

ENTITLEMENT, PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITY, AND CRIMINALITY: AN  
EXPANSION ON GRUBBS AND EXLINE'S (2016) MODEL

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by

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## ABSTRACT

### ENTITLEMENT, PSYCHOLOGICAL VULNERABILITY, AND CRIMINALITY: AN EXPANSION ON GRUBBS AND EXLINE'S (2016) MODEL

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The current study examines the predictive relationships among Entitlement, criminal thinking, and psychological vulnerability. Eighty male incarcerated individuals participated in this research and four measures were administered to each participant: the Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEs), the Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scale (TCU-CTS), the Woodcock Johnson-IV Cognitive Brief Intellectual Abilities scale (WJ-IV COG BIA), and the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF). Results yielded the following findings: Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction was the best predictor of Entitlement. Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction and Thought Dysfunction were the best predictors of each of the other aspects of criminogenic thinking. Emotional/Internalizing Dysfunction did not reliably predict any aspects of criminogenic thinking. Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction better predicted *Power Orientation* than Entitlement, though it reliably predicted both. Limitations and implications of these findings are discussed, and potential future research directions are proposed. This dissertation is available in open access at AURA, <https://aura.antioch.edu>, and OhioLINK ETD Center, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu>.

*Keywords:* entitlement, criminogenic thinking, psychological vulnerability

## **Dedication**

This dissertation is dedicated to my late grandmother, Mary “Jane” Dart. Grammy, you have always been an inspiration to me. You never hesitated to follow your dreams, live life to the fullest, and demonstrate endless compassion and love for those around you. Your love and encouragement of me on every step of this journey will never be forgotten. I wish you were here to see this.

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## CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

The psychological construct of Entitlement has been connected to increased psychological distress and poor mental health (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Entitled cognitions may have a role in predisposing individuals to mental illness; elevated Entitlement has been linked to depression, anxiety, psychosomatization, externalizing of distress, eating disorders, dissociation, psychosis, and more (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Additionally, elevated Entitlement has been linked to lower levels of overall life satisfaction and is broadly related to some indicators for various personality disorders (Grubbs & Exline, 2016; Major & Testa, 1989). While social connection has the potential to impart a number of benefits that serve as bolsters to physical and psychological well-being, because entitled individuals struggle with interpersonal problems, social connection often only serves to further ostracize and harm them (Poon et al., 2013). Throughout this paper, Entitlement is capitalized to identify it as a psychological construct and differentiate it from entitlement as a characteristic of personality.

Entitlement has also been connected, via research, to illicit and criminal behavior. Entitlement has been proposed to be a criminogenic need, or a factor that is directly related to criminally offending behavior (Fisher & Hall, 2011). Offending individuals typically have higher levels of Entitlement than nonoffending individuals and, inversely, a person with elevated levels of Entitlement is statistically more likely to commit criminal acts. With this relationship in mind, it is important to understand the complexity of psychological distress in relation to Entitlement in order to become more effective in treatment and intervention with entitled individuals. Meaningful understanding of this relationship and the relationship of Entitlement to criminal deviance has important implications for treatment, intervention, and eventual prevention of this problematic cycle in an increasingly vulnerable group.

## **The Present Study**

The present study seeks to develop a further understanding of the relationships among Entitlement, psychological vulnerability, and criminal thinking. It is hypothesized that psychological vulnerability, connected to high Entitlement, plays a major role in the outcome of deviant and criminal activity. The following hypotheses will be explored:

1. Emotional/Internalizing Dysfunction (EID), Thought Dysfunction (THD), and Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction (BXD) scores on the MMPI-2-RF will predict Entitlement scores.
2. Higher scores on the EID, THD, and BXD scales will predict higher overall criminogenic thinking.
3. The predictive power of higher scores on EID, THD, and BXD will be stronger for Entitlement scores than general criminogenic thinking.

Ideally, the results will be used to help inform future directions for treatment of Entitled individuals and teens and adolescents with early tendencies for deviant and criminal behaviors.

## **CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Entitlement**

Entitlement is a psychological construct defined in a number of contexts. Kingshott et al. (2004) state that Entitlement stems from impairments in the ability to empathize and behave respectfully as a result of significant relationships where individuals have been underentitled or hold unprocessed traumatic experiences. In another study, Dretske purports that Entitlement is the justification of one's beliefs that result from their connection to the world (2000).

Entitlement, measured on the Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scales (TCU; Texas Christian University Institute of Behavioral Research, 2011), is said to convey a sense of ownership, privilege, and misidentification of wants as needs. Offenders who score high on the EN scale of the TCU believe that the world "owes them" and they deserve special consideration (Knight et al., 2006). The multitude of definitions for Entitlement can create confusion and are often stigmatizing by nature. Grubbs and Exline (2016) developed an encompassing definition of Entitlement: "a personality trait characterized by pervasive and enduring feelings of deservingness for more goods, services, or special treatment than others, with or without a dutifully earned right to those benefits" (p. 1204). However, Entitlement exists on a continuum that includes healthy and unhealthy levels, and there are psychological costs and benefits to entitled ideation (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). This definition takes care to appropriately describe Entitlement as a construct, without expressing undue stigmatization. For the purposes of the current examination, Grubbs and Exline's (2016) definition will be used.

### **Entitlement and Development**

Researchers posit that elevated levels of entitlement occur for a number of reasons; however, parenting and development have been identified as variables that serve an important

role (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Parenting has been associated with self-esteem and entitlement both empirically and theoretically (Thomassin et al., 2020). Brummelman et al. (2020) noted the increased focus on individualism and self-esteem since the 1960s, especially in Western cultures, as an important historical shift in childhood narcissism and entitlement. In parents' attempts to instill self-esteem in their children, they may inadvertently cultivate narcissism and entitlement. The symbolic interactionism framework theorizes that children develop their sense of self by internalizing symbolic representations arising from the significant relationships they have with others (Thomassin et al., 2020). Therefore, the views that significant caregivers have of the child, and the way these views are communicated, have powerful effects on child development (Thomassin et al., 2020). In order to develop a child's healthy self-esteem, without elevating narcissistic tendencies, Brummelman et al. (2020) proposed a tripartite model that emphasizes realistic feedback, a focus on growth, and unconditional regard. Researchers posit that narcissistic and entitled children hold an unrealistic illusion of themselves that withstands disconfirming evidence. Parents uphold this by overestimating, overclaiming, and overpraising children, suggesting perfection and faultlessness (Brummelman et al., 2020). Narcissistic and entitled children focus on outperforming others rather than improving themselves. Parents encourage this by comparing children with their peers or the parent at the child's age. Parents may also pressure children to stand out from others or perform socially. Narcissistic and entitled children experience black and white self-attributions tied to their successes or failures. In other words, narcissistic and entitled children have fragile self-images, which crumble when given negative feedback. Parents that make their regard and respect conditional on the child living up to a certain standard foster the child's fragile self-worth (Brummelman et al., 2020). It is through

these exchanges and others like them that entitlement is fostered in a child's personality, which may come to have life-long effects.

### **Entitlement as Vulnerability**

Due to the often-negative understanding of Entitlement, it is important to conceptualize the construct in a way that is most therapeutic and decreases negative pathologizing of the individuals it affects. Research is supportive of a theory that conceptualizes Entitlement as a psychological vulnerability (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Individuals with elevated Entitlement are unlikely to characterize themselves as needing special services, making them less likely to seek psychological services and, as a result, more vulnerable to psychological distress. From the opposite perspective, peers and practitioners may not feel compelled to help individuals with elevated Entitlement (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Gerrard (2002) describes a case study. “[The identified client] expected a low fee and made her therapist feel useless, raging and denigrated.” “[The] therapist learned that she could expect nothing from the sessions ... not regular attendance, nor to be listened to, valued, have any interpretations reflected on nor to feel useful in any way. She was a thing, dehumanized” (p. 181). One can assume that therapists in a similar situation to the one described by Gerrard would feel neither confident in their treatment nor motivated to continue working with a similar client. Gerrard (2002) goes on to describe hospital staff working with these types of clients. She reported that they became overwhelmed with feelings of failure and self-blame. As a clinician goes through this experience, it is likely that treatment will not feel effective to either practitioner or client, which could lead to clinician burnout and client drop out.



### ***Unmet Expectations***

The first step of Grubbs and Exline's model draws attention to the predisposition of individuals with high Entitlement to experience unmet expectations (2016). Due to notions of the self as deserving and special, entitled individuals experience exaggerated expectations of treatment, services, and goods. Therefore, the likelihood of violated expectations increases. As a result, clear feelings of psychological distress are likely to occur, which is supported by the relationship between Entitlement and dissatisfaction, demonstrated in the scholarly literature (Grubbs & Exline, 2016).

### ***Distress***

The model suggests three ways in which entitled individuals interpret events of unmet expectations: disappointment, ego threat, and perceived injustice (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Disappointment is posited as the natural response to a violation of expectations, as the person does not feel personally responsible for the unmet expectation. Alternatively, ego threat occurs because obtaining entitled demands is an integral factor upholding the entitled individual's sense of specialness. When the entitled individual is denied a demand, it is felt as an affront to their sense of self. Furthermore, because entitled individuals genuinely believe they are owed the things they expect to receive, unmet expectations may be interpreted as perceived injustice (Grubbs & Exline, 2016).

Grubbs and Exline posit that at least one of these reactions is likely to occur in the wake of an unmet expectation and each of them, separately, may be generally distressing (2016). However, they may also lead to experiences of psychological distress worthy of consideration. Research links Entitlement to dissatisfaction in a number of life areas; the negative emotional consequences of ego threat and perceived injustice (e.g., anger and negative affect) are also

noted. Knowing that individuals with elevated Entitlement also have increased psychological distress, treatment that is dissatisfying to both client and practitioner is especially problematic (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Furthermore, if elevated Entitlement and psychological distress are related to criminal behavior, and interventions are found to be ineffective, there is ever-increasing pressure to find ways to support these individuals. Recognizing these individuals as vulnerable due to this personality characteristic may be pivotal in developing treatments that are capable of helping this particular population.

### *Self-Sustaining Cycle*

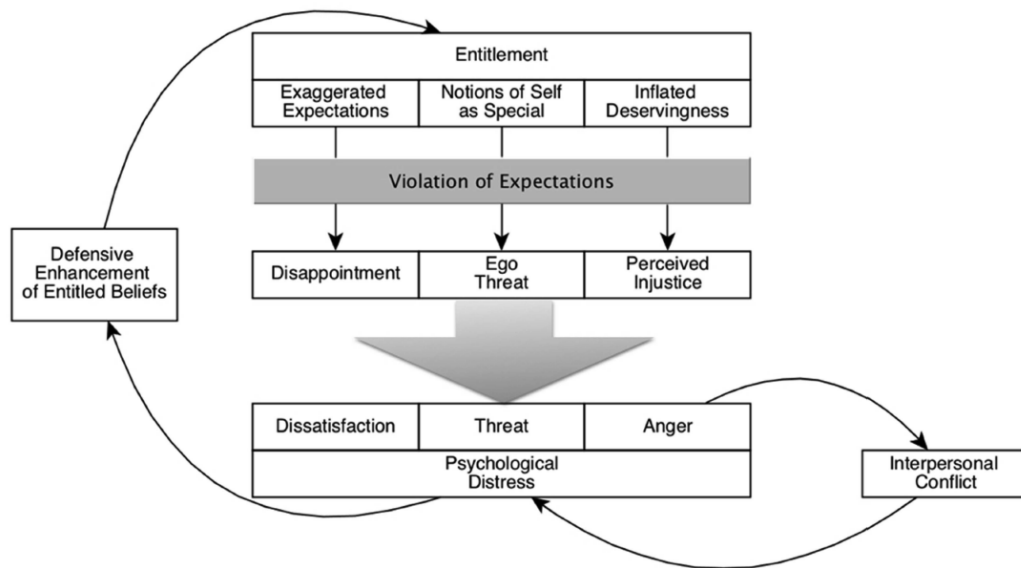
Grubbs and Exline (2016) describe a self-sustaining cycle comprised of Entitlement, unmet expectations, and resulting distress reactions. Their model posits that the same beliefs that resulted in unmet expectations and subsequent entitled interpretations bolster the individual's entitled self-image, thus, reinforcing themselves. As mentioned previously, the entitled individuals' experience of unmet expectations can threaten their self-concept. In response to perceived threat (unmet expectations), these individuals are prone to react with defensive self-enhancement in order to reaffirm their original notions of self. The entitled individual experiences unmet expectations, reacts to defend their self-image, and as a result bolsters their entitled tendencies and the cycle repeats (Grubbs & Exline, 2016).

Finally, the model recognizes that Entitlement can lead to distress from other sources (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). Interpersonal conflict is one example. The self-sustaining cycle likely produces a wide range of interpersonal conflicts that can predispose the individual to experience further distress; there is well-documented evidence of negative interpersonal expressions of Entitlement, such as selfishness and aggression. The model notes the potential of interpersonal problems to produce additional sources of distress in entitled individuals. This concept is

incorporated into the model to demonstrate the proclivity of Entitlement to cause psychological distress (Grubbs & Exline, 2016).

**Figure 2.1**

*Grubbs and Exline's Proposed Model of the Self-Sustaining Cycle of Entitlement*



*Note.* From Grubbs, J. B., & Exline, J. J. (2016). Trait Entitlement: A cognitive-personality source of vulnerability to psychological distress. *Psychological Bulletin*, 142(11), 1204–1226.

<https://doi.org/10.1037/bul0000063>

## Narcissism

There are a number of constructs that are often referenced alongside Entitlement. It is important to differentiate similar and related constructs from Entitlement for clarity. Narcissism is a construct often referenced in research about Entitlement, and these constructs are often mistakenly used interchangeably. In fact, Entitlement was historically discussed solely as a facet of narcissism (Rose & Anastasio, 2013). However, it was later theorized that psychological Entitlement was its own unique variable, related but discrete from narcissism. Rose and Anastasio (2013) described a study that compared the Psychological Entitlement Scale and

Narcissistic Personality Inventory. Their findings demonstrated that while scores on the two scales were correlated, 75% of the variance was unshared between the two. These results indicate that the two constructs tap into separate, unique psychological processes.

Both narcissism and Entitlement are related to an inflation of one's sense of self, but Rose and Anastasio (2013) suggest that this may be done by different processes. The role that others play in the process is one area of difference. The narcissistic experience is one of self-importance, grandiosity, and superiority. In this case, others play a peripheral role (Rose & Anastasio, 2013). In contrast, the entitled experience relies on others. It is an experience of being entitled to more than others. Others are integral in the experience of Entitlement.

### **Privilege**

Privilege, an important social construct, also intersects with Entitlement. The Exploring Privilege Special Task Group (STG), a subgroup of the Society of Counseling Psychology, defined privilege as “unearned advantages that are conferred on individuals based on membership in a dominant group or assumed membership” (Toporek et al., 2011, p. 1). They explain further that privilege is supported in society structurally and systemically and is based and reliant on power. This belies the major difference between Entitlement and privilege. Those who are entitled may have privilege, real or imagined, based on the power they hold in society. However, Entitlement on its own has no ground in structure and systems. Furthermore, privilege exists outside of the privileged person, while Entitlement is an internal construct of personality (Toporek et al., 2011).

### **Criminality and Criminogenic Thinking**

Criminogenic thinking encompasses attitudes, cognitive processes, neutralizations, and excuses that support or defend criminal activity (Folk et al., 2018). Such thinking has been

recognized as a major risk factor for both the onset and the maintenance of criminal behavior. Criminal thinking has reliably predicted criminal behavior, and evidence supports the notion that Entitlement may increase the likelihood of participating in criminal behavior (Fisher & Hall, 2011). Considering this, it is easy to see how this population could be misunderstood, stigmatized, and stereotyped. This increases the risk of criminal offenders to internalize labels and self-stigmatize, subsequently increasing the likelihood of recidivism (Moore et al., 2018). Convergently, when conceptualizing Entitlement as a vulnerability to distress we find that, especially in its more pathological forms, Entitlement has negative implications for many aspects of the self, outcomes, behaviors, and beliefs (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). In a 2010 article, researchers examined the perpetrators of three mass shootings in the United States who ultimately completed suicide. The researchers theorized that the murders functioned as an attempt to bolster the perpetrators' entitled self-images, which were previously threatened via bullying and would eventually be threatened by their suicides (Kalish & Kimmel, 2010).

Research further suggests that elevated Entitlement may actually change cognitions, influencing how individuals perceive everyday situations (Grubbs & Exline, 2016). In the case of male sexual Entitlement, traditional norms that disapprove of interpersonal violence and aggression may be seen as not applicable when a situation involves a man's desire for sex, even in cases of women's refusal (Bouffard, 2010). The men with elevated sexual Entitlement experience altered cognitions that allow them to interpret their acts of interpersonal violence and aggression as acceptable instead of dangerous and unjust.

### ***Mass Incarceration and Recidivism***

Recidivism is the tendency of criminals to reoffend, which affects both society and the individual. Research shows that approximately 80%–85% of serious juvenile offenders with

official criminal records recidivate within five years of release (Basto-Pereira & Maia, 2017). Because Entitlement is highly correlated with criminal offenses, it is also a predictor of recidivism (Fisher & Hall, 2011; Walters & White, 1990).

### **Personality Styles**

Scholarly literature demonstrates that personality profiles, scores, and subtypes can be connected to types of deviance and criminal behaviors (Olver, 2018). In fact, these associations can have meaningful implications regarding recidivism and intervention participation. To understand these connections, meaningful dilations must be made among types of criminal activity. Beyond drug-related crimes and sex-related crimes, nonviolent crimes can be defined as crimes that did not involve physical harm or potential physical harm to others (e.g., trespassing and robbery). Conversely, violent crimes can be defined as crimes that involved physical harm or potential physical harm to others (e.g., armed robbery and assault). In a 2011 study using aggregate data from 114 studies ( $N = 41,438$  offenders), Olver et al. examined predictors of offender treatment attrition, or the likelihood of the individual to complete a task or program. Attrition is an important factor, as completion of a program—in this case, one targeted at decreasing recidivism—is often essential to a successful outcome. Olver et al. (2011) argued that “the very clientele that may stand to benefit the most from completing services [are] less likely to receive the help [they] need, at least in full” (p. 15). Amongst a plethora of information regarding attrition, the study found that there were a number of personality characteristics that predicted attrition such as low motivation, poor engagement, and disruptive behavior (Olver et al., 2011). Further, personality disorders including psychopathy and antisocial personality disorder were also predictive factors. Ultimately the message serves to say that individuals with these personality characteristics are at an increased risk for premature termination and, therefore, more

vulnerable to recidivism (Olver et al., 2011).

In a 2013 study, researchers examined the significant relationship between personality traits and criminal thinking style while addressing selection bias (Bodusek et al., 2013). They used Eysenck's model to examine personality traits and propensity score matching to minimize the effects of selection bias. Propensity score matching mimics experimentation by isolating the effect of treatment and as a result, stronger assertions can be made about causality than can be interpreted from multiple regression analysis. Using data from 133 violent and 179 nonviolence recidivistic male prisoners, Bodusek et al. (2013) identified five significant predictors: psychoticism, extraversion, neuroticism, associations with criminal friends, and criminal identity.

Romero et al. (2017) posited that the literature on the diagnostic construct validity of the MMPI-2-RF did not comprehensively encompass the three domains of the measure, the internalizing domain, the thought dysfunction domain, and the externalizing domain. In order to address this gap, researchers sought to investigate the associations between the MMPI-2-RF substantive scales and groups of forensic psychiatric inpatients who were classified according to the three diagnostic categories. Results suggested that the broad Higher Order Thought Dysfunction (H-O THD) scale, midrange Aberrant Experiences (RC8) scale, and Psychoticism (PSY-5 PSYC-r) scale were sensitive to broad thought dysfunction psychopathology. Additionally, *lower* scores on Ideas of Persecution (RC6), Aberrant Experiences (RC8), and Psychoticism (PSYC-r) were associated with the presence of internalizing dysfunction (Romero et al., 2017).

In order to examine the predictors of institutional violence in sexually violent predators (SVP), Tarescavage et al. (2019) administered the MMPI-2-RF to 171 psychiatrically hospitalized men detained or civilly committed under SVP laws. SVP laws allow sex offenders,

upon being released from prison, to be committed to a secure psychiatric hospital because of “mental abnormality and posing a serious risk to public safety” (Tarescavage et al., 2019, p. 707). Researchers in the study were interested in predicting the likelihood of violence within the psychiatric institutions. The results demonstrated participants in the sample produced higher than average scores on measures of externalizing psychopathology and measures of underreporting response styles. Regarding future violence, correlational analyses indicated that the thought dysfunction, emotional dysregulation, and externalizing psychopathology scales were associated with higher predictability and that individuals were twice as likely to commit future violence when these scales were elevated (Tarescavage et al., 2017).

In a 2017 study by Haneveld et al., associations between the MMPI-2-RF and the Psychopathy Checklist Revised (PCL-R; Hare, 2003) were explored in order to determine how the measures might enhance substantive understanding of psychopathy when used conjointly. The results indicated that Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction (BXD) and Antisocial Behavior (RC4) were found to predict global psychopathy and its comprising facets (Haneveld et al., 2017). Interestingly, Dysfunctional Negative Emotions (low RC7) was predictive of high psychopathy scores, but only of its interpersonal and affective and not the behavioral facets. Similarly, the PSY-5 indices displayed a conceptually meaningful pattern. Disinhibition (DISC-r) and Instrumental Aggression (AGGR-r) were jointly predictive of the psychopathy total score, as well, but only DISC-r predicted the behavioral and lifestyle facets, whereas AGGR-r predicted the affective and interpersonal facets (Haneveld et al., 2017).



### **CHAPTER III: METHOD**

The data used in the study were archival, previously collected by another Antioch University New England student in partial fulfillment of her degree (Maiwald, 2020). However, I served as her research assistant and therefore took part in the data collection process by way of administering measures to a portion of the participants, scoring, and completing data entry tasks. The selected research method of the current study was a nonexperimental quantitative design, and included measures were selected by the previous researcher. This design was chosen to investigate the relationships among Entitlement, psychopathology, and criminogenic thinking. Given the choice of secondary archival numerical data, the quantitative design was determined to be the better choice over qualitative or mixed method designs.

#### **Participants**

Participants in the study were incarcerated individuals at the Cheshire County House of Corrections (CCHOC), a county jail located in Keene, New Hampshire. Participants were recruited by participation in one of two established Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) groups. Data from this group were used based on convenience; group participation and content were not of interest in this study. Incarcerated individuals were given the opportunity to sign up for the group via a sign-up sheet posted in the common area of the units or by approaching a group leader directly. However, before incarcerated individuals were included in the group, group leaders consulted with them to assess specific selection criteria, which primarily included length of stay, prediction of interest and motivation, prediction of symptom severity (e.g., antisocial behavior, drug addiction, psychological factors), recidivism history, and personality fit with the current group members. Incarcerated individuals who met the aforementioned criteria were then allowed to enter the group. In some cases, individuals were court-ordered to participate in MRT

as part of their sentencing. MRT is a group-based intervention designed to decrease recidivism in prison-incarcerated individuals. Each group member was given a personal workbook and asked to complete one step per week of the 12-step program. Participants attended weekly teaching sessions and completed homework assignments, which had to be adequately completed and presented to the group in order for participants to advance to the next step. Upon entry to the group, the individual group members were asked to participate in the study and to provide written informed consent. Participation in the study was not required to participate in the group.

### ***General Demographics and Frequencies***

The MRT program, and thus the group of participants available for this study, was restricted to male incarcerated individuals due to lack of interest and symptom severity in the female unit, determined by the CCHOC psychologist responsible for supervising and cofacilitating the group. Therefore, all of the participants ( $N = 80$ ) in this study were male. Of the participants, 75% ( $n = 60$ ) was Caucasian, 12.5% ( $n = 10$ ) was African American, 7.6% ( $n = 6$ ) was Hispanic, 2.5% ( $n = 2$ ) was mixed race or biracial, 1.3% ( $n = 1$ ) was Asian, and 1.3% ( $n = 1$ ) was Jamaican, and their ages ranged from 20 to 53 years old ( $M = 31.95$ ;  $SD = 6.73$ ). The participants varied in where they resided before incarceration with 78.9% ( $n = 63$ ) residing in the New England area and 21.1% ( $n = 17$ ) residing throughout the rest of the country.

Approximately half of the participants (47.6%;  $n = 38$ ) either graduated from high school or received their GED, and approximately one-quarter of the participants received some college or technical college education (25.1%;  $n = 20$ ). The remaining quarter did not complete high school due to dropout (27.5%;  $n = 22$ ). In terms of relationship status, 53.8% ( $n = 43$ ) of the participants identified as single, 32.5% ( $n = 26$ ) was partnered, 8.8% ( $n = 7$ ) was married, and 5% ( $n = 4$ ) was divorced or legally separated. Over half of the participants (60%;  $n = 48$ ) identified that they had

children, with the minimum number of children being one and the maximum being nine ( $M = 2.33$ ;  $SD = 1.59$ ). Upon release, 85% ( $n = 68$ ) of the participants stated that they would likely have steady employment, while 71.3% ( $n = 57$ ) stated that they would have stable housing.

### ***Incarceration-Related Frequencies***

County and state incarcerated individuals comprised 57.5% ( $n = 46$ ) of the participants, while federal incarcerated individuals comprised the remaining 42.5% ( $n = 34$ ). The participants were currently charged with and convicted of a variety of crimes, with the most frequent being drug-related crimes 47.5% ( $n = 38$ ), followed by nonviolent crimes (40%;  $n = 32$ ), defined in this study as crimes that did not involve physical harm or potential physical harm to others (e.g., trespassing and robbery). Violent crimes (10%;  $n = 8$ ) were defined in this study as crimes that involved physical harm or potential physical harm to others (e.g., armed robbery and assault), and sex crimes (2.5%;  $n = 2$ ). The vast majority of participants had been incarcerated previously (87.5%;  $n = 70$ ) rather than incarcerated for the first time (12.5%;  $n = 10$ ). The number of misdemeanors (Min = 0; Max = 100;  $M = 7.57$ ;  $SD = 11.99$ ) and felonies (Min = 0; Max = 150;  $M = 6.58$ ;  $SD = 17.07$ ) that the participants were charged with previously or currently varied greatly, as did the total number of years incarcerated up to the present (Min = 0; Max = 27;  $M = 4$ ;  $SD = 5.34$ ).

### ***Mental Health and Treatment-Related Frequencies***

Of the 72.5% ( $n = 58$ ) of participants who received formal psychotherapy in the past, 47.5% ( $n = 38$ ) of participants were formally diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Of those participants who were formally diagnosed, 32.5% ( $n = 26$ ) were diagnosed with a mood disorder, 22.5% ( $n = 18$ ) with an anxiety disorder, 21.3% ( $n = 17$ ) with posttraumatic stress disorder, 18.8% ( $n = 15$ ) with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder, 1.3% ( $n = 1$ ) with a personality

disorder, and 1.3% ( $n = 1$ ) with a psychotic disorder (e.g., schizophrenia, thought disorder, drug-induced psychosis, etc.).

### ***Substance Misuse and Treatment-Related Frequencies***

The vast majority of participants stated that they used alcohol in the past (88.8%;  $n = 71$ ) with 30.5% ( $n = 18$ ) using the substance daily before incarceration. Similarly, 97.5% ( $n = 78$ ) of participants stated that they had used drugs in the past, with 83.1% ( $n = 59$ ) using drugs daily before incarceration. Of these participants, 67.5% ( $n = 52$ ) had a history of using opioids, 63.6% ( $n = 49$ ) had a history of using stimulants (e.g., cocaine and methamphetamine), 40.8% ( $n = 31$ ) had a history of using cannabis, 6.6% ( $n = 5$ ) had a history of using club drugs (e.g., ecstasy), 6.6% ( $n = 5$ ) had a history of using hallucinogens (e.g., lysergic acid diethylamide [LSD]), and 2.6% ( $n = 2$ ) had a history of using dissociative drugs (e.g., phencyclidine [PCP]). Of the participants with a drug misuse history, 68.7% ( $n = 46$ ) reported a history of receiving formal substance abuse treatment.

## **Measures**

### ***Demographics Questionnaire***

Participants were asked to respond to 21 demographic questions that covered basic demographic information such as age, race, and education level. Additionally, the questionnaire collected information about participant incarceration, mental health, substance use, and treatment-related histories. See Appendix A for the demographic questionnaire.

### ***The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEs)***

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEs) was developed by Vincent Felitti, MD in the late 1990s. The questionnaire was developed as a means to assess the link between adverse experiences in childhood and physical health as an adult. The 10-item

self-report measure screens for 10 types of childhood trauma. These 10 types are categorized into three groups: abuse, neglect, and family or household challenges, and each category can be further divided into multiple subcategories. The ACEs questions address the respondent's first 18 years of life. The respondent is asked to respond either "yes" or "no" to each question. Each "yes" response counts as one point, and higher scores indicate a higher risk of adverse effects as an adult. See Appendix B for the ACEs Questionnaire.

### ***Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scale (TCU-CTS)***

The Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scale (TCU-CTS; Knight et al., 2006) is an assessment designed to measure cognitive functioning related to criminal conduct. I utilized the TCU in measuring the criminogenic thinking of individuals participating in the MRT group. The initial examination of the TCU was conducted with more than 3,200 offenders in a variety of correctional settings (Knight et al., 2006). Using the Cronbach's alpha, this study found moderate to high reliabilities for each of the measure's six scales, ranging from .68 to .82 and .66 to .84 at retest.

The TCU is made up of six scales (Knight et al., 2006), the first three of which were adapted from the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS; Walters, 2002). The additional three scales were developed specifically for the TCU, based on a framework developed by Yochelson and Samenow (1976). The six scales that make up the TCU are as follows: *Entitlement* (believing individuals deserve special treatment, misidentifying wants as needs, and conveying a sense of ownership and privilege), *Justification* (a thinking pattern characterized by minimizing the seriousness of antisocial acts and justifying actions based on external circumstances), *Power Orientation* (using aggression and manipulation as an attempt to control the external environment and achieve a sense of power), *Cold Heartedness* (callousness

and a lack of emotional involvement in relationships with others), *Criminal Rationalization* (having a negative attitude toward the law and authority figures), and *Personal Irresponsibility* (the degree to which an individual accepts ownership for criminal actions and blames others for those actions; Knight et al., 2006).

On the TCU, there are 5–7 items per scale and each item is scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale, (*disagree strongly* = 5 points, *disagree* = 4 points, *uncertain* = 3 points, *agree* = 2 points, and *strongly agree* = 1 point). All items in Domain D: Cold Heartedness and one item in Domain E: Criminal Rationalization are reverse scored (i.e., *strongly agree* = 1 point, *agree* = 2 points, *uncertain* = 3 points, *disagree* = 4 points, and *strongly disagree* = 5). The TCU takes approximately 10–15 minutes to complete. The score for each domain is computed by taking the average of scores and multiplying by 10. The resulting score then ranges from a low of 10 to a high of 50, with higher scores indicating increased levels of criminogenic thinking; see Appendix C for the TCU self-report form and Appendix D for TCU scoring form.

#### ***Woodcock Johnson-IV Cognitive (WJ-IV COG) Brief Intellectual Abilities Scale (BIA)***

We employed the Woodcock Johnson Cognitive (WJ-IV COG; McGrew & Woodcock, 2001) Brief Intellectual Abilities Scale (BIA) in the study to measure incarcerated individuals' level of general cognitive functioning. The BIA is comprised of the first three subtests on the WJ-IV COG and produces estimates of Fluid Reasoning (Gf), Comprehension-Knowledge (Gc), and Short-Term Working Memory (Gwm). This scale is advantageous in this study due to its logical application as a short but reliable measure of intelligence; it takes approximately 15–30 minutes to administer. The composite clusters demonstrate strong criterion validity (.67 to .76) when compared with the global composite or total scores of other major measures of IQ within

the field. The test-retest reliabilities for the individual subtests are typically  $\geq .80$  (McGrew & Woodcock, 2001).

***Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF)***

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2 Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF; Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008) is a shortened version of the MMPI-2 used to assess personality traits; it takes approximately 50 minutes to complete. The 338-item, true/false, self-report measure is liked conceptually and empirically to modern theories and models of psychopathology and personality. The MMPI-2-RF provides a comprehensive assessment of the most frequently relevant clinical psychopathology concerns as well as a broad assessment of response bias and validity; the scales consist of Validity, Higher-Order (H-O), Restructured Clinical (RC), Somatic/Cognitive, Internalizing, Externalizing, Interpersonal Interest, and Personality Psychopathology Five (PSY-5; Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008).

The MMPI-2-RF was normed on different population groups including forensic pretrial defendants and prison-incarcerated individuals. External validity data from mental health, forensic, medical, and nonclinical samples “document the convergent and discriminant validity and corroborate the construct validity of the substantive scales” (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008, p. 31). Test-retest coefficients for the MMPI-2-RF Higher-Order scales ranged from moderate to high (.64 to .91); the RC scales and the specific problems scales (Somatic/Cognitive, Internalizing, Externalizing, Interpersonal Interest) ranged from moderate to high (.54 to .92); and the PSY-5 scales were found to be in the high range (.76 to .93). The mean test-retest coefficient for the nine validity scales was found to be moderate at .67, but the values for the two consistency scales (VRIN-r and TRIN-r) were lower (.52 and .40, respectively). The mean for

the other seven validity scales was found to be high at .73. The internal consistency for all scales was found to be strong with a median of .79 (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008).

### **Procedure**

Given that the jail population is considered protected and vulnerable, considerate care was taken when storing the collected data. All participants were identified only by a Participant Identification Number (PIN). The PIN was utilized in the original study to anonymize all assessment, demographic, and study records. A key was kept in a separate, password-protected, and encrypted file separate from records and aggregate data, inaccessible to myself, the current researcher. Compliant with Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the key will be kept for seven years starting from its last use. The electronic data were stored in a password-protected, encrypted database on the server housed at the Antioch Psychological Services Center (PSC). A backup copy of the data was kept on an encrypted, password-protected flash drive and stored with the hard copies of the data. Such processes are intended to keep the participants' privacy secure. Consistent with HIPAA regulations, all participant data will be kept for seven years starting from the completion date of the study.



## CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

### Descriptive Statistics of Study Variables

The mean T scores for the three predictor variables were 58.68 ( $SD = 10.34$ ), 61.14 ( $SD = 14.74$ ), and 75.06 ( $SD = 10.53$ ) for EID, THD, and BXD, respectively. Among the three higher-order scales, only the mean BXD T-score was above 65T, indicating a clinically significant level of severity. The mean score of each of the TCU Domains were as follows: TCU.A *Entitlement* 17.96 ( $SD = 5.12$ ); TCU.B *Justification* 20.71 ( $SD = 6.06$ ); TCU.C *Power Orientation* 27.77 ( $SD = 7.21$ ); TCU.D *Cold Heartedness* 22.13 ( $SD = 6.28$ ); TCU.E *Criminal Rationalization* 30.53 ( $SD = 6.70$ ); and TCU.F *Personal Irresponsibility* 21.80 ( $SD = 6.06$ ).

### Preliminary Analysis

An a priori power analysis was conducted using G\*Power3 to determine the sample size required to achieve a power of .95. The results showed that a total sample of 55 participants was required to achieve this level of power. Based upon this, the number of participants in this study was sufficient to achieve this level of power.

### Hypothesis I

Emotional/Internalizing Dysfunction (EID), Thought Dysfunction (THD), and Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction (BXD) scores will predict Entitlement scores. In the analysis of this hypothesis, regression analyses were administered for the relationships among Entitlement (TCU Domain A), the remaining domains, and each higher order scale (see Table 4.1). The higher order scales (BXD, EID, & THD) accounted for 1% of the variance in Entitlement. A significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .14$ ,  $F(3,75) = 4.04$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CIs [.05, .29], [-.16, .08], and [-.05, .12], respectively. Participants' predicted Entitlement can be expressed using the following equation: Entitlement = 5.508 + .167 (BXD) - .040 (EID) + .037

(THD). As BXD was the only significant predictor of Entitlement, the regression analysis was reconducted excluding the other two higher order scales. BXD accounted for 1% of the variance in Entitlement, and a significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .13$ ,  $F(1,78) = 11.24$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [.07, .28].

## Hypothesis II

Higher scores on the EID, THD, and BXD scales will predict higher criminogenic thinking. As shown in Table 4.1, the higher order scales (BXD, EID, & THD) accounted for 2% of the variance in Domain B (*Justification*). A significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .20$ ,  $F(3,75) = 6.11$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CIs [.06, .33], [-.13, .14], and [-.02, .17], respectively. Participants' predicted *Justification* can be expressed using the following equation: Entitlement =  $1.527 + .192$  (BXD) +  $.073$  (THD) +  $.005$  (EID). Again, BXD was the only significant predictor of *Justification*. The regression analysis was reconducted excluding the other two higher order scales. BXD accounted for 2% of the variance in *Justification*, and a significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .17$ ,  $F(1,77) = 15.70$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.12, .36].

The higher order scales accounted for 4% of the variance in Domain C (*Power Orientation*). A significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .39$ ,  $F(3,75) = 16.01$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CIs [.20, .48], [-.12, .16], and [.01, .21], respectively. Participants' predicted *Power Orientation* is equal to  $-4.998 + .336$  (BXD) +  $.106$  (THD) +  $.018$  (EID). As both BXD and THD served as significant predictors, the regression analysis was reconducted excluding EID. BXD and THD accounted for 4% of the variance in *Power Orientation*, and a significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .39$ ,  $F(2,76) = 24.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CIs [.21, .48], and [.01, .21], respectively.

The higher order scales accounted for 1% of the variance in Domain D (*Cold Heartedness*). A nonsignificant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .08$ ,  $F(3,75) = 2.05$ ,  $p = .114$ , 95% CIs [.01, .32], [-.24, .06], and [-.09, .13], respectively. Participants' predicted *Cold Heartedness* is equal to  $13.800 + .165 (\text{BXD}) - .091 (\text{EID}) + .021 (\text{THD})$ . BXD served as the only significant predictor of *Cold Heartedness*, and the regression analysis was reconducted excluding the other two higher order scales. BXD accounted for 1% of the variance in *Cold Heartedness*, and a significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .06$ ,  $F(1,77) = 4.70$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [.01, .27].

The higher order scales accounted for 2% of the variance in Domain E (*Criminal Rationalization*). A significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .15$ ,  $F(3,74) = 4.37$ ,  $p < .01$ , 95% CIs [-.10, .22], [-.29, .03], and [.06, .29], respectively. Participants' predicted *Criminal Rationalization* is equal to  $23.005 + .173 (\text{THD}) - .129 (\text{EID}) + .061 (\text{BXD})$ . Only THD served as a significant predictor of *Criminal Rationalization*; therefore, the regression analysis was reconducted excluding the other two higher order scales. THD accounted for 1% of the variance in *Criminal Rationalization* and a significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .12$ ,  $F(1,76) = 10.16$ ,  $p < .005$ , 95% CI [.06, .26].

The higher order scales accounted for 1% of the variance in Domain F (*Personal Irresponsibility*). A significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .13$ ,  $F(3,75) = 3.70$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CIs [-.04, .24], [-.18, .10], and [.02, .21], respectively. Participants' predicted *Personal Irresponsibility* is equal to  $9.718 + .114 (\text{THD}) + .098 (\text{BXD}) - .039 (\text{EID})$ . Only THD served as a significant predictor of *Personal Irresponsibility*; therefore, the regression analysis was reconducted excluding the other two higher order scales. THD accounted for 1% of the variance

in *Personal Irresponsibility*, and a significant regression equation was found,  $R^2 = .11$ ,  $F(1,77) = 9.17$ ,  $p < .05$ , 95% CI [.05, .22].

### **Hypothesis III**

The results show that BXD was the best predictor of the Domains in almost all cases (see Table 4.1). Domains E and F are the two exceptions that were best predicted by THD. THD did not reliably predict Entitlement and EID did not reliably predict any of the Domains. BXD best predicted Domain C (*Power Orientation*), followed by Entitlement, and then Domains B, D, and E. THD best predicted Domain E (*Criminal Rationalization*), followed by Domains F and C.

### **Considerations of Intersectionality**

#### ***Age and Adverse Childhood Experiences (correlation)***

In consideration of the importance of identity and intersectionality, some demographic data were analyzed for further insight. A simple Pearson correlation was conducted to examine the relationships among age and adverse childhood experiences and the study's dependent variables (e.g., factors of criminogenic thinking and EID, THD, and BXD). Regarding age, participant age was negatively correlated with each of the TCU Domains, but only significantly so with Domain A, *Entitlement*,  $r(78) = -.24$ ,  $p < .05$ , Domain E, *Criminal Rationalization*,  $r(76) = -.29$ ,  $p < .01$ , and Domain F, *Personal Irresponsibility*,  $r(77) = -.32$ ,  $p < .01$ . This relationship indicates that, as age increases, criminal thinking scores decrease. Age demonstrated no correlation to EID, THD, and BXD.

Regarding the Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale (ACEs), no significant correlation occurred with any of the TCU scales. There were significant positive correlations between ACEs scores and two of the higher order scales: EID,  $r(53) = .35$ ,  $p < .01$  and BXD,  $r(53) = .32$ ,  $p < .01$ .

.05. This suggests that, as ACEs scores increase, indicating higher severity, so too do scores and therefore severity of the two higher order scales.

### ***T-tests***

In order to examine the relationship differences between certain demographic groups and the study's dependent variables, several independent *t* tests were conducted. When comparing two groups, those who reported having diagnosed mental illness ( $n = 38$ ) and those who reported that they do not have a diagnosed mental illness ( $n = 41$ ), there were few instances where the groups showed significantly different scores. Those cases included TCU Domain E and THD. In the case of Domain E, *Criminal Rationalization*, those who reported no diagnosed mental illness had significantly higher scores,  $M = 30.83$ ;  $SD = 5.804$ ; than those who reported mental health diagnoses,  $M = 30.29$ ;  $SD = 7.598$ ;  $t(76) = -.403$ ,  $p = .039$ . While of interest, the sample did not include enough members of each group to compare specific diagnoses, education level, disability status, or drug and alcohol use disorders.

## CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

Research suggests that overincarceration and recidivism are significant problems within the criminal justice system in the United States (Sawyer & Wagner, 2019). Therefore, continued research in areas that are associated with these systems is essential. Understanding the psychological factors that contribute to criminal tendencies can potentially create an opportunity for intervention, which can alter the trajectory of psychologically vulnerable individuals. It is important to understand, specifically, psychological distress in relation to Entitlement because it is a factor that has been meaningfully connected to criminogenic needs and illicit and criminal behavior (Fisher & Hall, 2011). Meaningful understanding of this relationship and the relationship of Entitlement to criminal deviance has important implications for treatment, intervention, and eventual prevention of this problematic cycle in an increasingly vulnerable group.

### Hypotheses I and II

Of the higher order MMPI-2-RF scales, only Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction was able to accurately predict Entitlement scores. When looking at other factors of criminogenic thinking, the higher order scales had varying predictive abilities. Behavioral/Externalizing Dysfunction (BXD) and Thought Dysfunction (THD) were the best predictors, which reliably predicted three criminal thinking scales each. BXD predicted *Justification*, *Power Orientation*, and *Cold Heartedness*. THD predicted *Power Orientation*, *Criminal Rationalization*, and *Personal Irresponsibility*. This finding is comparable to those from previous studies, which have demonstrated a predictive relationship between BXD, THD, and expressions of criminal behavior (Tarescavage et al., 2014).

There is documented research that supports the weakness of the Emotional/Internalizing Dysfunction (EID) scale in predicting criminal thinking and activity. Tareshavage et al. (2014) found that BXD and THD were significant predictors of violation probation after felonious crimes, but EID was not. Similarly, in 2019, Tareshavage et al. found that when predicting institutional violence, only THD, and not BXD or EID, was significantly reliable. Further, many of the TCU items are expressed through the lens of actions or external behaviors (Knight et al., 2006). For example, item 23 states “It is okay to commit crime in order to pay for the things you need” (*Entitlement*) and item 6 reads “seeing someone cry makes you sad” (*Cold Heartedness*). While both of these items pull for internal experiences, *believing* it is okay to commit crime and *feeling* sad, they are worded so as to express these concepts with external behaviors: *committing* crime and *seeing* someone cry. In this way, the TCU may better measure externalizing behaviors in criminal thinking.

### **Hypothesis III**

As neither THD nor EID predicted Entitlement, a comparison of the predictive ability cannot be made regarding those scales. As for BXD, this scale best predicted *Power Orientation* followed by Entitlement, *Justification*, and *Cold Heartedness* and did not predict *Criminal Rationalization*. Therefore, while BXD was a better predictor of Entitlement than most factors of criminogenic thinking, it better predicted *Power Orientation*. This finding may be explained by the established connection between undercontrolled behavior and feelings of Entitlement. In a 2010 study, Bouffard showed that entitlement scales were significantly correlated with self-control. That is, higher levels of entitlement occurred with lower self-control.

A resulting implication is one of a notable relationship between outward behavior and Entitlement. Knight et al. (2006), the developers of the TCU, state that those who score high on

the *Power Orientation* scale “typically show an outward display of aggression in attempt to control their external environment” (p. 164). Since BXD is defined as “problems associated with under-controlled behavior,” high predictability between the two is a logical relationship (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008, p. 6).

### **Clinical Implications**

This study provides context essential to understanding people with highly entitled personalities. When we view Entitlement as a psychological vulnerability and approach it with curiosity, we find that often, Entitlement results from true experiences of inequity. Furthermore, Entitlement is often formed in early childhood as a result of being denied certain essential resources and emotional support. With this in mind, early intervention is important in the treatment of these individuals. Professionals should work to identify children who are at risk of developing Entitled personality traits and work to bolster protective factors in their lives. This can mean connecting them to services that provide access to adequate nutrition and health resources. This may also include providing wraparound treatment to children and their caregivers to support the development and maintenance of healthy relationships in the child’s life. However, even with the best intentions of support, some individuals may experience Entitled personality traits later in life. Understanding the development of Entitlement can improve the therapeutic relationship and increase empathy and compassion. Conceptualizing Entitlement as the symptom of adverse experiences, instead of as an intentional way of being, allows room for supportive treatment, characterized by empathy and positive regard, to occur.

### **Limitations**

There are several limitations to the current study. The participants in this study were limited by gender, racial and ethnic identity, and geographic location. Therefore, the



generalizability of the results is limited to White male incarcerated individuals within rural areas. Because the demographic questionnaire and several measures, including the TCU and ACEs are self-report, there is the potential for over- or underreporting, intentional deceit, and random response patterns.

Performing research assessment within a forensic setting provides unique limitations. For assessment to be valid, it must be compared with representative populations (Aggarwal & Joseph, 2020). However, the majority of available, validated measures are not normed with incarcerated individuals. This limitation is highlighted by the documented phenomenon of cognitive decline in incarcerated populations. In a 2018 study, Umbach et al. (2018) showed that while in prison, incarcerated individuals declined cognitively and in emotion regulation and recognition. This study offers several theoretical influences that account for this decline, including deprivation of self-determination and autonomy, sustained physical and psychological distress, lack of stimulation, victimization, and sleep deprivation (Umbach et al., 2020). Another limitation of assessment within incarceration facilities is lack of control at the facility (Aggarwal & Joseph, 2020). The researcher had limited control over the location where the assessment was located. Therefore, there was little control over distractions (e.g., auditory and visual), interruptions, or use of space. For example, in this study, two assessors and two incarcerated individuals would complete the assessments within one shared space, creating a number of distractions and uncontrolled influences. Incarcerated individuals have limited access to resources and are a marginalized population. Therefore, their interaction with the researcher involves a notable power imbalance. This may have influenced incarcerated individuals' performance on their assessments.

Another relevant limitation is present in the inherent cultural bias of cognitive assessment, such as the Woodcock Johnson-IV (McGrew & Woodcock, 2001). Cognitive assessment bias occurs with varying degrees of familiarity with test-taking and the type of educational exposure received (Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016). Further, these tests can be biased against those whose primary language is other than that for which the test was standardized (Lowe et al., 2013). Many instruments may not include items that are culturally relevant to all cultural groups and may have items that do not have the same meaning across cultural groups. Finally, bias exists within the norming of the assessment due to the cumulative process of bias in the method, construct, and content of the assessment process (Shuttleworth-Edwards, 2016).

### **Future Directions**

While this study contributes interesting information to ongoing research of Entitlement and incarcerated populations, potential avenues for future research also emerge. Further research is needed to examine the multiple facets of Entitlement, as well as the numerous relevant kinds of Entitlement (e.g., racial entitlement, narcissistic entitlement, etc.). Further, because of the notable connection between externalizing behaviors and Entitlement, future research should explore the behavioral aspects of Entitlement, as well as their relationships to types of criminal offenses.

As previously mentioned, some of the measures in this study are inherently biased against people of color, as they were normed on White populations. This is especially problematic when employed in forensic settings because of the overrepresentation of people of color in incarcerated populations. Due to the geographic location of this study, and the majority demographic of White individuals, this bias was somewhat mitigated. However, this should be noted and accounted for in future research. Because the TCU is such a brief instrument and examines six factors, this

research may be bolstered by the use of an instrument with an increased focus on Entitlement specifically. This study revealed the importance of Entitlement and its role in identifying at-risk individuals, as well as its development over the lifespan. Understanding that Entitlement development is often rooted in early childhood experiences and caregiving, more work should be done to explore how to better measure Entitlement as a construct. Research revealed Entitlement measures with a focus on academic entitlement, racial entitlement, and criminal entitlement but no solid measure of overall Entitlement or Entitlement as a personality trait. A better measure of this construct is critical in moving forward the study of Entitlement for the ultimate goal of early intervention and prevention of problematic levels of Entitlement. In addition, a measure that is normed on a diverse population, rather than a White population, would better serve future research endeavors.

Over the course of this study, important contextual information was revealed for consideration. For example, with the understanding that Entitlement is often developed in early childhood and can be a result of repeated denial of certain needs such as safety, food, shelter, and love, we recognize that individuals who belong to certain racial and ethnic groups as well as socioeconomic classes, are more likely to be denied these needs. Therefore, these groups are at higher risk of developing higher Entitlement and are less likely to have the protective factors needed to intervene to prevent them from turning to criminal behavior. With this in mind, this research should be replicated with a more diverse sample in order to support these at-risk groups. For example, replicating this study with individuals of disenfranchised, marginalized identities such as individuals of racial and ethnic minorities, could shed meaningful light on comparisons between Entitlement in disenfranchised groups and majority groups. This creates more opportunity for future real-life applications of this research.

Additionally, a qualitative component has the potential to add meaningful contextual information to early formation of Entitlement and its role in developing capacity for criminal behavior. Given the developmental lens employed in this study to examine Entitlement, qualitative reports from participants could offer a richer understanding of the context of their development and influences upon them. This may also reveal even more avenues for future research. Conducting additional qualitative research also offers the propensity to amplify the voices of these disenfranchised groups, furthering the social justice mission of this research. The inclusion of qualitative narratives may also ameliorate some of the limitations of this study. For example, because meaningful data are lost through lack of influence over control variables and assessment bias, the addition of qualitative narratives could bolster the information of this study. The focus on those disenfranchised groups who are overrepresented in incarcerated populations makes this research a powerful tool in changing the future landscape of Entitlement as vulnerability.

## **Conclusion**

The present study sought to better understand the role of Entitlement in criminal behavior and its potential contribution to psychological vulnerability. The researcher looked at personality constructs, including Behavior/Externalizing, Emotional/Internalizing, and Thought Dysfunction, and their relationship to Entitlement and criminal thinking. The results of this study were inconsistently aligned with previous research on Entitlement and offered unique insights to the established body of research. The current results indicated that Behavior/Externalizing Dysfunction predicted Entitlement, as well as a number of other facets of criminal thinking, and provided continued support for the predictive relationship between Behavior/Externalizing and Thought Dysfunction and criminal thinking. These findings added to our understanding of

Entitlement and criminal thinking and their relationship to psychological constructs, as well as created considerations for future exploration.

The current findings have meaningful implications for the future of this at-risk population. The developmental trajectory of criminal thinking and recidivism are exceedingly important in helping to identify and support those who are at risk of future criminal behavior and incarceration. Further, data show that individuals of minority racial and ethnic backgrounds are at significantly higher risk of becoming incarcerated, and this research has the potential to inform future exploration and amelioration of this inequity. Such future research could lead to the development of methods of early identification and intervention with at-risk individuals, reducing the likelihood of criminal behavior and drastically improving their future quality of life. Disseminating this information to key early-intervention groups, such as pediatricians, early educators, child welfare workers, parents, and caregivers could allow them to provide positive and avoid negative Entitlement-development experiences and focus support toward already at-risk children. In the same way that speech and language developmental supports provide children with healthy speech development, this research could provide supportive methods that increase healthy development of Entitled personality traits.

**Table 4.1***Multiple Regression Analyses*

	BXD		THD		EID	
	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$	$\beta$	$R^2$
Entitlement (Domain A)	.343**	.139**	.107		-.080	
Domain B	.334**	.196***	.179		.008	
Domain C	.490***	.367***	.217*		.026	
Domain D	.277*	.076	.050		-.151	
Domain E	.096	.151**	.379**		-.197	
Domain F	.171	.129*	.279*		-.067	

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , and \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$

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## APPENDIX A: DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your age? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What is your race? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What state and county are you from? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Choose from the following about your education level (Circle one):
  - a. Did not finish high school (What was the last grade you attended? \_\_\_\_\_)
  - b. Graduated high school
  - c. Received GED
  - d. Some college
    - i. What year of college did you stop attending? \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. Or, what year of college are you currently enrolled in? \_\_\_\_\_
  - e. College degree
  - f. Some graduate degree (Master's or Doctorate)
    - i. What year did you leave graduate school did you stop attending? \_\_\_\_\_
    - ii. Or, what year of graduate school are you currently enrolled in? \_\_\_\_\_
  - g. Graduate Degree
5. What is your relationship status (Circle one)?
  - a. Single
  - b. Have Partner/Girlfriend/Boyfriend
  - c. Married
  - d. Divorced
  - e. Widowed
6. Do you have any children (Circle one)?    Yes        No
  - a. If so, how many children do you have? \_\_\_\_\_
7. Choose from the following about your employment:
  - a. Did you have a job before your incarceration (Circle one)?    Yes        No
  - b. Do you expect to have a job after you are released (Circle one)?    Yes        No
8. Are you on Disability (Circle one)?    Yes    No
  - a. If yes, what is your disability? \_\_\_\_\_

9. How much money did you make in a year before becoming incarcerated? \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your status (Choose one): Federal Inmate \_\_\_\_ County Inmate \_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_
11. What have you been charged with? \_\_\_\_\_
12. When is your release date? \_\_\_\_\_
13. Do you have a place to live when you are released (Circle one)?  
Yes                      No                      Don't Know
14. How many misdemeanors have you been charged with in your life? \_\_\_\_\_
15. How many felonies have you been charged with in your life? \_\_\_\_\_
16. Are you awaiting trial (Circle one)? Yes      No
17. Have you been in jail/prison before this time (Circle one)? Yes      No
- a. If yes, how many years have you served before this time? \_\_\_\_\_
18. Have you ever been diagnosed with a mental illness? \_\_\_\_\_
- a. If so, which one(s)? \_\_\_\_\_
19. Before this time in jail, did you ever drink alcohol (Circle one)? Yes      No
20. Before this time in jail, did you ever use other drugs (Circle one)? Yes      No
- a. If yes, which ones \_\_\_\_\_
21. Have you ever been in treatment or therapy? \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B: PERMISSIONS

### The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEs)

#### The Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire (ACEs)

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention. (2014).

#### Texas Christian University – Criminal Thinking Scale (TCU)

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## APPENDIX C: ACES QUESTIONNAIRE

### Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire

Finding your ACE Score ra hbr 10 24 06

**While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:**

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...  
 Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?  
**or**  
 Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...  
 Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?  
**or**  
**Ever** hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever**...  
 Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?  
**or**  
 Try to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
4. Did you **often** feel that ...  
 No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?  
**or**  
 Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
5. Did you **often** feel that ...  
 You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?  
**or**  
 Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
7. Was your mother or stepmother:  
**Often** pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?  
**or**  
**Sometimes or often** kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?  
**or**  
**Ever** repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_
10. Did a household member go to prison?  
 Yes No If yes enter 1 \_\_\_\_\_

**Now add up your "Yes" answers: \_\_\_\_\_ This is your ACE Score**

## APPENDIX D: TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY CRIMINAL THINKING SCALE SELF-REPORT FORM

<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> Client ID#	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> Today's Date	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> Facility ID#	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> Zip Code	<div style="border-bottom: 1px solid black; height: 15px; width: 100%;"></div> Administration
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### TCU CTSFORM

<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Disagree</i>	<i>Uncertain</i>	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Agree</i>
<i>Strongly</i>				<i>Strongly</i>
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)

**Please indicate how much you AGREE  
or DISAGREE with each statement.**

- |   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
|---|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. You get upset when you hear about someone who has lost everything in a natural disaster. ....              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 2. You are locked-up because you had a run of bad luck. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 3. The real reason you are locked-up is because of your race. ....  | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 4. When people tell you what to do, you become aggressive. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 5. Anything can be fixed in court if you have the right connections. ....                                     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 6. Seeing someone cry makes you sad. ....   | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 7. You rationalize your actions with statements like "Everyone else is doing it, so why shouldn't I?" ....    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 8. Bankers, lawyers, and politicians get away with breaking the law every day. ....                           | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 9. You have paid your dues in life and are justified in taking what you want. ....                            | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 10. When not in control of a situation, you feel the need to exert power over others. ....                    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 11. When being asked about the motives for engaging in crime, you point out how hard your life has been. .... | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| 12. You are sometimes so moved by an experience that you feel emotions you cannot describe. ....              | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |





Client ID#	Today's Date	Facility ID#	Zip Code	Administration
------------	--------------	--------------	----------	----------------

	<i>Disagree Strongly</i> (1)	<i>Disagree</i> (2)	<i>Uncertain</i> (3)	<i>Agree</i> (4)	<i>Agree Strongly</i> (5)
28. The only way to protect yourself is to be ready to fight. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
29. You are not to blame for everything you have done. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
30. It is unfair that you are locked-up when bankers, lawyers, and politicians get away with their crimes. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
31. Laws are just a way to keep poor people down. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
32. Your good behavior should allow you to be irresponsible sometimes. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
33. It is okay to commit crime in order to live the life you deserve. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
34. Prosecutors often tell witnesses to lie in court. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
35. You justify the crime you commit by telling yourself that if you had not done it, someone else would have. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
36. You may be a criminal, but your environment made you that way. ....	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## APPENDIX E: TEXAS CHRISTIAN UNIVERSITY CRIMINAL THINKING SCALE ITEM SCORING GUIDE

### TCU CTSFORM – Criminal Thinking Scales *Scales and Item Scoring Guide*

**Scoring Instructions.** Items shown below from this assessment are *re-grouped by scales*, and response categories are 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree. Scores for *each scale* are calculated as follows (and no more than half of the items for any scale can be missing).

- Find and reverse the scoring for reflected items (i.e., those designated with ®) by –
  - a. subtracting the response value (1 to 5) for this item from “6”,  
(e.g., if the response is “2”, the *revised* score is “4” [i.e., 6-2=4]),
2. Sum the response values of all non-missing items for each scale,
3. Divide the sum of item responses by the number of items included (yielding an average),
4. Multiply this average by 10 (in order to *rescale* the score so it ranges from 10 to 50)  
(e.g., an average response of “2.6” for a scale therefore becomes a score of “26”).

#### **A. Entitlement (EN)\***

9. You have paid your dues in life and are justified in taking what you want.
22. You feel you are above the law.
23. It is okay to commit crime in order to pay for the things you need.
24. Society owes you a better life.
32. Your good behavior should allow you to be irresponsible sometimes.
33. It is okay to commit crime in order to live the life you deserve.

#### **B. Justification (JU)\***

7. You rationalize your actions with statements like  
“Everyone else is doing it, so why shouldn’t I?”
11. When being asked about the motives for engaging in crime, you  
point out how hard your life has been.
16. You find yourself blaming the victims of some of your crimes.
25. Breaking the law is no big deal as long as you do not physically harm someone.
26. You find yourself blaming society and external circumstances for the problems  
in your life.
35. You justify the crimes you commit by telling yourself that if you had not  
done it, someone else would have.

#### **C. Power Orientation (PO)\***

4. When people tell you what to do, you become aggressive.
10. When not in control of a situation, you feel the need to exert power over others.
13. You argue with others over relatively trivial matters.
14. If someone disrespects you then you have to straighten them out,  
even if you have to get physical.
15. You like to be in control.
20. You think you have to pay back people who mess with you.
28. The only way to protect yourself is to be ready to fight.

**D. Cold Heartedness (CH)**

1. You get upset when you hear about someone who has lost everything in a natural disaster. ®
6. Seeing someone cry makes you sad. ®
12. You are sometimes so moved by an experience that you feel emotions you cannot describe. ®
17. You feel people are important to you. ®
27. You worry when a friend is having problems. ®

**E. Criminal Rationalization (CN)**

5. Anything can be fixed in court if you have the right connections.
8. Bankers, lawyers, and politicians get away with breaking the law every day.
18. This country's justice system was designed to treat everyone equally. ®
19. Police do worse things than do the "criminals" they lock up.
30. It is unfair that you are locked-up when bankers, lawyers, and politicians get away with their crimes.
34. Prosecutors often tell witnesses to lie in court.

**F. Personal Irresponsibility (PI)**

2. You are locked-up because you had a run of bad luck.
3. The real reason you are locked-up is because of your race.
21. Nothing you do here is going to make a difference in the way you are treated.
29. You are not to blame for everything you have done.
31. Laws are just a way to keep poor people down.
36. You may be a criminal, but your environment made you that way.

---

\*A revised "Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles (PICTS)" scale, taken from Walters, G. D. (1998). *Changing lives of crime and drugs: Intervening with substance-abusing offenders*. New York: John Wiley & Sons.

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## **APPENDIX F: FREQUENTLY USED TERMS**

Entitlement: “a personality trait characterized by pervasive and enduring feelings of deservingness for more goods, services, or special treatment than others, with or without a dutifully earned right to those benefits” (Grubbs & Exline, 2016)

Criminality: Behavior contrary to or forbidden by law; illegal actions

Criminogenic Thinking: Attitudes, cognitive processes, neutralizations, and excuses that support or defend criminal activity (Folk et al., 2018); a major risk factor for both the onset and the maintenance of criminal behavior

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-2-Restructured Form Scales:

Behavior/Externalizing Dysfunction (BXD): Problems associated with undercontrolled behavior

Thought Dysfunction (THD): Problems associated with disordered thinking

Emotion/Internalizing Dysfunction (EID): Problems associated with mood and affect

Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scales Domains:

Domain A Entitlement: believing individuals deserve special treatment, misidentifying wants as needs, and conveying a sense of ownership and privilege

Domain B Justification: a thinking pattern characterized by minimizing the seriousness of antisocial acts and justifying actions based on external circumstances

Domain C Power Orientation: using aggression and manipulation as an attempt to control the external environment and achieve a sense of power

Domain D Coldheartedness: callousness and a lack of emotional involvement in relationships with others

Domain E Criminal Rationalization: having a negative attitude toward the law and authority figures

Domain F Personal Irresponsibility: the degree to which an individual accepts ownership for criminal actions and blames others for those actions (Knight et. al, 2006).