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# A Victim Who Hasn't Been Wronged Yet: Can Events in the Future Make Us Selfish in the Present?

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A Victim Who Hasn't Been Wronged Yet:  
Can Events in the Future Make Us Selfish in the Present?

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of Bachelor of Science in Psychology from  
The College of William and Mary

by

Dolores A. Gano

Accepted for \_\_\_\_\_  
(Honors, High Honors, Highest Honors)

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Williamsburg, VA  
May 2, 2012

# A VICTIM WHO HASN'T BEEN WRONGED YET

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### Abstract

In two experiments, the researchers expanded on previous findings by examining the behavioral effects brought about when participants were asked to imagine and then write about a potential future event in which they would be wronged or treated unfairly. After writing about a future victimizing event (control condition: future boring event), participants were expected to have heightened levels of entitlement. This heightened entitlement was hypothesized to lead to more selfish decision making, as tested by an assignment task in which participants were asked to assign themselves and another participant to one of two second tasks, one of which was clearly more desirable than the other. The goal of this research was to determine whether simply considering a future victimizing event would give individuals an inflated sense of entitlement, and whether these individuals would act on this feeling of entitlement by making more selfish assignments even though they had not yet actually experienced the victimizing event.

*Keywords:* selfish behavior, imagination, anticipation, entitlement, morality



### A Victim Who Hasn't Been Wronged Yet:

#### Can Events in the Future Make Us Selfish in the Present?

Most individuals have experienced the feelings of frustration and outrage that arise when events in life feel completely unfair. Some of these undeserved incidents involve being wronged by another person, like being cut in line at the grocery store. Other unfair events happen at times when random chance seems to turn against a person, like having the internet connection disrupted right in the middle of an online exam. Whether these unfair events can be attributed to another's malice or purely to bad luck, they usually result in anger and irritability on the part of the wronged individual. These unfair events often activate feelings of being victimized. The feeling of victimization can range from very low to extreme, depending on the severity of the unfair event being experienced or remembered (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010), and the default state is to feel very mild or no feelings of victimization until an unjust experience alters that state.

One way individuals cope with threat of victimization is through aggressive reactions, even when such outbursts are ultimately to the detriment of the individual's wellbeing, such as when incarcerated (Ireland, 2010). Perceptions of being alienated or victimized by coworkers and superiors is highly correlated with rates of aggression and conflict in the workplace (Jockin, Arvey, & McGue, 2001). When treated unjustly by customers, customer service representatives will often retaliate by purposefully undermining the quality of customer service, thereby sabotaging the interests of their company and risking their jobs (Skarlicki, Jaarsvelt, & Walker, 2008). After being duped by a con artist, victims often react with feelings of self-blame and shame and subsequently become more vigilant against such threats (Vohs, Baumeister, & Chin, 2007). Extreme and traumatic instances of victimization can even lead to posttraumatic stress

disorder (see DSM-IV: American Psychological Association, 2003). Clearly, unfair events have dramatic effects on people's moods, and the victim's reaction to his or her unfortunate situation goes beyond his or her internalized negative feelings about the event, often triggering externalized behaviors like retaliation.

Another effect of undergoing an unfair, victimizing situation is that it activates the individual's entitlement mindset. This increased sense of entitlement makes individuals feel that they deserve to evade further trials and secure future benefits for themselves (Zitek et al., 2010). Individuals whose level of entitlement was temporarily raised through subliminal presentation of entitled messages perceived dull tasks to be less interesting and more time consuming than individuals who were not exposed to such messages (O'Brien, Anastasio, & Bushman, 2011). Those who scored high on measures of entitlement were less likely to forgive enemies for past offenses and more likely to demand recompense from their transgressors (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell, & Finkel, 2004). When an individual's entitlement mindset has been activated by an unfair event, that mindset affects the way the individual reacts to his or her surroundings. The results of this entitlement-influenced mindset go beyond affecting the transgressor who caused the unfair incident; in fact, the selfish behavior associated with the entitlement mindset can be acted out upon unsuspecting individuals who were completely unrelated to the entitled individual's woes.

Zitek et al. (2010) refers to entitlement as a "dynamic, domain-general mindset" (p. 246). Entitlement is dynamic because the entitlement mindset can be activated at different levels of intensity depending on how salient a victimizing event is to the individual. Thus, although an individual who was cut in line at the grocery store may not have been inclined to act selfishly before the victimizing incident, once this unfair event occurs his or her mindset of entitlement

will be activated, making the individual more likely to behave selfishly. Entitlement is a domain-general mindset because after a person has experienced an unfair event in one domain, that individual may exhibit selfish behavior in a separate domain. So after a student's online exam is disrupted by a faulty internet connection, the student might selfishly eat the ice cream in the freezer that belonged to his or her roommate. Academics and food are two separate areas of life, but a victimizing event in one of these domains can lead to selfish behavior in the other. Thus, once the entitlement mindset is activated by a victimizing event, its effects will be dynamic and domain-general.

Previous research has found that this mindset of entitlement is not exclusively activated by unfair events that have just occurred. Merely thinking about a victimizing event that occurred in the past increased entitlement in participants, which in turn caused them to behave more selfishly when making decisions. These selfish behaviors included declining to help the researcher with an optional second task after the experiment was completed, rating themselves as unlikely to partake in various altruistic activities in the future, and allocating more money to themselves in a hypothetical game after being told their decisions would shape how the game would actually be run in future studies (Zitek et al., 2010). These findings further support the dynamic, salience-dependent nature of entitlement by indicating that the important factor in evoking feelings of entitlement is not proximity in time to the unfair event but rather vividness of the mental representation of the unfair event. The findings also support the idea that the entitlement mindset is domain-general because remembering a victimizing event had mental and behavioral effects regardless of the fact that participants recalled events from diverse and unrelated domains.

According to Zitek et al. (2010), the act of remembering past offences activates the entitlement mindset, which in turn causes selfish behavior. This previous research evokes the question, “What happens when people imagine an unfair event happening to them in the future?” The present study was designed to explore whether the mindset of entitlement described in Zitek et al. (2010) can be activated by imagining an instance of unfair treatment occurring in the future.

Recent research suggests that the feelings evoked by anticipation of a future event are stronger than those evoked by retrospection on a past event (Boven et al., 2007). This heightened emotional effect was present both when participants were asked to imagine future events that they would definitely experience (their upcoming Thanksgiving holiday) and when participants were asked to imagine a fictionalized future event (winning and taking a free skiing vacation). Whatever feelings the participant expected to feel during the upcoming event were felt more strongly after thinking about the future event compared to their baseline emotions before the imagination exercise. For example, participants who thought about a fictional upcoming ski trip and anticipated feeling happy during the trip actually felt happier during the experiment than participants who thought about happy memories from a fictionalized past ski trip. If anticipation of a future event can elicit strong emotional reactions in an individual, could anticipating a future victimizing event activate the associated sense of entitlement? If so, would this sense of entitlement lead to selfish behavior even though the victimizing event that elicited the feeling of entitlement has not actually occurred? The current literature has left these questions undetermined, but this study’s aim was to explore and shed light on these possibilities.

A theory that competes with the idea of entitlement as a response to victimization is the negative-state relief hypothesis. The negative-state relief model states that those who are

experiencing a temporary negative affective state will see the opportunity to help another person as a chance to relieve their negative mood. Helping others has a rewarding component, the theory says, and engaging in this rewarding helpful behavior is an efficient way to restore one's happy mood (Batson, Batson, Griffitt, Barrientos, Brandt, Sprengelmeyer, & Bayly, 1989). This reaction is not an altruistic one; rather, it is selfish and entitled in its own way because the motivation for helping is not out of empathetic interest in the other person but out of an egoistic desire to feel better about oneself (Cialdini, Schaller, Houlihan, Arps, Fultz, & Beaman, 1987). This effect is strengthened when the person looking to improve his or her affect feels that he or she is responsible for causing the negative event and that the negative event is targeting the other person in particular as opposed to both the other and the self equally (Carlson and Miller, 1987). In this case, those who were put in a negative state by an unfair event would react more generously and selflessly than those in a neutral mood state when presented with the choice between a selfish and an unselfish decision.

The first experiment of the present research used the methodology and measures of entitlement and selfishness used in Zitek et al. (2010), but instead of asking participants to think about a victimizing event in their past, the participants were asked to write a short essay on an unfair event that they might plausibly experience within the next few months. The participants in the control group wrote a short essay on a possible future event during which they would feel bored. Victimizing events and boring events are similar in that they can both evoke negative affective states, but boring events differ from victimizing events in that boring events are not usually brought on by injustice or unfair treatment. In this way, the negative-state relief hypothesis can be tested against the victim entitlement model. The negative-state relief model predicts that participants in both conditions would behave similarly, since both groups' moods

will be affected negatively by thinking about future unpleasant events. The victim entitlement model predicts that imagining a boring event would not bring about the same sense of entitlement that writing about a future victimizing event would evoke, and that for this reason those in the victimization group would behave more selfishly than those in the boredom group.

The results of this research could be of use in helping to explain Batson, Batson, Griffitt, Barrientos, Brandt, Sprengelmeyer, & Bayly (2003). In this study, the researchers asked individuals to assign themselves and another participant to a pair of tasks, one of which was “clearly more desirable” (p. 1190) and one of which was more boring and less desirable. Surprisingly, individuals asked to imagine themselves in the other’s position before making the assignment decision acted no more altruistically than those in the control condition who were not asked to do any perspective-taking. These results suggest that the common moral prescription heard from parents, teachers, and religious leaders to imagine oneself in the other’s shoes may not be effective in promoting altruistic behavior. Perhaps the reason perspective-taking did nothing to increase altruistic behavior is that when the participants imagined themselves in a hypothetical unfair position (that is, being in the other person’s situation of not having any say in their own task assignment), it activated the entitlement mindset and they were motivated to act selfishly. The first experiment of this research used a modification of the assignment task used in Batson et al. (2003) to see whether the victimization condition of this experiment had the same general effect of selfish assignment that the imagine-self condition had in Batson’s study.

This research aimed to establish whether entitlement and its consequent selfishness can, in fact, be activated by the mere imagining of future instances in which one’s life might be unfair. By asking participants to think about a plausible future unfair situation and then measuring their level of entitlement, their current experience of feelings associated with unfair

events (frustration and feeling wronged), and their “self” versus “other” assignment to the more desirable task, the researcher hoped to use the knowledge gleaned from Zitek et al. (2010) and Boven et al. (2007) to extend and generalize both studies’ findings and to gain a greater understanding about the processes behind victimization, entitlement, and selfishness.

### **Experiment 1**

This first experiment is similar to that of Zitek et al. (2010) in that it attempts to manipulate victimization through a writing task and measure subsequent entitlement and selfish behavior. Where this experiment differs from those performed in Zitek et al. (2010) is in asking participants to think of a future time when they could be wronged as opposed to a past event when they were wronged. In this prediction aspect, the study attempts to replicate Boven et al. (2007) by using expectation of a future event to evoke affective change in the present. Finally, the measure of selfish behavior this study uses – namely, an assignment task with the option of flipping a coin to make the decision – replicates the task used in Batson et al. (2003) to measure selfish behavior and moral hypocrisy.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

The participants in this study were undergraduate students at the College of William and Mary who were part of the psychology participant pool because of their enrollment in the Introduction to Psychology course. All were participating in this research in partial fulfillment of required course credit. The participants signed up for a time slot via the school’s online sign-up system, where the experiment was listed as being two short studies combined into one time slot. The study was advertised as two separate studies to help prevent participants from guessing how the essay tasks and questionnaires at the beginning of the study related to the task assignment

section at the end of the study. The study was listed as “Imagination and Personality” and “Detail Attentiveness” in order to disguise the true nature of the experiment. The participants were randomly assigned to either the experimental victimization condition or the control boredom condition. A total of  $N = 70$  participants signed up for the study, and this group of participants was made up of 55% females and 45% males, with an average age of  $M = 19$ ,  $SD = 1.0$ .

### **Materials and Procedure**

The study was conducted two participants at a time, with both in each pair assigned to the same condition. Participants in the control condition were tested separately from participants in the experimental condition so that the differences in the essay topics between the groups would not be apparent. When participants arrived at the room reserved for the study, they were first asked whether they were friends outside of the study. This check was meant to control for the possibility that pairs of participants who were not strangers might make their assignment decisions differently than those who were strangers. Since the stipulation that people should not sign up for the study with friends was clearly written on the study sign-up website, however, there were no acquainted pairs that had to be removed from the study. Participants were told they would be taking part in two separate studies, which were being held at the same time for convenience's sake. After completing the consent form, they were given the short essay forms, an entitlement questionnaire, and a brief version of the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS) (Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988). Participants were then given verbal instructions for completing each questionnaire along with the written instructions at the top of each form. After completing the packet, the two participants were taken to separate rooms where they completed an assignment form to make their decision about how to assign the tasks. All forms given to participants in the first experiment can be viewed in Appendix A of this paper.



**Short essays.** The participants were first asked to complete the two short essays and the questions attached to those essays. The first essay topic of “describe your morning routine” was identical in both conditions and was used as a way to mask the true manipulation of the experiment, the second essay. After the morning routine essay, participants were asked to answer three questions along a 7-point Likert scale about how rushed, tired, and anxious they usually feel during a typical morning. The subject on which the participants wrote their second short essay differed depending on the condition to which they were assigned. In the victimization condition, participants were asked to think of an unfair event that they might plausibly experience in the next few months. These participants were then asked to write a paragraph or two describing this possible future scenario, detailing the type of unfair treatment they might receive, and commenting on the emotions this event would produce. In the control condition, participants were asked to think of and write about a scenario within the next few months during which they might feel bored. Participants in both the victimization condition and the boredom condition were then asked to indicate how frustrated, wronged, and bored they expected to feel when this event did take place by answering three questions on a 7-point scale from 1 (not at all) to 7 (very). The hypothesis, which follows from the victim entitlement model, was that the short essay portion in the victimization condition, but not in the boredom condition, would activate the participants’ entitlement mindset which would in turn increase the likelihood of behaving selfishly.

**Entitlement questionnaire.** After completing the short essay task, participants were asked to complete a twenty-item “personality questionnaire” that included four items measuring their current entitlement mindset and sixteen filler items regarding basic personality traits. Activation of the entitlement mindset was measured by having participants answer four questions

published in Zitek et al. (2010) that were designed to measure to what degree each individual felt that he or she deserved to “avoid further suffering and obtain positive outcomes for themselves” (p. 245). The four entitlement questions used in this study were as follows: “I am entitled not to suffer too much,” “I deserve good things in my life,” “I deserve an extra break now and then,” “I should not have to inconvenience myself for others.” The sixteen filler questions were written by the researcher to sound like typical personality test items and were added to disguise what the questionnaire was truly measuring. All items were answered on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The mean of these four entitlement items were recorded as that participant’s score on the measure of entitlement.

**Brief PANAS.** Next the participants were asked to complete a brief version of the positive and negative affect schedule. The Brief PANAS was originally published in Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988) and has since been used in thousands of studies as a measure of general emotional state. Participants were asked to indicate how much on a scale of 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) they were currently experiencing 10 positive (e.g. excited, alert) and 10 negative (e.g. ashamed, nervous) affective states. This measure was meant to control for the possibility predicted by the negative-state relief model that a more negative affective state would prompt altruistic behavior in the assignment task. Since predicting future victimizing events may have brought about more negative feelings than predicting future boring events, it was important to control for this third variable by measuring the affective state of participants in both conditions so that their degree of negative affect could be accounted for in analysis of the data.

**Self-other assignment task.** After completing the PANAS, participants were thanked for their participation in the first study and were told that the first study was over. The researcher collected their essays and questionnaires.

Participants were told that since the researchers of this second experiment wanted to have an even number of participants in each task, they were giving half the participants the choice of which task they wanted to complete. Therefore, one participant in each pair would have the opportunity to choose the condition in which they wanted to participate by filling out an assignment form while other would just have to complete the task to which he or she was assigned by the other participant. Before the participants were led to the separate rooms, they were told that there would be an orange folder with a form inside and that if their folder contained an “Assignment Form” then that meant that they had been randomly chosen to be the assigner – the participant who gets to choose which task each of them would complete. They were told that if their folder contained a “Preference Form,” then that meant they were not chosen to be the assigner and, while they would indicate their preferred task, their preference would have no bearing on which task they would actually complete. In actuality, both participants received the “Assignment Form” in their folders, but since they were in separate rooms, both were led to believe that they were the only ones who had the opportunity to make the actual assignment decision.

The choice of conditions each participant was given was between a film clip task that was estimated to take less than ten minutes and would involve watching a short movie clip and answering questions about it and an essay writing task that was estimated to take between 15 and 20 minutes and would involve writing three more essays similar to the ones they had to write in the first part of the study. It was assumed that the film clip task would be the more desirable

option since watching film clips would likely sound more appealing to college students than would writing additional essays. Another reason the film clip task was predicted to be the clearly more desirable option was that it was estimated to take less time. Participants were provided with a coin and were told they could use it if they wanted to make an unbiased heads-or-tails decision in assigning themselves and the other participants to the tasks. They were asked to signify their assignment choice by filling out the assignment form on which they were required to check either “myself” or “other participant” in response to the questions “Who did you assign to the film clip task?” and “Who did you assign to the essay-writing task?” The assignment form also included the question “Did you flip the coin so that your decision would be unbiased?” to which the participants would check either the line marked “yes” or the one marked “no.”

After filling out the assignment form, the participants returned to the original room and were told that the experiment had ended. It was revealed that the “two” studies were actually just different parts of the same study, that there was no second task, and that the researchers were really seeking out their answers to questions on the assignment form to see how they related to the essay-writing task and the questionnaires earlier in the study. Participants were asked whether they had any suspicions about the assignment task or the second study prior to being told the true nature of the experiment. Their answers regarding suspicions about the deceptions in this study were used to evaluate whether any participants’ data had to be excluded from use because of their doubts about the validity of the second part of the study. Following this final portion of the study, participants were thanked for their participation, were asked whether they had any questions about the study, and were given the researchers’ contact information in case they wanted any more information about the study’s results.

## Results

Before calculating the results from the study, two subjects' data had to be excluded because they failed to follow the essay prompt. Two other subjects' data had to be excluded from analysis because they did not indicate whether or not they flipped the coin in their decision-making process. This left a total of 66 participants, with 32 in the experimental victimization condition and 34 in the control boredom condition.

**Manipulation checks.** First the two essay topics were evaluated to make sure each prompted the expectation of different emotions based on the different essay topics. As predicted, those in the victimization condition tended to report that if the unfair event they wrote about were to happen, they would feel more wronged ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 1.27$ ) than those in the boredom condition reported they would if the boring event they wrote about actually happened ( $M = 2.20$ ,  $SD = 1.63$ ). An independent samples t-test measuring the difference between the expected feeling of being wronged in the victimization group and in the boredom group indicated that the assigned essay topic had a significant effect on the degree to which participants expected to feel wronged if the event they wrote about happened ( $t(66) = -8.04$ ,  $p < .001$ ). An alpha level of .05 was used for this and all other statistical tests in this study.

Similarly, the unfair event was judged by the victimization group to be more likely to make them feel frustrated ( $M = 6.15$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) than was the boring event written about by the boredom group ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.90$ ). This difference was also significant ( $t(66) = -5.20$ ,  $p < .001$ ), such that those in the victimization condition reported that they expected to feel significantly more frustrated if the event they wrote about in their essay actually happened than did those in the boredom condition.

In response to the question of how bored participants expected the event they wrote about to make them feel, those in the boredom condition gave higher ratings of expected boredom ( $M = 5.33$ ,  $SD = 1.15$ ) than did those in the victimization condition ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ). This difference was significant as well ( $t(66) = 9.00$ ,  $p < .001$ ), showing that those in the boredom condition expected to be more bored than did those in the victimization group if each one had to experience the event they wrote about in the essay.

These results indicate that the essay manipulation was successful in that those who were asked to write about a possible unfair event in their future expected to feel more frustrated and wronged if the event transpired than did those who wrote about a future boring event. Conversely, those who were asked to write about a possible boring event expected that this event would make them feel more bored than did those who wrote about a future unfair event.

**Entitlement scale reliability.** The researchers tested the reliability of the four items in the entitlement scale and found that Cronbach's alpha was .52, which is generally regarded as fairly poor reliability. However, during data analysis it seemed that the fourth entitlement item, which asks participants to rate their agreement with the statement "I should not have to inconvenience myself for others," fluctuated independently of the other items on the entitlement scale. When this fourth entitlement item was removed, Cronbach's alpha for the three remaining entitlement items was .69, which indicates a better reliability between these entitlement-measuring items.

**Entitlement scores.** Using their averaged entitlement item responses to give each participant an overall entitlement score, the difference in the entitlement scores between those in the boredom condition ( $M = 4.23$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) and those in the victimization condition ( $M = 4.00$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) did not reach significance ( $t(68) = 1.02$ ,  $p = .311$ ). Using the average of the three

entitlement items that were found to be most reliable as the basis for the participants' entitlement score also failed to yield significant results ( $t(68) = 1.14, p = .260$ ), so there was again no significant difference between the entitlement scores of those in the boredom condition ( $M = 4.61, SD = 1.08$ ) and those in the victimization condition ( $M = 4.29, SD = 1.21$ ). As shown in Figure 1, the mean entitlement scores were patterned in the opposite direction than what was expected, with the boredom condition's scores higher than those of the victimization condition. However, these differences were not significant.

**Task assignment.** The groups did not differ in their overall likelihood of assigning themselves (as opposed to assigning the other participant) to the more desirable film-clip task. 72.7% of those in the boredom condition and 66.7% of those in the victimization condition assigned themselves to the film-clip task, and the difference in assignment choice between the groups was not significant ( $t(68) = -0.17, p = .869$ ). Although there were no significant differences in assignment choices between condition, the directionality was opposite from what was predicted, with a higher percentage of those in the boredom group making the selfish assignment decision (see Figure 2).

**Coin flipping.** With 60.6% of those in the boredom condition reporting to have flipped the coin and 54.5% of those in the victimization condition marking that they used a coin flip to make their decision, the groups did not significantly differ in their likelihood to report having flipped the coin ( $t(66) = -0.27, p = .788$ ).

Neither group of participants showed any evidence of moral hypocrisy. One-sample *t*-tests were used to see if either group's self-other assignment choices made after having reported flipping the coin differed significantly from the 50-50 split that would be expected from true coin flips. Of the 20 participants in the boredom condition who reported flipping the coin, thirteen

assigned themselves to the film-clip task, which did not differ significantly from the 10 that random chance would have predicted ( $t(20) = -1.37, p = .186$ ). Of the 18 participants in the victimization condition who reported using the coin, 8 assigned themselves to the film-clip task, which did not differ significantly from the 9 that was predicted by chance ( $t(18) = 0.46, p = .651$ ).

**PANAS scores.** Both the ten-item positive affect scale ( $\alpha = .85$ ) and the ten-item negative affect scale ( $\alpha = .82$ ) were found to be highly reliable. The ten positive affect items were averaged to create a mean positive affect score for each participant, and the ten negative affect items were averaged to create a mean negative affect score for each participant. Positive affect did not differ as a function of condition ( $t(68) = -1.92, p = .074$ ), so the positive affect of those in the boredom condition ( $M = 2.17, SD = 0.69$ ) did not differ from that of those in the victimization condition ( $M = 2.53, SD = 0.68$ ). Likewise, the groups did not differ in their negative affect ( $t(68) = -1.59, p = .146$ ), with neither the boredom group ( $M = 1.41, SD = 0.44$ ) nor the victimization group ( $M = 1.50, SD = 0.54$ ) reporting significantly higher negative affect. As represented in Figure 3, condition did not account for any differences in positive or negative affect.

Positive and negative affect did not affect self-other task assignment choices. Those who assigned themselves to the film-clip task did not have significantly different reported positive affect ( $M = 2.37, SD = 0.72$ ) than those who assigned the other participant to the film-clip task ( $M = 2.21, SD = 0.67$ ) ( $t(68) = 0.42, p = 0.683$ ). Similarly, those who assigned themselves to the film-clip task did not differ significantly in their reported negative affect ( $M = 1.56, SD = 0.54$ ) when compared to those who assigned the other participant to the film-clip task ( $M = 1.42, SD = 0.40$ ) ( $t(68) = 0.75, p = .466$ ).



Reported positive and negative affect was not significantly different between those who reported flipping the coin to make their decision and those who did not. Those who reported flipping the coin had positive affect scores ( $M = 2.41, SD = 0.72$ ) and negative affect scores ( $M = 1.45, SD = 0.41$ ) that did not differ significantly from the positive affect scores ( $M = 2.20, SD = 0.67$ ) and negative affect scores ( $M = 1.68, SD = 0.60$ ) of those who did not report flipping the coin ( $t(28) = 1.52, p = .155$ ) ( $t(28) = -1.34, p = .201$ ).

### Discussion

The results of this study indicate that even though the essay topics succeeded in making those in the victimization condition reflect on a possible future event that would make them feel wronged and frustrated, the act of thinking and writing about this plausible unfair event did not significantly increase participants' sense of entitlement and had no effect on their likelihood of making a selfish decision in assigning tasks. Those in the bored condition, even though the event they wrote about was rated by participants as being significantly less likely to make them feel frustrated or wronged, had entitlement scores that were not significantly different than those of the victimization condition participants. Those in the bored condition were also no more likely to have used a coin flip to make a fair decision or to have assigned the other participant to the more desirable task.

The victim entitlement model is left unsupported by these data, since the victimization and boredom conditions did not differ in entitlement scores or task assignments. Despite the fact that the two groups demonstrated similar behavior, however, the negative-state relief hypothesis is not fully supported by these data either. Since negative affect scores had no significant effect on task assignment, the data do not fit with the notion that a heightened negative affect will increase generous helping behavior.

One possible reason for the lack of significant results may be a high incidence of suspicion among participants. During debriefing, participants were asked whether they had any suspicions about the experiment. Eight participants had mild suspicions about the veracity of the cover story (e.g., mentioning mild feelings that there was going to be “a twist” in the experiment), and nine participants had strong suspicions about what the experimenter had told them about the study (e.g., asserting concrete suspicions about the second task or the assignment process). There were enough suspicious participants that the researchers chose not to eliminate their data sets from analysis because it would drastically decrease the total number of participants. A secondary analysis of the data that used only non-suspicious participants confirmed that the main comparisons of interest still failed to reach significance even when the issue of suspicion was removed. However, the failure of the non-suspicious participants’ data to demonstrate significant effects may have been due to the decreased power that resulted from the diminished sample size, so the impact of suspicion on the participants’ behavior cannot be ruled out entirely.

When comparing the current study to the studies that formed the basis for this experiment and which were mentioned earlier in this paper, it became clear that there were a few small but important inconsistencies between the way the previous research was conducted and the method used in this research. Zitek et al. (2010), the study that links victimization to increased entitlement, was used in this study as the basis for the essay manipulation and the measure of entitlement. Although Zitek et al. (2010) used the four-item entitlement scale that was adopted for this experiment in the first two studies in their paper, the paper’s third study utilized the Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004). This scale has better-established validity and higher reliability scores than does the four-item scale, which means it may have

been a better choice for use in attempting to demonstrate the relationship between victimization and entitlement.

Another difference in the way entitlement was measured in Zitek et al. (2010) was that the researchers asked participants to rate the degree to which the entitlement questionnaire items described their state *at the present moment* as opposed to generally. This specification was made in order to be sure that *state* entitlement was being measured, as opposed to *trait* entitlement. It is entirely possible that the victimization condition participants in our study had elevated state entitlement, but that since wording of the instructions on the entitlement questionnaire in our study was aimed more at recording their normal level of entitlement mindset, this temporary spike in entitlement was not observed.

In Boven et al. (2007), which demonstrated that anticipation of an event is more emotionally evocative than retrospection on an event, the biggest effect that resulted from anticipating an event was the change in participants' current emotions. Thus, Boven's work would suggest that those who anticipated a future victimizing event would feel frustrated and wronged in the present. In this study, however, the questionnaires failed to ask whether participants who had just written their essay were currently experiencing these emotions associated with victimization. Instead, we asked about the degree to which they expected to feel these emotions in the future. Boven did not demonstrate significant changes to predicted emotions as a result of anticipation; rather, they showed that changes in current emotions were the result of anticipation. Including the items "wronged" and "frustrated," in the list of emotions on the PANAS form would have tested whether anticipating an unfair event did indeed elicit these emotions. Some items that were already included on the PANAS (i.e., irritable and distressed) marginally resembled the emotions of interest, but the comparison is not exact and

these emotions were not included in Zitek et al.'s description of feeling victimized. Including a measure of current emotional state with regards to feeling victimized may have provided a better indication of whether the participants who wrote about a future unfair event were actually made to feel victimized in the present.

Even if this study included better measurements of current entitlement and current victimization, this would not have changed the participants' decision-making behavior, which had no significant differences between the two conditions. There were some additional discrepancies between this and previous research that may have influenced participants to act differently than previous observations would predict. The third experiment in Zitek et al. (2010) suggested that when an individual remembers a victimizing experience, their current sense of entitlement is heightened, which in turn leads to selfish behavior. There were some discrepancies between the former and the present studies in the scenarios participants were met with in which they had the choice of a selfish or unselfish decision, and it is possible that these differences diminished the effects of the essay manipulation in this study. In Zitek et al.'s study, participants were asked to make a decision about money allocation that was purportedly going to be taken into account when designing a future experiment. Thus, the decision participants came to regarding the money had no immediate, direct effects on either themselves or on another current participant. Their decision had little gravity because it was to be compiled with the responses of many other individuals before being used in a way that could only affect new participants in the distant future. This decision-making situation would psychologically be very different from the one used in this study. In the present study, participants made a task-assignment choice that would immediately affect both themselves and another person, giving their decision much more weight. In addition, the participants in this study were led to believe that they were the ones that

possessed absolute authority on settling the issue of task-assignment, as opposed to being just one of many offering an opinion. Perhaps the more serious and tangible effects that participants thought would transpire as a result of their decision led them to take the task assignment more seriously and to think about it longer. Spending extra time actively and consciously thinking about their assignment decision may have subdued the effects of the essay manipulation, making the decision process and outcome of the boredom and victimization groups effectively the same.

The Batson et al. (2003) study included a task similar to the assignment task in this study in that it asked participants to assign themselves and the other participant to two tasks, one of which was clearly more desirable, and participants had the option of using a coin flip to make their decision. Although this task was used as a basis for the assignment task in this experiment, there are a few differences between the two applications of the assignment task that may have resulted in the absence of moral hypocrisy and selfish behavior in the victimization group. One very important distinction is that, in Batson et al.'s study, participants were told there was a second participant present, but they never actually saw or interacted with the fictitious "second participant." In this study, there were two participants run at a time, with both participants reporting to the same room to complete the first part of the experiment. The participants were separated to make their assignment choices, but the "other participant" about whom they were making their decision would have been by that point solidified in their minds as a particular individual, as opposed to the nebulous idea of another participant whose identity was kept in the abstract in Batson's study. Being able to see and have even a small amount of interaction with the other participant may have made participants feel more empathy for the other individual, causing them to act in a more friendly way about their assignment choices regardless of condition.

In addition, the participants in this study were both told the cover story that one participant would get the assignment form, and that whoever got the assignment form would be solely responsible for choosing which participant would complete which task. These instructions fundamentally differ from those Batson et al. used, in which the researcher told each participant that the other participant would be told the assignments were made by random chance, as opposed to by the deliberate choice of the first participant. Whereas the participants in Batson's experiment would not face any social ramifications of making a selfish choice that benefited themselves over the other participants, the participants in this study knew that the responsibility would fall on them in the eyes of the other participant. The knowledge that another person would know about their decision and hold them responsible for it may have increased the social pressure placed on the participants to act unselfishly. This social pressure may have been compounded by the fact that the two participants had actually "met" in a general sense of being able to see and have minor social interactions with each other. These factors may have combined to create an overall floor effect for selfishness, wiping out the small impetus to be selfish that would have come from thinking about a future victimizing event.

It appears that these small differences in the degree to which participants were able to interact and the way in which the assignment scenario was framed have the potential to have had large effects on the way participants made their decisions. The fact that neither group showed evidence of engaging in moral hypocrisy is of particular interest since much of the research Batson has done indicates that moral hypocrisy occurs normally without any manipulations needed to catalyze it, and that instead manipulations are needed to get the phenomenon of moral hypocrisy to diminish.

## **Experiment 2**

Taking into account the problems with the methodology of Experiment 1 discussed above, Experiment 2 was designed to mitigate these issues and to allow for a more accurate testing of the researchers' predictions. In Experiment 2, the general hypothesis remains the same: that participants who think about a future unfair event will experience a heightened state of entitlement, and that this mindset of entitlement will subsequently influence them to behave selfishly rather than altruistically.

One important change is that a third condition was added to Experiment 2. In addition to the control boredom condition and the experimental victimization condition that were used in Experiment 1, a third condition has been added to attempt to replicate the findings of Zitek et al. (2010). In this condition, the experimental manipulation of essay topic will ask participants to reflect on and write about an unfair or victimizing event they have experienced in the past. This close replication is expected to result in the same effects found in Zitek et al. (2010); namely, that participants who think about a previously-experienced unfair event will show an increased level of entitlement and will act more selfishly on the assignment task. To avoid confusion, we will call this replication condition the past victimization condition and the original condition the future victimization condition. All forms given to participants in the second experiment can be viewed in Appendix B of this paper.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The participants were Introduction to Psychology undergraduates at the College of William and Mary who were completing the study for course credit. Participants were randomly assigned to the future victimization condition, the past victimization condition, or the boredom

condition. A total of  $N = 91$  participants signed up for the study, and this group of participants was made up of 46.2% females and 53.8% males, with an average age of  $M = 18.84$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ .

### **Materials and Procedure**

The study was conducted one participant at a time to eliminate the social pressure caused by the participants' interaction in Experiment 1. After completing the consent form, participants were given a packet including the short essay forms, an entitlement questionnaire, a brief version of the positive and negative affect schedule (PANAS), and an assignment form. Participants were given verbal instructions by the research assistant in addition to the written prompts on each page of the packet. After completing the essays and questionnaires within the packet, the participants were given verbal instructions about their choice between two tasks and were asked to make an assignment decision on the form.

**Short essays.** As in Experiment 1, the first essay prompt asked participants to describe their morning routine in order to disguise the actual manipulations and predictions of the study. Participants in all three conditions wrote on this topic for their first essay. In Experiment 2, participants were asked to think for one minute about the essay topic before starting to write. The research assistant timed them and told them when to begin. Participants were also asked to continue writing on the essay topic for four minutes until the research assistant told them to stop. These time constraints were put in place to more closely control the amount of time participants spent thinking and writing and to ensure that the events were highly salient by the end of the task.

After writing the first essay, participants were asked to answer three questions along a 9-point Likert scale about how rushed, tired, and anxious they usually feel during a typical morning, as in Experiment 1. However, in Experiment 2, a fourth question was added to the post-



essay response questionnaires asking participants how thinking about their morning routine influences their current mood. Participants responded on a 9-point scale from “1 – has no effect” to “9 – substantially worsens current mood.” This measure was included to more closely replicate Boven and Ashworth (2007), which focused on how imagining events in the past and the future influences individuals’ *current* moods.

The topic of the second essay, the experimental manipulation, differed in each of the three conditions. In the future victimization condition, participants were asked to think about an unfair event that might happen to them in the near future. In the boredom condition, participants were asked to think about a boring event that might happen to them in the near future. In the past victimization condition, participants were asked to think about a time in the past when they experienced an unfair situation. The same time constraints were employed on the second essay task, with one minute spent thinking of an applicable event and four minutes spent writing about the event and their reactions to it.

After writing the second essay, participants were asked to indicate on a 9-point scale how wronged, bored, and frustrated they expected to feel if the event happened (future victimization condition and boredom condition) or remembered feeling when the event happened (past victimization condition). A fourth question on each of the second essay response questionnaires asked participants to indicate on a 9-point scale what effect thinking about the event had on their current mood. It was hypothesized that the short essay portion in the future and past victimization conditions, but not in the boredom condition, would activate the participants’ entitlement mindset. In addition, it was hypothesized that thinking about the future unfair event would worsen participants’ moods more than thinking about the past unfair event.

**Entitlement questionnaire.** After completing the short essay task, participants were asked to complete a 35-item “personality questionnaire” that included nine items measuring their current entitlement mindset and 26 filler items regarding basic personality traits. As opposed to the four-item entitlement scale used in the first experiment, the second experiment used the more reliable nine-item Psychological Entitlement Scale developed by Campbell et al. (2004). The nine entitlement items were worded as follows: “I honestly feel I’m just more deserving than others.” “Great things should come to me,” “If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the first lifeboat,” “I demand the best because I’m worth it,” “I do not necessarily deserve special treatment,” (Reverse-scored), “I deserve more things in my life,” “People like me deserve an extra break now and then,” “Things should go my way,” “I feel entitled to more of everything.” The 26 filler questions were written by the researcher to sound like typical personality test items and were added to disguise what the questionnaire was truly measuring. All items were answered on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The mean of these nine entitlement items were recorded as each participant’s overall entitlement score.

**Brief PANAS.** Next the participants were asked to complete a brief version of the positive and negative affect schedule (Watson, Clark, and Tellegen, 1988). Participants were asked to indicate how much on a scale of 1 (very slightly or not at all) to 5 (extremely) they were currently experiencing ten positive (e.g. excited, alert) and ten negative (e.g. ashamed, nervous) affective states. As in the first experiment, the Brief PANAS has been included measure to control for the possibility that negative affective state could be the cause of mood-improving unselfish behavior in the assignment task for all participants, regardless of condition. In addition to the 20 items included on the Brief PANAS, the items “bored,” “frustrated,” and “wronged” were added and dispersed among the other emotions. These items were included to test the

prediction derived from Boven et al. (2007) that thinking about a future event would result in the individual experiencing in the present the emotions he or she would anticipate feeling in the future if the event were actually happening.

**Self-Other assignment task.** In order to eliminate interaction between participants, participants were run one at a time, thus controlling for the confounding variable of social pressure in the first experiment. To account for this, the cover story about the assignment task had to be altered slightly. As in the first experiment, participants were told that they were being offered a choice between two tasks to complete for the final part of their participation in the study. The research assistants explained that each participant only had to complete one of the tasks, but that the researchers wanted an equal number of people to complete each task. Therefore only the odd-numbered participants would get to choose their task and the even-numbered participants would be required to do whichever task was rejected by the odd-numbered participant before them. To make this cover story more believable, an odd number was handwritten in pen in the upper corner of the front page of each participant packet. To lessen participants' feelings of accountability for their decisions, they were assured by the research assistant that the even-numbered participant in the following time slot would not be informed that their task assignment was made by a previous participant and that they would be told the assignment was made by random chance. In reality, all participants were given the chance to make an assignment decision.

The two tasks were described in the same way as in the first experiment, with a short film clip task as the more-desirable task and a longer essay task as the less-desirable task. Participants were provided with a coin and were told they could use it if they wished to make an unbiased heads-or-tails decision. They were asked to signify their assignment choice and whether they

used the coin to make their decision by filling out the Assignment Form. The research assistant stepped out of the room while participants made their decisions to lessen any social pressures they might feel by being observed.

### Results

The participants were randomly assigned to condition, resulting in 29 participants in the boredom condition, 32 in the future victimization condition, and 30 in the past victimization condition.

**Manipulation checks.** Preliminary tests were run to ensure that participants in the boredom condition wrote about an event they would find boring but not unfair and participants in the future and past victimization conditions wrote about an event they would find unfair but not boring. The results of these manipulation checks are presented in Table 1.

As predicted, those in the future and past victimization conditions reported that the event they wrote about would make them feel more wronged (future victimization condition) or had made them feel more wronged (past victimization condition) than did those in the boredom condition. A one-way analysis of variance showed that the assigned essay topic had a significant effect on the degree to which participants expected to feel wronged if the event they wrote about happened ( $p < .001$ ). Tukey post-hoc comparisons among the three conditions indicated that those in the future victimization condition predicted significantly higher feelings of being wronged if they experienced their event than did the boredom condition ( $p < .001$ ). Similarly, there was a significant difference in remembered feeling of being wronged in the past victimization group and predicted feeling of being wronged in the boredom group ( $p < .001$ ). In line with the intended manipulation, there was not a significant difference in reported

expectation/memory of feeling wronged between the future victimization group and the past victimization group ( $p < .442$ ).

With regards to the frustrated feeling that accompanies unfair events, the events written about by the future and past victimization groups were expected to/remembered to bring up more feelings of frustration than were the events written about by the boredom group. An analysis of variance revealed a significant difference among the three conditions ( $p < .001$ ). Post-hoc tests indicated that the significant differences were between the boredom condition and the future victimization condition ( $p < .001$ ) and between the boredom condition and the past victimization condition ( $p = .007$ ), such that those in the future and past victimization condition reported that they expected to feel/remembered feeling significantly more frustrated by the event they wrote about in their essay than did those in the boredom condition. There was no significant difference between the two victimization conditions in reported feelings of frustration ( $p = .785$ ).

In response to the question of how bored participants expected/remembered the event they wrote about to make them feel, those in the boredom condition gave their events higher ratings of associated boredom than did those in the future victimization condition and the past victimization condition. This difference was significant both when comparing the boredom and future victimization conditions ( $p < .001$ ) and when comparing the boredom and past victimization conditions ( $p < .001$ ), showing that those in the boredom condition associated the feeling of boredom with their event more strongly than did those in the victimization groups. Again, the future and past victimization conditions did not differ significantly in predicted/recalled feelings of boredom ( $p = .104$ ).

These results indicate that the essay manipulation was successful in that those who were asked to write about a past or future unfair event indicated having felt/expecting to feel more

frustrated and wronged when/if the event transpired than did those who wrote about a future boring event. Conversely, those who were asked to write about a possible boring event expected that this event would make them feel more bored than did those who wrote about a past or future unfair event.

**Entitlement scores.** The reliability of the nine items in the Psychological Entitlement Scale was tested, resulting in a Cronbach's alpha of .88, which is generally considered a reliable score. The researchers averaged the entitlement item responses to give each participant an overall entitlement score between 1 (lowest possible entitlement score) and 9 (highest possible entitlement score). According to a one-way analysis of variance, the difference in the entitlement scores between those in the boredom condition ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 0.97$ ), those in the future victimization condition ( $M = 3.26$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ), and those in the past victimization condition ( $M = 3.01$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ) did not reach significance ( $F(2, 88) = .537$ ,  $p = .592$ ) (see Figure 4).

**Current "bored," "frustrated," and "wronged" feelings.** Participants' current feelings of being "bored," "frustrated," and "wronged" did not differ based on their essay topic. These results are presented in Table 2.

Contrary to the hypothesis that those who anticipated a future victimizing event would experience stronger feelings of frustration and being wronged, the future victimization, past victimization, and boredom conditions did not differ in their reported current experiences of these emotions. The three essay topics failed to elicit differences in currently-felt emotions among the groups.

**Task assignment.** As represented in Figure 5, The groups did not differ in their overall likelihood of assigning themselves (as opposed to assigning the other participant) to the more desirable film-clip task. 25 out of 29 (86.21%) in the boredom condition, 23 out of 32 (71.88%)

in the future victimization condition, and 20 out of 30 (66.67%) in the past victimization condition assigned themselves to the film-clip task, and the difference in assignment choice between the groups was not significant ( $F(2, 88) = 1.60, p = .212$ ).

**Coin flipping.** In response to the question asking whether they used a coin flip to make their assignment decision, 15 out of 29 (51.72%) in the boredom condition, 10 out of 32 (31.25%) in the future victimization condition, and 8 out of 30 (26.67%) of those in the past victimization condition reported that they flipped the coin. The groups did not significantly differ in their likelihood to report having flipped the coin ( $F(2, 88) = 2.31, p = .115$ ).

One-sample t-tests were used to see if any group's self-other assignment choices made after having reported flipping the coin differed significantly from the 50-50 split that would be expected from true coin flips. Of the 15 participants in the boredom condition who reported flipping the coin, 14 assigned themselves to the film-clip task, did differ significantly from the 7.5 that random chance would have predicted ( $t(15) = 6.50, p < .001$ ). Of the 10 participants in the future victimization condition who reported using the coin, 7 assigned themselves to the film-clip task, which did not differ significantly from the 5 that was predicted by chance ( $t(10) = 1.31, p = .228$ ). Of the 8 participants in the past victimization condition who reported flipping the coin to make their decision, 5 assigned themselves to the film-clip task, which did not differ significantly from the 4 that was predicted by chance ( $t(8) = .68, p = .523$ ).

**PANAS scores.** Both the ten-item positive affect scale ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and the ten-item negative affect scale ( $\alpha = .79$ ) were found to be highly reliable. The ten positive affect items were averaged to create a mean positive affect score for each participant, and the ten negative affect items were averaged to create a mean negative affect score for each participant. The comparisons of these PANAS scores by condition are presented in Table 3.

The positive affect of those in the boredom condition, the future victimization condition, and the past victimization condition did not differ significantly as a function of condition. Likewise, the groups did not differ in their negative affect, with the boredom group, the future victimization group, and the past victimization group having significantly equivalent negative affect scores.

Positive and negative affect did not affect self-other task assignment choices. Those who assigned themselves to the film-clip task did not have significantly different reported positive affect ( $M = 2.40$ ,  $SD = 0.76$ ) than those who assigned the other participant to the film-clip task ( $M = 2.43$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ) ( $t(91) = 0.20$ ,  $p = .844$ ). However, those who assigned themselves to the film-clip task did differ significantly in their reported negative affect ( $M = 1.55$ ,  $SD = 0.53$ ) when compared to those who assigned the other participant to the film-clip task ( $M = 1.28$ ,  $SD = 0.30$ ) ( $t(91) = -2.32$ ,  $p = .0231$ ).

### **Discussion**

Despite efforts to match this study's methodology to that of previous research by running participants one at a time and modifying some sections of the questionnaire packet, the second experiment still failed to produce the main effects that were hypothesized to occur. Writing about a past or future unfair event was not shown to activate the entitlement mindset, as there was no difference in the entitlement scores of those in the boredom condition and those in the two victimization conditions. The essay task manipulation also failed to affect participants' decisions about whether to act selfishly or unselfishly, since neither task assignment nor coin flipping varied by condition. Furthermore, contrary the predicted effect, the three groups did not differ in



their current feelings of frustration, being wronged, and boredom, despite having reflected and written about either victimizing or boring events.

There was insufficient evidence to confirm the hypotheses specific to this paper, but the results also failed to replicate the effects demonstrated in Zitek et al. (2010) and Boven et al. (2007). Despite attentive replication of the wording and procedure of these experiments by including a past victimization condition (replicating Zitek et al. (2010)) and by asking groups who had completed a retrospective or anticipatory exercise about their current emotions (replicating Boven et al. (2007)), the previously-demonstrated effects did not reach significance. This could have been due to a difference in the sample of participants between those studies and the present study, but since both of the previous studies recruited undergraduate students to participate in the majority of their experiments, it seems unlikely that the undergraduate sample used in this study differed vastly on any important factors. Therefore it remains to be determined why the findings published in these other papers could not be replicated here.

Those who assigned themselves to the film clip task tended to have higher negative affect scores than those who assigned the other participant to the more desirable task. This result contradicts the effect that would be predicted by the negative-state relief model; namely, that people will work to restore their good mood when experiencing a negative affective state. So despite the fact that the three groups did not differ in their decision-making behavior, an effect which would be predicted by the negative-state relief model, the model is not supported by the fact that those who had the most severe cases of negative affect were the least likely to relieve it by granting the other participant the more desirable task.

### Conclusion

The main hypothesis derived from the victim entitlement model, that thinking about a future victimizing event would increase one's entitlement mindset which would in turn lead to selfish behavior, was not supported by the results of these two experiments. The alternate hypothesis that people would seek to relieve the negative affective state caused by thinking about a victimizing or boring occurrence also lacked support from the data. It seems that the previously demonstrated effect of anticipation evoking more powerful feelings than retrospection does not apply to the anticipation of unfair occurrences and the evocation of feelings of frustration and being wronged. These results also indicate that the process of entitlement causing selfish behavior in victims does not generalize to individuals thinking about a future victimizing event that they may experience. However, since the original effect was not able to be replicated in the present study, it is possible that there was some difference in this study's sample or methodology that was overlooked.

Great care was taken to match the methodology of this study as closely as possible to that of Zitek et al. (2010), so any methodological discrepancies would be very minor. The failure to replicate the phenomenon of victims' entitlement to behave selfishly despite these efforts to imitate the previous method suggests a lack of robustness in the effect found by Zitek et al. (2010). If the phenomenon cannot be replicated or generalized upon at all, it calls into question the effect's very existence. Zitek et al. ran three experiments in their paper, all of which confirmed the hypotheses derived from the victim entitlement model. The present study tested for two generalizations of the victim entitlement model and one direct replication of it and found none of the predicted results to be significant. After extensive review of the literature, no other studies that confirm or deny the effects reported in Zitek et al. (2010) can be found. The lack of

significant results in this study does not discount the many significant effects demonstrated by Zitek et al., but it does suggest that if the phenomenon of victim entitlement to behave selfishly does exist, it is a feeble, fleeting effect that can easily be wiped out by small changes to the participants' surroundings and situation.

The victim entitlement model put forth by Zitek et al. has only been cited in a few other studies, none of which have attempted to replicate its findings. Before attempting to expand on the effect, future research should set forth to better understand the original phenomenon and the factors that cause it to happen. Was this study's inability to replicate the findings in Zitek et al. (2010) simply a fluke? Or is there some factor that has been left unaccounted for by both Zitek et al. (2010) and the present paper? More controlled replications of the study would need to be done in order to confirm or deny these possibilities; but as it stands, the validity of the theory that people who feel victimized will experience an increased state of entitlement and will be more likely to behave selfishly is uncertain. As more research is done on the factors that cause people to make selfish and unselfish decisions, the links between victimization, entitlement, and selfishness will become more clear.

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**Appendix A: Participant Forms for Experiment 1**

Demographic Information

Please specify your age:

Please specify your gender:

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

Short Essay Form 1 – Morning Routine

Please write a paragraph or two describing your daily morning routine. Include details about what kinds of activities your morning usually consists of and comment on what kinds of emotions you typically feel during the morning.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop. After writing, stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.



## Short Essay 1 Response Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in regards to the event you just described.

How rushed do you typically feel during your morning routine? Please indicate your answer by circling a number from 1 to 7.

- 1 – not at all rushed
- 2
- 3
- 4 – moderately rushed
- 5
- 6
- 7 – very rushed

How tired do you typically feel during your morning routine? Please indicate your answer by circling a number from 1 to 7.

- 1 – not at all tired
- 2
- 3
- 4 – moderately tired
- 5
- 6
- 7 – very tired

How anxious do you typically feel during your morning routine? Please indicate your answer by circling a number from 1 to 7.

- 1 – not at all anxious
- 2
- 3
- 4 – moderately anxious
- 5
- 6
- 7 – very anxious

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

Short Essay Form 2 – Boring Event

Please write a paragraph or two describing the boring scenario you think you are likely to encounter in the **future**. Include details about why the event would be boring, and comment on what your emotions and responses to this event might be.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop. After writing, stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

Short Essay Form 2 – Unfair Event

Please write a paragraph or two describing an unfair scenario you think you are likely to encounter in the **future**. Include details about why the event would be unfair, and comment on what your emotions and responses to this event might be.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop. After writing, stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

## Short Essay 2 Response Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in regards to the event you just described.

How wronged would you expect to feel if this event did take place? Please indicate your answer by circling a number from 1 to 7.

1 – not at all wronged

2

3

4 – moderately wronged

5

6

7 – very wronged

How bored would you expect to feel if this event did take place? Please indicate your answer by circling a number from 1 to 7.

1 – not at all bored

2

3

4 – moderately bored

5

6

7 – very bored

How frustrated would you expect to feel if this event did take place? Please indicate your answer by circling a number from 1 to 7.

1 – not at all frustrated

2

3

4 – moderately frustrated

5

6

7 – very frustrated

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

## Personality Questionnaire

Please evaluate to what degree these statements match your personality and respond by circling a number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

1. I would rather socialize than read a book alone. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. I prefer to keep a standard schedule from day to day. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I am entitled not to suffer too much. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. I am usually on time to meetings and appointments. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. I consider myself very willing to try new foods. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I often worry about my future. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. I can usually think of creative solutions to problems. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. I deserve good things in my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. I love being the center of attention. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. I like to do things efficiently. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. I am quick to trust other people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I tend to be disorganized. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. I deserve an extra break now and then. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. I can easily strike up a conversation with a stranger. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. I know how to handle stress well. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. I will not give up until the task is finished. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
17. I should not have to inconvenience myself for others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. I only trust people I have known for a long time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. I would describe myself as serious and determined. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. I tend to make decisions rather impulsively. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

After completing this questionnaire, turn the page and complete the next questionnaire.

## PANAS

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way **right now** at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers.

1 – very slightly or not at all

2 – a little

3 – moderately

4 – quite a bit

5 – extremely

- \_\_\_\_\_ interested
- \_\_\_\_\_ distressed
- \_\_\_\_\_ excited
- \_\_\_\_\_ upset
- \_\_\_\_\_ strong
- \_\_\_\_\_ guilty
- \_\_\_\_\_ scared
- \_\_\_\_\_ hostile
- \_\_\_\_\_ enthusiastic
- \_\_\_\_\_ proud
- \_\_\_\_\_ irritable
- \_\_\_\_\_ alert
- \_\_\_\_\_ ashamed
- \_\_\_\_\_ inspired
- \_\_\_\_\_ nervous
- \_\_\_\_\_ determined
- \_\_\_\_\_ attentive
- \_\_\_\_\_ jittery
- \_\_\_\_\_ active
- \_\_\_\_\_ afraid

After completing this scale, please close your questionnaire packet and wait for further instructions from the researcher.

## Assignment Form

You have been selected to be the participant who gets to assign yourself and the other participant to the different tasks for the next experiment. The decisions you make on this form will determine which tasks each of you will be doing for the second experiment. Remember that only one person may complete each task, so you must assign yourself and the other participant to different tasks.

Did you flip the coin so that your decision would be unbiased? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Who do you assign to the film clip task? Myself \_\_\_ Other participant \_\_\_

Who do you assign to the essay-writing task? Myself \_\_\_ Other participant \_\_\_

**Appendix B: Participant Forms for Experiment 2**

Demographic Information

Please specify your age:

Please specify your gender:

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.



### Short Essay Form 1 – Morning Routine

Take a few minutes to think about what your morning routine is like. Think about the kinds of activities your morning usually consists of and the emotions you typically feel during the morning. Try to really get a sense of what your mornings are like. Then, when the researcher tells you, begin writing a paragraph or two about what your morning routine is like.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop.

## Short Essay 1 Response Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in regards to the event you just described. Indicate your answers by circling a number from 1 to 9.

What is the overall level of unpleasantness that you remember experiencing during your last morning routine?

1 – no unpleasantness

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme unpleasantness

What is the overall level of tiredness that you remember experiencing during your last morning routine?

1 – no tiredness

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme tiredness

Go on to the next page.

What is the overall level of anxiousness that you remember experiencing during your last morning routine?

1 – no anxiousness

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme anxiousness

When you think about your morning routine, how does it make you feel right now? That is, how does the act of thinking about your morning routine influence your current mood?

1 – has no effect

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – substantially worsens current mood

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

### Short Essay Form 2 – Future Unfair Event

Take a few minutes to think about an unfair event that might happen to you in the near future. It might help to think about some events coming up on your social and academic schedule and think of how something could go wrong through no fault of your own. Think about how it would affect your life if this happened, and try to really get a sense of how it would make you feel. Then, when the researcher tells you, begin writing a paragraph or two describing the possible unfair event and how it would make you feel.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop.

## Short Essay Form 2 – Future Boring Event

Take a few minutes to think about a boring event that might happen to you in the near future. It might help to think about some events coming up on your social and academic schedule and think of how something will feel especially boring. Think about what your responses might be to this boring event, and try to really get a sense of how it would make you feel. Then, when the researcher tells you, begin writing a paragraph or two describing the possible boring event and how it would make you feel.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop.

Short Essay 2 Future Events Response Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in regards to the event you just described. Indicate your answers by circling a number from 1 to 9.

How wronged would you expect to feel if this event actually happened?

1 – not at all wronged

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extremely wronged

What is the overall level of boredom that you would expect to feel if this event actually happened?

1 – no boredom

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme boredom

Go on to the next page.

What is the overall level of frustration that you would expect to feel if this event actually happened?

1 – no frustration

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme frustration

When you think about the possibility of this event actually happening, how does it make you feel right now? That is, how does the act of thinking about this event influence your current mood?

1 – has no effect

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – substantially worsens current mood

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

Short Essay Form 2 – Past Unfair Event

Take a few minutes to think about a time in the past when your life seemed unfair. Perhaps you felt wronged or slighted by someone, for example. Think about how the event affected you, and try to really get a sense of how it made you feel. Then, when the researcher tells you, begin writing a paragraph or two describing the unfair event and how it made you feel.

Please keep writing for 4 minutes until the researcher tells you to stop.



Short Essay 2 Past Event Response Questionnaire

Please answer the following questions in regards to the event you just described. Indicate your answers by circling a number from 1 to 9.

How wronged do you remember feeling when this event happened?

1 – not at all wronged

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extremely wronged

What was the overall level of boredom that you remember feeling when this event happened?

1 – no boredom

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme boredom

Go on to the next page.

What is the overall level of frustration that you remember feeling when this event happened?

1 – no frustration

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – extreme frustration

When you think about this event, how does it make you feel right now? That is, how does the act of thinking about this event influence your current mood?

1 – has no effect

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9 – substantially worsens current mood

Stop and wait for instructions before going to the next page.

## Personality Questionnaire

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

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

1. I feel that others can never fully understand me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. I prefer to keep a standard schedule from day to day. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. Other people find me easy to get along with. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. I consider myself very willing to try new foods. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I often worry about my future. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. Great things should come to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. I'm good at thinking of creative solutions to problems. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
9. I love being the center of attention. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
10. I like to do things efficiently. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
11. If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the first lifeboat. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
12. I tend to be disorganized. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
13. To me, my family is ultimately more important than my friends. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
14. I know how to handle stress well. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
15. I demand the best because I'm worth it. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
16. I will not give up until the task is finished. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Go on to the next page.

17. If I won the lottery, I would use some of my winnings to travel. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
18. I only trust people I have known for a long time. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
19. I do not necessarily deserve special treatment. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
20. I tend to make decisions rather impulsively. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
21. I am usually on time to meetings and appointments. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
22. I am quick to trust other people. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
23. I deserve more things in my life. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
24. When I meet a stranger, I can easily strike up a conversation. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
25. I would describe myself as serious and determined. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
26. Problems always work out okay in the end. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
27. People like me deserve an extra break now and then. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
28. I can only concentrate on work when the room is silent. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
29. Things should go my way. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
30. I have trouble staying within my spending budget. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
31. I'd rather read a book than attend a party. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
32. I am easily overwhelmed by all that is expected of me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
33. I feel entitled to more of everything. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
34. I am deeply sensitive to the feelings of others. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
35. It is important to me that I keep up-to-date with the national news. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

After completing this questionnaire, turn the page and complete the next questionnaire.

## PANAS

This scale consists of a number of words that describe different feelings and emotions. Read each item and then mark the appropriate answer in the space next to that word. Indicate to what extent you feel this way **right now** at the present moment. Use the following scale to record your answers:

1 – very slightly or not at all

2 – a little

3 – moderately

4 – quite a bit

5 – extremely

\_\_\_\_\_ interested

\_\_\_\_\_ distressed

\_\_\_\_\_ excited

\_\_\_\_\_ upset

\_\_\_\_\_ bored

\_\_\_\_\_ strong

\_\_\_\_\_ guilty

\_\_\_\_\_ scared

\_\_\_\_\_ hostile

\_\_\_\_\_ enthusiastic

\_\_\_\_\_ frustrated

\_\_\_\_\_ proud

\_\_\_\_\_ irritable

\_\_\_\_\_ alert

\_\_\_\_\_ wronged

\_\_\_\_\_ ashamed

\_\_\_\_\_ inspired

\_\_\_\_\_ nervous

\_\_\_\_\_ determined

\_\_\_\_\_ attentive

\_\_\_\_\_ jittery

\_\_\_\_\_ active

\_\_\_\_\_ afraid

After completing this scale, please wait for further instructions from the researcher.

## Assignment Form

Because you are an odd-numbered participant, you get to be the one who chooses which task you want to do next. Whichever task you do not choose will be left to the next participant to do. The next participant will be told he or she was assigned to the task by random chance. You can flip a coin if you want to make a fairer decision.

Did you flip the coin so that your decision would be unbiased? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Who do you assign to the film clip task? Myself \_\_\_ Other participant \_\_\_

Who do you assign to the essay-writing task? Myself \_\_\_ Other participant \_\_\_

## Tables

Table 1

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Simple Analysis of Variance Effects for Manipulation Checks of Anticipated/Remembered Feelings Related to Second Essay Topic*

Conditon	How Wronged?	How Frustrated?	How Bored?
Future Victimization	$M = 6.69, SD = 1.89$	$M = 7.88, SD = 1.26$	$M = 3.47, SD = 2.79$
Past Victimization	$M = 7.27, SD = 1.48$	$M = 7.60, SD = 1.61$	$M = 2.40, SD = 1.71$
Future Boredom	$M = 3.17, SD = 2.14$	$M = 6.31, SD = 1.89$	$M = 7.44, SD = 1.18$
Simple Effects	$F(2, 88) = 42.10$ $p < .001$	$F(2, 88) = 8.15$ $p < .001$	$F(2, 88) = 50.12$ $p < .001$

Table 2

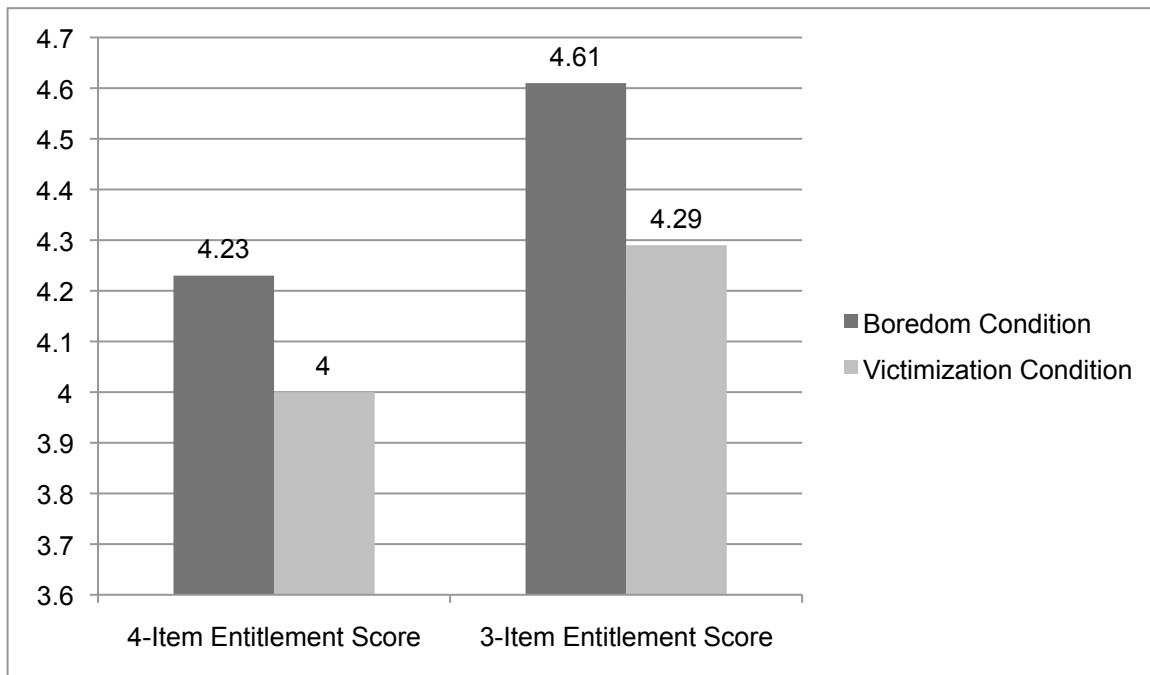
*Means, Standard Deviations, and Simple Analysis of Variance Effects for Currently-Felt “Bored,” “Wronged,” and “Frustrated” Emotions*

Condition	Currently Wronged	Currently Frustrated	Currently Bored
Future Victimization	$M = 2.03, SD = 1.23$	$M = 1.69, SD = 1.23$	$M = 2.25, SD = 1.14$
Past Victimization	$M = 1.67, SD = 0.80$	$M = 1.70, SD = 1.24$	$M = 2.37, SD = 1.07$
Future Boredom	$M = 1.86, SD = 1.09$	$M = 1.24, SD = 0.79$	$M = 2.41, SD = 0.87$
Simple Effects	$F(2, 88) = 0.91$ $p = .208$	$F(2, 88) = 1.64$ $p = .413$	$F(2, 88) = 0.21$ $p = .827$

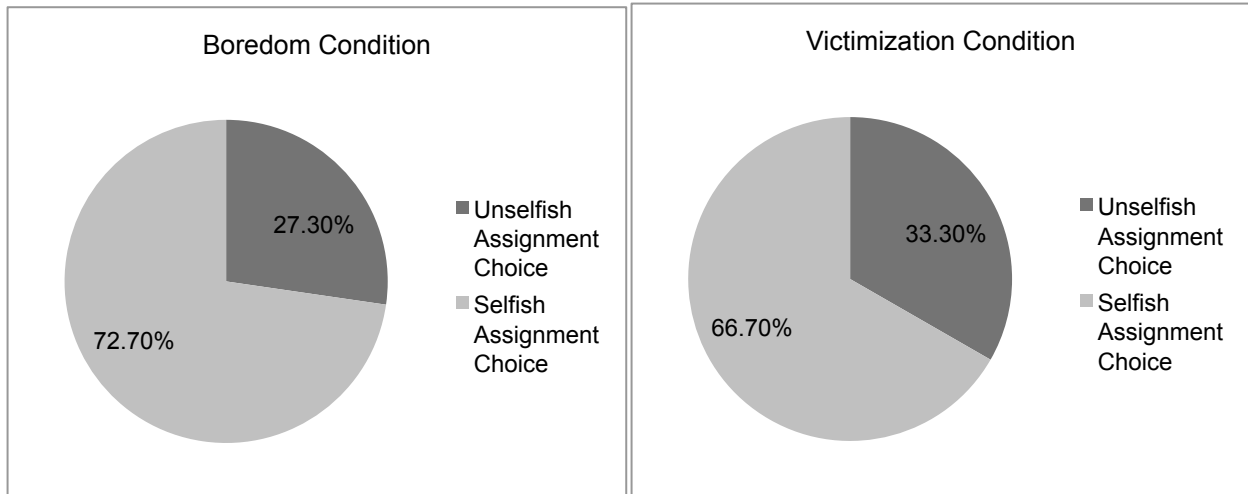


Table 3		
<i>Means, Standard Deviations, and Simple Analysis of Variance Effects for Positive Affect Score and Negative Affect Score</i>		
Condition	Positive Affect Score	Negative Affect Score
Future Victimization	$M = 2.43, SD = 0.80$	$M = 1.49, SD = 0.53$
Past Victimization	$M = 2.36, SD = 0.80$	$M = 1.47, SD = 0.43$
Future Boredom	$M = 2.43, SD = 0.75$	$M = 1.48, SD = 0.54$
Simple Effects	$F(2, 88) = 0.09$ $p = .918$	$F(2, 88) = 0.01$ $p = .995$

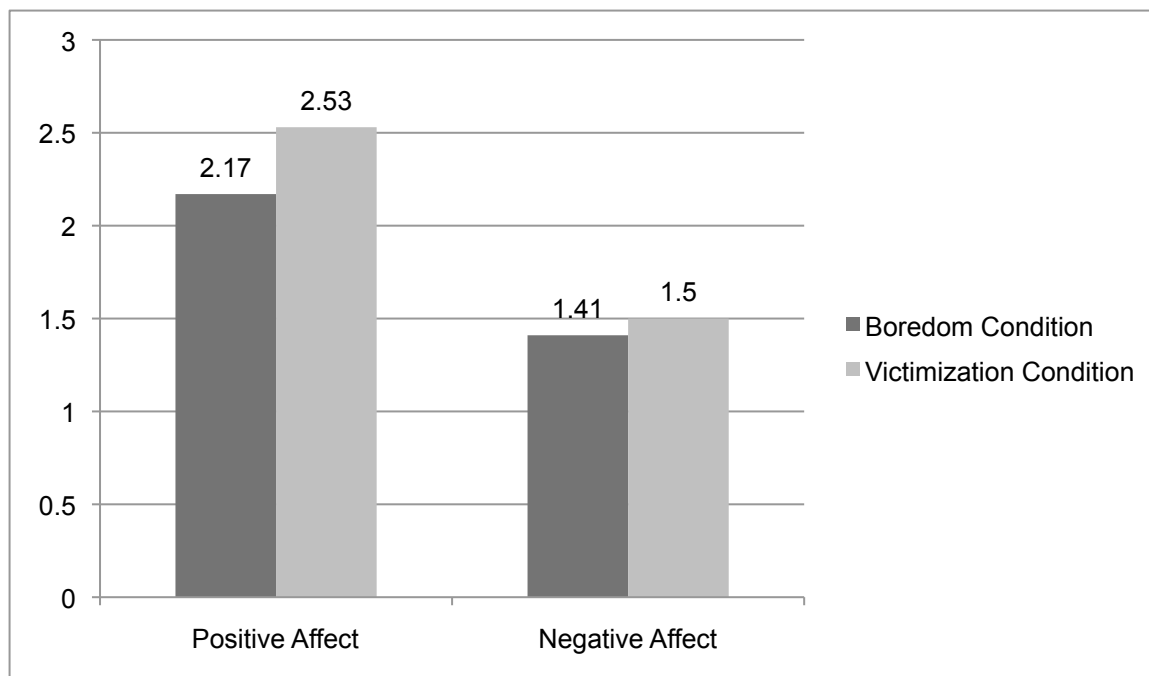
## Figures



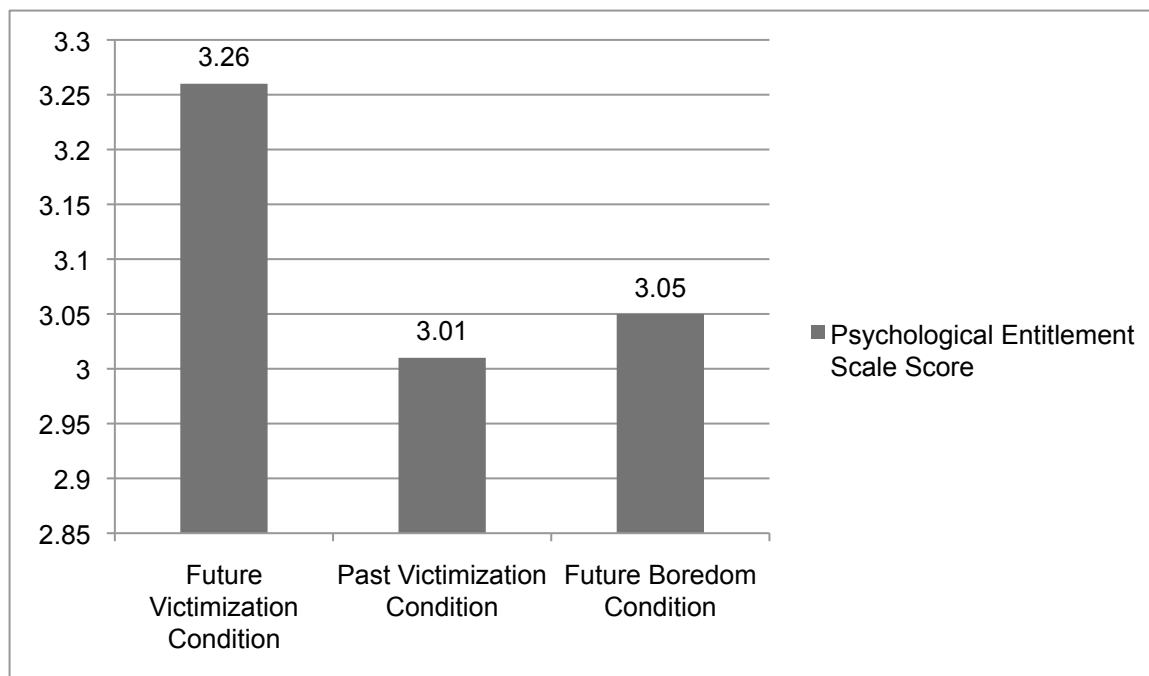
*Figure 1.* Mean 4-item and 3-item entitlement scores between the boredom condition and the victimization conditions.



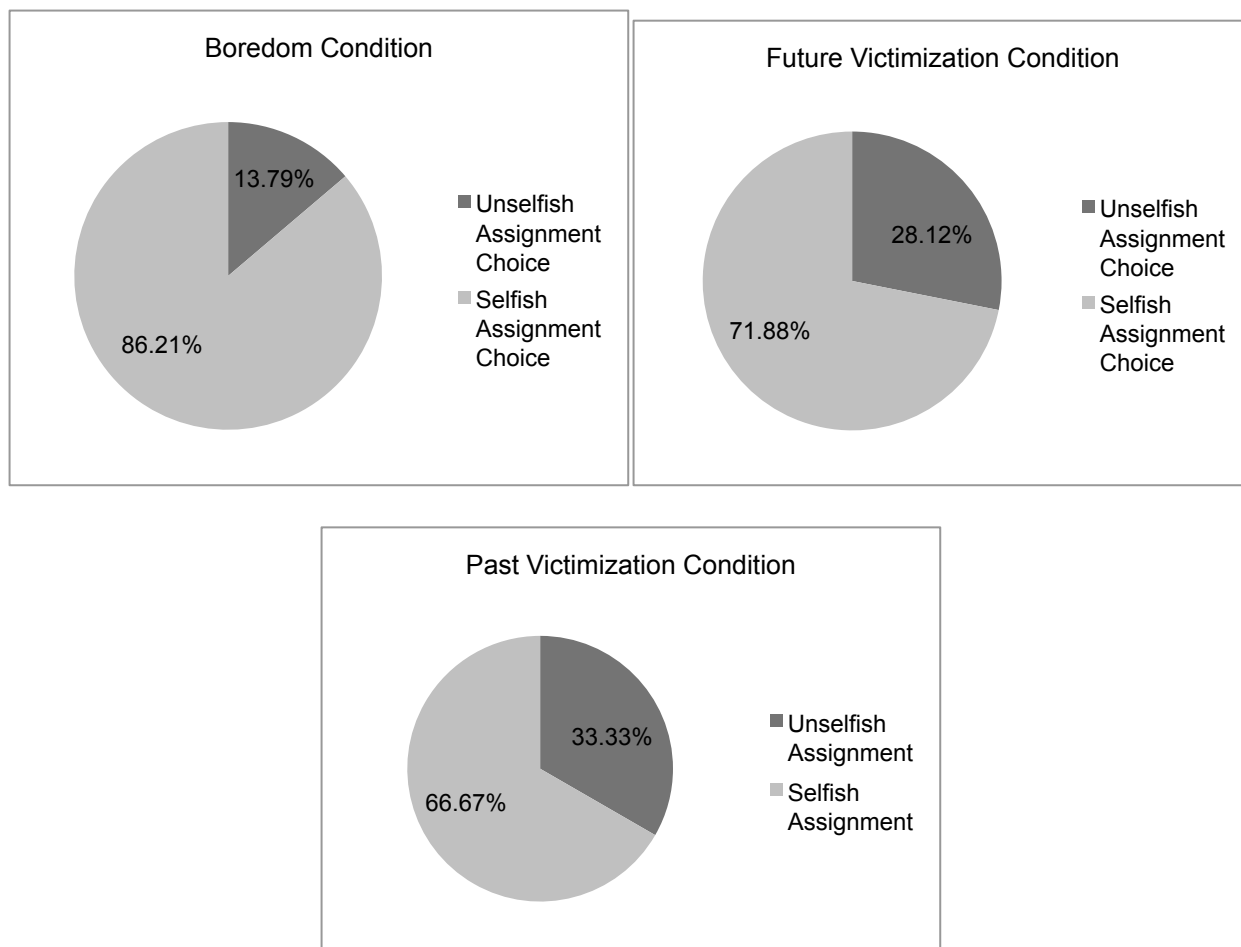
*Figure 2.* Assignment choice between the boredom condition and the victimization condition.



*Figure 3.* Mean positive and negative affect scores between the boredom condition and the victimization condition.



*Figure 4.* Mean Psychological Entitlement Scale scores among the future victimization, past victimization, and boredom conditions.



*Figure 5.* Assignment choice between the boredom condition, the future victimization condition, and the past victimization condition.