Predictors of Fan Entitlement in Three Fandoms

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Abstract

In this study, we examined predictors of entitlement in three fan groups. Fan entitlement in the present research reflects a belief that one is deserving of special treatment or positive regard from others. Participants that self-identified as furry fans, anime fans, and fantasy sport fans completed measures concerning fan entitlement and four possible predictors of entitled attitude: fanship, time engaging in fan activity, social awkwardness with non-fans, and extraversion. The results showed that a greater amount of time engaged in the fan interest, social awkwardness, and extraversion predicted greater fan entitlement for members of each of the fan groups. Fans' degree of fanship predicted entitlement for anime and fantasy sport fans, but not furry fans. The results are discussed with respect to linkages with entitlement in other domains.

Keywords: entitlement, fans, furry, anime, fantasy sport, fanship

Entitlement is the belief that a person is owed something (Twenge & Campbell, 2009)—an idea that has been studied as an individual difference, as an intragroup difference (e.g., status within a group), and as an intergroup difference (e.g., group status in society; Plaschke, 2005; Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Ackerman and Donnellan (2013) argue that entitlement plays an important role in narcissism and in distinguishing between two different types of entitlement: normal and narcissistic. Normal entitlement occurs when one's self-esteem and beliefs about deservingness is contingent upon their achievements. For example, employees who have been employed for a designated length of time may feel and be entitled to paid leave from work (Albiston, 2005). In contrast, people with narcissistic entitlement may have unrealistically positive self-evaluations that lead them to believe they deserve positive outcomes, resources, treatment, or success that is unwarranted, but which they feel they nevertheless are deserving (Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

One of the most researched areas of narcissistic entitlement involves students' academic entitlement (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Gatson & Reid, 2012; Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008; Westerman, Bergman, Bergman, & Daly, 2011) and its classroom and real-world implications. Entitlement has been observed in students who expect academic success while putting in minimal effort and taking no responsibility for their desired success (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Greenberger and colleagues (2008) found that an overall sense of narcissistic entitlement was moderately related to feelings of academic entitlement. However, academic entitlement was highly correlated with exploitative attitudes toward others (Westerman et al., 2011). These exploitative attitudes are often defined as the mental states of the exploiter, rather than by singular actions. The exploiter's motives and intentions demonstrate a lack of caring for the individual being exploited (Logar, 2009). Westerman et al. (2011) found that, when compared to psychology students, business students have high levels of narcissistic attitudes and disproportionately high expectations of finding a job and receiving promotions after college graduation. This seeming willingness to exploit others for personal advantage may have implications for the real world, as is seen in the positive correlation with high levels of political power and socioeconomic status. Entitlement appears prevalent in society and is evident in multiple areas (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). In the present study we examine predictors of entitlement in another domain—leisure groups.

Fan Entitlement

Fans are people who identify with a strong interest in a recreational activity. Popular culture is rife with examples of fan entitlement, particularly when it comes to fans of a particular television show, music group, or author: fans have, on different occasions, pressured a show's creators to rewrite the ending of a story because they disagreed with the original ending, to bring back a favorite character in a series (*Sherlock Holmes*), and have even pressured television stations to reprise a discontinued show (*Star Trek*, *Futurama*) ("The Blog," 2013). Other examples of entitlement among fans include the belief that they do not have to wait in line or that they deserve rewards, attention, or material goods not permitted to other fans ("Emma's Pen," 2013; Mendelson, 2013; Smith, 2014).

Beyond fans of television shows, soccer fans have also been known to demand refunds on their ticket cost if the team loses the game (Smith, 2014). Other fans have expressed beliefs that they are owed a celebrity's time and attention in exchange for their devotion ("Emma's Pen," 2013), which can include taking to the internet to create petitions and boycotts when their favorite celebrities are not casted to play roles (Mendelson, 2013). Taken together, these examples illustrate the multitudinous ways fans, regardless of the fandom's content, may express beliefs that they deserve special treatment. These beliefs may stem from their devotion to their interests, including invested time and money, which they feel entitles them to rewards and attention not given to other fans, who may be equally passionate and devoted ("Emma's Pen," 2013; Mendelson, 2013; Smith, 2014).

Despite the prevalence of fan entitlement examples, and despite a growing body of research suggesting the importance of fan group identification to a person's social identity (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010; Reysen et al., in press), there has been little research systematically investigating the predictors of entitlement in fan groups. Several possible predictors, including fan identification, time invested, feelings of social awkwardness, and extraversion are discussed below.

Possible Predictors of Fan Entitlement

Several concepts are positively correlated with entitlement in non-fandom contexts and may serve as predictors to entitled attitudes and behavior: level of personal identification with a

subject (Wenzel, 2001; Wenzel, 2002), time invested in an area of interest (Kelly, Sung, & Farnham, 2002; Sanchez, 1994), feelings of social awkwardness (Purcell, Pathe, & Mullen, 2004; Haskins & Silva, 2006), and extraversion (Raskin & Hall, 1981; Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009; Rhodewalt & Morf, 1995) are all related to the exhibition of entitlement. These concepts may serve as predictors of entitlement in specific fandoms, as well.

A fan's identification with their interest (i.e., fanship) represents a plausible predictor of their sense of entitlement. Prior research has made an important distinction between fanship, a fan's connection with their object of interest, and fandom, which reflects the degree of connection to other people who also are fans of the same interest (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Prior research has found that individuals who strongly identify with their group communicate feelings of deservedness: more prototypical group members feel they are more deserving than less identified or less prototypical group members of positive treatment and group resources (Wenzel, 2001). This feeling of entitlement is so robust that even outgroup members are seen as being entitled so long as they exhibit values and strengths consistent with the indicated ingroup (Wenzel, 2002). In the context of fan entitlement, fans' degree of felt psychological connection with the fan interest (i.e., fanship; Reysen & Branscombe, 2010) may thus be expected to predict greater entitlement.

A second plausible predictor fan entitlement is the amount of time a fan spends in on the activity of interest. This relationship has been demonstrated in non-fan contexts. For example, spending time on the division of household tasks, or spending significant time supervising household tasks leads people to feel entitled to making significant decisions about the household, such as the amount of money spent on groceries (Sanchez, 1994). People who spend more time engaged in an online activity, such as role-playing, are more likely to believe they deserve special considerations for future time engaged, such as regulating members with less time accrued (Kelly et al., 2002). While these examples do not specifically pertain to fans, other research has found that fans do consider the length of time one has identified as a fan as a way of quantifying fanship (Reysen, 2006). As such, it seems likely that fans may also use time investment as a means of evaluating their entitlement to special privileges.

A third variable which may predict fan entitlement, albeit in an indirect manner, is a fan's social awkwardness. Social awkwardness is defined as feeling uncomfortable around strangers (Rodden, Rogers, Halloran, & Taylor, 2003) or feeling uncertain of appropriate communication with strangers, and these feelings often interfere with ordinary social interaction (Green, Davis,

Karshmer, Marsh, & Straight, 2005). Individuals who lack appropriate social skills, such as misunderstanding boundaries or ignorance of social norms, may not realize they are intruding upon others' lives or may believe that their entitled behaviour is acceptable. For example, overzealous celebrity fans may place phone calls or send letters to their idols in an effort to garner personal attention from a celebrity (Purcell et al., 2004). In other cases, individuals who are socially awkward may feel isolated or lonely, fostering beliefs that they are entitled to a relationship with another person (Haskins & Silva, 2006). When applied to the context of fan groups, greater social awkwardness may be positively related to entitled attitudes and behaviors.

A final variable hypothesized to be associated with fan entitlement is extraversion, defined as any combination of traits reflecting being active, enthusiastic, talkative, outgoing, and assertive (McCrae & John, 1992). In non-fan research (e.g., Brown et al., 2009; Raskin & Hall, 1981), extraversion was found to be positively associated with narcissism and with entitlement. Rhodewalt and Morf (1995) found that high levels of extraversion are related to feelings of entitlement and, more specifically, high scores on the narcissistic personality inventory. While not explicitly studied in the context of fans, it is conceivable that more extraverted fans may feel more comfortable acting on feelings of entitlement by contacting celebrities or requesting special treatment. As such, extraversion is also hypothesized to be positively related to greater fan entitlement.

Present Study

The purpose of the present study was to examine four variables (fanship, time investment, social awkwardness, and extraversion), which are hypothesized to predict fan entitlement based on prior research in non-fandom contexts. Moreover, we sought to test the generalizability of the four variables and their relationships to fan entitlement across different fandoms. As such, we surveyed fans from three different fandoms—anime fans, furries, and fantasy sport fans. Furry fans are individuals who self-identify with an interest in anthropomorphism—the ascription of human traits to animals—and zoomorphism—the ascription of animal traits to humans (Gerbasi et al., 2008; Mock, Plante, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2013; Roberts, Plante, Gerbasi, & Reysen, in press; Plante, Roberts, Reysen, & Gerbasi, 2014a, 2014b; Plante et al., in press). Anime fans are enthusiastic consumers of Japanese animation and manga novels (Reysen et al., in press). Fantasy sport fans are sport enthusiasts who create and

manage hypothetical teams of real-world athletes and compete in fictitious leagues with fellow fantasy sport fans, the results of which are determined by the performance of the actual athletes (Reysen et al., in press). As part of a larger study regarding various aspects of fandom, participants were asked to rate their own endorsement of specific fan interests including fanship, time, social awkwardness, extraversion, and fan entitlement. In general, we hypothesized that the four predictors would be positively related to greater endorsement of fan entitlement.

Method

Participants and Procedure

Participants ($N = 4419$, 70.2% male; $M_{age} = 24.61$, $SD = 7.70$) included self-identified anime fans ($n = 3122$), furries ($n = 912$), and fantasy sport fans ($n = 385$). Furry participants completed the survey in-person at Anthrocon 2014, a furry convention in Pittsburg, PA. Anime fans completed the survey in two locations: at A-Kon 2014, an anime convention in Dallas, TX, or online, recruited through various anime-themed websites. Finally, fantasy sport fans completed the survey online and were recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk, a website in which people pay users to complete short, simple tasks. The majority of participants indicated their racial/ethnic group as White (75.9%). As part of a larger survey regarding fan interests, all participants completed measures of fanship, time spent engaging with the fan interest, social awkwardness with non-fans, extroversion, and fan entitlement. The questions were adapted such that the measures referenced each participants' particular fan group (specific wording of items is indicated in brackets). All measures used a 7-point Likert-type response scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Materials

Fanship. We adopted three items ("I am emotionally connected to being [*an Anime fan, a Furry, a Fantasy Sport fan*]," "I strongly identify with being [*an Anime fan, a Furry, a Fantasy Sport fan*]," and "Being [*an Anime fan, a Furry, a Fantasy Sport fan*] is part of me") from Reysen and Branscombe (2010) ($\alpha = .90$).

Time. A single item ("I spend all of my free time [*watching Anime, on Furry related activities, playing Fantasy Sport*]") assessed the degree participants spent engaging with the fan interest.

Social Awkwardness. We constructed two items ("I act awkward around non-[*Anime fans, Furries, Fantasy Sport fans*]," and "I lack social skills when interacting with non-[*Anime fans, Furries, Fantasy Sport fans*]") to assess the degree that participants feel socially awkward when interacting with non-fans ($\alpha = .88$).

Extroversion. We adopted the two extroversion items from the *TIPI* (Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003), a 10-item personality inventory ($\alpha = .71$).

Fan Entitlement. We constructed seven items ("[*Artists, Players/Athletes*] should make sure they are able to meet me in person, or other fans, at [*conventions, conventions/games*]," "I think that [*Artists, Players*] are obligated to go above and beyond expectations to fulfill their fans' requests," "If I email an [*Artist, Player*], I expect them to email me back," "The [*Artists, Players*] that I am a fan of should make special accommodations for me, or other fans, because we are devoted," "[*Artists, Players*] should listen to their fans and take our suggestions," "I would let [*an Artist, a Player*] know if I thought their work was sub-par (inadequate)," and "I should get special treatment from my favorite [*Artists, Players*]") based on prior entitlement measures (Achacoso, 2002; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008). The seven items were combined to form a fan entitlement index ($\alpha = .81$).

Results

As a preliminary analysis, we first examined whether participants from different fan groups differed on the assessed variables in a MANOVA. The fan group (furry, anime, fantasy sport) was entered as the independent variable, and assessed variables as dependent variables. The omnibus test was significant, Wilks' $\Lambda = .91$, $F(4, 4413) = 55.93$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .05$. As shown in Table 1, furries rated their degree of fanship higher than anime and fantasy sport fans. Fantasy sport fans rated their time investment as significantly lower than both furry and anime fans. Furries indicated feeling more socially awkward when interacting with non-fans than

fantasy sport fans. Anime fans indicated being more introverted than furry and fantasy sport fans. Lastly, furries rated fan entitlement significantly higher than sport and anime fans.[1]

To examine predictors of fan entitlement we conducted three separate regressions. Fanship, time spent engaging in the fan interest, social awkwardness, and extroversion were entered simultaneously predicting fan entitlement. As shown in Table 2, with the exception that fanship did not significantly predict fan entitlement for furries, fanship, time spent engaging in the fan interest, social awkwardness, and extroversion all significantly and positively predicted fan entitlement. Further examination of the difference between the fan groups with respect to the size of the beta weights showed that the relationship between fanship and entitlement was stronger for anime and fantasy sport fans compared to furry fans ($p < .01$). Fantasy sport fans showed a stronger relationship between time and entitlement than anime fans ($p < .05$). Fantasy sport fans showed a stronger relationship between social awkwardness and entitlement than furry and anime fans ($p < .01$). The three fan groups did not show significant differences in beta weights for the relationship between extraversion and entitlement.

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to test the hypothesis that four variables previously shown to be related to entitlement (fanship, time investment, social awkwardness, and extroversion) would significantly predict fan entitlement across three fan groups with distinct interests: furries, anime fans, and fantasy sport fans. Across the three fan groups, fans' amount of time spent engaging in the fan activity, social awkwardness, and extraversion predicted entitlement. Fans' degree of fanship also predicted entitlement for anime and fantasy sport fans, yet this was not the case for furries. Taken together, the results provide initial evidence that each of the predictors uniquely predicts fan entitlement and that the results generalize across a range of different fandoms. The implications of these findings for the literature are discussed below.

Despite the fact that entitlement research has grown in the past decade (e.g., Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Gatson & Reid, 2012; Greenberger et al., 2008; Westerman et al., 2011), there

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[1] Although demographic differences on ratings of fan entitlement were not a main focus of this study, we did examine preliminary analysis with demographic variables. An independent differences *t*-test showed that men ($M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.06$) were slightly more entitled than women ($M = 2.74$, $SD = 1.16$), $t(4346) = 2.79$, $p = .005$, $d = .09$. Additionally, a correlation showed that younger individuals were slightly more entitled than older fans ($r = -.03$, $p = .03$).

has been no empirical research systematically examining the presence or precursors of fan entitlement in the context of fandoms. The present findings provide the first evidence that time, social awkwardness, extraversion, and, to a limited extent, fanship, uniquely predicted fan entitlement. Moreover, the consistency of these findings across three distinct three fan groups demonstrates the generalizability of these findings to most fan groups, rather than simply being an idiosyncratic characteristic of any one fan group.

Fanship represents the degree of psychological connection with an object of fan interest (Reysen & Branscombe, 2010). Based on research examining prototypicality within groups (Wenzel, 2001, 2002), we predicted that fans who felt strongly connected to their fan interest would express the greatest sense of entitlement. While this was the case for anime and sport fans, we are unsure as to why fanship did not predict entitlement for furries. One possible explanation for these unexpected findings centers on one aspect of the object of fan interest: its centralization, or organization around a single object. While anime fans are admirers of Japanese animation and graphic novels and fantasy sport fans admire professional athletes, furry fans do not have a single fan object, or clear category of fan objects, to coalesce around: anthropomorphism is an exceptionally broad and diverse interest, which includes subjects as diverse as anthropomorphic artwork, stories involving anthropomorphic characters, costuming and puppeteering, spiritual beliefs about animal deities, and roleplaying with others as anthropomorphic avatars. Because of the diversity of interests contained within the broad category of "anthropomorphism," there is no group of television shows, stories, personalities, artwork, or media content that all furry fans can point to as representative of the fandom's interests. As a result, the nature of fanship within the furry community may differ from fanship in other fandoms, reflecting a broader statement about lifestyle or belief systems for furries instead of a liking of a specific genre of media or sports for anime and fantasy sport fans, respectively. Further research exploring how fans interpret fanship measures is needed to understand whether the meaning is equivalent across fandoms.

The amount of time fans' spend on their interest is an important variable often used by fans to distinguish casual, low-status fans from more invested, high-status fans (Reysen, 2006). For example, the number of posts to an online message board, a signal of time engaging with the group, reflects group members' status within the fan community (Dino, Reysen, & Branscombe, 2009; Reysen, Lloyd, Katzarska-Miller, Lemker, & Foss, 2010). As predicted in the present study, greater time spent engaging in the fan activity was associated with greater felt entitlement.

Future research may assess whether fans' absolute or relative assessments of time, based on other fans, is more strongly associated with fan entitlement. For example, a fan who spends ten hours a week on fan activities may feel a greater sense of entitlement than a fan who only spends five hours a week. Alternatively, it may be the case that a fan who spends five hours a week compares him or her self to a fan who spends one hour engaging in the fan activity feels more entitled in comparison to a fan who spends ten hours a week and compares him or her self someone who spends 20 hours a week.

The present results also showed that social awkwardness around non-fans, or outgroup members, and extraversion both contributed to greater fan entitlement. These two results may appear contradictory at first glance because awkwardness may suggest withdrawal from others or a lack of desire to interact with others (Green et al., 2005), whereas extraversion suggests a need to seek social interaction with others (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1991). It is worth noting, however, that these variables are typically examined as individual difference measures at a personal level of analysis. Presently, however, the variables are being studied in an intergroup context—social awkwardness around non-fans, for example. Recent research suggests that an individual's reported personality can differ depending on what group identity is referenced (see Jenkins, Reysen, & Katzarska-Miller, 2012). Fans may express awkwardness and introversion with respect to outgroup members, yet feel comfortable and extraverted with ingroup members. Indeed, future research may examine whether a reversal of the black sheep effect is occurring: group members may hold extreme judgments toward other ingroup members and misjudge appropriate behavior or interaction with these individuals (Marques, Yzerbyt, & Leyens, 1988). For instance, ingroup members may expect more attention from other ingroup members (vs. outgroup members) based on their expectations of those other members. As a result of extreme expectations, they may exhibit inappropriate behaviors with ingroup members, but show social awkwardness and low expectations from outgroup members. As entitlement research remains in its infancy, examining awkwardness and extraversion from both a personal level and group level of analysis may prove interesting.

Limitations and Future Directions

The present research provides the first evidence of the four variables of interest uniquely predicting entitlement in the domain of fandoms. The present research is not without its

limitations, however. For example, the sample recruited furry and anime participants from their respective conventions in the United States. Fantasy sport fans were surveyed online, but were restricted to American participants. Consequently, the generalizability of the present results is limited to American fans, as is it possible that individuals in other cultural contexts (e.g., Japan) may feel less entitled, or show less association between the variables of interest and entitlement. It is also worth noting that all participants surveyed were done so at a time when their fan interest was made salient—at conventions, through fan websites, or after having been recruited on the basis of their fan interest. As such, responses may be related to the prototypical content of the different fan groups. Additional research may investigate fans groups outside of their respective domain events—for example e-mailing fantasy sport fans months after recruitment—to determine whether salience of fan identity is a necessary condition for the associations to occur.

As another possible limitation to the present findings, all measures were self-reported, requiring participants to report on their own behaviors (e.g., such as amount of time engaged in the fan interest), which may be under- or over-estimated. It is possible that individuals may be motivated to underestimate the time spent engaged in a task (Josephs & Hahn, 1995; Francis-Smythe & Robertson, 2011), particularly if the task is seen as frivolous or wasteful.

Alternatively, fans may be motivated to overestimate the amount of time they spend on fan activities if they consider this to be desirable or a source of status in the community. A lack of personal insight may also skew self-reported social awkwardness, as a lack of understanding of the self may lead participants to have a poor understanding of their own social competence. Given these limitations, it would be beneficial in future research to also utilize more objective measures where possible, to reduce socially desirable responding, or adherence to preconceived ideas (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Conclusion

The present study assessed four different predictors of fan entitlement and the nature of this relationship across three different fan groups. Fanship (for anime and fantasy sport fans), time engaging in the fan activity, social awkwardness around outgroup members, and extraversion uniquely positively predicted fan entitlement. With research examining entitlement in general (e.g., Twenge & Campbell, 2009), and academic entitlement (e.g., Gatson & Reid, 2012), continuing to grow, researchers may seek to gain a greater understanding of the

phenomenon by exploring the presence of entitled attitudes and behaviors in other domains of life, such as fan groups. As the present results show four predictors, three of which generalized across fan groups, future research can examine whether these variables also predict entitlement in other domains (e.g., academics). Furthermore, future researchers may examine the behavioral outcomes of fan entitlement and the possible link to celebrity worship or non-normative or deviant fan behaviors (e.g., stalking).

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Table 1

Means (Standard Deviation) of Assessed Variables by Fan Group

Variable	Furry	Anime	Fantasy Sport	F-value	p-value	η_p^2
Fanship	5.27 (1.52)$_a$	4.54 (1.69)$_b$	4.30 (1.48)$_c$	81.05	< .001	.035
Time	3.55 (1.64)$_a$	3.49 (1.70)$_a$	2.48 (1.68)$_b$	65.65	< .001	.029
Social Awkward	2.57 (1.70)$_a$	2.41 (1.65)$_{ab}$	2.32 (1.56)$_b$	4.36	.013	.002
Extroversion	3.93 (1.58)$_a$	3.56 (1.54)$_b$	4.11 (1.43)$_a$	77.89	< .001	.034
Entitlement	3.24 (1.07)$_a$	2.67 (1.03)$_b$	2.98 (1.30)$_c$	109.36	< .001	.047

Note. Means with different subscripts are significantly different (Tukey's post hoc comparison). Measures used 7-point Likert scale, from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 7 = *strongly agree*.

Table 2

Predicting Fan Entitlement by Fan Group

Variable	Furry			Anime			Fantasy Sport		
	b	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*	*b*	*SE*	*t*
Fanship	-.00	.03	-0.09	.08	.01	6.82**	.16	.04	4.13**
Time	.10	.02	4.27**	.09	.01	7.54**	.17	.04	4.71**
Social Awkward	.10	.02	4.44**	.09	.01	8.20**	.36	.04	9.45**
Extroversion	.07	.02	2.91*	.11	.01	8.99**	.11	.04	3.02*
R^2	.06			.11			.40		
F-value	14.32*			98.48*			63.00*		
df	(4, 907)			(4, 3117)			(4, 380)		

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .001$.