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### **It's a privilege, not an entitlement: Attributions of advantage and perceived deservingness distinguish feelings of privilege and entitlement**

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IT'S A PRIVILEGE, NOT AN ENTITLEMENT:  
ATTRIBUTIONS OF ADVANTAGE AND PERCEIVED  
DESERVINGNESS DISTINGUISH FEELINGS OF  
PRIVILEGE AND ENTITLEMENT

TAI YONG EN AMOS

SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY  
2023

It's a Privilege, not an entitlement: Attributions of Advantage and  
Perceived Deservingness Distinguish Feelings of Privilege and  
Entitlement

Tai Yong En Amos

Submitted to the School of Social Sciences in partial fulfilment of  
the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy in  
Psychology

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Singapore Management University  
2023

I hereby declare that this Master's thesis is my original work  
and it has been written by me in its entirety.

I have duly acknowledged all the sources of information  
which have been used in this thesis.

This Master's thesis has also not been submitted for any degree in  
any university previously.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Amos', is positioned above a horizontal line.

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Tai Yong En Amos

28 June 2023

## Abstract

Having an advantage over others can be seen as a privilege or an entitlement. Drawing on attribution theory, we hypothesized that recipients of relative advantage may perceive it as a privilege or an entitlement based on external or internal attributions of their advantage, respectively. Furthermore, we hypothesized that relative to the external attribution of privilege, the internal attribution of entitlement should subsequently predict stronger beliefs of deservingness, as well as stronger feelings of pride in response to received advantage, but stronger feelings of anger when advantage is denied. Study 1 tested the basic attributional processes tied to privilege and entitlement perceptions using a correlational design. We found that individuals high on self-rated entitlement were more likely to rate the advantages held by entitled people as due to individual qualities (e.g., personally earned, within personal control) and less due to external factors (e.g., their group membership), compared to individuals high on self-rated privilege. Study 2 experimentally manipulated attributions for the advantage of going first before other candidates in an initial round of salary negotiation to examine their causal effects on privilege or entitlement perceptions, and indirect effects on deservingness beliefs and emotional responses. Additionally, all participants' advantages were denied in a second negotiation round. In the initial round, participants led to attribute their advantage to internal reasons (i.e., judged as "top of the pile") reported stronger entitlement whereas those led to attribute their advantage to external reasons (i.e., randomly determined) reported stronger privilege. However, attributions only showed a significant indirect effect on deservingness and anger through entitlement, but not privilege perceptions. The direct and indirect effects of

attributions on deservingness and emotional responses through entitled and privileged perceptions when advantages were denied were mixed. The limitations and implications of our theory are discussed.

*Keywords:* attribution, privilege, entitlement, deservingness

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to start by thanking God for his all-sufficient grace in giving me both the opportunity to enrol in this programme and the strength to see it through. For you know the plans you have for me, plans to prosper me and not to harm me, to give me hope and a future. It is my hope that this path I have tread and will continue to traverse will bring you all due glory and praise.

I would also like to thank my supervisor and mentor, Dr. Jacinth Tan, to whom I look up to with the utmost respect. Thank you for dedicating your time in guiding, teaching, and supporting me in pursuing my research endeavours, first as your research assistant and then as your student. Thank you for the trust you have placed in me working alongside you and the security to confide all matters in you, no matter big or small, throughout the course of my graduate school. I cannot imagine how this experience would have been like without you and I thank you again for giving me the chance to be one of your students.

To my parents and grandparents, the wind beneath my sails and the hand behind my back, thank you for providing for and supporting me throughout my education journey. Thank you for the little things: always inquiring about my research and my studies even when it may make little sense to you and sending me to class on a weekend, so I have more time to sleep in or prepare. Your love and encouragement gave me the motivation to get up each day and strive to attain the educational goals I set before me. I love you all.

To my fellow graduate students, thank you for shaping these two short years to be some of the closest to my heart. Although they were filled with the stresses of course work and deadlines, you have all helped to balance that out with an



equal measure of laughter and alcohol. Even as we part ways and journey our separate paths in academia and industry, both locally and overseas, you will all retain a significant place in my heart for years to come. I will forever look forward to that lost bet and dinner treat that we never got to enjoy.

Finally, to the friends I have made along the way who have supported me in one form or another, thank you for your season of friendship. Regardless of whether our series is renewed, the time that we have shared together and the memories we have made will be cherished and relived when we eventually come round to that promised meetup, long overdue. To God be the glory, the best is yet to be.

## Introduction

Privilege and entitlement are ideas commonly invoked in discussions of social inequalities and social justice. An individual is judged or defined as privileged when they are seen as having unearned advantages, often resulting from some group membership (Anderson, 2021). On the other hand, an individual is judged or defined as entitled when they are seen to demand or expect advantages or special treatment (Campbell et al., 2004). In addition, awareness of privileges enjoyed by some social groups over others are often seen to produce inequalities (Lowery et al., 2007), while a recognition of one's entitlement or basic right to gains or advantages (Feather, 1999, 2003) often motivates actions for social justice. Despite the conceptual distinction between both privilege and entitlement in relation to how advantage is construed, lay discussions and even academic discourses often use both terms as interchangeable in referring to an individual with an advantage over others (e.g., A. Geiger & Jordan, 2014; Anderson, 2021; Black & Stone, 2005; Côté et al., 2021; Golann & Darling-Aduana, 2020; Levitt-Frank & Shoshana, 2021; Ryan et al., 2018).

The conceptual murkiness between privilege and entitlement may result primarily from the lack of a theory articulating where they overlap and importantly, where they differ. The current research aims to provide a theory that distinguishes psychological privilege and entitlement as such. We propose that privilege and entitlement differ fundamentally in their attributions of advantage as well as their consequent appraisals of deservingness. Furthermore, we propose that the distinct attributions and appraisals tied to privilege or

entitlement also predict distinct emotional responses when individuals are either presented or denied an advantage.

A theory that articulates the distinction between privilege and entitlement serves three important contributions. Firstly, it guides our understanding of how feelings of privilege and entitlement manifest and evolve systematically. Secondly, it prevents the conflation of both constructs when discussing and studying issues relating to social inequalities and social justice. Finally, it suggests that individuals who relate to or are aware of being privileged respond to advantages (or the lack of) differently from those who relate to or are aware of being entitled. Thus, addressing issues of privilege or entitlement may involve different approaches that target different beliefs and emotions. Moreover, feelings of privilege and entitlement may predict different responses to policies or initiatives aimed at reducing inequalities stemming from unequal advantages.

### **Attributions of Advantage**

Attributions are about determining causes. Within attribution theory, the internal-external dimension is one key dimension an individual's explanatory style varies on (Gilovich et al., 2018; Hilton et al., 1995; Hilton & Slugoski, 1986; Medcof, 1990). *Internal* or dispositional attributions refer to causes tied to an individual's traits and abilities. *External* or situational attributions refer to causes tied to a person's environment and circumstance. Internal/dispositional attributions often convey a greater sense of choice and controllability, whereas external/situational attributions convey less choice and controllability (Anderson, 1991; Anderson & Deuser, 1993).

We suggest that feelings of privilege and entitlement both reflect beliefs about one's presented or experienced advantage. However, whether the presented or experienced advantage elicits a sense of privilege or entitlement depends on an individual's attribution of their advantage. Specifically, forming more internal or dispositional attributions of one's advantage should predict stronger feelings of entitlement, whereas forming more external or situational attributions of one's advantage should predict stronger feelings of privilege.

### **Internal Attributions Predict Entitlement**

Driven by a desire to maintain a positive view of themselves (Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Moeller et al., 2009; Redford & Ratliff, 2018), entitled individuals attribute success or positive outcomes to themselves or their abilities (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). Studies of narcissism, of which entitlement is often considered a subset, provide further evidence for this relationship. These studies demonstrate the robust effect of self-serving biases and self-enhancement motivations among narcissistic individuals across a wide array of outcome measures from intelligence to task performance (Campbell et al., 2000; Grijalva & Zhang, 2016; Raskin et al., 1991; Stucke, 2003). The similarity in the relationships between entitlement and narcissism with attribution styles further suggests that entitlement may carry the same self-reinforcing nature as narcissism (Baumeister & Vohs, 2001; Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Thus, we expect that individuals who perceive or expect advantages will attribute these advantages to internal or dispositional qualities they possess, nurturing a pervasive sense of entitlement.

Critically, this theorizing is developed based on entitlement defined as an individual difference characterised by an excessive demand or expectations for advantages or special treatment (Campbell et al., 2004). Nonetheless, we note that this is not the only way that entitlement has been defined. Entitlement can also be defined in a legalistic manner as an individual's right in accordance with a formal or informal rule established by a larger group (Feather, 2003). Adopting such a definition, several researchers have sought to make a distinction between *normal* or *healthy* entitlement and *excessive* or *narcissistic* entitlement (Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013; Golann & Darling-Aduana, 2020; Lessard et al., 2011). In the construction of our theory, the definition we have adopted in the current research better represents the latter, more narcissistic form of entitlement. Used in colloquial speech, it is this form of entitlement that is regularly conflated with privilege.

### **External Attributions Predict Privilege**

Comparatively fewer studies have examined the conceptual links between attribution and privilege. Nevertheless, the term 'privilege' is often used in relation to *group membership*, as in white privilege, male privilege, or class privilege. There is some ambiguity regarding whether such group memberships reflect uncontrollable circumstance or controllable traits/abilities. For instance, group memberships tied to race and gender are more clearly uncontrollable and circumstantial, whereas group memberships tied to culture, religion, political orientation or social class, are less inherent and therefore could be less clearly uncontrollable or circumstantial (Bastian & Haslam, 2006; Haslam et al., 2000, 2002; Rothbart & Taylor, 1992). However, privileged advantages remain most salient in the domains of race, gender, and class (Black

& Stone, 2005; McIntosh, 2019; Todd et al., 2022). Even in the case of class-based privilege, some researchers argue that barriers to social mobility are often difficult to overcome through one's effort alone (Lareau, 2003), rendering it more uncontrollable than not. Taken together with the conceptual definition that privilege entails advantage that is unearned and not attributable to one's efforts (implying situational advantage), we theorize that being cued to external/situational attributions is more likely to elicit feelings of privilege.

Based these associations between internal/external attributions and entitlement/privilege, we formulate the first set of hypotheses we aim to test across two studies in the current research:

Hypothesis 1a: Individuals who make more internal/dispositional attributions for advantageous outcomes are more likely to elicit feelings of *entitlement* than individuals who make more external/situational attributions.

Hypothesis 1b: Individuals who make more external/situational attributions for advantageous outcomes are more likely to elicit feelings of *privilege* than individuals who make more internal/dispositional attributions.

### **Deservingness**

Internal versus external attributions of advantage are also likely to impact evaluations and perceptions of one's deservingness of advantage. According to Feather (1999, 2008), judgments of deservingness are made when outcomes are earned as a result of one's actions or qualities. 'Good' outcomes are said to be deserved when they follow from similarly 'good' actions or

qualities (Feather, 2003). Hence, individuals who frequently make internal attributions for advantages (i.e., those that implicate their positive traits or abilities) will be more likely to evaluate these advantages as deserved. Conversely, when an individual can make alternative explanations for the advantageous outcomes they receive beyond their internal traits or efforts, the discounting principle predicts that such internal attributions will be reduced (Kelley, 1973). Thus, individuals who make external attributions for advantages (i.e., those that implicate situational factors) will be less likely to evaluate these advantages as deserved.

Perceptions of deservingness, in turn, have been found to be robustly associated with a sense of entitlement, in line with its conceptual definition (Campbell et al., 2004; de Cremer & van Dijk, 2005). On the other hand, individuals who frequently make external attributions for advantages (i.e., those that implicate one's environment or circumstance) are less likely to evaluate these advantages as deserved, in line with the conceptual definition of privilege (Anderson, 2021; Robinson, 1999). Based on these associations, we formulate the next hypothesis we aim to test that extends from Hypotheses 1a and 1b:

Hypothesis 2: Individuals made to feel more entitled from internal/dispositional attributions for their advantageous outcomes are subsequently likely to feel more deserving of their advantage than individuals made to feel more privileged from external/situational attributions.

## **Emotional Response**

We further posit that states of entitlement and privilege are likely to elicit distinct emotional responses when advantages are presented (as expected) or denied. When expectations with regards to anticipated advantages are met, individuals who feel more entitled and deserving are more likely to respond with more pride than individuals who feel more privileged and less deserving. On the other hand, when such expectations go unmet, individuals who feel more entitled are likely to feel less deserving of such outcomes and are subsequently more likely to respond with anger and demonstrate behaviours aimed at compensating for their lost advantage than individuals who feel more privileged and less deserving.

Pride is often expressed in response to success, although attributions also elicit different forms of pride (Mercadante et al., 2021). Specifically, authentic pride that is characterized by feelings of accomplishment and confidence is often elicited by success due to controllable causes, such as one's effort. On the other hand, hubristic pride that is characterized by arrogance and egoism is often elicited by success due to uncontrollable causes, such as one's talent. Based on our argument so far about the attributions associated with entitlement and privilege, it is possible to reason that authentic pride may be more likely elicited by feelings of entitlement, while hubristic pride may instead be elicited by feelings of privilege. However, we note that the attributions of causes linked to pride (one's effort or talent) both refer to internal or dispositional rather than external or situational factors. Therefore, following from hypotheses 1a and 1b, we reason that relative to feelings of privilege that stems from primarily external or situational causes, feelings of entitlement that



stem from internal attributions should predict stronger feelings of both authentic and hubristic pride than feelings of privilege. This leads to the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: Individuals made to feel more entitled from internal/dispositional attributions for their advantageous outcomes are subsequently likely to feel more authentic and hubristic pride towards their advantage than individuals made to feel more privileged from external/situational attributions.

The previous prediction is made regarding an experienced advantage. We theorize that emotional responses elicited by feelings of entitlement and privilege may be further distinguished when advantage is denied—specifically in terms of anger responses. Studies have consistently demonstrated that when entitled individuals experience outcomes which they perceive undeserved or unfair, they report greater anger and hostility (Feather et al., 2011; Grubbs et al., 2013; Zitek & Jordan, 2021). More generally, entitlement has also been found to be positively associated with measures of anger and hostility at the trait level (Ackerman & Donnellan, 2013; Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Moeller et al., 2009). If indeed entitlement elicits a stronger sense of deservingness for positive outcomes, as posited by hypothesis 2, we propose that denying one's advantage will likely violate entitled individuals' sense of deservingness and predict stronger feelings of anger towards their denied advantage. Conversely, if privilege is elicited by a lower sense of deservingness, denying one's advantage is less likely to violate privileged individuals' sense of deservingness and predict less anger towards denied advantage. This leads to our fourth hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: When denied their advantage, individuals made to feel more entitled are more likely to respond with anger than individuals made to feel more privileged.

Furthermore, feelings of anger elicited by perceived violations of fairness or justice often prompt behaviours to correct or reverse those violations (Goldberg et al., 1999; Lerner et al., 1998). Similarly, we argue that violations of one's deservingness of an outcome is likely to motivate behaviours to restore their denied advantage. Again, following from Hypothesis 2, if sense of deservingness is stronger among those made to feel more entitled than privileged, denying one's advantage is likely to prompt restoration of advantage among entitled rather than privileged individuals. Nevertheless, it is also possible that such feelings of anger may instead mediate feelings of deservingness and subsequent attempts to restore any advantages lost. This is an alternative explanation which we also aim to examine. This leads to our fifth and final hypotheses:

Hypothesis 5a: When denied their advantage, individuals made to feel entitled are more likely to engage in behaviours to compensate for their lost advantage than individuals made to feel privileged.

Hypothesis 5b: The relationship between privilege/entitlement and compensating behaviours will be mediated by feelings of anger.

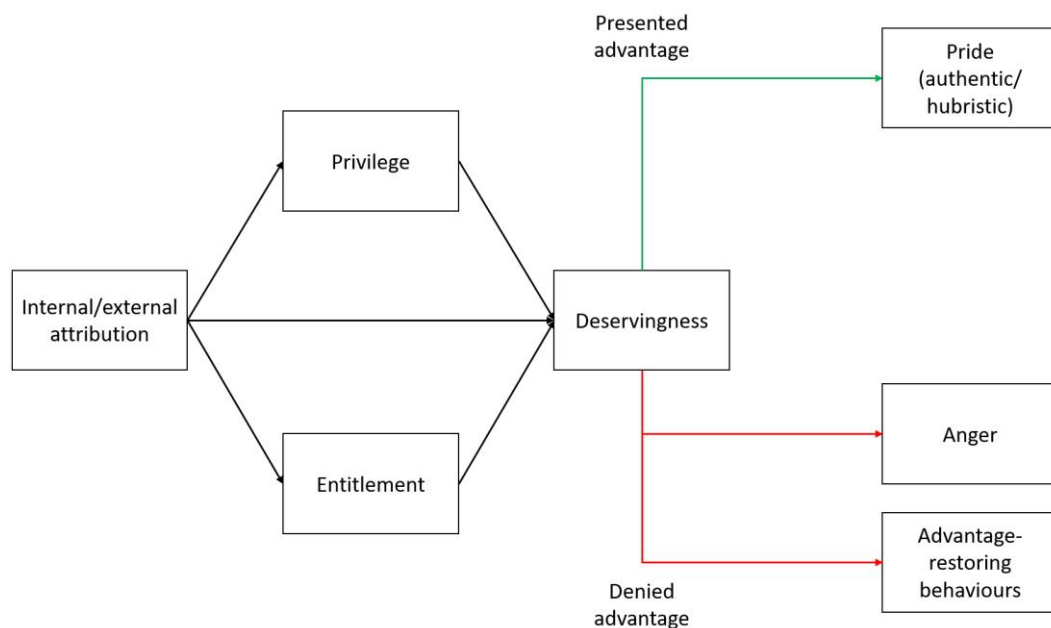
### **The Current Research**

The current research seeks to test our theory of how attributions of advantage and perceived deservingness distinguish feelings of privilege and entitlement, along with how these states of privilege and entitlement predict

distinct emotional responses to presented or denied advantage, in two studies. In Study 1, we explored whether individual differences in feelings of entitlement and privilege are correlationally linked to internal versus external attributions of one's advantage (Hypothesis 1a and 1b) and perceptions of deservingness (Hypothesis 2). Drawing on findings from Study 1, we propose to conduct Study 2, where we induce feelings of entitlement and privilege by experimentally manipulating internal/external attributions of an experienced advantage. This will enable us to test if feelings of entitlement and privilege causally shapes feelings of deservingness (Hypothesis 2) and pride (Hypothesis 3) in response to presented advantage. Furthermore, we also propose to introduce a scenario of denying one's advantage in Study 2, to examine our theorized distinct anger (Hypothesis 4) and behavioural (Hypothesis 5) response patterns from entitled versus privileged individuals. Figure 1 below represents a model of the theoretical pathways we aim to test in the current research.

**Figure 1**

*Theoretical Pathways Tested in Studies 1 and 2*



## **Study 1: The Links Between Reported Privilege and Entitlement, Attributions, and Perceived Deservingness**

The aim of Study 1 was to examine if individual differences in feelings of entitlement or privilege are linked to internal versus external attributions of one's advantage and perceptions of deservingness in a correlational design. Participants were asked to evaluate imagined privileged and entitled targets on dimensions regarding their internal and external attributions for their advantage. In this study, we focused on target ratings rather than self-ratings to circumvent the potential problem of deflated ratings due to self-presentation biases. As perceivers may assume similarity based on specific traits (Srivastava et al., 2010), a reasonable assumption is that a person high on entitlement or privilege rating an entitled or a privileged target respectively is likely to make judgments based on assumed similarity. We tested the following hypotheses in this study:

Hypothesis 1a: Individuals who report higher levels of entitlement are more likely to rate both targets as having advantage attributed to their internal abilities, but not external causes.

Hypothesis 1b: Individuals who report higher levels of privilege are more likely to rate both targets as having advantage attributed to external causes, but not to their internal abilities.

Hypothesis 2: Individuals who report higher levels of entitlement will likely feel more deserving of their advantage, whereas individuals who report higher levels of privilege will likely feel less deserving of their advantage.

## **Method**

### ***Sample***

We aimed to recruit 400 participants on Prime Panels via Cloud Research, an online national recruitment platform that has demonstrated strong validity in recruitment of samples for social science research (Chandler et al., 2019). In total, 465 participants completed the survey via Cloud Research. Responses were excluded on the basis of having a completion time under three minutes, significant “straight-line” responses, and failure to meet qualitative standards on open-response questions as judged by the first and second authors. The final sample included 407 participants (60.4% female) aged 18-89 ( $M = 50.7$ ,  $SD = 16.8$ ), 76.4% of whom identified as ethnically European American, 16% African American, 1.7% Asian American, 3.4% Latin American, 0.5% Native American, and 2% of other ethnicities. Majority of participants in the study reported annual household incomes of less than \$50,000 (62.7%) and had completed at least some college-level education (68.1%).

### ***Procedure***

Participants were first asked a series of questions regarding what they believed defined a privileged person or a person who is in a privileged position. They rated privileged targets on dimensions regarding the nature of the advantage they possessed, their group membership, their trait associations, and their valence associations. The same questions were repeated for entitled targets. Privilege and entitlement questions were counterbalanced to minimise any potential order or anchoring effects that may influence responses on the second block. After rating privileged and entitled targets, participants

completed a questionnaire which included measures of social privilege and psychological entitlement. For the purposes of the current study, only questions relevant to the nature of the targets' advantage are reported below.

### ***Measures***

**Attributions of advantage.** Participants were asked to think of a privileged/entitled person and rate whether they were more likely to have an advantage due to internal or external factors. Specifically, participants rated how likely a privileged/entitled person was to have: (1) an unearned versus earned advantage (1 = *most likely to have an unearned advantage*, 5 = *most likely to have an earned advantage*), (2) an advantage due to uncontrollable versus controllable factors (1 = *most likely due to uncontrollable factors*, 5 = *most likely due to controllable factors*), (3) an advantage due to one's trait versus circumstance (1 = *most likely due to one's trait*, 5 = *most likely due to one's circumstance*; reverse scored), and (4) an advantage due to belonging versus not belonging to a social group (1 = *most likely due to belonging to a social group*, 5 = *most likely due to not belonging to a social group*). After reverse scoring item 3, for all items, higher scores indicate more internal attributions while lower scores indicate more external attributions.

**Deservingness.** Participants' evaluations of deservingness of advantage were assessed with one item, "When you think about a privileged/entitled person, how likely does this person have an undeserved versus deserved advantage (1 = *most likely to have an undeserved advantage*, 5 = *most likely to have a deserved advantage*).

**Social privilege.** Individual differences in privilege were measured using an adapted version of Black and colleagues' (2007) 25-item Social Privilege Measure ( $\alpha = .91$ ). The Social Privilege Measure consists of five different subscales measuring personal credibility (7-items,  $\alpha = .84$ ; for e.g., "I can be sure if I need legal or medical services, my background/characteristic(s) will not work against me"), visibility (8-items,  $\alpha = .73$ ; for e.g., "My background/characteristic(s) has made my life easier"), penalty (3-items,  $\alpha = .65$ ; for e.g., "I believe I have fewer advantages in this culture because of my background/characteristic(s)"), environmental predictability (4-items,  $\alpha = .80$ ; for e.g., "Should I need to move, I am confident that I will be able to rent or purchase a home in any area I choose"), and protection (3-items,  $\alpha = .75$ ; for e.g., "My children's acceptance by his or her employer will not (or would not) be dependent on his or her employer's attitudes toward his or her race"). Participants responded to each subscale using the same 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Higher scores on this measure represent greater levels of privilege. On average, participants in our sample rated themselves as privileged ( $M = 3.45$ ,  $SD = .55$ ).

**Psychological entitlement.** Psychological entitlement was measured using Campbell and colleagues' (2004) 9-item Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES;  $\alpha = .87$ ). This scale includes items such as, "I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others." Participants responded to these items using a 7-point scale (1 = *strong disagreement*, 7 = *strong agreement*). Higher scores on this measure represent greater levels of entitlement. On average, participants in our sample rated themselves as entitled ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ).

## Results

We analysed responses to each item for attributions of advantage and deservingness independently. Descriptive statistics for these items are reported in Table 1. First, we conducted t-tests against the midpoint for our measures of attributions of advantage and deservingness. Items for which participants' responses were significantly different from a neutral midpoint are highlighted in columns 2 and 3 of Table 1 for privileged and entitled targets, respectively. Next, we conducted paired t-tests comparing ratings of privileged versus entitled targets for each item. Results of this test are reported in column 4 of Table 1. Because participants' self-reported scores on psychological entitlement were significantly correlated with their scores on social privilege ( $r = .16, p < .001$ ), we conducted repeated measures regressions to examine the relationships between participants' entitlement and privilege with their attributions of advantages and deservingness for both privileged and entitled targets.

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics and T-Tests for Ratings of Privileged and Entitled Targets*

Attribution	Target ratings		Paired t-test
	Privileged targets <i>M (SD)</i>	Entitled Targets <i>M (SD)</i>	
Unearned versus earned advantage	2.69 (1.28)**	2.57 (1.21)**	$t(405) = 2.09^*$
Advantage due to uncontrollable versus controllable factors	2.92 (1.14)	2.86 (1.11)*	$t(406) = 1.03$
Advantage due to trait vs circumstance <sup>a</sup>	2.75 (1.16)**	2.76 (1.11)**	$t(406) = -0.26$
Advantage due to versus not due to social group	2.60 (1.16)**	2.64 (1.20)**	$t(406) = -0.58$
Undeserved versus deserved advantage	2.73 (1.16)**	2.63 (1.14)**	$t(406) = 1.96$

*Note.* T-tests for privileged and entitled target ratings are compared against midpoint (3). \*. T-test is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). \*\*. T-test is significant at the .001 level (2-tailed). <sup>a</sup>. Item was reverse-scored so higher scores represent internal attributions (advantage due to trait).



Our results demonstrate that both privileged and entitled people are seen to have an advantage that is unearned ( $M_p = 2.69$ ,  $SD_p = 1.28$ ,  $t_p(405) = -4.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_e = 2.57$ ,  $SD_e = 1.21$ ,  $t_e(406) = -7.11$ ,  $p < .001$ ), due to circumstance ( $M_p = 3.25$ ,  $SD_p = 1.16$ ,  $t_p(406) = 4.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_e = 3.24$ ,  $SD_e = 1.11$ ,  $t_e(406) = 4.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ), due to belonging to a particular social group ( $M_p = 2.60$ ,  $SD_p = 1.16$ ,  $t_p(406) = -6.94$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_e = 2.64$ ,  $SD_e = 1.20$ ,  $t_e(406) = -6.09$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and undeserved ( $M_p = 2.73$ ,  $SD_p = 1.16$ ,  $t_p(406) = -4.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $M_e = 2.63$ ,  $SD_e = 1.14$ ,  $t_e(406) = -6.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Only entitled targets were seen to have an advantage that was due to uncontrollable factors ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ,  $t(406) = -2.46$ ,  $p = .01$ ). Paired t-tests further revealed that entitled people are seen to have significantly more unearned ( $t(405) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .04$ ) and marginally more undeserved advantage ( $t(405) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .051$ ) than privileged people.

Controlling for self-reported privilege, participants who were high on self-reported entitlement rated both privileged and entitled targets as more likely to have an advantage that was earned ( $b_p = .20$ ,  $t_p(403) = 3.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b_e = .22$ ,  $t_e(403) = 4.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ), due to controllable factors ( $b_p = .16$ ,  $t_p(404) = 3.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b_e = .14$ ,  $t_e(404) = 2.87$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and not due to belonging to a particular social group ( $b_p = .17$ ,  $t_p(404) = 3.42$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b_e = .23$ ,  $t_e(404) = 4.36$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No significant associations were found between participants' entitlement and their ratings on the attributions of advantage as due to circumstance versus trait ( $b_p = -.04$ ,  $t_p(404) = -0.78$ ,  $p = .43$ ;  $b_e = -.09$ ,  $t_e(404) = -1.75$ ,  $p = .08$ ).

Controlling for self-reported entitlement, participants who were high on self-reported privilege rated both privileged and entitled targets as more likely

to have an advantage due to circumstance ( $b_p = -.37$ ,  $t_p(404) = -3.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b_e = -.30$ ,  $t_e(404) = -3.00$ ,  $p < .01$ ). They rated only entitled (and not privileged) targets as having more earned advantage ( $b_p = .06$ ,  $t_p(403) = 0.54$ ,  $p = .59$ ;  $b_e = .22$ ,  $t_e(403) = 2.02$ ,  $p = .05$ ). No significant associations were found between participants' privilege and their ratings on the attributions of advantage as due to uncontrollable versus controllable factors ( $b_p = .14$ ,  $t_p(404) = 1.37$ ,  $p = .17$ ;  $b_e = .16$ ,  $t_e(404) = 1.57$ ,  $p = .12$ ), or due to belonging versus not belonging to a particular social group ( $b_p = -.08$ ,  $t_p(404) = -0.77$ ,  $p = .44$ ;  $b_e = -.12$ ,  $t_e(404) = -1.16$ ,  $p = .25$ ) for either target.

Entitled participants were also more likely to rate both privileged and entitled targets as having an advantage that was deserved ( $b_p = .25$ ,  $t_p(404) = 4.93$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $b_e = .26$ ,  $t_e(404) = 5.29$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In contrast, there was also no significant association between participants' self-reported privilege and their attributions of advantage as undeserved versus deserved ( $b_p = .04$ ,  $t_p(404) = 0.34$ ,  $p = .74$ ;  $b_e = .05$ ,  $t_e(404) = 0.44$ ,  $p = .66$ ) for either target.

## **Discussion**

Our results provide some initial support for our postulated theory. Entitled participants were more likely to attribute a privileged/entitled target's advantage to internal factors (i.e., more earned advantage, due to controllable factors, and not due to group membership). On the other hand, privileged participants were more likely to attribute a privileged/entitled target's advantage to circumstance, although not due to uncontrollable factors or group membership. Privileged participants did not associate a privileged target's advantage as unearned, although they did associate an entitled target's

advantage as earned. This latter finding suggests that at least when judging targets like themselves, they do not associate their advantage as being more earned, which still distinguishes them from entitled individuals. Therefore, there is still some general support for hypothesis 1a and 1b. Regarding deservingness, more entitled participants judged both targets as being more deserving of their advantage, but this was not the case among more privileged targets. This is largely consistent with hypothesis 2.

One limitation of this study was our primary use of target ratings over self-ratings. Although we reason that individuals may make judgments based on assumed similarity of traits (Srivastava et al., 2010), the results speak to our theory only indirectly, and it would be important to provide more direct evidence based on self-ratings. To address this limitation and test our remaining hypotheses, we aim to conduct Study 2 using an experimental design manipulating participants' own privilege and entitlement, rather than that of some target.

### **Study 2: Examining Causality and Further Emotional Responses to Presented and Denied Advantage**

Study 2 aimed to provide a causal test of our hypotheses using an experimental paradigm which temporarily induced feelings of entitlement and privilege. Drawing on our theory and results from Study 1, we proposed to manipulate internal versus external attributions of advantage to elicit feelings of entitlement and privilege respectively. Manipulating these attributions should enable us to examine if manipulated internal versus attributions of advantage systematically produces stronger feelings of entitlement versus privilege,

respectively (Hypotheses 1a and 1b), as well as differences in perceptions of deservingness of advantage and feelings of pride (Hypotheses 2 and 3). Furthermore, we aimed to provide an extended test of our theory by examining if by denying advantage, whether entitled individuals will respond with more anger and engage in behaviour to restore their advantage (Hypotheses 4 and 5). Finally, addressing the limitation of Study 1, Study 2 focused on self-ratings instead of target ratings.

## **Method**

### *Sample*

Given that some of our hypotheses involve indirect effects, we conducted a Monte Carlo power analysis to detect indirect effects using the ShinyApp and following steps provided by Schoemann, Boulton, and Short (2017). The analysis revealed that a sample size of 260 would give us the desired power of 80% at alpha 0.95, assuming a small effect size of  $r = 0.2$  for all direct and indirect paths. Therefore, we aimed to recruit 300 participants for Study 2, to account for possible unusable data or missing values for our analysis. However, over the course of one semester, we only managed to recruit a total of 185 participants from a local Singaporean university. Two participants were unable to complete the entire study due to technical difficulties in loading the online survey. When probed for the nature of the study, two participants were able to partially guess the study's primary research question. These four participants were excluded from subsequent analyses. The final sample consisted of 181 participants (65.7% female) aged 18-27 ( $M = 21.6$ ,  $SD = 1.94$ ), 81.8% of whom identified as ethnically Chinese, 6.1% Malay, 5.0% Indian, and

7.2% of other ethnicities. All participants were compensated with either course credits or SGD\$5 for the completion of this study.

### ***Procedure***

As a cover story, participants were informed that the current study was part of a collaboration with the university's career centre to better prepare students for their first jobs. Participants were given information on the short-term and long-term effects of negotiating for one's salary, along with information on improving negotiation strategies from both academic (Marks & Harold, 2011; O'Shea & Bush, 2002) and non-academic sources (Babcock & Bear, 2017; Gould, 2017). They were then told that the current study involved a series of salary negotiation simulations aimed at helping students become more comfortable and effective at negotiating for their starting salaries upon graduation.

Participants completed the study in groups of no more than 3 students. Following the informed consent, participants were told that they would be participating in a series of two salary negotiation simulations for entry-level positions with two trained career coaches. After reading a brief job description for the salary and role they would be negotiating for, participants were made to complete an online questionnaire disguised as an application form. The form included measures on demographics, filler resume-related items such as "Please describe your most relevant/latest working experience along with details on three achievements or responsibilities during this stint" and "Please list other any other skills/certifications you possess which will be helpful in your fulfilling your job responsibilities," and other filler personality items such as the

Rahim Organisational Conflict Inventory-II (Rahim & Magner, 1995), the Fixed Pie Perceptions scale (Marks & Harold, 2011), and the 10-item Big Five Inventory (Rammstedt & John, 2007).

After completing the questionnaire, participants were told that they would take turns to complete the negotiation simulations and provided information regarding the advantages of being the first candidate in such scenarios. As part of our manipulation of internal/external attributions, participants were told that the order in which they were to undergo both simulations would be decided either based on the decision of the negotiators after reviewing their respective profiles (internal condition), or randomly based on the result of a dice roll (external condition).

Participants in the internal attribution condition read the following instructions:

*In the upcoming simulations, each of you will take turns negotiating with two career coaches from the Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre. To make this experience as realistic as possible, the order in which you will proceed will be decided after the career coaches have reviewed all your profiles. This is in line with common human resource practice whereby candidates judged to be the most promising are often placed at the 'top of the pile' and receive the attention of hiring managers as quickly as possible.*

Meanwhile, participants in the external attribution condition read these instructions:

*In the upcoming simulations, each of you will take turns negotiating with two career coaches from the Dato' Kho Hui Meng Career Centre. To keep this process as fair and bias-free as possible, the order in which you will proceed will be decided at random, based on the results of a random number generator. This is in line with the increasing trend of 'blind interviewing' aimed at promoting greater equality in the workplace by preventing human biases such as the 'similar-to-me effect' from influencing hiring outcomes.*

Regardless of their assigned condition, all participants were informed that they would be the first to undergo the negotiation simulations. Specifically, participants in the internal attribution condition read:

*Congratulations, after reviewing the profiles of all the candidates, the reviewers have selected you to be interviewed first! According to their remarks, they have judged you to be the **most unique** candidate with the highest potential for the role based on your personality fit and previous working experiences.*

Meanwhile, participants in the external attribution condition read:

*Congratulations, based on the results of the random number generation, you have been selected to be interviewed first! The random number generator assigns each candidate with a number between 1-100. Among the currently participating candidates, you have obtained the highest number of **92**.*

Prior to the start of the first negotiation, participants first underwent a goal setting exercise to input the target salary they hoped to achieve across the

two simulations. This measure was meant to serve as a baseline comparison to evaluate the extent to which participants' exhibited behaviours aimed at compensating for a lost advantage during the second simulation. After setting their negotiation goals, participants were directed to a chat room hosted by Chatplat within the online survey where they were joined by the experimenter posing as a career coach. Chatplat is a chatroom platform that has been used and validated in previous negotiation and decision-making research (Brooks & Schweitzer, 2011; Huang et al., 2017).

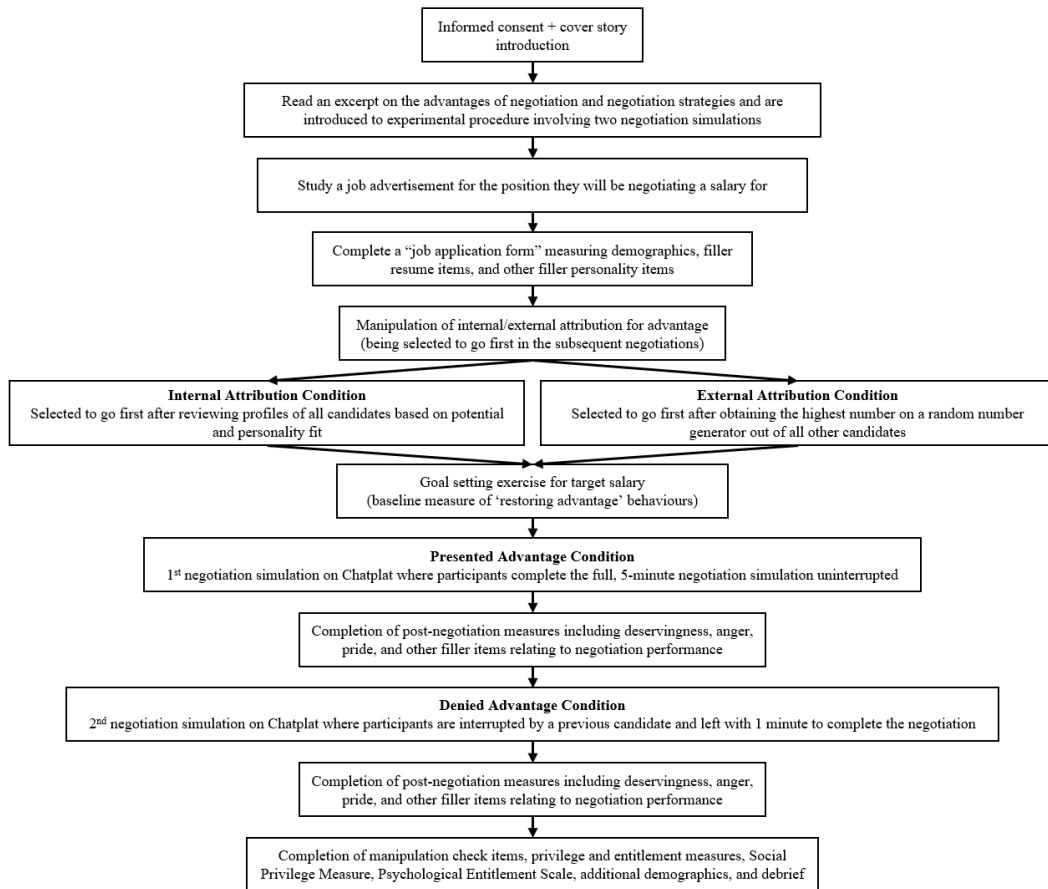
As part of our within-subjects manipulation of presented/denied advantage, within the two negotiation simulations, participants either experienced the full, uninterrupted 5-minutes in one simulation (presented condition) or was interrupted by some 'unforeseen circumstances' and left with 1-minute to complete the simulation (denied condition). Participants were always presented their advantage in the first negotiation and denied their advantage in the second. Specifically, in the denied condition, once participants entered the chatroom and had completed their introductions, they read the following administrator message:

*I am sorry to interrupt your negotiation. One participant from the previous session was unable to attempt his second negotiation because he had accidentally exited the survey page and we had to spend time retrieving his partially completed response and reopening that survey for him. To complete the study and be awarded his subject pool credit/cash compensation, we are arranging for him to quickly complete his second negotiation now. Thus, we will need to borrow Charlie for the next 4 minutes or so. Unfortunately, to keep to schedule, we will not*



*be able to provide you with additional time for this negotiation. Please hold until the negotiator is able to return.*

After completing each negotiation simulation, participants completed a questionnaire containing measures of deservingness, anger, authentic pride, hubristic pride and other filler items asking participants to evaluate their recent performance such as “How do you feel about your performance” and “How would you rate the professionalism of the career coach who negotiated with you?” Finally, after completing this questionnaire for the second time, participants completed manipulation check items examining their attributions for the outcomes of the negotiations, measures for how privileged and entitled they felt during the procedure, and the extent to which they felt they felt advantaged in the negotiations. Following, participants further completed the Social Privilege Measure (Black et al., 2007), Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et al., 2004) as trait-level measures of privilege and entitlement, additional demographic questions not included earlier, and were subsequently debriefed. Figure 2 represents a flow diagram for the procedure described above.

**Figure 2****Flow Diagram for Experimental Procedure of Study 2****Measures**

**Manipulation check.** To assess our manipulation of participants' internal/external attributions, participants were asked the following two questions: "The upcoming negotiation and final outcomes will be largely determined by my personal traits and abilities," (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*) and "The upcoming negotiation and final outcomes will be largely determined by external or situational circumstances" (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). These items were not significantly correlated ( $r = .05, p = .51$ ).

We further assessed our manipulation of perceived advantage with three additional items. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the extent to

which they agreed with the following statements: “Going first in the first negotiation simulation was advantageous *for me*,” “Going first in the second negotiation simulation was advantageous *for me*,” “In general, being able to go first in such negotiations is advantageous” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). As a scale, these items did not display acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .06$ ).

**Privilege.** In addition to the trait-level Social Privilege Measure (Black et al., 2007) used in Study 1, we created three items to assess how privileged participants felt during the negotiation simulations. Specifically, indicated their agreement with the following statements: “I was lucky to be selected to go first,” “Anyone could have been selected to go first, it just happened to be me,” and “Even if I was not selected to go first, this would not have surprised me.” This scale, however, was less reliable than we had hoped ( $\alpha = .48$ ) and was not increased by dropping any of the three items. Nevertheless, to allow for a direct comparison with our corresponding entitlement measure, we retained all three items for this scale. On average, participants in our sample demonstrated felt some privilege ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = .66$ ).

**Psychological entitlement.** In addition to the trait-level PES (Campbell et al., 2004) used in Study 1, we created three items to assess how entitled participants felt during the negotiation simulations. These items were designed to parallel the privilege items discussed above. Specifically, participants indicated their agreement with the following statements: “I believe I earned the opportunity to go first,” “Not just anyone should expect to go first, it takes certain qualities I possess,” and “If I was not selected to go first, I would have doubted the selection process.” This scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ( $\alpha = .71$ ). On average, participants in our sample felt little entitlement ( $M = 2.47$ ,

$SD = 0.86$ ). Unlike in Study 1, participants' ratings on the scales for privilege and entitlement were not significantly correlated ( $r = -.13, p = .08$ ).

**Deservingness.** Deservingness of outcomes was measured using a 4-item measure of perceived injustice by (Zitek & Jordan, 2021, Study 2). This measure asks, "What happened was (1) just, (2) fair, (3) justified, and (4) appropriate," (1 = *strong disagreement*, 7 = *strong agreement*) and has demonstrated acceptable reliability in both the first ( $\alpha = .86$ ) and second ( $\alpha = .94$ ) negotiations.

**Anger and pride.** Anger and authentic pride were measured using the Achievement Emotions Questionnaire-12 (Perkins et al., 2020). This scale was designed to capture emotions felt by participants while currently undergoing or shortly after the completion of a test. It contains four 3-item subscales, measuring anger (for e.g., "I am fairly annoyed"), boredom (for e.g., "I am so bored, I have trouble staying alert"), enjoyment (for e.g., "I am enjoying this test"), and pride (for e.g., "I am proud of how well I am doing on this test"). Participants responded on a 5-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*). Both the anger and pride subscales demonstrated reasonable levels of reliability following the first ( $\alpha_a = .71; \alpha_p = .67$ ) and second ( $\alpha_a = .73; \alpha_p = .70$ ) negotiations. For the purposes of the current study, the pride subscale was used as our measure of authentic pride.

Participants were also asked about the extent to which they felt offended by the denial of advantage will be measured using a 7-item scale by Harinck and colleagues (2013) as a proxy for hubristic pride. Items include: "I was insulted," "I was hurt," "My honour was hurt," "The other person's behaviour

was unacceptable,” “I was embarrassed,” “The other person did not show respect,” and “I was humiliated.” Participants responded on a 6-point scale (1 = *not at all*, 6 = *very much*). This scale also demonstrated acceptable reliability after both the first ( $\alpha = .94$ ) and second ( $\alpha = .94$ ) negotiation.

**Compensating behaviours.** Initially, we planned to assess participants’ compensating behaviours by examining responses across both negotiation simulations. Specifically, we coded for (1) whether the participant or experimenter made the first offer, the (2) number of messages sent, (3) highest negotiated amount, and (4) difference between highest negotiated amount and target salary indicated prior to negotiations. However, the experimenter noted that during the procedure, majority of the participants displayed the same pattern of response which included full sentences that participants often spent most of the negotiation time typing. To facilitate the completion of the negotiations due to time constraints, the experimenter often made the first offer according to a predetermined script, introducing systematic bias into our first item.

Additionally, the experimenter noted that due to the short negotiation window, majority of the participants were unable to send the final message which they had spent some time typing. This similarly introduced some systematic bias into our second item. Thus, in our analyses of participants’ behaviours to restore their denied advantage, we only examined (1) participants’ target salaries, (2) their highest negotiated amount, and (3) the difference between the highest negotiated amount and target salary.

### ***Analytical Strategy***

In all subsequent analyses reported, participants' randomly assigned attribution condition was dummy coded (1 = *internal*, 2 = *external*). To test our first set of hypotheses (Hypotheses 1a and 1b), we used an independent sample t-test with participants' attributions entered as the independent variable and participants' self-reported privilege and entitlement as dependent variables. To test Hypothesis 2, we regressed participants' deservingness after both negotiations on their internal/external attributions, privilege, and entitlement using the PROCESS macro (model 4) on SPSS (Hayes, 2017), entering participants' attribution condition as a dependent variable and privilege and entitlement as parallel mediators.

Given the 2 (internal versus external attribution) x 2 (presented versus denied advantage) mixed factorial design in our current study, to test our remaining hypotheses (Hypotheses 3-5), we used repeated measures general linear models with participants' attributions entered as a between-subjects factor, and participants' anger, authentic and hubristic pride, and compensating behaviours after the first and second negotiation entered as the within-subject variables. Additionally, we also independently regressed participants' anger, authentic and hubristic pride, and behavioural measures on their deservingness, privilege, entitlement, and attribution condition using the PROCESS macro (model 80), entering participants' attribution condition as a dependent variable, privilege and entitlement as parallel mediators, and deservingness as a serial mediator.

## Results

### *Manipulation Checks*

Contrary to our expectations, participants in the internal attribution condition ( $M_i = 3.43$ ,  $SD_i = 1.04$ ) were not more likely to rate the completed negotiations as being largely determined by their personal traits and abilities compared to participants in the external attribution condition ( $M_e = 3.48$ ,  $SD_e = 1.01$ ;  $t(179) = -0.30$ ,  $p = .76$ ). Similarly, participants in the external attribution condition ( $M_i = 3.53$ ,  $SD_i = .95$ ) were not more likely to rate the completed negotiations as being largely determined by their external or situational circumstances compared to participants in the internal attribution condition ( $M_e = 3.72$ ,  $SD_e = .86$ ;  $t(179) = -1.44$ ,  $p = .15$ ).

We further probed our manipulation checks by calculating a difference score that subtracted participants' scores on the internal attribution item from their scores on the external attribution item. This score would indicate if participants made a relatively more internal or external attribution based on their assigned condition, with higher scores indicating relatively more external attribution. Although participants in the internal attribution condition rated relatively less external attribution ( $M_i = .10$ ,  $SD_i = 1.36$ ) than participants in the external attribution condition ( $M_e = .24$ ,  $SD_e = 1.31$ ;  $t(179) = -0.75$ ,  $p = .46$ ), this difference was non-significant.

Again, contrary to our expectations, participants in the internal attribution condition ( $M_i = 3.60$ ,  $SD_i = 1.06$ ) were not more likely to rate going first in the first negotiation as being advantageous compared to participants in the external attribution condition ( $M_e = 3.56$ ,  $SD_e = .96$ ;  $t(179) = 0.27$ ,  $p = .79$ ).

They were also not more likely to rate going first in the second negotiation as being advantageous ( $M_i = 2.11, SD_i = .78; M_e = 2.09, SD_e = .79; t(179) = 0.14, p = .89$ ) or going first to be advantageous in general ( $M_i = 1.90, SD_i = .82; M_e = 1.79, SD_e = .84; t(179) = 0.33, p = .34$ ). The non-significance of our manipulation checks and their implications are discussed below.

### ***Hypotheses Testing***

To test Hypothesis 1, we conducted a t-test on participants' scores on how privileged and entitled they felt using our created scales, comparing participants based on their assigned attribution condition. Participants in the internal attribution condition ( $M_i = 2.65, SD_i = .80$ ) felt more entitled than participants in the external attribution condition ( $M_e = 2.32, SD_e = .88; t(179) = 2.65, p < .01$ ). Similarly, participants in the external attribution condition ( $M_i = 3.85, SD_i = .61$ ) felt more privileged than participants in the internal attribution condition ( $M_e = 3.59, SD_e = .70; t(179) = -2.73, p < .01$ ). Overall, these patterns were in line with Hypotheses 1a and 1b.

To test Hypothesis 2, we conducted regression analyses which further revealed a significant negative main effect of entitlement ( $b = -.25, SE = .08, t(177) = -3.15, p < .01$ ) and a significant positive main effect of privilege ( $b = .23, SE = .11, t(177) = 2.18, p < .05$ ) on participants' perceived deservingness of outcomes after the *first* negotiation. However, the direct main effect of attribution condition on deservingness was non-significant ( $b = -.14, SE = .14, t(177) = -1.00, p = .32$ ). Partially supporting Hypothesis 2, we found a significant indirect effect of attribution condition on deservingness through entitlement ( $b = .09, SE = .05, 95\% CI [.01, .19]$ ). In contrast, the indirect effect

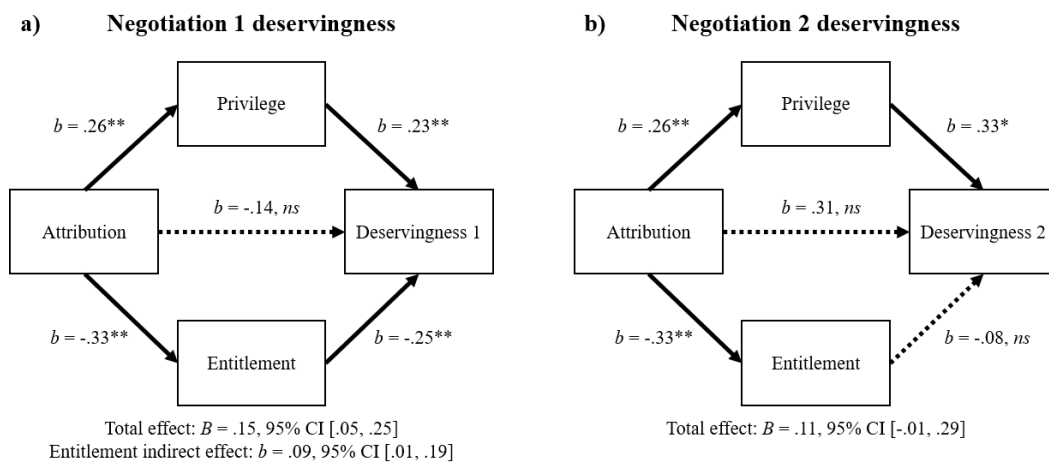


of attribution condition on deservingness through privilege was non-significant ( $b = .06$ ,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI [-.00, .15]; Figure 3a).

To further test Hypothesis 2, we repeated these analyses using participants' perceived deservingness of outcomes after the *second* negotiation. We observed a significant positive main effect of privilege ( $b = .33$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $t(177) = 2.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ) but no significant main effect of entitlement ( $b = -.08$ ,  $SE = .12$ ,  $t(177) = -0.69$ ,  $p = .49$ ). Similarly, the direct main effect of attribution condition on deservingness was non-significant ( $b = -.14$ ,  $SE = .14$ ,  $t(177) = -1.00$ ,  $p = .32$ ). We also did not detect any significant indirect effects of attribution condition on deservingness through both entitlement ( $b = .03$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI [-.06, .15]) or privilege ( $b = .09$ ,  $SE = .06$ , 95% CI [-.00, .22]; Figure 3b). Privilege and entitlement only predicted deservingness following the first but not second negotiation, with entitlement indirectly mediating the relationship between attribution and deservingness. This pattern of results provides partial support for Hypothesis 2.

### Figure 3

*Mediation models testing the indirect effect of attribution on deservingness through privilege and entitlement*

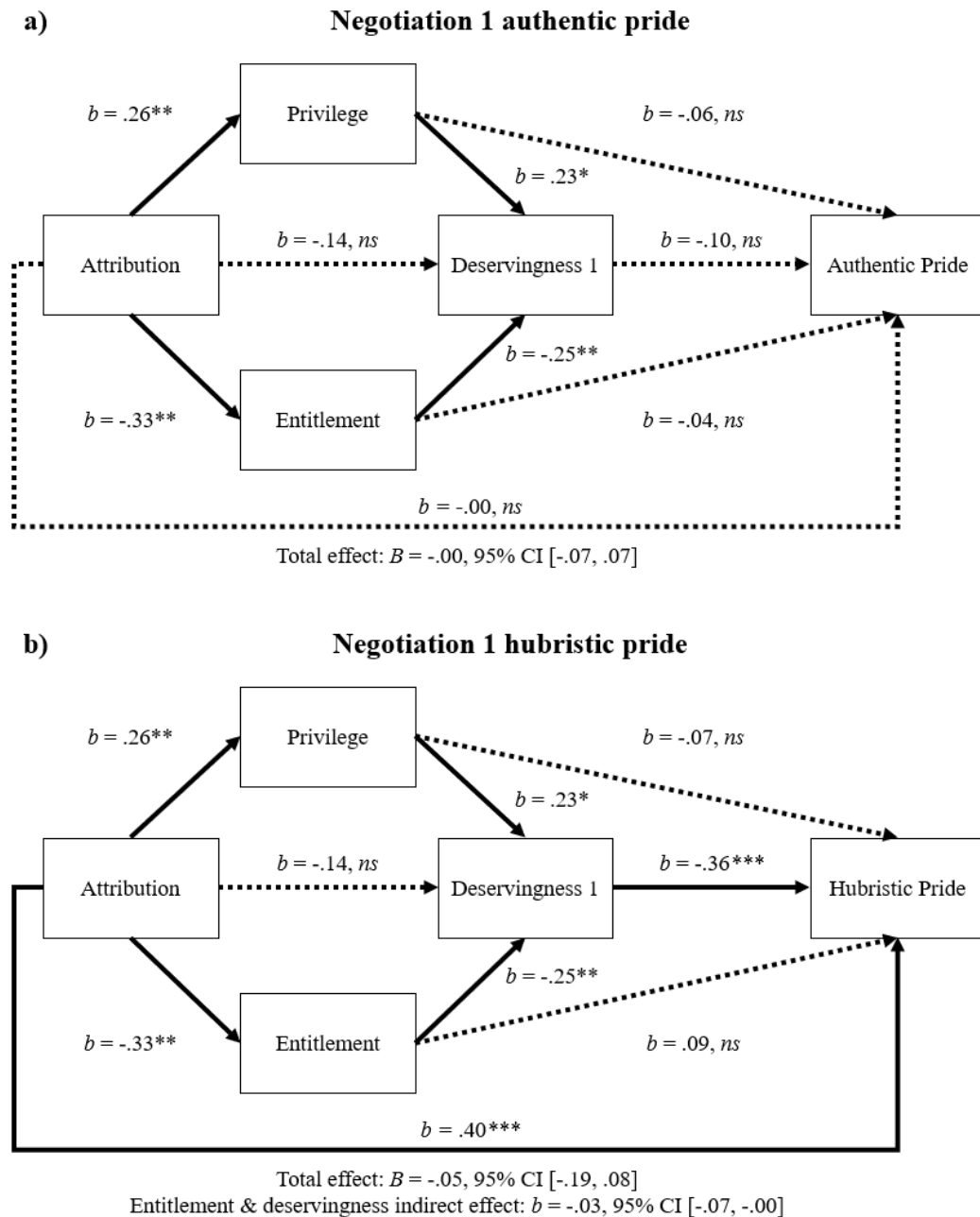


*Note.* Left model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 1, right model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 2. \*.  $p < .05$  (2-tailed). \*\*.  $p < .01$  (2-tailed).

To test Hypothesis 3, we regressed participants' hubristic pride when their advantage was presented on their attribution, entitlement, privilege, and deservingness when their advantage was presented. Our regression analyses revealed a significant main effect of attribution condition ( $b = .40$ ,  $SE = .11$ ,  $t(176) = 3.58$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and deservingness ( $b = -.36$ ,  $SE = .06$ ,  $t(176) = -6.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ). In addition to the direct effect of attribution condition, there was a significant indirect effect of attribution condition on hubristic pride via entitlement and deservingness ( $b = -.03$ ,  $SE = .02$ , 95% CI [-.07, -.00]; Figure 4a). In contrast, when regressing participants' authentic pride in place of hubristic pride, only deservingness produced a marginally significant effect ( $b = -.10$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $t(176) = -1.97$ ,  $p = .05$ ). No indirect effects were observed here (Figure 4b). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was only partially supported when examining effects of entitlement on hubristic but not authentic pride.

**Figure 4**

*Mediation models testing the indirect effect of attribution on authentic and hubristic pride through privilege, entitlement, and deservingness*



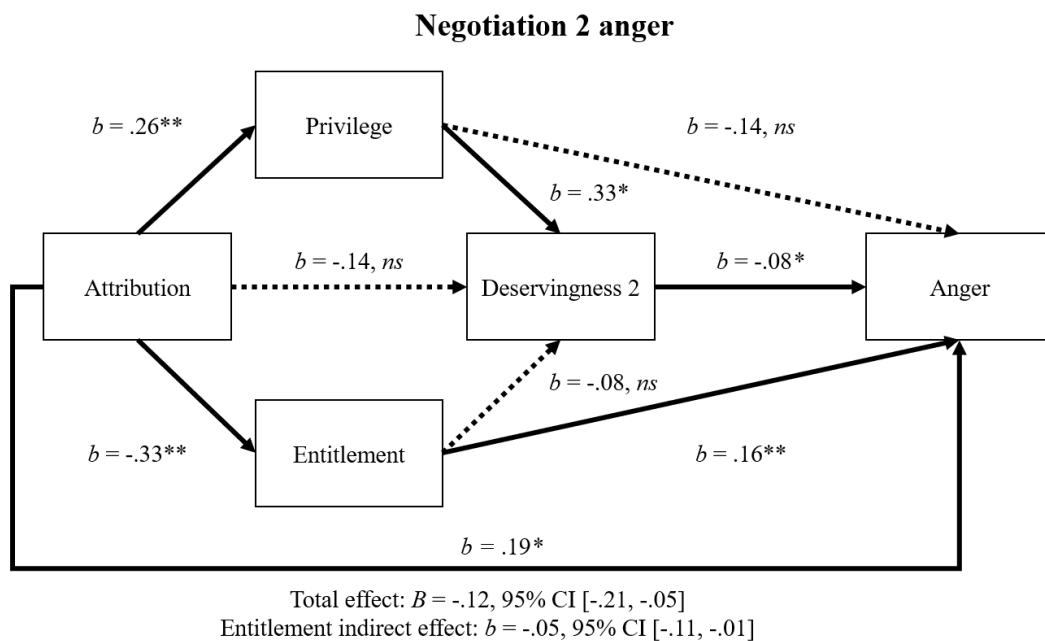
*Note.* Top model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 1 for authentic pride, bottom model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 1 for hubristic pride. \*.  $p < .05$  (2-tailed). \*\*.  $p < .01$  (2-tailed). \*\*\*.  $p < .001$  (2-tailed).

To test Hypothesis 4, we regressed participants' anger when their advantage was denied on their attribution, entitlement, privilege, and deservingness when their advantage was denied. Significant main effects were

observed for attribution ( $b = .19$ ,  $SE = .10$ ,  $t(176) = 1.99$ ,  $p < .05$ ), entitlement ( $b = .16$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $t(176) = 2.83$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and deservingness ( $b = -.08$ ,  $SE = .03$ ,  $t(176) = -2.20$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Privilege only produced a marginally significant effect ( $b = -.14$ ,  $SE = .07$ ,  $t(176) = -1.88$ ,  $p = .06$ ). We also observed a significant indirect effect of attribution on anger through entitlement ( $b = -.05$ ,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI [-.11, -.01]) and a significant total indirect effect ( $b = -.12$ ,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI [-.21, -.05]; Figure 5). The results obtained here provide support for Hypothesis 4.

**Figure 5**

*Mediation models testing the indirect effect of attribution on anger through privilege, entitlement, and deservingness*



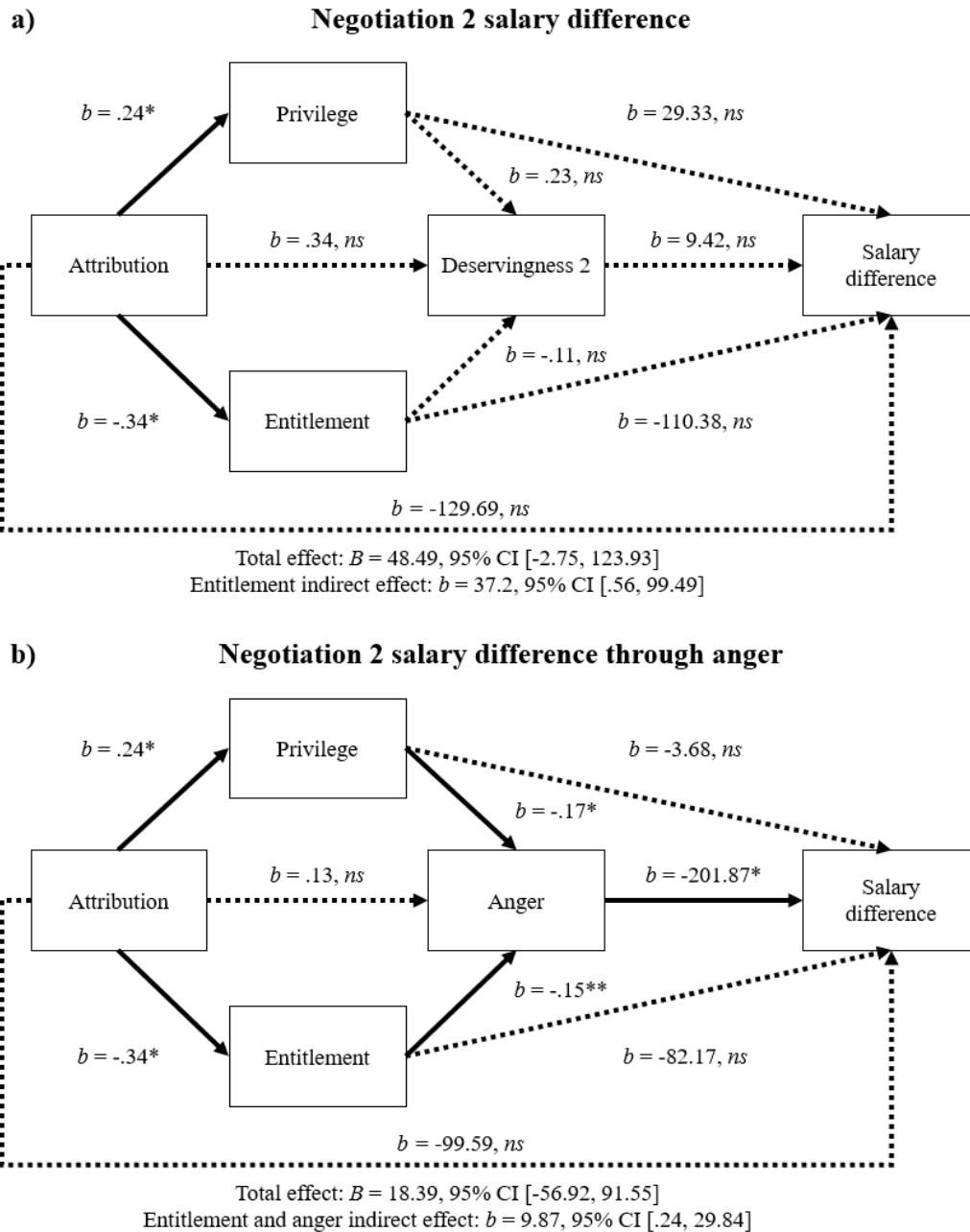
*Note.* Model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 2. \*.  $p < .05$  (2-tailed). \*\*.  $p < .01$  (2-tailed).

To test Hypothesis 5a, we regressed participants' first offers when their advantage was denied on their attribution, entitlement, privilege, and deservingness when their advantage was denied. Significant main effects were observed only for deservingness ( $b = -.92.49$ ,  $SE = 38.69$ ,  $t(163) = -2.39$ ,  $p < .05$ ). No indirect effects were observed for this model. Repeating the regression

analysis using the difference between their first offers and target salaries in place of participants' first offer, we observe a marginally significant main effect of entitlement ( $b = -110.38$ ,  $SE = 58.10$ ,  $t(163) = -1.90$ ,  $p = .06$ ). In addition, we also observed a significant indirect effect of attribution on this salary difference through entitlement ( $b = 37.20$ ,  $SE = 25.86$ , 95% CI [.56, 99.49]; Figure 6a). Given this significant indirect effect, we tested Hypothesis 5b by regressing the same salary difference on participants' attribution, entitlement, privilege, and anger when their advantage was denied. We only observed a significant main effect of participants' anger on their salary difference ( $b = -201.87$ ,  $SE = 80.76$ ,  $t(163) = -2.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ) and an indirect effect of attribution on salary difference through entitlement and anger ( $b = 9.87$ ,  $SE = 8.02$ , 95% CI [.24, 29.84]; Figure 6b). This pattern of results provides some partial support for Hypothesis 5a and more direct support for Hypothesis 5b.

**Figure 6**

Mediation models testing the indirect effect of attribution on salary differences through privilege, entitlement, and deservingness/anger



*Note.* Top model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 2 with deservingness as serial mediator, bottom model depicts the pathways tested in negotiation 2 with anger as serial mediator. \*.  $p < .05$  (2-tailed). \*\*.  $p < .01$  (2-tailed).

As additional tests of Hypotheses 2-5, we conducted a series of repeated measures general linear models. From these models, we noted a consistent main effect of advantage (presented versus denied) but no significant main effect of

attribution (external versus internal) or interaction effect. When presented an advantage ( $M_p = 4.84$ ,  $SD_p = .94$ ), participants felt that the outcome was significantly more deserved than when the advantage was denied ( $M_d = 3.41$ ,  $SD_d = 1.37$ ,  $t(180) = 12.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Participants were also significantly more likely to feel less angry when presented their advantage ( $M_p = 1.53$ ,  $SD_p = .56$ ) than when their advantage was denied ( $M_d = 1.66$ ,  $SD_d = .65$ ,  $t(180) = -2.82$ ,  $p < .01$ ). They were also significantly less likely to feel authentic pride when presented their advantage ( $M_p = 2.06$ ,  $SD_p = .63$ ) than when their advantage was denied ( $M_d = 2.17$ ,  $SD_d = .65$ ,  $t(180) = -2.11$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Finally, when presented an advantage ( $M_p = 1.70$ ,  $SD_p = .83$ ), participants were also significantly more less likely to feel hubristic pride than when their advantage was denied ( $M_d = 2.16$ ,  $SD_d = 1.13$ ,  $t(180) = -6.18$ ,  $p < .001$ ). No significant main effects were detected for both attribution and advantage when testing for behaviours to restore advantage comparing participants' target salaries versus the first offers made in the second negotiation, first offers made in the first versus second negotiation, or the "first offer-target" salary differences in the first versus second negotiation. Overall, these results failed to provide any additional support for our hypotheses.

## Discussion

The results from Study 2 extend our findings from Study 1. They provide further evidence for the theoretical link between internal/external attributions and entitlement/privilege and subsequently, deservingness. In support of Hypothesis 1a, participants in the internal attribution condition were more likely to demonstrate greater feelings of entitlement. In support of Hypothesis 1b, participants in the external attribution condition were more likely to

demonstrate greater feelings of privilege. Unlike our findings from Study 1 where participants self-ratings of entitlement correlated with their self-ratings of privilege, we did not observe the same correlation following the procedure in Study 2. This provides some evidence for the distinction between the constructs of privilege and entitlement.

Further supporting this distinction, although privilege and entitlement both independently predicted feelings of deservingness, the two constructs displayed different directions of effects. In support of Hypothesis 2, participants who felt more privileged were more likely to feel that the outcomes of both the negotiation simulations they underwent were more deserved. On the other hand, participants who felt more entitled were less likely to feel that the outcome of the first negotiation simulation was more deserved. Directly relating to Hypothesis 2, our mediation analyses revealed that participants in the internal attribution condition felt less deserving of the outcomes they received as a result of their greater feelings of entitlement. However, we did not observe a corresponding significant mediation effect of attribution on deservingness via privilege. Additionally, neither an indirect effect of privilege nor entitlement was detected when participants had their advantage explicitly denied in the second negotiation.

The current findings also extend our theory by demonstrating how states of privilege or entitlement predict different emotional responses in response to the presentation or denial of advantages. Firstly, providing partial support for Hypothesis 3, our results show that individuals who make internal attributions feel more entitled and less deserving of negative outcomes. Owing to these feelings of deservingness, such individuals are more likely to feel offended due



to their hubristic pride. However, we did not observe any such effect of participants' attributions on their authentic pride through privilege or entitlement. In a similar manner, supporting Hypothesis 4, our results also show that individuals who make internal attributions and feel more entitled are more likely to feel angry when explicitly denied an advantage. This effect, however, did not go through participants' feelings of deservingness which, we suspect, was due to the non-significant main effect of entitlement on deservingness following the second negotiation.

Finally, providing support for Hypothesis 5a, individuals who feel entitled are more likely to make greater salary offers following the denial of their advantage, although this difference was only marginally significant. Entitlement mediated the relationship between attribution and this salary difference, suggesting that individuals who make more internal attributions feel more entitled and therefore made larger first offers. In support of our alternative explanation (Hypothesis 5b), however, this mediated relationship was found to be further mediated by anger. Individuals who make internal attributions feel more entitled, causing them to feel angrier when their advantage is denied and therefore make greater salary offers in a retaliatory manner.

### **General Discussion**

The current research fills a significant gap in the existing literature by clearing up the conceptual murkiness between the constructs of privilege and entitlement. The proposed theory posits that an individual's internal and external attributions for perceived advantages influence their sense of entitlement and privilege and subsequently increase or decrease feelings of

deservingness for specific outcomes. This theory was tested across 2 studies in the current research – correlationally in Study 1 and experimentally in Study 2. Overall, the results obtained across both studies were convergent in demonstrating the distinction between the constructs of privilege and entitlement. Individuals not only identify privileged and entitled targets differently but come to adopt states of privilege and entitlement differently, depending on the extent to which they attribute the advantages they receive.

Our theory therefore provides insight into how individuals come to adopt pervasive trait-like feelings of privilege and entitlement. More importantly, the distinction drawn between these two constructs therefore allows their effects to be identified and parsed apart. As Study 2 demonstrates, differences in emotional responses can be predicted based on one's current arousal of privilege or entitlement. Specifically, compared to participants who felt more privileged, participants in our study who were higher on entitlement were more likely to demonstrate negative affective states such as anger and hubristic pride in situations where they felt undeserving of the outcomes they received.

It is important to note, however, that the results of our manipulation checks in Study 2 were non-significant. Although participants displayed different levels of privilege and entitlement according to their assigned attribution groups, we were unable to verify if our manipulation of participants' attribution for the advantage they received was indeed successful. The results of Study 2 should therefore be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, given the consistency between the results of Studies 1 and 2 with our theory, we suspect that the non-significance of our manipulation checks could have been due to the

placement of these questions within our procedure. Because participants responded to the attribution manipulation check items after the completion of the negotiation simulations, these scores may have been driven primarily by the negotiation outcomes obtained instead of our manipulation, as originally intended.

In the current research, we only obtained partial support for many of our proposed hypotheses. For instance, we did not observe any significant main and indirect effects of privilege or entitlement on deservingness following the second negotiation simulation in Study 2. The inability to detect significant indirect effects here may have been due to our small, underpowered sample size. We remain uncertain regarding the loss of a significant main effect of entitlement on deservingness following the second negotiation when participants' advantage was denied.

In addition, although we had expected to observe a reversal of this pattern of results when participants were presented versus denied an advantage, the absence of such a reversal could be due to the fact that even when they were presented with the advantage of having more time, 58% of participants ( $n = 105$ ) were not able to complete the negotiation simulation. These participants may have judged their poor or unsatisfactory performance as the result of an unfair procedure that failed to allow them to fully demonstrate their capabilities. Such an interpretation is consistent with prior literature which demonstrate how entitled individuals are more likely to view undesirable outcomes as undeserved or unfair (Grubbs et al., 2013; Zitek & Jordan, 2021). This inability to complete both negotiation simulations may have also led them to question how advantageous going first really was to them, potentially explaining the non-

significance of our advantage manipulation check items. Thus, although we had aimed to assess how an individual's emotional and behavioural responses vary across situations of presented and denied advantage, our results suggest that our experimental procedure only succeeded in simulating a situation of denied advantage.

Despite deservingness being a fundamental part of the definition of entitlement, our results suggest that it did not mediate emotional (anger) and behavioural (salary) responses following the denial of an expected advantage. The underpowered sample may be one potential reason as to why indirect effects through entitlement and deservingness were non-significant. However, the support we obtained for Hypotheses 4 and 5b suggests that emotional and behavioural responses to undesired outcomes may not necessarily result from perceptions of deservingness as we have measured it. Instead, such responses may simply be the result of a general predisposition toward anger and the downstream effects that follow (Grubbs & Exline, 2016).

Furthermore, despite using multiple measures to assess compensating behaviours, we only found marginal support for Hypothesis 5a in this study. One potential explanation for this is that, following the denial of their advantage, participants might have prioritised the completion of the negotiation rather than the results of the negotiation per se. Hence, they may have refrained from making larger offers. This may have been the case given that many of these participants were already unable to complete the negotiation in the first simulation with the full 5 minutes. Failure to detect significant effects using this and other measures of compensating behaviours could also be due to participants' lack of familiarity with negotiation skills or tactics in general.

Although we had expected participants to make first offers beyond that of their target salaries, only 82 (43.4%) and 93 (49.2%) participants did so in the first and second negotiations, respectively. Thus, even if participants had wanted to make up for their lost advantage, they might not have known how to do so in the given negotiation paradigm.

Our findings further suggest that individuals who identify and/or are aware of their privilege may be more sensitive to fairness and are more willing to sacrifice their advantage for the greater good compared to entitled people. At the very least, our results show that these individuals are less likely to take offence or respond with anger when they encounter situations in which such advantages are lost. They may also be more receptive to redistributive policies compared to entitled people. Thus, interventions and policies aimed at reducing social inequality and injustice may be better targeted toward reducing entitlement within a population. The current theory suggests that one fundamental way of reducing entitlement may be to promote external, rather than internal attributions for the advantages people receive.

The final, unique contribution of this study is its methodology. The current study presents a novel, immersive paradigm through which the effects of privilege and entitlement can be studied in an ecologically valid manner. The manipulation adopted demonstrates that states of privilege or entitlement can be induced by manipulating the attributions individuals make for outcomes they experience. To our knowledge, this manipulation is the first to manipulate a state of entitlement without relying on recall procedures (for e.g., Redford & Ratliff, 2018), and adds to the repertoire of entitlement manipulations that have been tested.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

One limitation of the current research is the small sample size used in Study 2. Although we had aimed to recruit 300 participants for this study, in the course of one semester, our collected sample size was only about two thirds of that. We suspect that many of the effects we hypothesised remain undetected due to our underpowered sample size. Moreover, we were unable to sufficiently test the compensating behaviours which we had hypothesised in part because our sample was unexpectedly unfamiliar with negotiation tactics and skills. Future research should aim to test these hypotheses again with a larger sample more experienced with negotiations or train participants in these negotiation tactics as part of the procedure.

While the methodology adopted in Study 2 presents a novel and immersive paradigm through which the effects of attribution, privilege, and entitlement can be studied, the complexity of the design may have also inhibited some of the hypothesised effects. Due to time and budget constraints, the current study was designed as a 30-minute study with relatively short negotiation simulations. However, many participants failed to complete the negotiation even within the allocated 5-minute duration. This may have influenced some participants to perceive the outcome of the first negotiation as positive and others as negative depending on whether they were able to complete it. Any subsequent perception participants may have had of the advantage they were presented may have therefore been discounted. Thus, our attempts to examine differences in how states of privilege and entitlement differentially affect individuals depending on whether they encounter positive versus negative outcomes may have fallen short.

The current methodology may have also obscured some of the effects observed due to the placement of our privilege and entitlement measures. Within our procedure, privilege and entitlement were measured toward the end of the study, after the completion of all the negotiation simulations. Although the current placement of these measures avoids cuing participants to any demand characteristics or risking the true nature of the study being exposed, on hindsight, in line with our proposed model, it would have been better to measure this prior to the start of the negotiation simulations. Nevertheless, the significant differences observed between participants in the internal and external attribution conditions on both measures of privilege and entitlement suggest that these effects were robust enough to last long enough to be captured even at the end of the experimental procedure.

To better examine the hypotheses that we have proposed, we recommend the following modifications to our procedure. Firstly, future research should subject participants to distinctly positive and negative outcomes. Secondly, in light of our non-significant manipulation check results, we recommend future research to include this manipulation check prior to the start of the negotiation simulations. These attempts at replicating this negotiation paradigm following our proposed modifications are important to verify the veracity of our theory.

Finally, as we have already noted, the current theory and analyses are specific to the narcissistic form of entitlement which we have chosen to examine. Our hypotheses and results may not generalise to the healthy or normal form of entitlement we have briefly discussed above. Nevertheless, given that narcissistic entitlement represents entitlement in an extreme form, we could

expect our hypotheses and results to apply, even when testing for healthy entitlement as well. However, we would expect that while the results obtained may demonstrate a similar pattern, the size of the observed effects may be smaller. Thus, we would recommend any future research aiming to examine these effects to use a stronger manipulation – that is, a stronger denial of any advantage presented to participants.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, across two studies, we test the theory that attributions of advantage and perceived deservingness distinguish feelings of privilege and entitlement. Our results suggest that internal attributions are associated with feelings of entitlement, whereas external attributions are associated with feelings of privilege. Additionally, entitlement mediated subsequent feelings of deservingness such that individuals who make internal attributions feel more entitled and cultivate a stronger sense of deservingness. The effect of privilege on deservingness, however, demonstrated mixed results and did not mediate the relationship between external attributions and deservingness. Using a novel paradigm, we tested this theory in a negotiation context, allowing us to further examine the different emotional responses individuals in states of privilege and entitlement elicit.

We found that when participants encounter undesirable outcomes, entitled individuals who make internal attributions demonstrate greater hubristic pride than privileged individuals who make external attributions. Furthermore, when explicitly denied an anticipated advantage, entitled individuals feel greater anger and may subsequently make greater demands. These results



suggest that although entitlement and privilege are often discussed in the same breadth, entitlement may be a more pernicious threat than privilege. Thus, interventions and policies aimed at promoting social outcomes such as harmony and reducing discrimination or social inequality may be better targeted toward reducing feelings of entitlement rather than privilege.

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