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To cite this version:

Scott J. Moeller, Jennifer Crocker, Brad J. Bushman. Creating Hostility and Conflict: Effects of Entitlement and Self-Image Goals. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 2009, 45 (2), pp.448. 10.1016/j.jesp.2008.11.005 . hal-00686674

HAL Id: hal-00686674

https://hal.science/hal-00686674v1

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Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0022-1031(08)00236-9
DOI: 10.1016/j.jesp.2008.11.005
Reference: YJESP 2189

To appear in: *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*

Received Date: 9 July 2008
Revised Date: 21 September 2008
Accepted Date: 12 November 2008

Please cite this article as: Moeller, S.J., Crocker, J., Bushman, B.J., Creating Hostility and Conflict: Effects of Entitlement and Self-Image Goals, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology* (2008), doi: 10.1016/j.jesp.2008.11.005

This is a PDF file of an unedited manuscript that has been accepted for publication. As a service to our customers we are providing this early version of the manuscript. The manuscript will undergo copyediting, typesetting, and review of the resulting proof before it is published in its final form. Please note that during the production process errors may be discovered which could affect the content, and all legal disclaimers that apply to the journal pertain.

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Running head: ENTITLEMENT, SELF-IMAGE GOALS, AND CONFLICT

Creating Hostility and Conflict:

Effects of Entitlement and Self-Image Goals

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Word count: 2453 words

Keywords: narcissism, entitlement, goals, hostility, conflict, relationships, interpersonal problems, self-defeating behavior

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Abstract

People who feel entitled to admiration and respect from others do not make good companions. This research shows one reason why. Entitled people adopt self-image goals (goals that aim to construct and defend a positive self-image), which then lead to interpersonal conflict and hostility. Studies 1A and 1B documented a unique relation between entitlement and self-image goals. Study 2 extended these results by showing, via a longitudinal design, that entitlement prospectively predicts chronic self-image goals. These chronic self-image goals then predict chronic relationship conflict and hostility, all averaged over 10 weeks. Further, Study 2 revealed that self-image goals mediate the effect of pretest entitlement on both weekly hostility and conflict. These results suggest that by pursuing self-image goals, entitled people create conflict and hostility in their relationships.

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Creating Hostility and Conflict:

Effects of Entitlement and Self-Image Goals

It is a good idea to be ambitious…but it is a terrible mistake to let drive and ambition get in the way of treating people with kindness and decency.

— Robert Solow

Compassionate goals and self-image goals have important implications for creating or undermining interpersonal relationships. C*ompassionate goals* involve supporting others and contributing to their well-being; these goals foster social support and trust. Conversely, *self-image goals* involve constructing, maintaining, and defending a positive self-image; these goals undermine social support and trust (Crocker & Canevello, 2008).

Narcissistic people should be especially likely to adopt self-image goals as an interpersonal strategy because they are concerned (if not downright obsessed) with obtaining admiration and respect from others (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001). Narcissistic people hold grandiose self views, an inflated sense of entitlement, and an interpersonal style marked by exploitative attitudes and low empathy (American Psychiatric Association, 1994). Narcissists may pursue self-image goals to obtain the inclusion, acceptance, advancement, status, admiration, and respect from others that they desire (Leary, 2007; Schlenker, 2003).

However, the self-image goals adopted by narcissists may ultimately trigger relationship conflict. We suggest that narcissists' fragile self-esteem becomes damaged when they do not achieve their self-image goals. Because narcissists care deeply about maintaining their grandiose self-views, they respond with aggression, conflict, and

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hostility against those who insult or criticize them (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman, Bonacci, van Dijk, & Baumeister, 2003; Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989; Rhodewalt, Madrian, & Cheney, 1998; Zeigler-Hill, 2006). Therefore, narcissists may use a self-defeating interpersonal strategy, aimed at garnering respect and admiration, but instead breeding conflict and ill-will (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). And because narcissism and entitlement continue to rise among today's young adults, compared to previous generations (Twenge, Konrath, Foster, Campbell, & Bushman, 2008), understanding how narcissism contributes to negative interpersonal outcomes becomes increasingly important.

The present research tests the hypothesis that narcissists, particularly those with a high sense of entitlement, pursue self-image goals, which lead to conflict with others. We are particularly interested in the entitlement component of narcissism (i.e., the belief that one simply deserves more than others), because it specifically relates to interpersonal conflict (e.g., Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2004), and also because it may contribute more to maladaptive behavior than other narcissism components (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; Emmons, 1984, 1987). Studies 1A and 1B sought to establish a link between entitlement and self-image goals. Study 2 tested whether self-image goals mediate the link between entitlement and perceived interpersonal conflict and hostility.

STUDIES 1A and 1B

Participants

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***Study 1A*.** Participants (*N*=96) were college students who received course credit for their voluntary participation. Although demographic data are unavailable, participants came from a population that mainly consisted of college freshmen (49% female, 65% Caucasian, 6% African American, 13% Asian American).

***Study 1B*.** Participants (*N*=86; 59% female; M_{age}=19.6; 41% Caucasian, 11% African American, 40% Asian American) were college students who responded to advertisements. They received $5 for their voluntary participation.

Procedure

Study 1A. Participants completed the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1988; total α=.82), which contains 40 forced choice items divided into seven subscales: Authority, Self-Sufficiency, Superiority, Exhibitionism, Exploitativeness, Vanity, and Entitlement. Analyses focused on Entitlement, which contains six items (e.g., "If I ruled the world it would be a much better place" versus "The thought of ruling the world frightens the hell out of me"; α=.54).

We assessed self-image goals (e.g., "get others to recognize or acknowledge your positive qualities"; α=.89) and compassionate goals (e.g., "be supportive of others"; α = .86; see Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Items were rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*always*).

Study 1B. Participants completed the NPI (total α=.83; entitlement α=.44) and a different measure of self-image goals and compassionate goals (Moeller, Crocker, & Canevello, 2008, Study 2). Participants responded to an open-ended question about an important self-improvement goal, then responded to 11 items about the consequences of having the goal [response scale: 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*)]. Two composite

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scores were computed: *self-image* items (e.g., “make you want to project a certain image to others”; α=.71) and *compassionate* items (e.g., “help you make a difference for other people”; α=.80) (see supplementary online material for the complete list of items). As expected, this new measure of goals correlated with the goal measures used in Study 1A (self-image goals: r=.41, p<.001; compassionate goals: r=.50, p<.001) (Moeller et al., 2008).

Results & Discussion

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among all variables. Because of intercorrelations among NPI subscales, self-image goals, and compassionate goals across all studies (Tables 1 & 2), the zero-order correlations could be spurious; therefore, all analyses controlled for compassionate goals and the other NPI subscales.

Regression analysis showed that entitlement was significantly related to self-image goals when controlling for the other narcissism subscales and compassionate goals (Study 1A: β=.32, p<.016; Study 1B: β=.26, p<.048). The total NPI score, and the other subscales, were unrelated to self-image goals.

Consistent with our hypotheses, Studies 1A and 1B showed that people with high entitlement pursue goals to construct and inflate desired images of the self. Study 2 aimed to replicate the specificity of the entitlement finding in a larger sample while also examining the potential interpersonal problems that arise as a consequence of the self-image goals of highly entitled people. Study 2 assessed goals, entitlement, and perceived interpersonal conflict and hostility in a longitudinal design, and employed a second measure of psychological entitlement to address the low reliability of the

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entitlement scale of the NPI. We predicted that self-image goals would mediate the effects of entitlement on interpersonal conflict and hostility.

STUDY 2

Method

Participants and Procedure

Study 2 used data from the Goals and Adjustment to College Study (Crocker & Canevello, 2008), a 12-week longitudinal study consisting of a pretest, a posttest, and 10 weekly surveys. Participants were college students (N=199; 61% female; M_{age}=18.1; 71% Caucasian, 6% African American; 19% Asian American) who received $5 for each survey, plus a $40 bonus if they completed all 12 surveys.

At pretest, participants completed the NPI (Raskin & Terry, 1988) and the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004), which consists of 9 items (e.g., "If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the *first* lifeboat!"; α = .83) rated on scales ranging from 1 (*strong disagreement*) to 7 (*strong agreement*).

Weekly surveys included measures of self-image and compassionate goals (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; the same items used in Study 1A), which exhibited good internal consistency each week of the study (self-image goals: .85<α<.95, M_{α}=.91; compassionate goals: .88<α<.96, M_{α}=.94), and measures of hostility and conflict. *Weekly hostility* was assessed using three items from the Brief Symptom Inventory (Derogatis, 2000). Items included "having urges to beat, injure, or harm someone," "getting into frequent arguments," and "feeling easily annoyed or irritated". Weekly hostility exhibited adequate internal consistency each week of the study (.64<α<.78,

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M_{α}=.68). *Weekly conflict* was measured using one item: "In the past week, how often did you have conflicts with people?" All items from the weekly surveys were rated using 5-point scales.

Results

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations among all variables used in Study 2. Data were analyzed using regression analysis. Again, due to intercorrelations among our variables of interest, and to establish the specificity of entitlement, all NPI entitlement analyses controlled for the other NPI subscales. No significant effects emerged for total NPI scores or any other NPI subscale in any analysis. All analyses also controlled for compassionate goals, because they correlated with self-image goals over the ten weeks.

Although the zero-order correlations were not significant, regression analysis showed that when we entered the control predictors, NPI entitlement and PES prospectively predicted self-image goals, averaged over the 10 weeks (β=.18, p<.019 and β=.23, p<.001). NPI entitlement prospectively predicted chronic hostility, averaged over the 10 weeks (β=.17, p<.042), as did PES (β=.16, p<.028). Both NPI entitlement and PES predicted chronic interpersonal conflict (β=.20, p<.023 and β=.14, p<.05). Chronic self-image goals, averaged over 10 weeks, predicted chronic hostility (β=.31, p<.001) and chronic interpersonal conflict (β=.36, p<.001).

Mediation

Chronic self-image goals mediated the effect of NPI entitlement (Sobel's z=1.81, p<.07) and PES (Sobel's z=2.51, p<.012) on weekly hostility. Chronic self-image goals also mediated the effect of NPI entitlement (Sobel's z=1.99, p<.047) and PES (Sobel's

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z=2.77, p<.006) on weekly conflict. In all mediation analyses, the effects of NPI entitlement and PES became nonsignificant, indicating complete mediation.

Discussion

Study 2 replicated Studies 1A and 1B by showing an association between entitlement and self-image goals. Study 2 extended these results by showing that two different measures of entitlement prospectively predict chronic self-image goals, averaged over the following ten weeks.

In Study 2, these relations only emerged when we controlled for compassionate goals, which was not unexpected because these chronic goals correlate over time (Crocker & Canevello, 2008). Therefore, detecting effects of one goal may require controlling for the other. We also caution that although we again found effects using the NPI entitlement subscale, its poor reliability remains a concern (Campbell et al., 2004). Therefore, replicating these relations with the PES, a more reliable measure of entitlement, increases confidence in our findings.

Importantly, the results of Study 2 also revealed that self-image goals mediated the effect of entitlement on perceived hostility and conflict in relationships. Thus, the self-image goals that entitled people adopt predict perceptions of interpersonal problems.

General Discussion

Narcissism, particularly a sense of entitlement, predicts a variety of negative outcomes (Campbell et al., 2004; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Vazire & Funder, 2006). Our results indicate that the self-image goals entitled people pursue might ultimately

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damage their relationships. Previous studies have not investigated the types of goals entitled people pursue, nor have they broadly linked such goals to the interpersonal consequences that ensue within a single theoretical framework.

All studies reported here revealed a unique effect of the entitlement subscale of the NPI, demonstrating the reliability and specificity of this effect; no other NPI subscale remained significant in the regressions, including the four subscales identified by Emmons (1987) (see supplementary online material). Thus, although other narcissism components may relate to self-image goals, our results suggest that such associations are explained by shared variance with entitlement. This perspective is consistent with the hypothesis that entitlement may be particularly responsible for narcissists' maladaptive behavior (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; Emmons, 1984, 1987).

Accordingly, our results also support previous research demonstrating problematic outcomes specifically associated with psychological entitlement. Although we acknowledge the impressive body of literature linking narcissism to interpersonal consequences (Bushman & Baumeister, 1998; Bushman et al., 2003; Kernis et al., 1989; Rhodewalt et al., 1998; Zeigler-Hill, 2006), we draw on recent research to suggest that entitlement may drive such associations (Bushman & Baumeister, 2002; Campbell et al., 2004; Reidy, Zeichner, Foster, & Martinez, 2008; van Dijk & De Cremer, 2006). But whether entitlement accounts for all narcissism findings, or only conflict-related findings, requires further research.

In general, our findings support the hypothesis that narcissism is self-defeating (Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). Narcissistic people often attempt to construct and inflate desired self-views in the eyes of others, such as boasting about accomplishments or

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flaunting money and possessions (Buss & Chiodo, 1991; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). However, people often perceive such strategies negatively, perhaps because the motivations underlying them likely come across as empty and selfish (Crocker & Canevello, 2008; Feeney & Collins, 2001, 2003; Schlenker & Leary, 1982; Turan & Horowitz, 2007). Thus, rather than receiving the attention and admiration they desire, narcissistic people instead alienate others.

Our mediation results indicated that self-image goals completely accounted for the effect of entitlement on conflict and hostility. These results are consistent with process models of personality, which posit that personality traits shape goals, affect, and cognition to produce behavior (Mischel, 2004; Mischel & Shoda, 1995; Mischel & Shoda, 1998). Our mediation findings suggest that reducing self-image goals (and, we speculate, adopting compassionate goals) could provide a sustainable approach for reducing the consequences of narcissism and entitlement. This idea is buttressed by zero-order correlations indicating negative associations between entitlement (both measures) and compassionate goals in Study 2 (see Table 2), and by our previous work showing that establishing an interpersonal connection in a laboratory setting can reduce narcissistic aggression (Konrath, Bushman, & Campbell, 2006). This idea of shifting toward compassionate goals is also consistent with recent calls to replace self-esteem programs with programs that encourage empathy (Twenge, 2006).

Several limitations of these studies should be acknowledged. First, these studies relied on correlations, and therefore other causal sequences could account for these data. For example, a childhood characterized by lack of (or inconsistent) parental support could give rise to the pathological self-focus and unstable self-esteem that

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characterize narcissism, as classical clinical accounts have emphasized (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1971); this kind of childhood could similarly give rise to chronic self-image goals, in which people who experienced deficient parental support chronically feel the need to prove their worth to others. We consider this explanation to be less plausible, though, because narcissism relates positively to parental warmth, and to recollections of pervasive parental admiration (Horton, Bleau, & Drwecki, 2006; Otway & Vignoles, 2006). Competition contingencies of self-worth, which correlate with both narcissism and self-image goals, may also be involved (Crocker, Luhtanen, Cooper, & Bouvrette, 2003; Moeller & Crocker, 2008; Zeigler-Hill, Clark, & Pickard, 2008). Therefore, only experimental studies that manipulate self-image goals can establish causality.

Another limitation involves these studies' inability to assess objective markers of conflict and hostility. Study 2 relied on self-reports from only one person; future studies could use dyads, perhaps observing them while they interact in the laboratory (e.g., Roisman, Clausell, Holland, Fortuna, & Elieff, 2008). We note, though, that socially desirable responding and other demand characteristics are probably not especially prominent in these studies, because we believe few people would arbitrarily report relationship conflict and hostility if none existed. Nevertheless, future studies should remedy some of these concerns.

In summary, these studies have shown that entitled people pursue self-image goals, which aim to construct and inflate a desired image of the self. However, their self-image goals appear to damage their relationships, breeding relationship conflict and hostility, outcomes contrary to the admiration and respect they desire from others. By

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pursuing self-image goals, entitled people appear to create exactly the opposite of what they want.

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Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for all variables in Studies 1A and 1B.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Self-Image Goals	2.95 (2.84)	0.72 (0.80)	--	**.40****	**.22***	-.03	.01	**.22***	.10	-.12	.14	.06
2. Compassionate Goals	3.54 (2.78)	0.63 (0.88)	.10	--	.09	.03	.01	.05	-.13	-.05	-.03	-.02
3. Entitlement	0.24 (0.33)	0.21 (0.21)	**.35****	.05	--	**.23***	**.47****	**.29****	**.39****	**.42****	.21	**.50****
4. Authority	0.57 (0.57)	0.28 (0.27)	**.23***	**.24***	**.44****	--	**.57****	**.28***	.17	**.31****	**.41****	**.78****
5. Self-Sufficiency	0.40 (0.40)	0.24 (0.23)	-.12	.01	.10	.16	--	**.35****	.16	**.40****	**.30****	**.73****
6. Superiority	0.42 (0.46)	0.27 (0.26)	.07	.16	**.25***	**.30****	.18	--	**.35****	.20	**.38****	**.63****
7. Exhibitionism	0.21 (0.24)	0.25 (0.25)	**.25***	-.02	**.60****	**.42****	-.01	**.36****	--	.14	**.45****	**.53****
8. Exploitativeness	0.27 (0.26)	0.22 (0.25)	.09	-.14	**.39****	**.35****	.16	.09	**.35****	--	.17	**.55****
9. Vanity	0.36 (0.37)	0.37 (0.36)	.06	.09	.15	.10	.05	.15	**.27****	.05	--	**.66****
10. Narcissism	0.39 (0.40)	0.16 (0.17)	.18	.13	**.56****	**.77****	**.45****	**.60****	**.66****	**.54****	**.40****	--

Note. Numbers not in parentheses and on the lower diagonal come from Study 1A; numbers in parentheses and on the upper diagonal come from Study 1B. Narcissism represents the total NPI score (scores range from 0 to 1), with subscales entitlement, authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, and vanity.
* $p<.05$ ** $p<.01$.

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Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and zero-order correlations for all variables in Study 2.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Self-Image Goals	3.03	0.56	--												
2. Compassionate Goals	3.30	0.64	**.53****	--											
3. Entitlement (PES)	3.05	1.06	.09	**-.23****	--										
4. Entitlement (NPI)	0.30	0.20	.04	**-.28****	**.45****	--									
5. Authority	0.61	0.27	.06	-.06	**.21****	**.43****	--								
6. Self-Sufficiency	0.42	0.22	-.09	**-.15***	**.23****	**.27****	**.41****	--							
7. Superiority	0.44	0.29	.00	-.04	**.39****	**.33****	**.33****	**.24****	--						
8. Exhibitionism	0.26	0.24	**15***	-.03	**.33****	**.43****	**.31****	**.15***	**.41****	--					
9. Exploitativeness	0.34	0.28	-.01	-.13	**.26****	**.38****	**.34****	**.29****	**.17***	**.28****	--				
10. Vanity	0.41	0.38	.09	-.03	**.20****	**.24****	**.21****	**.16***	**.35****	**.39****	**.26****	--			
11. Narcissism	0.43	0.17	.05	-.11	**.41****	**.55****	**.76****	**.59****	**.64****	**.63****	**.61****	**.56****	--		
12. Hostility	1.64	0.54	**.14***	**-.15***	**.19****	**.24****	.12	-.03	-.11	**.21****	**.15***	.05	.10	--	
13. Conflict	2.19	0.63	**.25****	-.02	**.14***	**.22****	**.19****	-.05	-.07	.11	**.14***	.09	.12	**.60****	--

Note. Narcissism represents the total NPI score (scores range from 0 to 1), with subscales entitlement, authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, and vanity. NPI and PES were assessed at pretest; self-image goals, compassionate goals, hostility, and conflict were averaged over 10 weekly reports.
* $p<.05$ ** $p<.01$.

ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT