the experimental manipulation of ego threat. By the flip of a coin, half the participants were assigned to the negative feedback condition, and they received bad evaluations consisting of negative ratings on organization, originality, writing style, clarity of expression, persuasiveness of arguments, and overall quality. There was also a handwritten comment stating "This is one of the worst essays I have read!" The other participants received favorable, positive evaluations consisting of high (positive) numerical ratings and a written comment, "No suggestions, great essay!" Previous research has shown that the negative feedback makes people quite angry (Bushman, 1995, 2002; Bushman & Baumeister, 1998, Bushman, Baumeister, & Phillips, 2001; Bushman, Baumeister, & Stack, 1999).

The second part of the study involved playing a competitive reaction time task based on a paradigm developed by Taylor (1967). Previous studies have established the construct validity of this paradigm (e.g., Anderson & Bushman, 1997; Bernstein, Richardson, & Hammock, 1987; Giancola & Zeichner, 1995). The ostensible purpose of the reaction time task was to give the participant an idea of what his or her partner was like in a competitive situation. The participant was told that he or she and the partner would have to press a button as fast as possible on each trial, and whoever was slower would receive a blast of noise. The participant was permitted to set in advance the intensity of the noise that the other person would receive between 60 dB (Level 1) and 105 dB (Level 10) if the other lost. A nonaggressive, no-noise setting (Level 0) was also offered. In addition to deciding the intensity, the winner decided the duration of the loser's suffering because the duration of the noise depended on how long the winner held the button pressed down. In effect, each participant controlled a weapon that could be used to blast the other person if the participant won the competition to react faster.

The reaction time task consisted of 25 trials. After the initial (no provocation) trial, the remaining 24 trials were divided into three blocks with eight trials in each block. Within each block of trials, the "other participant" set random noise

<sup>5</sup>Participants were randomly assigned to write on one of two topics: (a) "If I ruled the world it would be a better place because, . . ." or (b) "The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me because . . ." Both topics were taken from the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The "other participant's" essay was always on the topic "The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me because . . ." The results were not influenced by the essay topic the participants wrote about (either alone or in interaction with other variables), so the data were combined across this variable.

levels (ranging from 65 dB to 100 dB) and random noise durations (ranging from 0.25 sec to 2.5 sec). The participant heard noise on half of the trials within each block (randomly determined). An iMac computer controlled the events in the reaction time task and recorded the noise levels and noise durations the participant set for the “other person.” The white noise was delivered through a pair of Telephonics TDH-39P headphones. After completing the competitive reaction time task, participants were probed for suspicion, thoroughly debriefed, and thanked for their participation.

## Results and Discussion

The mean entitlement score was 27.8 ( $SD = 9.2$ ). Entitlement scores did not differ for men ( $M = 29.2$ ,  $SD = 9.2$ ) and women ( $M = 26.7$ ,  $SD = 9.0$ ),  $t(103) = 1.41$ ,  $ns$ ,  $d = .28$ .

Noise intensity and noise duration were measures of the same construct—aggressive behavior. The same pattern of results was obtained for both measures, and the two measures were significantly correlated ( $r = .53$ ). To create a more reliable measure, the noise intensity and noise duration data were standardized and summed across the 25 trials to form a total measure of aggressive behavior.

The data were analyzed by means of a 2 (positive vs. negative feedback)  $\times$  2 (high vs. low entitlement) analysis of variance.<sup>6</sup> As expected, the relationship between entitlement and aggression depended on whether the evaluation was positive or negative. This is indicated by a significant two-way interaction between type of feedback and level of entitlement,  $F(1, 103) = 4.11$ ,  $p < .05$  (see Figure 3). As expected, participants high in entitlement were more aggressive than those low in entitlement after receiving a negative evaluation,  $t(103) = 2.00$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $d = .39$ . High-entitlement people lashed out and behaved aggressively against the person who criticized them. High- and low-entitlement participants did not differ in how aggressive they were when they were not criticized,  $t(103) = -0.87$ ,  $ns$ ,  $d = -.17$ . In sum, psychological entitlement as measured by the PES was associated with aggression against critical individuals but not noncritical individuals.

Importantly, the two-way interaction remained significant even when the Entitlement subscale of the NPI was treated as a covariate in the analysis,  $F(1, 96) = 4.85$ ,  $p < .03$ ,  $d = .45$ . Thus, the PES explains variance above and beyond that explained by the Entitlement subscale of the NPI.

## GENERAL DISCUSSION

The goal of this study was to develop a measure of psychological entitlement, the PES, and to assess its interpersonal

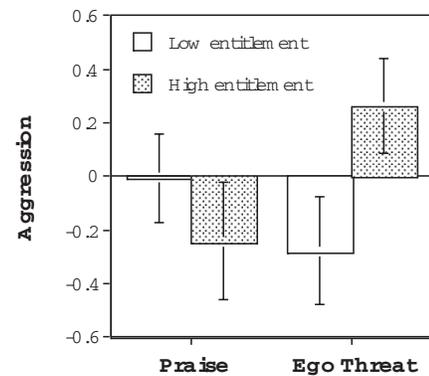


FIGURE 3 Effect of praise and ego threat on aggression levels in high- and low-entitlement participants (Study 9). For ease of interpretation, aggression levels are represented using standardized scores. Capped vertical bars denote 1 SE.

consequences. Empirical results from a series of 9 studies suggest that the PES is a reliable and valid measure of psychological entitlement. In Studies 1 through 4, we focused on validating and testing the psychometric properties of the scale. In Study 1, the PES was shown to be an internally consistent scale made up of one factor. Study 1 also provided initial validation of the scale by demonstrating its positive correlations with narcissism (particularly the Entitlement subscale) and a visual measure of entitlement, the Me Versus Other Scale. Study 2 confirmed the single-factor structure of the PES, this time in a much larger sample and using a confirmatory factor analysis. This confirmatory factor analysis also demonstrated that the PES and NPI Entitlement subscale are better modeled as two separate factors than as a single factor. Importantly, in Study 2, we also found no association between the PES and global socially desirable responding (on the subscales, there was no correlation with self-deceptive enhancement and a small negative correlation with impression management). Study 3 focused on test-retest reliability of the PES. We theoretically described psychological entitlement as a stable individual difference. Study 3 demonstrated this predicted stability in two samples, one with a 1-month duration between test and retest and the other with a 2-month duration between test and retest. Finally, in Study 4, we found that (a) the PES had small negative associations with two factors of the Big Five (agreeableness and emotional stability), and (b) this pattern of associations was different from that of the NPI Entitlement subscale. In all, the first four studies supported our contention that the PES validly and reliably measures a stable individual difference in psychological entitlement that is different than the NPI Entitlement subscale. Likewise, these results suggest that we are not “reinventing the wheel” in that the PES is not redundant with the NPI Entitlement subscale and any one or simple combination of Big Five factors.

Studies 5 and 6 focused on further validation of the PES against criteria that went beyond self-report personality mea-

<sup>6</sup>A median split was used to identify high versus low entitlement. Regression analyses, treating entitlement as a continuous variable, yielded the same pattern of results.

tures. Overall, the PES was found to be valid in two different settings. In Study 5, we demonstrated that the PES was positively associated with taking candy intended for children; in Study 6, we demonstrated that the PES was positively associated with perceived self-deserved salary compensation in a company facing budget cuts. In both of these studies, the PES remained predictive even when the NPI Entitlement subscale was controlled statistically.

Studies 7 through 9 focused on three important interpersonal contexts in which psychological entitlement is likely to have an impact: a commons dilemma, romantic relationships, and aggression following ego threat. In Study 7, we demonstrated that the PES is associated positively with intention to harvest more than others in a classic commons dilemma situation. The findings of Study 7 also suggest that psychological entitlement was acquisitive rather than defensive in nature. In simple terms, the motivation is greed and not fear. In Study 8, we demonstrated that individuals who are high in entitlement and involved in romantic relationships display a pattern of selfishness on a range of variables including more dismissing attachment, less overall accommodation, less empathy, perspective taking and respect, greater game playing, and less selflessness. Finally, in Study 9, we demonstrated that PES was linked positively to aggression following criticism but not following praise. Taken together, these results hint at the range of areas in which an individual difference measure of psychological entitlement such as the PES may be useful.

### Implications and Future Research

The PES developed in this research will ideally be useful to researchers in a range of settings. For example, self-researchers in social and personality psychology have long benefited from individual difference measures that focus on the functioning of the self (e.g., self-esteem, self-control, narcissism). These measures provide a window into the operation of the self that is convenient and reliable. We conceive of psychological entitlement as being in the same class of variables. Like these other self variables, there will likely be future techniques developed to manipulate experimentally high and low levels of entitlement, and these efforts will complement research conducted with the individual differences measure.

Applied researchers may also benefit from this scale or similar measures. For example, it is likely that psychological entitlement will have an effect on workplace functioning (e.g., Study 6). In an extensive review of the literature on justice in organizations, it was noted that only two individual difference variables have been used in the study of organizational justice to date: negative affectivity and self-esteem (Cohen-Charash & Spector, 2001). Clearly, this research area would benefit from an individual differences measure of entitlement. It is also likely that psychological entitlement will affect other social behaviors. Obvious examples would

be the individual's willingness to give and to receive charity. High-entitled individuals will arguably be less likely to give to charity but may be more willing to accept charity—even if they do not construe it as charity but instead as a just reward.

Developmental researchers who focus on entitlement may also find the PES useful. The finding of this research demonstrating that psychological entitlement is linked to dismissing attachment in romantic relationships also hints at the developmental roots of entitlement. It is plausible that a style of attachment that includes a positive view of one's self and own needs and an accompanying negative view of close others and their needs may result in psychological entitlement in later life. This would be an interesting avenue for future research.

We began this article by noting that psychological entitlement is a common topic of social discourse. The samples used in this research were too limited in scope for us to make any larger societal statement regarding entitlement. Past research, however, has revealed that self-esteem levels have changed in the United States over the last several decades (Twenge & Campbell, 2002) and also differ across different cultural groups and between genders (Kling, Hyde, & Showers, 1999; Twenge & Crocker, 2002). Likewise, narcissism appears to diminish with age and be less prevalent in more interdependent cultures and previous birth cohorts (Foster, Campbell, & Twenge, 2003). We suspect that psychological entitlement may also diminish as individuals get older and are repeatedly exposed to the unfortunate realization that life does not give you what you want all the time. Psychological entitlement may also differ across cultures. We speculate that entitlement would be greater in cultures in which material resources are relatively conspicuous and interdependence is low. This would be an interesting question for future research. Finally, it is important to identify gender differences in psychological entitlement. Across our 10 samples of participants, we found a significant gender difference in only two samples and a marginally significant gender difference only once. Given the small gender difference found in self-reported self-esteem and narcissism, however, we speculated that there would be a small gender difference in psychological entitlement, with men reporting slightly greater entitlement than women. We thus conducted a meta-analysis of the gender differences across our 10 samples. Men did report a slightly higher score on psychological entitlement than did women, weighted  $d = .20$ ,  $p < .0001$ ; unweighted  $d = .17$ ;  $r = .09$ . To put this difference into perspective, the effect size is almost identical to the effect size of  $d = .21$  found in a recent meta-analysis of gender and self-esteem (Kling et al., 1999).

Finally, we point out that entitlement might not always have negative consequences for the individual and perhaps for society. There may even be incidents in which psychological entitlement leads to positive outcomes in the long term (but recall Study 7). For example, researchers have suggested that low levels of psychological entitlement may result in individuals getting less pay in employment settings.

This may lead to gender differences in compensation if the specific level of entitlement differs between genders (Major, 1989). Indeed, entitlement may be a reasonable approach to a noncommunal environment. Our best guess is that the mean level of entitlement in modern Western society is relatively elevated (compared to previous generations and to more communal societies), so the majority of problems reflect high rather than low levels of entitlement. This remains an important question for future research.

### Concluding Thoughts

In this study, we presented and tested a measure of psychological entitlement. Across 9 studies, the PES was proven to be a reliable, stable, and valid measure. Furthermore, we documented potentially important consequences of psychological entitlement across a wide range of social settings. These included an employment context, a commons dilemma, romantic relationships, and ego threat. Across all of these domains, the PES was linked to a pattern of selfish and self-serving beliefs and behaviors—deserving more salary than fellow employees, cutting down more trees, greater game playing and less empathy and respect for romantic partners, and interpersonal aggression. Psychological entitlement is clearly an important predictor of social behavior. We hope that the PES proves a useful tool for assessing psychological entitlement in a variety of social contexts.

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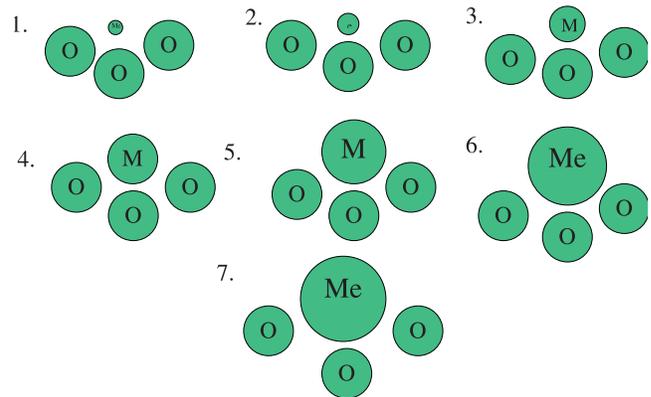
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## APPENDIX A Me Versus Other Scale

Please write the number of the diagram (1 – 7) that best represents how you see yourself “Me” compared to others “O”? \_\_\_\_



APPENDIX B  
Psychological Entitlement Scale

Please respond to the following items using the number that best reflects your own beliefs. Please use the following 7-point scale:

- 1 = strong disagreement.
- 2 = moderate disagreement.
- 3 = slight disagreement.
- 4 = neither agreement nor disagreement.
- 5 = slight agreement.
- 6 = moderate agreement.
- 7 = strong agreement.

- 1. I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others.
- 2. Great things should come to me.
- 3. If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the *first* lifeboat!

- 4. I demand the best because I'm worth it.
- 5. I do not necessarily deserve special treatment.
- 6. I deserve more things in my life.
- 7. People like me deserve an extra break now and then.
- 8. Things should go my way.
- 9. I feel entitled to more of everything.

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