

Pride and punishment: Entitled people's self-promoting values motivate hierarchy-

restoring retribution

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### Abstract

What is the purpose of punishment? The current research shows that for entitled people—those with inflated self-worth—justice is about maintaining societal hierarchies. Entitled people more strongly hold self-enhancing values (power and achievement; Studies 1 and 3). They are also more likely, when thinking about justice for offenders, to adopt a hierarchy-based justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motives to restore those hierarchies, and support for retribution (Studies 2 and 3). Further, the relationship of entitlement to justice orientation is mediated by self-enhancing values when entitlement is measured (Study 3) and manipulated (Studies 4, 5 and 6). Together these studies suggest that entitlement—and the resultant preoccupation with one’s status—facilitates a view of justice as a hierarchy-based transaction: one where criminal offenders and their victims exchange power and status. These findings reveal the self-enhancing and hierarchy-focused nature of entitlement, as well as the roots of retribution in concerns about status, power, and hierarchies.

*Keywords:* justice, entitlement, values, power, status

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Punishment is a multifaceted tool. It is often wielded to restore justice. But others exploit it to reach their personal goals, using it to fit their needs. The current research examines how entitlement—inflated self-importance and self-worth—promotes self-enhancing personal values—power and achievement—and how those values guide one's approach to decisions about justice for offenders. Driven to climb the social hierarchy, entitled people may come to see justice as a climbing tool. If so, they may be more likely to see crime and punishment through the lens of social hierarchy, perceiving that crime threatens hierarchies, becoming motivated to restore power and status via punishment, and supporting retributive punishment.

### **Entitlement and Self-enhancing Values**

Entitled people have an inflated sense of self-importance and pervasive expectations to receive special treatment without reciprocating (Exline et al., 2004; Fisk, 2010). In this way, it differs from deservingness (Feather, 2003). While deservingness reflects judgments of just outcomes that are contingent on equity and past actions, psychological entitlement involves expectations of unearned benefits unrelated to merit, equity, or past actions. Entitlement is a personality trait that tends to be stable across time (Campbell et al., 2004). Thus, it is global and pervasive, influencing thoughts about oneself across domains and situations. However, like other individual differences (e.g., self-esteem; Strelan & Zdzianuk, 2015), it also has a situationally malleable component (e.g., Humphreys, Haden, & Davis, 2015; Zitek & Vincent, 2015). This sense of inherent self-importance may manifest in the standards that guide people's attitudes and behavior:

their personal values. People use their values as criteria to select, evaluate and justify a wide range of targets, including policies, people and events (Schwartz, 2012). They judge what is good or bad, legitimate or unjustified, and worth approaching or avoiding based on its implications for their values.

Achievement values (e.g., ambition, success), for example, emphasize demonstrating personal success according to social standards. Power values (e.g., authority, wealth) emphasize gaining or maintaining control over people and resources. Although they are distinct values, achievement and power both focus on improving and maintaining one's social position: they are self-enhancing values (Schwartz, 2012) and are typically examined together (e.g., Pufrey & Butera, 2013; Van Berkel et al., 2015). They both correlate positively with assertiveness and, like entitlement, correlate negatively with agreeableness, entailing self-interest even at others' expense (Campbell et al., 2004; Roccas et al., 2002). Thus, entitlement probably promotes self-enhancing values. Firstly, entitled peoples' behavior exemplifies self-interest. For example, when the cherished ego is threatened, entitled people respond aggressively (Campbell, 2004). Such aggressive responses serve to restore threatened status, as in the insult-aggression cycle observed in honor cultures (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). Entitled people are also more selfish; they allocate more unearned money to themselves (Zitek 2010), and take more candy for themselves from a bowl intended for children (Campbell, 2004). Indeed, entitlement fosters motivation to gain both dominance and prestige, forms of social rank that roughly correspond with power and achievement (Redford, Lange, & Crusius, 2017). This self-serving, self-promoting pattern of behaviors and motivations suggests that entitlement prompts self-enhancement values: self-enhancement shapes entitled peoples'

evaluations of events and of potential responses. Thus, in Study 1, we test the hypothesis that greater entitlement predicts greater self-enhancing values.

### **Self-enhancing Values and Justice Orientation**

If entitlement promotes self-enhancing values, then self-enhancing values may thus shape their attitudes and beliefs regarding justice. Justice beliefs involve two components: the crime being punished, and the purpose of punishment. Entitlement and its associated values should alter how people think about both: they should increase the perceived threat posed by crime, and thereby also change how one prefers to address that crime. Specifically, self-enhancing values may facilitate a hierarchy-based view of crime and punishment, one in which crime seems to threaten social hierarchies, in which punishment should be designed to restore those hierarchies, and in which punishment should be retributive.

The expectation that entitlement contributes to self-enhancing values and retribution is supported by a wealth of literature that links crime to power and status threat, and power and status threat to retribution. In terms of one component of justice beliefs, perceptions of crime, several previous findings suggest that crime can threaten power and status values. Breaking norms signals power; norm violators appear free to do whatever they want (van Kleef et al, 2011), thereby gaining power and status by degrading their victims (Bilz, 2014; Schnabel & Nadler, 2008). Not surprisingly, then, people at the top of hierarchies react negatively to norm violators in order to prevent them from rising in rank (Stamkou, van Kleef, Homan, & Galinsky, 2016). Moreover, criminals are stereotypically low in status (Côté-Lussier, 2012), so if their offenses win power and freedom, it may seem directly usurped from higher-status people. If so, then

crime may symbolize hierarchy subversion (Okimoto & Wenzel, 2008), especially to entitled, self-enhancing people vigilant to power and status threats. This reasoning is supported by findings that people become more retributive and less forgiving when their self-esteem is threatened (Strelan & Zdaniuk, 2015). Thus, the current research tests whether entitlement predicts perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, and whether this effect is mediated by self-enhancing values.

Seeing crime as hierarchy subversion should threaten entitled peoples' power and status values. Thus, it should also change the second component of justice beliefs: those about the purpose of punishment. It should motivate them to restore power and status in their approach to handling crime, promoting a belief that the *purpose* of punishment is to restore power and status. Thus, the current research tests a second outcome: whether entitled people more strongly endorse power and status restoration as a purpose of punishment, and whether this effect is mediated by self-enhancing values.

Power and status can be restored via payback-focused punishments commensurate with crimes; in other words, via retribution (Oswald et al., 2002). Retribution's supporters believe that proportional return of suffering for the transgression is itself just and morally right, that offenders *deserve* punishment (Wasserstrom, 1978). Proportional return of suffering can, at the same time, degrade offenders—it can reduce their status and power—relative to the victim and society (Vidmar, 2000). The idea that retribution aims to protect victims' social standing is recognized and borne out by research on honor cultures, whose members' vigilante retribution is seen as the only appropriate response to insult (Cohen & Nisbett, 1994). When carried out by the state, many aspects of historical and modern punishment retributively imply shame or degradation, often by visibly

marking the transgressor—as in maiming or prison uniforms. This retributive reduction of power and status restores the balance of power upset by the criminal offense, and can thereby satisfy power and status concerns. Thus, it may be that retribution accomplishes balance in terms both of harm and of power and status. Indeed, people who perceive a transgression as violating power and status hierarchies, and who are motivated to restore those hierarchies, more strongly endorse retribution (Wenzel, Okimoto, & Cameron, 2012), suggesting its hierarchy-maintaining function.

In short, entitled people should support retribution because it regulates social hierarchies, hierarchies central to maintaining the entitled person's social standing. Entitlement, and its associated values (i.e., power and achievement), should change their beliefs about the hierarchy threat posed by crime, and also their beliefs about the purpose of punishment: restoring power and status via retribution. Previous findings lend credence to this reasoning, suggesting that self-enhancing values contribute to retributivism. For example, people higher on the social ladder—who may be higher in both achievement and power values—view justice as requiring more punishment and less rehabilitation (Kraus & Keltner, 2013), and people motivated to enforce status boundaries with criminal offenders more strongly endorse retribution (Gerber & Jackson, 2013). People higher in power are more vengeful (Strelan, Weick, & Vasiljevic, 2014) and punitive (van Prooijen, Coffeng, & Vermeer, 2014), and people higher in power values more strongly support retribution (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2012), and are less forgiving (McKee & Feather, 2008; Strelan, Feather, & McKee, 2011). In addition, leaders' power and status concerns contribute to their punitive tendencies (Mooijman et al., 2015).

People who value power also tend to be high in Social Dominance Orientation (SDO); they prefer that their social group dominate others (McKee & Feather, 2008). People high in SDO more strongly support retribution (Sidanius et al., 2006), especially for low-status offenders (Redford & Ratliff, 2015), as well as punishment designed to establish and maintain power over criminal offenders (Gerber, 2012). These findings, spanning actual power and status, personal power and status values, and ideological beliefs, suggest that retribution provides a means of restoring the balance of power and status subverted by crime, which is especially appealing to those who value power and status. There is less existing evidence to suggest that achievement values in particular should influence thoughts about justice. However, the above findings make clear that thoughts about justice are related to concerns about promoting the self, exactly the self-enhancement that achievement and power together represent. Thus, while the empirical case is stronger for power than for achievement, theory binds the two values: their shared contribution to the emergent construct of self-enhancing values should predict justice orientation. Thus, the current research tests a third outcome: whether entitlement predicts support for retribution, and whether this effect is mediated by self-enhancing values (i.e., power and achievement).

Thus, although substantial previous work finds connections between hierarchy concerns and thoughts about justice, it often falls short of explaining them. But theoretical analysis, and some existing findings, suggest that values may be an overlooked contributor to this question. Values may, crucially, be what help translate entitlement into a hierarchy-based view of crime and punishment. Thus, the current studies test the novel, but theoretically grounded, idea of self-enhancing values as a



valuable, but as yet under-investigated, explanation of how concerns about social position—here represented by entitlement—connect to thoughts about justice.

### **Overview of the Present Research**

The current research was designed to show that for entitled people, crime and punishment are about maintaining hierarchies. If entitled people value power and status, they may align their justice beliefs to protect the power and status they believe to be threatened by crime. Specifically, they may be more concerned that crime threatens hierarchies, motivating them to restore those hierarchies via retribution. If so, self-enhancing values should mediate entitlement's effect on three hierarchy-based aspects of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, power and status restoration motives, and support for retributive punishment.

The current research tests this reasoning in five studies. Study 1 tests the hypothesis that entitlement predicts greater self-enhancing values. Study 2 tests the hypothesis that entitlement predicts three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, power and status restoration motives, and support for retribution. Study 3 tests the hypothesis that self-enhancing values mediate between entitlement and each of the three measures of justice orientation. Study 4 replicates Study 3, but manipulates, rather than measures, entitlement. Study 5 replicates Study 4, again manipulating entitlement to test whether self-enhancing values mediate between entitlement and justice orientation, but with minor changing to the layout of the manipulation intended to improve compliance. Study 6 replicates Studies 4 and 5, but uses a different change to the manipulation layout that more successfully improved compliance.

## Study 1

### Method

#### Participants

Participants in this study were 879 U.S. citizen volunteers<sup>1</sup> at the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>; Nosek et al., 2002) who completed all study materials ( $M_{age} = 35.2$  years,  $SD = 14.7$ , 60.9% women, 77.7% White). Project Implicit participants are somewhat more diverse and representative of the general population than a typical undergraduate sample (e.g., in the studies reported in the current research, the mean age was always over 30, about 30% of the total sample is non-White people, and the participants come from all over the United States).

#### Materials and Measures

**Entitlement.** We measured entitlement using the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004;  $\alpha = .71$ ), which assesses the “pervasive sense that one deserves more and is entitled to more than others”. It includes nine items such as *People like me deserve an extra break now and then* and *I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others*. Participants responded on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

**Self-enhancing values.** We measured self-enhancing values using two subscales (power and achievement) with four items each, using an adapted form of the Schwartz Short Value Survey (Lindeman & Verkasalo, 2005). We measured power values using

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<sup>1</sup> For each study, we used G\*Power to conduct a power analysis with  $\alpha = .05$ , power = .80, and a small effect, for a regression analysis of one predictor on a continuous outcome. Attaining a small effect ( $R^2 = .04$ ) with those parameters requires at least 266 participants. Each of our studies was sufficiently powered (The sample sizes were 879 (Study 1), 494 (Study 2), 428 (Study 3), 331 (Study 4), 582 (Study 5), and 409 (Study 6). Studies at Project Implicit are not always taken down immediately upon request. Because of the delay in study removal, and the unpredictability of the number of volunteers, sample sizes are variable and often quite a bit larger than the target N.

four items such as *How important is power as a life-guiding principle for you?* ( $\alpha = .70$ ). We measured achievement values using four items such as *How important is achievement as a life-guiding principle for you?* ( $\alpha = .72$ ). For both power and achievement items, participants responded on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Not important*) to 7 (*Extremely important*). Power and achievement values were combined into a single variable to represent self-enhancing values ( $\alpha = .79$ ).

### Procedure

After random assignment to this study from the Project Implicit research pool, participants completed the Psychological Entitlement Scale followed by the values items.<sup>2</sup>

### Results

To test the hypotheses that entitlement predicts prioritization of self-enhancing values, we analyzed the data using a regression analysis in which self-enhancing values were predicted by entitlement. As expected, entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI = [0.14, 0.22],  $\beta = .28$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .08$ , such that greater entitlement predicted greater self-enhancing values (see Table 1 for means and standard deviations). Entitlement also significantly predicted each self-enhancing value separately: power,  $b = 0.23$ , 95% CI = [0.18, 0.27],  $\beta = .31$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .10$ , and achievement,  $b = 0.12$ , 95% CI = [0.08, 0.17],  $\beta = .18$ ,  $SE = 0.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ .

### Discussion

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<sup>2</sup> All studies were part of a large data collection and not all measured variables are reported here. Data from these measures were not examined for this research but are included in the publicly available materials and dataset posted on the Open Science Framework (<https://osf.io/5bgsr/>). We also measured Universalism values. Universalism did not correlate with self-enhancing values or with the Psychological Entitlement Scale.

As expected, greater entitlement predicted greater self-enhancing (power and achievement) values. These results are consistent with our reasoning that entitlement promotes self-focused values; they are also consistent with other research showing a relationship between entitlement and motives to enhance and protect the self (Campbell, 2004; Zitek, 2010). Our overall hypothesis for the current research was that entitlement would predict a hierarchy-based justice perspective, and that this effect would be mediated by self-enhancing values. This study provided support for one part of this model: entitlement predicted greater self-enhancing values. The next study was designed to test another hypothesized path: the relationship of entitlement to justice orientation. To do this, in the next study we tested whether entitlement predicted three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivation to restore power and status as a purpose of punishment, and support for retributive punishment.

## **Study 2**

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Participants were 494 U.S. citizen volunteers at the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>; Nosek et al., 2002) who completed all study materials ( $M_{age} = 32.5$  years,  $SD = 13.8$ , 71.3% women, 70.4% White). No participants were excluded from analysis.

#### **Materials and Measures**

**Entitlement.** As in Study 1, we measured entitlement using the Psychological Entitlement Scale ( $\alpha = .72$ ).

**Power/status restoration motives.** We measured power/status restoration as a punishment motive using two items: *Punishment should communicate to the offender that people have low regard for him*, and *punishment should humiliate the offender* (Gerber & Jackson, 2013;  $\alpha = .83$ ). Participants responded on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

**Crime as a threat to hierarchies.** We measured perceptions of crime as threat to social hierarchies using three items such as *through crime, people of lower social groups take away resources and power from people of higher social groups* (Gerber, 2012;  $\alpha = .81$ ). Participants responded on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

**Retributive justice orientation.** We measured support for payback-style punishment as a core component of justice using six items such as *for the sake of justice, some degree of suffering has to be inflicted on an offender* (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2012;  $\alpha = .85$ ). Participants responded on a 7-point scale, ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*).

## **Procedure**

After random assignment to this study from the Project Implicit research pool, participants completed the Psychological Entitlement Scale. Participants then responded to measures of retributive justice orientation, power/status restoration motives, and perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchies.

## **Results**

To test the hypotheses that entitlement predicts higher scores on each measure of justice orientation, we analyzed the data using three linear regression models where

entitlement separately predicted perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchies, power/status restoration motives, and retributive justice orientation (see Table 2 for descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among independent and dependent variables).

**Crime as a threat to hierarchies.** As expected, entitlement significantly predicted perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies,  $b = 0.32$ , 95% CI = [0.20, 0.45],  $\beta = .23$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .05$ , such that greater entitlement predicted greater perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies.

**Power/status restoration motives.** As expected, entitlement significantly predicted power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.38$ , 95% CI = [0.25, 0.51],  $\beta = .25$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .06$ , such that greater entitlement predicted greater power/status restoration motives.

**Retributive justice orientation.** As expected, entitlement predicted retributive justice orientation,  $b = 0.27$ , 95% CI = [0.15, 0.38],  $\beta = .20$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .04$ , such that greater entitlement predicted greater retributive justice orientation.

### Discussion

As expected, entitlement predicted three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivation to restore power and status as a purpose of punishment, and support for retributive punishment. Entitlement's relationship to perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies supports our reasoning that entitled people, who value power and status (as shown in Study 1), may be more vigilant to threats to that power and status. The relationship of entitlement to power/status restoration motives supports our reasoning that entitled people, because they perceive crime to threaten their valued power and status, believe that punishment should be designed to restore that

power and status. Lastly, the relationship of entitlement to retribution supports our reasoning that entitled people believe that such power and status restoration can be accomplished via retributive punishment. This pattern of results is consistent with others showing that people who value power and status are stronger supporters of retribution (Okimoto, Wenzel, & Feather, 2012; McKee & Feather, 2008; Gerber & Jackson, 2013; Gerber, 2012; Sidanius et al., 2006). They also suggest that retribution may be perceived to provide a means of restoring the balance of power and status subverted by crime.

Our overall hypothesis for the current research was that entitlement would predict a hierarchy-based justice perspective, and that this effect would be mediated by self-enhancing values. This study provided support for one part of this model: entitlement predicted three aspects of hierarchy-based justice beliefs and preferences. The next study tested the entire model: whether self-enhancing values mediate between entitlement and justice orientation.

### **Study 3**

#### **Method**

##### **Participants**

Participants were 428 U.S. citizen volunteers at the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>; Nosek et al., 2002) who completed all study materials ( $M_{age} = 30.5$  years,  $SD = 13.8$ , 67.8% women, 72.9% White). No participants were excluded from analysis.

##### **Materials, Measures, and Procedure**

Entitlement ( $\alpha = .69$ ), self-enhancing values (power and achievement;  $\alpha = .78$ ), crime as a threat to hierarchies ( $\alpha = .79$ ), power/status restoration motives ( $\alpha = .75$ ), and

retributive justice orientation ( $\alpha = .85$ ), were measured exactly as in the previous studies.<sup>3</sup> After random assignment to this study from the Project Implicit research pool, participants completed the Psychological Entitlement Scale. Participants then completed the values items and justice measures in randomized order, with the justice items always presented together.

### Results

In three mediation models, we tested whether self-enhancing values mediated the relationship between entitlement and each of three outcomes: power/status restoration motives, perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchies, and retributive justice orientation (see Table 3 for descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among independent, mediator and outcome variables). We used the bootstrapped indirect effects approach recommended by Preacher and Hayes (2008).

#### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI = [0.13, 0.25],  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted crime threat,  $b = 0.53$ , 95% CI = [0.30, 0.75],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and crime threat,  $b = 0.31$ , 95% CI = [0.17, 0.44],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ , remained significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.21$ , 95% CI = [0.06, 0.35],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .005$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.10$ ,  $SE = .03$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.05, 0.16]

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<sup>3</sup> We also measured Universalism values. Universalism did not correlate with self-enhancing values or with the Psychological Entitlement Scale. Universalism correlated negatively with perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchy ( $r = -.30$ ,  $p < .001$ ), power/status restoration motives ( $r = -.22$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and retributive justice orientation ( $r = -.23$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Universalism did not mediate between entitlement and any of the three outcomes.



indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values mediated the effect of entitlement on crime threat: as expected, greater entitlement predicted greater self-enhancing values, which in turn were related to greater crime threat. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted crime threat, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .10, .22]. Achievement values were significantly predicted by entitlement, and had a significant zero-order relationship with crime threat, but did not predict crime threat with entitlement in the model, and the indirect effect was marginal [95% CI = .00, .05].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Power/status Restoration Motives**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI = [0.13, 0.25],  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.49$ , 95% CI = [0.25, 0.73],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.48$ , 95% CI = [0.34, 0.62],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ , remained significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.39$ , 95% CI = [0.24, 0.54],  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.09$ ,  $SE = .02$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.05, 0.15] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values mediated the effect of entitlement on power/status restoration motives; as expected, greater entitlement predicted greater self-enhancing values, which in turn were related to greater power/status restoration motives. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged

[95% CI = .08, .21]. Achievement values were significantly predicted by entitlement, and had a significant zero-order relationship with power/status restoration motives, but did not predict power/status restoration motives with entitlement in the model, and the indirect effect was marginal [95% CI = .00, .05].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Retributive Justice Orientation**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI = [0.13, 0.25],  $SE = .03$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted retribution,  $b = 0.60$ , 95% CI = [0.38, 0.81],  $SE = .11$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and retribution,  $b = 0.34$ , 95% CI = [0.21, 0.47],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ , remained significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.23$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.36],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p = .001$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.11$ ,  $SE = .03$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.07, 0.17] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values mediated the effect of entitlement on retribution: as expected, greater entitlement predicted greater self-enhancing values, which in turn were related to greater retribution. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .08, .21], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .08, .21].

### Discussion

As expected, self-enhancing values mediated between entitlement and each of three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivation to restore power and status via punishment, and support for retribution. These findings replicate those of the first study, in which entitlement was positively related to self-enhancing values. These findings also replicate those of the second study, in which entitlement was positively related to justice orientation.

Our overall hypothesis for the current research was that entitlement would predict a hierarchy-based justice perspective, and that this effect would be mediated by self-enhancing values. This study provided support for this model: self-enhancing values mediated between entitlement and justice orientation.

The analyses show that values mediate between entitlement and justice orientation, but it could also be that justice orientation mediates between entitlement and values. Although theory suggests that personal values are more likely to guide specific justice beliefs than vice versa (Schwartz, 2012), we tested for the alternative. The results did not indicate that justice orientation mediates between entitlement and values. In a multiple-mediator model, the indirect effect of the justice measures combined was 0.05 (0.03, 0.08),  $SE = .01$ . Only retribution emerged as a (barely) significant mediator,  $b = 0.03$  (0.01, 0.02),  $SE = .05$ . However, to more confidently establish entitlement as causally influential, we conducted a fourth study in which we manipulated entitlement. Thus, the next study replicated this study, in that it tested the entire hypothesized model: that self-enhancing values mediate between entitlement and justice orientation. However, entitlement was manipulated, rather than measured.

## Study 4

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 331 U.S. citizen volunteers at the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>; Nosek et al., 2002) who completed all study materials and passed the manipulation check ( $M_{age} = 31.8$  years,  $SD = 14.2$ , 70.1% women, 77.0% White). Participants were excluded from analysis if they failed to complete the entitlement manipulation correctly according to two independent coders (see below for more information).

#### Materials, Measures, and Procedure

Self-enhancing values (power and achievement;  $\alpha = .80$ ), crime as a threat to hierarchies ( $\alpha = .77$ ), power/status restoration motives ( $\alpha = .84$ ), and retributive justice orientation ( $\alpha = .86$ ) were measured exactly as in the previous studies.<sup>4</sup>

**Entitlement manipulation.** Participants completed an entitlement manipulation in which they listed reasons for three statements (Zitek & Vincent, 2015). In the entitlement condition, they were asked to list one reason each for why they (1) should demand the best in life, why they (2) deserve more than others, and why they (3) should get your [their] way in life. In the control condition, they listed reasons why they (1) should /not/ demand the best in life, why they (2) do /not/ deserve more than others, and why they (3) should not expect to get your [their] own way in life.

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<sup>4</sup> We also measured Universalism values. Universalism correlated negatively with self-enhancing values ( $r = -.09, p = .03$ ). Universalism correlated negatively with perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchy ( $r = -.31, p < .001$ ), power/status restoration motives ( $r = -.22, p < .001$ ), and retributive justice orientation ( $r = -.28, p < .001$ ). Universalism did not mediate between entitlement and any of the three outcomes.

Participants' responses were coded for content by two independent coders according to a pre-specified system (see Appendix A). Coders assigned codes to each participant independently, and then met to resolve discrepancies. Participants were assigned at least one code, and assigned two codes in cases where two codes described their response equally well. Participants were removed from analysis for such reasons as writing about the opposite condition to which they were assigned (18.1%) or typing less than ten words across all items (8.0%). Besides coding for inattentive responses, the coding was designed to address the empirical and theoretical distinction between deservingness and entitlement (Feather, 2003). While deservingness reflects contingent judgments based on equity and past actions as applied to a particular outcome, psychological entitlement involves unearned, inherent benefits unrelated to merit, equity, or past actions. Thus, reported results also exclude participants whose responses reflected deservingness, such as saying they ought to get their way only if they work hard (5.9%) or only if they meet other contingencies (4.5%). We also analyzed the data more conservatively, excluding only those who responded in ways that did not match their condition, or who responded in deservingness-based ways, boosting compliance to 74%. All paths and indirect effects remained significant. In addition, removing only participants who responded in ways that did not match their condition (boosting compliance to 78%), all effects persisted. Codes were not used as dependent variables. Participant responses, as well as content codes, are publicly available at the Open Science Framework project page at <https://osf.io/5bgsr/>.

### **Procedure**

After random assignment to this study from the Project Implicit research pool, participants completed the entitlement manipulation. Participants then completed the values items and justice measures in randomized order, with the justice items always presented together.

### Results

As in Study 3, in three mediation models, we tested whether self-enhancing values mediated the relationship between entitlement and each of three outcomes: power/status restoration motives, perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchies, and retributive justice orientation (see Table 4 for descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among mediator and outcome variables).

#### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.22$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.34],  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted crime threat,  $b = 0.63$ , 95% CI = [0.39, 0.86],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and crime threat,  $b = 0.36$ , 95% CI = [0.09, 0.64],  $SE = .14$ ,  $p = .010$ , was no longer significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.22$ , 95% CI = [-0.05, 0.49],  $SE = .14$ ,  $p = .104$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.14$ ,  $SE = .05$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.06, 0.25] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values fully mediated the effect of entitlement on crime threat: as expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater crime threat. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted

power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .07, .26], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .15].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Power/status Restoration Motives**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.22$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.34],  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.66$ , 95% CI = [0.36, 0.95],  $SE = .15$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.37$ , 95% CI = [0.04, 0.71],  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .029$ , was no longer significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.23$ , 95% CI = [-0.11, 0.56],  $SE = .17$ ,  $p = .179$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.15$ ,  $SE = .06$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.06, 0.28] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values fully mediated the effect of entitlement on power/status restoration motives; as expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater power/status restoration motives. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .07, .32], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .14].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Retributive Justice Orientation**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.22$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.34],  $SE = .06$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted retribution,  $b = 0.67$ , 95% CI = [0.42, 0.91],  $SE = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and retribution,  $b = 0.45$ , 95% CI = [0.17, 0.74],  $SE = .15$ ,  $p < .001$ , remained significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.30$ , 95% CI = [0.03, 0.58],  $SE = .14$ ,  $p = .033$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.15$ ,  $SE = .05$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.07, 0.28] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values mediated the effect of entitlement on retribution: as expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater retribution. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .07, .26], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .17].

### **Testing the Indirect Effect of Entitlement on Retributive Justice Orientation**

To better test our theoretical model, that entitlement would have an indirect effect on retribution via self-enhancing values, crime as a threat to hierarchies, and power/status restoration motives, we examined the indirect effect of entitlement on retribution using sequential, multiple-mediator path modeling (see Figure 1 for path coefficients). The model was estimated using Full Information Maximum Likelihood procedures in MPlus



(Muthen & Muthen, 2012). The model was fully saturated: retribution was predicted by entitlement via self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted both crime as a threat to hierarchies and power/status restoration motives. Direct effects from entitlement to each subsequent construct were also specified, and the predictors and mediators were free to covary. We tested for mediation with 10,000 bootstrap resamples (Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The full results of this analysis can be found in Figure 1. In summary, the indirect effect of entitlement via self-enhancing values and crime threat was significant,  $ab = 0.03$ , 95% CI [0.00, 0.05],  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .04$ , the indirect effect of entitlement via self-enhancing values and power/status restoration motives was significant,  $b = 0.05$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.09],  $SE = .02$ ,  $p = .02$ , and the direct effect of entitlement was not significant,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI [-0.04, 0.41],  $SE = .11$ ,  $p = .10$ .

### Discussion

As expected, self-enhancing values mediated between manipulated entitlement and each of three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivation to restore power and status via punishment, and support for retribution. These findings replicate those of the first study, in which entitlement was positively related to self-enhancing values. These findings also replicate those of the second study, in which entitlement was positively related to measures of justice orientation. Finally, they replicate those of the third study, in which self-enhancing values mediated between entitlement and measures of justice orientation. In doing so, the current findings join the third study in supporting our overall hypothesis for the current research: entitlement produced a hierarchy-based justice perspective, and this effect was mediated

by self-enhancing values. However, they also expand upon the previous three studies by illuminating entitlement's causal role.

Although the current study provided important causal data, a replication was needed to provide a more confirmatory test of the hypotheses, to establish the reproducibility of the effect, and to obtain a more stable and precise effect size estimate, as recently recommended for psychological research (e.g., Bonett, 2012; Funder et al., 2014). Study 5 also introduced minor modifications to the entitlement manipulation instructions, with the intention of promoting greater compliance.

## **Study 5**

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

Participants were 582 U.S. citizen volunteers at the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>; Nosek et al., 2002) who completed all study materials and passed them manipulation check ( $M_{age} = 36.2$  years,  $SD = 14.4$ , 66.3% women, 76.6% White). Participants were excluded from analysis if they failed to complete the entitlement manipulation correctly according to three independent coders (see below for more information).

#### **Materials, Measures, and Procedure**

Self-enhancing values (power and achievement;  $\alpha = .79$ ), crime as a threat to hierarchies ( $\alpha = .80$ ), power/status restoration motives ( $\alpha = .82$ ), and retributive justice orientation ( $\alpha = .86$ ) were measured exactly as in the previous studies.

**Entitlement manipulation.** As in the previous study, participants completed an entitlement manipulation in which they listed reasons for three statements. However,

rather than responding freely as in the previous study, participants completed sentence fragments followed immediately by text boxes. This change was designed to constrain their responses to provide more usable data. In the entitlement condition, they completed the following sentences: (1) “I should demand the best in life because”, (2) “I deserve more than others because”, and (3) “I should get my own way in life because”. In the control condition, they completed the following sentences: (1) “I should not demand the best in life because”, (2) “I do not deserve more than others because”, and (3) “I should not expect to get my way in life because”.

Participants’ responses were coded for content by two independent coders according to a pre-specified system (see Appendix B). Coders assigned codes to each participant independently, and then a third coder arbitrated between discrepancies. Participants were assigned at least one code, and assigned two codes in cases where two codes described their response equally well. As in Study 4, participants were removed from analysis for such reasons as writing about the opposite condition to which they were assigned (18.7%), typing less than eight words across all items (7.3%), or responding in deservingness- rather than entitlement-based ways dependent on hard work (11.2%) or other contingencies (0.5%). We also analyzed the data more conservatively, excluding only those who responded in ways that did not match their condition, or who responded in deservingness-based ways, boosting compliance to 70%. All paths and indirect effects remained significant (one direct path became marginally significant,  $p < .07$ ). In addition, removing only participants who responded in ways that did not match their condition (boosting compliance to 82%), all effects persisted. Participant responses, as well as

content codes, are publicly available at the Open Science Framework project page at <https://osf.io/5bgsr/>.

### **Procedure**

After random assignment to this study from the Project Implicit research pool, participants completed the entitlement manipulation. Participants then completed the values items and justice measures in randomized order, with the justice items always presented together.

### **Results**

As in Studies 3 and 4, in three mediation models, we tested whether self-enhancing values mediated the relationship between entitlement and each of three outcomes: power/status restoration motives, perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchies, and retributive justice orientation (see Table 5 for descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among mediator and outcome variables).

#### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.20$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.29],  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted crime threat,  $b = 0.84$ , 95% CI = [0.65, 1.04],  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and crime threat,  $b = 0.31$ , 95% CI = [0.07, 0.54],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .010$ , was no longer significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.14$ , 95% CI = [-0.08, 0.37],  $SE = .11$ ,  $p = .211$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.17$ ,  $SE = .04$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.09, 0.26] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values fully mediated the effect of

entitlement on crime threat: as expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater crime threat. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted crime threat, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .10, .27], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted crime threat, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .14].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Power/status Restoration Motives**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.20$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.29],  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.85$ , 95% CI = [0.65, 1.05],  $SE = .10$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.36$ , 95% CI = [0.12, 0.60],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .003$ , was no longer significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI = [-0.04, 0.42],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .101$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.17$ ,  $SE = .04$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.09, 0.25] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values fully mediated the effect of entitlement on power/status restoration motives; as expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater power/status restoration motives. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .11, .28], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted

achievement, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .14].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Retributive Justice Orientation**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.20$ , 95% CI = [0.10, 0.29],  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted retribution,  $b = 0.83$ , 95% CI = [0.64, 1.02],  $SE = .13$ ,  $p < .001$ . The significant relationship between entitlement and retribution,  $b = 0.35$ , 95% CI = [0.12, 0.58],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p = .003$ , was no longer significant when self-enhancing values were entered into the model,  $b = 0.19$ , 95% CI = [-0.03, 0.41],  $SE = .11$ ,  $p = .096$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.16$ ,  $SE = .04$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.09, 0.26] indicated a significant indirect effect. Self-enhancing values mediated the effect of entitlement on retribution: as expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater retribution. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .10, .26], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .15].

### **Testing the Indirect Effect of Entitlement on Retributive Justice Orientation**

As in Study 4, we examined the indirect effect of entitlement on retribution using sequential, multiple-mediator path modeling. The full results of this analysis can be found in Figure 2. In summary, the indirect effect of entitlement via self-enhancing values and crime threat was significant,  $ab = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.09],  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .01$ , the indirect effect of entitlement via self-enhancing values and power/status restoration motives was significant,  $b = 0.06$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.06],  $SE = .02$ ,  $p < .001$ , and the direct effect of entitlement was not significant,  $b = 0.09$ , 95% CI [-0.10, 0.28],  $SE = .10$ ,  $p = .34$ .

## Discussion

As expected, self-enhancing values mediated between manipulated entitlement and each of three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivation to restore power and status via punishment, and support for retribution. These findings replicate those of the four previous studies, providing robust support for our overall hypothesis: entitlement produces a hierarchy-based justice perspective, and this effect was mediated by self-enhancing values. Specifically, it most closely replicated Study 4, adding confidence to the causal effects of entitlement. However, while Study 5 introduced modifications to the entitlement manipulation instructions that were intended to promote greater compliance, the success of these modifications were limited. Thus, Study 6 involved more dramatic restructuring of the manipulation instructions, intended to more effectively improve compliance.

## Study 6

### Method

#### Participants

Participants were 409 U.S. citizen volunteers at the Project Implicit website (<http://implicit.harvard.edu>; Nosek et al., 2002) who completed all study materials and passed the manipulation check ( $M_{age} = 39.1$  years,  $SD = 15.6$ , 64.5% women, 72.1% White). Participants were excluded from analysis if they failed to complete the entitlement manipulation correctly according to two independent coders (see below for more information).

### **Materials, Measures, and Procedure**

Self-enhancing values (power and achievement;  $\alpha = .81$ ), crime as a threat to hierarchies ( $\alpha = .77$ ), power/status restoration motives ( $\alpha = .74$ ), and retributive justice orientation ( $\alpha = .86$ ) were measured exactly as in the previous studies.

**Entitlement manipulation.** As in the previous two studies, participants completed an entitlement manipulation in which they listed reasons for three statements. However, because many participants in the previous studies reported that they found it difficult to respond to the prompts, we changed the instructions. In this study, the instructions explicitly acknowledged that participants may not actually believe the prompt to be true about themselves, and that responding could be difficult, but that the researchers would nonetheless like them to attempt to think of a reason. This change was designed to allow participants to more freely engage in the thought processes induced by the prompts, producing more usable data. Of the participants who responded to the prompts (i.e., did not leave it entirely blank), only fifteen failed to respond satisfactorily (3.2%; e.g., writing responses such as “I don’t know”).<sup>5</sup> Participant responses, and coding

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<sup>5</sup> There were no discrepancies in compliance between the control and entitlement conditions. Few participants (46; 9.8%) left the manipulation completely blank, considering that participants were volunteering for no compensation. Importantly, these were evenly split between both conditions: 25 in the control condition and 21 in the entitlement condition. And of participants who responded in any way to the



for failure to complete the manipulation satisfactorily, are publicly available at the Open Science Framework project page at <https://osf.io/5bgsr/>.

### **Procedure**

After random assignment to this study from the Project Implicit research pool, participants completed the entitlement manipulation. Participants then completed the values items followed by the justice measures.

### **Results**

As in Studies 3, 4, and 5, in three mediation models, we tested whether self-enhancing values mediated the relationship between entitlement and each of three outcomes: power/status restoration motives, perceptions of crime as a threat to hierarchies, and retributive justice orientation (see Table 6 for descriptive statistics and intercorrelations among mediator and outcome variables).

#### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.24$ , 95% CI = [0.08, 0.41],  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted crime threat,  $b = 0.34$ , 95% CI = [0.20, 0.48],  $SE = .12$ ,  $p < .001$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.08$ ,  $SE = .04$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.03, 0.16] indicated a significant indirect effect. As expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater crime threat. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted crime threat, and a significant indirect effect

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prompts, only 15 failed to respond satisfactorily, or 3.2%. Moreover, such failures to respond and incorrect responses did not differ by entitlement condition,  $\chi^2 = .015$ ,  $p = .51$ .

emerged [95% CI = .01, .15], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted crime threat, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .11].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Power/status Restoration Motives**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.24$ , 95% CI = [0.08, 0.41],  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted power/status restoration motives,  $b = 0.49$ , 95% CI = [0.35, 0.64],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.12$ ,  $SE = .04$ , and the 95% confidence interval [0.04, 0.21] indicated a significant indirect effect. As expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater power/status restoration motives. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .01, .18], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted power/status restoration motives, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = .03, .15].

### **Self-enhancing Values Mediated the Relationship between Entitlement and Retributive Justice Orientation**

Entitlement significantly predicted self-enhancing values,  $b = 0.24$ , 95% CI = [0.08, 0.41],  $SE = .08$ ,  $p < .001$ , and self-enhancing values significantly predicted retribution,  $b = 0.48$ , 95% CI = [0.35, 0.62],  $SE = .07$ ,  $p < .001$ . The 1000-sample bootstrapped estimate of the indirect effect was  $b = 0.12$ ,  $SE = .05$ , and the 95%

confidence interval [0.04, 0.22] indicated a significant indirect effect. As expected, greater entitlement led to greater self-enhancing values, which in turn predicted greater retribution. This pattern also held for power values separately: entitlement significantly predicted power, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = 0.01, 0.14], and for achievement values separately: entitlement significantly predicted achievement, which in turn predicted retribution, and a significant indirect effect emerged [95% CI = 0.04, 0.20].

### **Testing the Indirect Effect of Entitlement on Retributive Justice Orientation**

As in Studies 4 and 5, we examined the indirect effect of entitlement on retribution using sequential, multiple-mediator path. The full results of this analysis can be found in Figure 3. In summary, the indirect effect of entitlement via self-enhancing values and crime threat was marginally significant,  $ab = 0.01$ , 95% CI [0.00, 0.02],  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .08$ , the indirect effect of entitlement via self-enhancing values and power/status restoration motives was significant,  $b = 0.04$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.07],  $SE = .01$ ,  $p = .01$ , and the direct effect of entitlement was not significant,  $b = -0.12$ , 95% CI [-0.32, 0.09],  $SE = .11$ ,  $p = .26$ .

### **Discussion**

As expected, self-enhancing values mediated between manipulated entitlement and each of three measures of justice orientation: perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivation to restore power and status via punishment, and support for retribution. These findings replicate those of five previous studies, providing robust support for our overall hypothesis: entitlement produces a hierarchy-based justice perspective, and this effect was mediated by self-enhancing values.

### **General Discussion**

The current research was designed to demonstrate a route to self-serving morality: entitled people's self-enhancing values motivate them to think about crime and punishment as hierarchy-based transactions. We expected that entitled people would value self-enhancement because of their inflated sense of self-worth and self-importance—and that this focus on the social ladder would promote perceptions that crime threatens hierarchies, motivations to restore power and status via punishment, and support for retributive punishment.

In five studies, entitlement both predicted and causally contributed to greater self-enhancing values. This finding points to entitlement's strong and pervasive relationship to thinking about the self and social world. Entitlement also predicted greater perceptions that crime threatens societal hierarchies, greater power/status restoration motives, and greater support for retribution. These findings support our argument that entitled people, who value power and status, may be more vigilant to threats to that power and status. As such, they more strongly believe that crime threatens societal hierarchies. This threat activates motives to restore power and status via punishment, which can be satisfied via retribution.

Most importantly, in one correlational and three experimental studies, self-enhancing values mediated between entitlement and justice orientation. This is the first evidence that entitlement influences justice orientation via changes in personal values. This finding supports our overall reasoning: entitled people's concern that crime threatens valued hierarchies motivates them to restore those hierarchies via retribution. In short, entitled people align their justice beliefs to protect the power and status they value

and believe to be threatened by crime. Thus, retributive responses to transgressions may be one way in which entitled people navigate hierarchies, seeking and preserving high status for the self by keeping norm violators in their place.

Although Studies 4-6 provide converging evidence in support of these effects of entitlement, Studies 4 and 5 were limited by high rates of participant noncompliance. Study 6 resolved these limits by restructuring the manipulation instructions, thereby greatly improving compliance. In addition to greater compliance, this approach produced noncompliance that was unrelated to condition. As such, Studies 4-6 provide not only converging substantive information about the effects of entitlement, but also offer an improved approach to manipulating psychological entitlement.

Entitlement's relationship to justice beliefs coheres with research in motivated moral reasoning, but also extends it. Like the current research, findings in motivated moral reasoning show how self-interested motives influence morality (see Ditto, Pizarro, & Tannenbaum, 2009, for a review). Moral judges, for example, become more lenient on a cheater when they feel deprived (Sharma et al., 2014) or when they stand to gain from the cheating (Bocian & Wojciszke, 2014). In the current studies, people support retribution not because of detached reasoning about justice, but because they stand to gain: retribution allows restoration of the power and status they feel is threatened by crime. Moreover, people tend to be ignorant of processes causing their behaviors or attitudes (e.g., Adriaanse et al., 2014), including that of self-interest on their moral judgments (Bocian & Wojciszke, 2014), so they are probably unaware that entitlement can influence their values and justice orientation. In addition to these similarities to the motivated moral reasoning literature, the current research extends it. Rather than sharing

its focus on judgments of high or low moral responsibility, the current research investigates thoughts about how transgressions should be handled and what the goal of punishment should be—responses more likely to shape interpersonal interactions and public policy.

Ideas about the purpose of punishment guide criminal-justice policies—in that such policies are designed to retributively even the score, to rehabilitate the offender, and/or to deter future crime—and some ideas are more effective than others. Rehabilitation, for example, can produce lower recidivism than retribution in some contexts (Rodriguez, 2007; Andrews & Bonta, 2010). Retribution is also a poor facilitator of forgiveness compared to restorative justice (Wenzel & Okimoto, 2014). Indeed, punishment may be entirely the wrong approach if, as some findings suggest, reward is more effective at producing desired behaviors (Rand et al., 2009). Thus, understanding and changing the justice orientations of real decision-makers and regulators (e.g., jurors, judges, legislators, and voters) is an important question for future research. If their decision-making processes are guided by entitlement and self-enhancing values, they may be biased toward retribution, ultimately producing negative outcomes like higher recidivism.

However, such real-world decision-makers often encounter non-retributive options, like deterrence and rehabilitation. Thus, an important extension of the current findings is testing whether entitlement and self-enhancing values predict support for non-retributive approaches. If so, this would suggest that entitlement increases punitiveness in general. If not, it would suggest that entitlement's effects are limited to retribution. Such a study could also address whether entitlement causes people to prefer retribution to other

responses, or as in the current studies, increases support of retribution only sans alternatives.

The current research also suggests that some types of transgressions may be more likely to incite retribution. For example, we suspect entitlement to influence justice orientation even more strongly for transgressions against the entitled person's self or ingroup, because hierarchy threat and power and status concerns would be activated more strongly. Future research could address this question, testing whether entitled people lash out against all criminal offenders—maybe motivated by general defensiveness—or whether their greater retributivism is focused on protecting only the ingroup or even only the self.

The current research shows that for entitled people, justice is about maintaining hierarchies. Thus, another potential moderator is the social status of the transgressor and of the victim. Such research could show whether entitled people feel more threatened by low-status people who usurp power, or by high-status people whose social status entitled people want for themselves. Indeed, the process influencing entitled people's thoughts about justice may differ for low- and high-status transgressors.

An open question concerns exactly how entitlement and values contribute to each other, and how they work together to contribute to justice orientation. Because entitlement and values are both stable but situationally malleable, it seems plausible that entitlement and self-enhancing values could each influence each other, in a reciprocal causal loop. For example, people high in Social Dominance Orientation seek jobs that enhance hierarchies, a context which ultimately strengthens the dominance orientation that brought them there (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994). These previous

findings, along with the current results, are consistent with values theory, according to which a person's value priorities are affected by their value-relevant social experiences (Schwartz, 1992). Entitled people's aggressive, selfish behavior, and people's acquiescence of power and status in response to their demands, should create a context that affords prioritization of self-enhancing values. However, future research could manipulate values to better answer how entitlement and values work together to contribute to justice orientation.

Although the current research focuses on the combination of power and achievement into self-enhancing values, separate analyses of each value add nuance to the findings. While entitlement consistently predicted each value separately, effects were generally stronger for power than for achievement. This imbalance coheres with the greater availability of previous evidence on power. However, considered separately or together, power and achievement are predicted and influenced by entitlement, and subsequently predict thoughts about justice. Thus, while the empirical case is stronger for power than for achievement, the two values work in concert: their shared contribution to the emergent construct of self-enhancing values is influenced by entitlement, and predicts justice orientation.

The current research also sheds light on how concerns about hierarchy can alter views of crime and punishment, suggesting that justice systems may function as hierarchy regulators. Justice systems are designed by those in power. If they let that power bias their motives and values, it may result in systems designed to maintain the status quo. The current research speaks to hierarchy-regulating motives, but future research could illuminate whether those motives actually manifest in justice systems that



function as hierarchy regulators. For example, it may be that retributive punishment in hierarchical or competitive contexts actually reduces the transgressor's perceived social status. It may also be that retributively punishing an offender enhances the status of the victim, and that such status enhancement especially motivates entitled people to support retribution.

### **Conclusion**

The current research suggests that entitled people, preoccupied with their social standing, view justice as a hierarchy-based transaction, one in which criminals and their victims trade in power and status. Entitled people see crime as threatening the power and status they value, motivating them to restore it via retribution. Revealing and challenging such self-interested biases is critical for fair and effective justice systems.

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Table 1

*Descriptive statistics for measures in Study 1*

	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Psychological Entitlement Scale	877	3.58	0.87
Self-enhancing values	1073	2.58	0.54



Table 2

*Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of measures in Study 2*

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Psychological Entitlement Scale	3.74 (0.89)	-			
2. Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies	2.55 (1.26)	.23**	-		
3. Power/Status Restoration Motives	2.48 (1.34)	.25**	.52**	-	
4. Retributive Justice Orientation	4.40 (1.19)	.20**	.36**	.48**	-

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

Table 3

*Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of measures in Study 3*

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4	5
1. Psychological Entitlement Scale	3.69 (0.85)	-				
2. Self-enhancing Values	2.76 (0.53)	.31**	-			
3. Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies	2.60 (1.26)	.21**	.26**	-		
4. Power/Status Restoration Motives	2.54 (1.33)	.31**	.27**	.50**	-	
5. Retributive Justice Orientation	4.23 (1.19)	.24**	.31**	.43**	.50**	-

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

Table 4

*Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of measures in Study 4*

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Self-enhancing Values	2.84 (0.54)	-			
2. Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies	2.54 (1.22)	.30**	-		
3. Power/Status Restoration Motives	2.53 (1.46)	.26**	.41**	-	
4. Retributive Justice Orientation	4.21 (1.27)	.31**	.38**	.51**	-

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

Table 5

*Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of measures in Study 5*

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Self-enhancing Values	2.74 (0.52)	-			
2. Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies	2.41 (1.31)	.34**	-		
3. Power/Status Restoration Motives	2.16 (1.34)	.343*	.50**	-	
4. Retributive Justice Orientation	3.89 (0.52)	.35**	.45**	.52**	-

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

Table 6

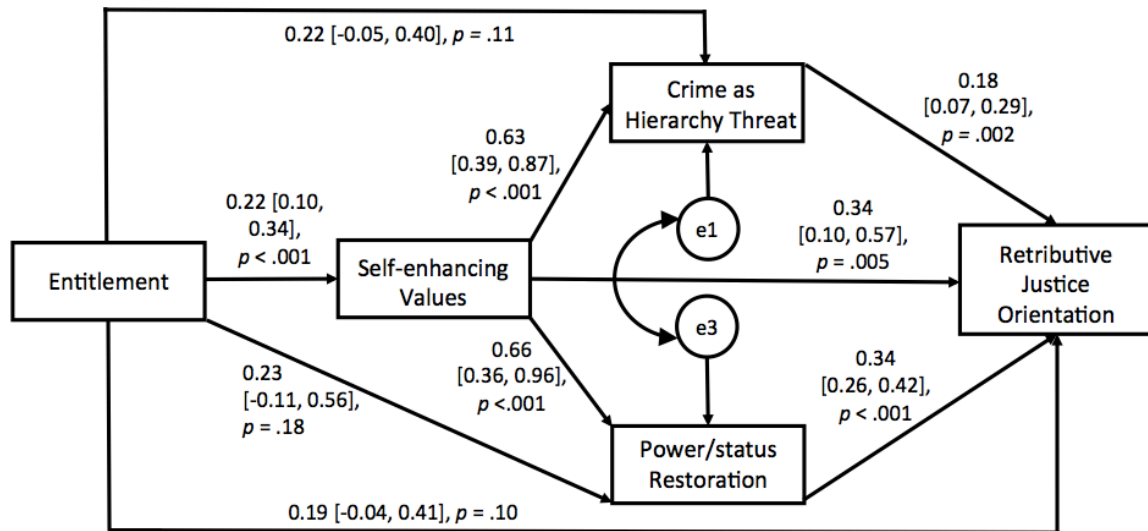
*Descriptive statistics and zero-order correlations of measures in Study 6*

	M (SD)	1	2	3	4
1. Self-enhancing Values	2.77 (0.85)	-			
2. Crime as a Threat to Hierarchies	2.52 (1.23)	.24**	-		
3. Power/Status Restoration Motives	2.37 (1.29)	.32**	.38**	-	
4. Retributive Justice Orientation	4.12 (0.85)	.33**	.32**	.45**	-

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

Figure 1

*Direct and mediation model effects in Study 4*



*Note.* Unstandardized coefficients shown.

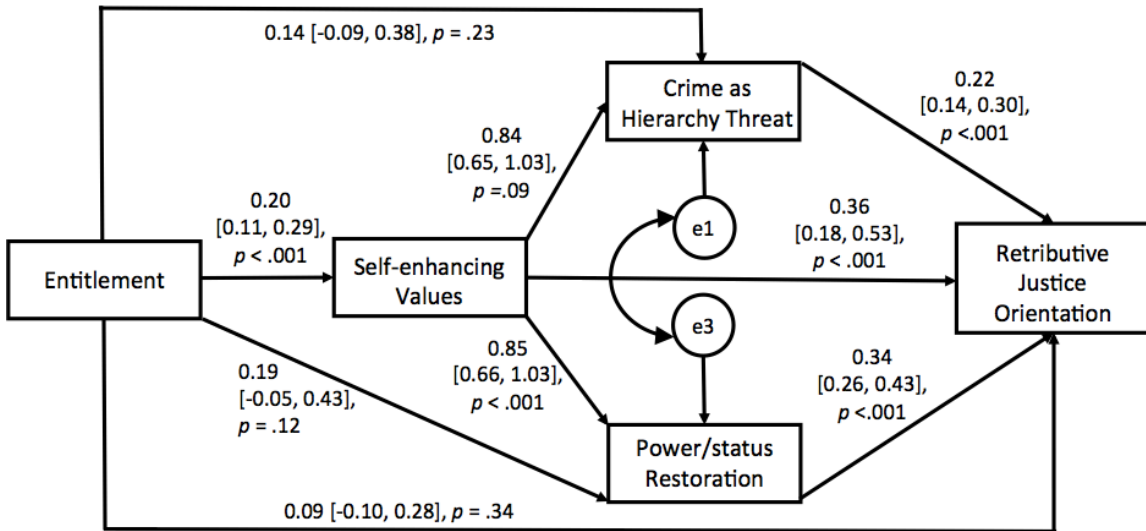
$N = 329$ ; Correlation between crime as a threat to hierarchies and power/status restoration motives =  $.57$ ,  $p < .001$ .

Specific indirect effect of entitlement on retribution via crime as a threat to hierarchies:  $b = 0.03$  [0.00, 0.05],  $p = .04$ .

Specific indirect effect of entitlement on retribution via power/status restoration motives:  $b = 0.05$  [0.01, 0.09],  $p = .02$ .

Figure 2

Direct and mediation model effects in Study 5



Note. Unstandardized coefficients shown.

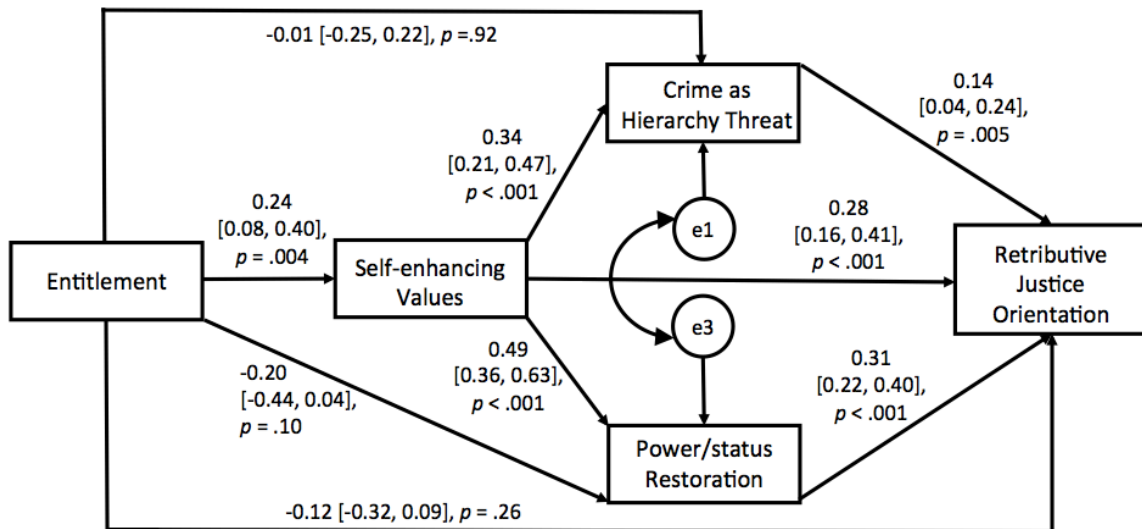
Study 5:  $N = 582$ ; Correlation between crime as a threat to hierarchies and power/status restoration motives = .43,  $p < .001$ .

Specific indirect effect of entitlement on retribution via crime as a threat to hierarchies:  $b = 0.04$  [0.01, 0.06],  $p = .001$ .

Specific indirect effect of entitlement on retribution via power/status restoration motives:  $b = 0.06$  [0.03, 0.09],  $p < .001$ .

Figure 3

Direct and mediation model effects in Study 6



Note. Unstandardized coefficients shown.

Study 6:  $N = 405$ ; Correlation between crime as a threat to hierarchies and power/status restoration motives = .48,  $p < .001$ .

Specific indirect effect of entitlement on retribution via crime as a threat to hierarchies:  $b = 0.01$  [0.00, 0.02],  $p = .077$ .

Specific indirect effect of entitlement on retribution via power/status restoration motives:  $b = 0.04$  [0.01, 0.07],  $p = .01$ .



**Appendix A***Content codes for responses to entitlement manipulation, Study 4*

- Instead of writing about “I” or the self, writing about “you” or “Everyone” (1)
- Writing that they don’t know, don’t want to answer, or that they can’t answer (2)
- Writing about deserving more when in the control condition, or writing about being undeserving while in the entitlement condition. (3)
- “Only if hard work” (4)
- “It depends” without mention of work (5)
- Writing in a language other than English, or otherwise unintelligibly to an average English speaker. (6)
- Writing less than ten words (7)
- Writing about a topic unrelated to the manipulation instructions. (8)
- In addition, there may be unanticipated ways in which participants fail to satisfactorily complete the manipulation. If a participant has failed to satisfactorily complete the manipulation for a reason other than those listed above, mark code (9).

**Appendix B***Content codes for responses to entitlement manipulation, Study 5*

- Instead of writing about “I” or the self, writing about “you” or “Everyone” (1)
- Writing that they don’t know, don’t want to answer, or that they can’t answer (2)
- Writing about deserving more when in the control condition, or writing about being undeserving while in the entitlement condition. (3)
- “Only if hard work” (4)
- “It depends” without mention of work (5)
- Writing in a language other than English, or otherwise unintelligibly to an average English speaker. (6)
- Not left completely blank, but less than eight words (7)
- Writing about a topic unrelated to the manipulation instructions. (8)
- In addition, there may be unanticipated ways in which participants fail to satisfactorily complete the manipulation. If a participant has failed to satisfactorily complete the manipulation for a reason other than those listed above, mark code (9).
- Left completely blank (10)