An examination of a sense of entitlement in violent men: 
Violence towards others and the self

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Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the
requirements of the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

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Murdoch University
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May 2010
Acknowledgements

My most sincere and humble thanks go to the many people who have traveled on this incredible journey with me. In particular, the following:

To my supervisors Mr Guy Hall, Associate Professor and Dr Jaimie Zander, Lecturer, both from the School of Law at Murdoch University, whose unique and specific sets of knowledge, skills and talents complemented one another. Together they tailored a program to help me in the learning process of designing and completing my PhD.

To Courtney Field, fellow PhD student, for all his invaluable help and unfailing support.

To Dr Liana Christensen, formerly from the UniQuest Program at Murdoch University, who helped me gain entry into university to begin a tertiary education all those years ago which has now resulted in this thesis.

To Professor Bryant Stokes, Consultant Neurosurgeon, Royal Perth Hospital for keeping me alive so that I could complete this thesis.

To the many of the staff at the Department of Corrective Services, as well as at Casuarina and Hakea Prisons who were so supportive of my study and helpful to me.

To Marian Squiers for keeping my house clean so that I could work and study.

To Alex Truelove for keeping my computer working come rain, hail or shine.

To Di, Annie, Carol, Richard, Gary and Colin for proof-reading and editing various sections and versions of this thesis.

To Louise for the many coffees and chats when I needed a “brain break”.

To Faye and Hector Patfield, my mother and father, who in the early days would deliver “meals on wheels” and towards the end provided much needed encouragement.

To Trisha Atkinson, my daughter, for her unstinting belief in my ability to do it.
Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any other university and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except when due reference is made in the text.

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Sofia Fisher

May 2010
Publications from this Thesis

Sections of this thesis have already been presented as a book chapter, journal articles, conference paper and poster. They are as follows:

**Book Chapter:**


**Journal Article:**


**Conference paper:**


**Poster:**

Abstract

This body of work examines the concept of an inflated sense of entitlement, the modern term for a concept that can be traced back to Plato in 360 BCE (Before Christian Era). Although the concept is advanced and examined in philosophical terms, Plato’s work is also considered to be one of the first and most comprehensive psychological theories of human motivation. A sense of entitlement is frequently referred to in contemporary literature, and yet there has been a lack of investigations into the nature of entitlement and how it operates in violent men. This investigation set out to rectify the deficiency by examining the concept through four studies. The global purpose of this thesis is to determine if an inflated sense of entitlement is related to both violent offending and self-harming behaviour.

The first study was designed to refine a definition of an inflated sense of entitlement for violent offenders and to determine if there was a qualitative difference in this characteristic between violent offenders and male members of the general public. The study examined twelve domains used to describe an inflated sense of entitlement. It also identified two main themes which were an action theme and an experiential theme. The action theme included actions that were likely to be elicited when an inflated sense of entitlement was violated. These actions were assault, confrontation and rejection of others. This was particularly so when the domains of anger, respect, power, obedience from subordinates and obedience from family and friends were violated. The experiential theme included emotions and cognition and whether these were expressed in an outward direction towards others or inwardly towards the self.

The second study was conducted on archival material from a prison database. It examined the self-harming behaviour of offenders currently incarcerated in Western Australia (WA). This study was conducted to test the assumption that violent offenders are more likely to self-harm than non-violent offenders, using a current cohort. It was revealed that violent offenders self-harm at a far higher rate than incarcerated non-violent offenders. Of the self-harming offenders, nine out of ten were violent offenders. It was also found that violent offenders were far less likely to have warnings of potential self-harm on the prison database than non-violent offenders.
The third study involved the construction and validation of the Sense of Entitlement Questionnaire (SOEQ) on a student population. The purpose of this study was to enable the measurement of an inflated sense of entitlement in violent men. The action themes and the domains from the first study formed the basis of the questions. This scale had sound psychometric properties and revealed two statistical factors indicating both attitude and behaviour subscales. Further investigations found differences in levels of an inflated sense of entitlement in terms of age and sex.

The fourth study was the administration of the SOEQ to violent and non-violent, as well as self-harming and non-self harming, incarcerated offenders. This was to establish the level of an inflated sense of entitlement in violent men as well as to establish the level of an inflated sense of entitlement in self-harming offenders. It was found that violent men have an inflated sense of entitlement in both attitude and behaviour. If their inflated sense of entitlement was violated then violence was most likely their first choice. This was particularly likely when the respect, power, forgiveness and anger domains were involved. When examining self-harming behaviour and entitlement, this study found a difference in attitude only.

This body of work demonstrated that an inflated sense of entitlement is related both to violent offending and self-harming behaviour. Through these investigations different aspects of an inflated sense of entitlement were identified, which included a strong desire for respect, power, admiration and status, as well as a profound aversion to feelings of shame, disrespect and humiliation. A violation of an inflated sense of entitlement has the capacity to end in violent behaviour towards others and harm towards the self. These findings show how an inflated sense of entitlement meets two of the three criteria required to qualify as a criminogenic need: that is, that the characteristic has the ability to distinguish non-criminal from criminal behaviour and has the ability to be measured. This opens the way for further research to investigate the third criterion required to qualify for a criminogenic need, which is whether an inflated sense of entitlement can be changed.
Table of Contents

Figures  xii
Tables   xiii
Appendices xiii

Chapter One: Introduction  1
1.1 Overview  1
1.2 Violence and Violent Offender Treatment  2
1.3 Entitlement from Antiquity  5
  1.3.1 Plato’s Three Parts of the Soul  7
  1.3.2 Freud’s Development of Plato’s Treatise  8
1.4 Defining an Inflated Sense of Entitlement in Contemporary Terms  12
  1.4.1 Current Definitions of an Inflated Sense of Entitlement  12
  1.4.2 Semantic Confusion  14
1.5 Perspectives of Entitlement  16
  1.5.1 Personality Disorders and Entitlement  17
    1.5.1.1 Narcissistic Personality Disorder  18
    1.5.1.2 Psychopathy  19
    1.5.1.3 Anti-social Personality Disorder  20
    1.5.1.4 Borderline Personality Disorder  21
  1.5.2 Personality Characteristics and Entitlement  22
    1.5.2.1 Weak super ego  22
    1.5.2.2 Narcissistic traits  23
    1.5.2.3 Threatened egotism  24
1.6 Theoretical Perspectives Related to Entitlement and Violence  27
  1.6.1 Frustration-aggression Hypothesis  27
  1.6.2 Learned Helplessness Model  29
  1.6.3 Social Interactionist Perspective on Violence  33
  1.6.4 Other Theoretical Perspectives  36
1.7 Entitlement, Violence, Self-harm and Treatment  36
  1.7.1 Murder-suicide  37
  1.7.2 Violence and Suicide  38
  1.7.3 Violence and Self-harm  39
  1.7.4 Treatment  41
    1.7.4.1 Treatment for violent offenders  42
    1.7.4.2 Treatment for self-harming offenders  44
1.8 Criminogenic Needs, Violence and Entitlement 45
  1.8.1 Aggression, Hostility and Violence in the Context of Entitlement 45

1.9 Emotion, Cognition, Violence and Entitlement 48
  1.9.1 Maladaptive Emotions 49
  1.9.2 Provocative Cognitions 53
  1.9.3 Violent Behaviour 55

1.10 Theoretical Model 58

1.11 The Four Studies 59
  1.11.1 Pre-existing Differences 60
  1.11.2 The Purpose of this Study 61
  1.11.3 The Studies 61

Chapter Two: A Sense of Entitlement in Violent Men: A Qualitative Analysis 64

2.1 Overview 64

2.2 A Sense of Entitlement and Violence 65
  2.2.1 The Domains 65
    2.2.1.1 Respect 66
    2.2.1.2 Forgiveness 66
    2.2.1.3 Anger 66
    2.2.1.4 Frustration 67
    2.2.1.5 Sympathy and support 67
    2.2.1.6 Special treatment 67
    2.2.1.7 Power 67
    2.2.1.8 Extra good times 68
    2.2.1.9 Obedience from family and friends 68
    2.2.1.10 Obedience from subordinates 68
    2.2.1.11 Pay back special favours 69
    2.2.1.12 Wishes 69

2.3 Method 69
  2.3.1 Participants 69
  2.3.2 Materials and Equipment 72
  2.3.4 Procedure 73

2.4 Analysis 74
  2.4.1 A Sense of Entitlement 75
  2.4.2 Violation of a Sense of Entitlement 76
  2.4.3 Action Theme 77
    2.4.3.1 Assault 77
    2.4.3.2 Confrontation 78
    2.4.3.3 Rejection 78
  2.4.4 Experiential Theme 79
    2.4.4.1 Emotion 79
2.4.4.2 Cognition 79
2.4.4.3 Direction of expression 80

2.5 Analysis of the Twelve Individual Domains 82
2.5.1 Anger Domain 83
   2.5.1.1 Anger summary 86
2.5.2 Respect Domain 86
   2.5.2.1 Respect summary 88
2.5.3 Power Domain 89
   2.5.3.1 Power summary 92
2.5.4 Obedience from Subordinates Domain 92
   2.5.4.1 Obedience from subordinates summary 95
2.5.5 Obedience from Family and Friends Domain 96
   2.5.5.1 Obedience from family and friends summary 98
2.5.6 Sympathy and Support Domain 98
   2.5.6.1 Sympathy and support summary 100
2.5.7 Wishes Domain 101
   2.5.7.1 Wishes summary 103
2.5.8 Pay back Special Favours Domain 104
   2.5.8.1 Pay back special favours summary 106
2.5.9 Extra Good Times Domain 106
   2.5.9.1 Extra good times summary 109
2.5.10 Forgiveness Domain 109
   2.5.10.1 Forgiveness summary 112
2.5.11 Frustration Domain 112
   2.5.11.1 Frustration summary 115
2.5.12 Special Treatment Domain 116
   2.5.12.1 Special treatment summary 118

2.6 Discussion 118
2.6.1 Major Themes 119
   2.6.1.1 Action theme 119
   2.6.1.2 Experiential theme 121
2.6.2 Individual Domains 123
2.6.3 Limitations and Future Directions 126
2.6.4 Conclusion 127

Chapter Three: Self-harming in Violent and Non-violent Offenders 129

3.1 Overview 129

3.2 A Sense of Entitlement and Self-harm 130
3.2.1 Suicide, Self-harm and Incarcerated Offenders 130
3.2.2 Difficulties in Defining Self-harm 136
3.2.4 Difficulties in Obtaining Data 138
3.2.5 Prediction 139
3.2.6 Identification and Intervention 139
3.3 Method 142
  3.3.1 Cases 142
  3.3.2 Procedure 142

3.4 Results 143
  3.4.1 Violent Offenders and Self-harm 144
  3.4.2 Recorded Alerts 144

3.5 Discussion 145
  3.5.1 Database Anomalies 147
  3.5.2 Limitations and Future Directions 150
  3.5.3 Conclusion 151

Chapter Four: The Sense of Entitlement Scale: Construction and Validation 152

4.1 Overview 152

4.2 Measuring a Sense of Entitlement 153
  4.2.1 Current Measures of Entitlement 153
  4.2.2 Measuring the Model of Entitlement 157
  4.2.3 Question Design 157
    4.2.3.1 Themes 157
    4.2.3.2 Domains 158
  4.2.4 Questionnaire Design 160
  4.2.5 Questionnaire Construction 161
    4.2.5.1 Likert scale 161
    4.2.5.2 Scale length 161
    4.2.5.3 Readability and grade level 162
    4.2.5.4 Positively-worded items 162

4.3 Method 163
  4.3.1 Participants 163
  4.3.2 Questionnaire 163
  4.3.3 Procedure 163

4.4 Analysis 164
  4.4.1 Descriptive Statistics 166
    4.4.1.1 Sex and entitlement 168
    4.4.1.2 Age and entitlement 168

4.5 Discussion 169
  4.5.1 Limitations and Future Directions 170
  4.5.2 Conclusion 170

Chapter Five: A Sense of Entitlement: Violence and Self-harm 172

5.1 Overview 172
5.2 Entitlement in Violent Offenders who Self-harm 173
5.2.1 Violence, Suicide and Self-harm 173

5.3 Method 175
5.3.1 Participants 175
5.3.2 Measures 177
5.3.3 Procedure 177

5.4 Analysis 178
5.4.1 Data Screening 178
5.4.2 Descriptive Statistics 179
5.4.3 Age and Entitlement 180
5.4.4 Multivariate Analysis 181
5.4.5 Univariate Analysis - Violent Offender Status 182
5.4.6 Univariate Analysis - Self-injury Status 183
5.4.7 Investigating Criminogenic Needs 184
5.4.8 Differences in Domains 186

5.5 Discussion 187
5.5.1 Limitations and Future Directions 189
5.5.2 Conclusion 191

Chapter Six: Synthesis and Conclusion 192

6.1 Overview 192

6.2 Synthesis of the Four Studies 193
6.2.1 Theoretical Model 193
6.2.2 Individual Studies 194
6.2.3 The Global Hypotheses 195
6.2.3.1 Violence 195
6.2.3.2 Self-harm 196

6.3 General Discussion 197
6.3.1 Domains: The Similarities Between Studies 197
6.3.2 Relationships: Personality Disorders and Individual Characteristics 198
6.3.2.1 Personality disorders 199
6.3.2.2 Individual characteristics 201
6.3.3 Relationships: Theoretical Perspectives on an Inflated Sense of Entitlement 203
6.3.3.1 Frustration-aggression Hypothesis 203
6.3.3.2 Learned Helplessness Model 204
6.3.3.3 Social Interactionist Model 204
6.3.3.4 Attribution of Hostile Intent Theory 205
6.3.3.5 Social Exchange Theory 206
6.3.3.6 Alexithymia 206
6.3.4 Attachment Styles and Entitlement 208
6.3.4.1 Attachment Theory 210
6.3.5 Culture and an Inflated Sense of Entitlement 211
6.3.6 The Function of Age on an Inflated Sense of Entitlement 211
6.3.7 Treatment 213
6.3.8 Criminogenic Needs Assessment 214
6.3.9 Limitations and Future Directions 216
6.3.10 Conclusion 217

References 218

Appendices 261
Figures

Figure 1.1 Theoretical model of a violated inflated sense of entitlement. 59

Figure 2.1 Flow Chart - Anger: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 84

Figure 2.2 Flow Chart - Respect: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 87

Figure 2.3 Flow Chart - Power: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 90

Figure 2.4 Flow Chart - Obedience from Subordinates: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 93

Figure 2.5 Flow Chart - Obedience from Family and Friends: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 96

Figure 2.6 Flow Chart - Sympathy and Support: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 99

Figure 2.7 Flow Chart - Wishes: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 102

Figure 2.8 Flow Chart - Pay Back Special Favours: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 105

Figure 2.9 Flow Chart - Extra Good Times: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 107

Figure 2.10 Flow Chart - Forgiveness: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 107

Figure 2.11 Flow Chart - Frustration: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 110

Figure 2.12 Flow Chart - Special Treatment: Illustrating the experiential theme (emotion, cognition and direction of expression) and the action theme (rejection, confrontation and assault). 113

Figure 5.1 Mean entitlement scores for violence (error bars represent standard error of the mean). 182

Figure 5.2 Mean entitlement scores for self-injury status (error bars represent standard error of the mean). 183
Figure 5.3 Comparison of mean scores for males on entitlement attitudes and behaviours (error bars represent standard error of the mean). 185
Figure 5.4 Mean scores on entitlement-attitude domains for violent and non-violent offenders (error bars represent standard error of the mean). 186
Figure 5.5 Mean scores on entitlement-behaviour domains for violent and non-violent offenders (error bars represent standard error of the mean). 187

Tables
Table 1.1 Definitions of Entitlement with References using Four Main Categories 13
Table 3.1 Incidents of Self-harm in Violent and Non-violent Offenders 144
Table 3.2 Recorded Alerts for Self-harm in Violent and Non-violent Offenders 145
Table 4.1 Illustration of Question Construction Using Domains and Themes 160
Table 4.2 Descriptive Statistics for SOEQ Subscales on a Student Sample 168
Table 5.1 Demographic Information - Violent and Self-harming Offenders 176
Table 5.2 Mean and Standard Deviation Scores from the SOEQ - Offender Status and Self-injury Status 180

Appendices
Appendix A Inclusion Criteria for Crimes of Violence 261
Appendix B Official Prison Database 262
Appendix C Semi-structured Interview Proforma - Study One 263
Appendix D Information Sheets - General Public and Violent Offenders 265
Appendix E Consent Forms - General Public and Violent Offenders 267
Appendix F Information Sheet - Test Validation 269
Appendix G Preliminary Questionnaire - 54 Questions 270
Appendix H Scree Plot - Test Construction 272
Appendix I Corrected-item Total Correlation - Test Construction 273
Appendix J Information Sheet - Offenders 275
Appendix K Consent Form - Offenders 276
Appendix L Sense of Entitlement Questionnaire - 49 Questions 277

Presentation Style
To assist with the interpretation of this thesis it is necessary to provide an explanation of the presentation style. This thesis consists of a series of four studies with each chapter consisting of a single study. However, for ease of reading, only one reference list is provided at the end of this thesis. APA 5th edition was used.