Materialism, Subjective Well-being, and Entitlement

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Abstract

The present article examines interrelationships between materialism, subjective well-being, and entitlement. Three entitlement attitudes (active, passive, and revengeful) are examined as possible outcomes of materialism, whereas subjective well-being (SWB) is regarded as a potential mediator and moderator of this relationship. The study analyzed data from a sample of Polish citizens (N = 534). Active entitlement, which is defined as a focus on self-interest and self-promotion, was positively correlated with materialism and SWB. Passive entitlement, or belief in the world as a net of obligations with a focus on group interest, was positively related to materialism only among individuals with a low level of SWB. Revengeful entitlement, defined as difficulties in forgiving insults, was negatively related to SWB and positively to materialism. Results are discussed in the context of the research literature on materialism and subjective well-being.

Keywords: Materialism; Subjective Well-being; Entitlement.

Investigation of the relationships between materialism and well-being on the one hand, and entitlement and materialism on the other, is not a new idea in social research (see Kasser, 2010; Lash, 1979; Twenge, 2006). Even though this idea is not a novel one, relatively few studies have examined the interrelations between the three variables of entitlement, subjective well-being, and materialism, respectively. Twenge & Campbell (2009) published a representative example of work exploring these interrelationships. In their study of American youth, Twenge

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& Campbell described the way in which a materialistic culture results in increased levels of narcissism, entitlement, and dissatisfaction. While this study made a significant contribution to the field, many questions remain to be answered. One of the most important of these questions is identifying the possible link between materialism and entitlement and the degree to which this relation is mediated or moderated by subjective well-being. The inclusion in the same survey of measurements of materialism, entitlement and subjective well-being offers a chance for direct examination of their interrelations (well-being as a mediator of relationship between materialism and entitlement). The other problem yet to be resolved in the research is the oversimplified conceptualization of entitlement. In addition to addressing relationships between well-being, materialism and entitlement, the approach adopted in the present work proposes a three-dimensional understanding of this phenomenon of entitlement alone (based on active entitlement, passive entitlement and revengefulness). This three-dimensional model allows for more precise measurement demonstrating possible differences in linking entitlement with materialism and subjective well-being. The makes a unique contribution to the literature in that it offers a complex conceptualization of entitlement (as a multidimensional phenomenon) and tests these relationships using national-level sample in Poland.

**Materialism and its Psychological Consequences**

The concept of materialism is broadly defined in sociology, economics, and consumer psychology (see Ahuvia & Wong, 1995 for a review). Richins & Dawson (1992) defined materialism as “a set of centrally held beliefs about the importance of possessions in one’s life” (p. 308). Some researchers describe materialistic individuals are those who pursue fame, status, and wealth as desired outcomes (Górnik-Durose, 2005; Kasser, 2002; Zawadzka, 2006). A focus on the possession of material goods could be described in terms of external goal orientation (see Kasser, 2010). This attitude is an integral part of consumerism and consumption, such as that often observed in countries with developed economies (Kasser, 2010).

Most studies on materialism focus on its negative aspects, especially in the context of decreasing life satisfaction (Belk, 1985; Kasser & Ryan, 1993 Kasser, 2002, 2010), egoistic behaviors (Sheldon & McGregor, 2000), and narcissism (Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Focus on materialistic goals should be understood in terms of self-enhancement and egoistic concentration on self-interest (Kasser, 2002), so that an important negative outcome of materialism could be the increasing level of entitlement (see Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

**Entitlement – Basic Definitions**

In psychology and sociology, entitlement is commonly defined as: (1) a belief that one deserves special treatment (Bishop & Lane, 2002; Campbell et al., 2004; Exline et al., 2004); or, (2) the expectation that individual needs will be supported by other people and public institutions (Krzęzewski, 1990; Lewicka, 2005).

Despite specific differences between definitions of entitlement, this concept is typically linked to self-interest. Two main approaches dominate the psychological literature regarding entitlement. The first, which is rooted in clinical psychology, links entitlement and narcissism. In this approach, entitlement is understood as an exploitative orientation, related to inflated self-esteem and an unjustified demand for special treatment because of the person’s perceived special capabilities, characteristics, or position (Bishop & Lane, 2002). It is further related to revengefulness and difficulties with forgiveness (Exline et al., 2004). The second approach to understanding entitlement within the psychological literature focuses on analyzing entitlement within the context of fairness, justification for formulating demands, and the rules of social justice, such as social solidarity norms and underlying expectations toward others (see Feather, 1999, 2003; Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984; Pelham & Hetts, 2001).
Entitlement as Multidimensional Phenomenon: New Understanding of Entitlement

Entitlement is currently understood as a complex, multidimensional phenomenon. A good example of efforts to better understand entitlement that is particularly relevant to the present discussion is the distinction between exploitive and non-exploitive types of entitlement. Exploitive entitlement is based on unrealistic self-esteem and expectations for special treatment, whereas the non-exploitive form is related to self-worth and fairness (Lessard et al., 2011). This approach to entitlement, which is the newest, indicates the necessity of adopting more complex, multidimensional approach to this concept instead of the commonly proposed one-dimensional view described earlier.

On the basis of previous research employing both Polish and international samples, we define entitlement as a multi-dimensional phenomenon consisting of three dimensions: active entitlement, passive entitlement and revengefulness (Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Baran & Piotrowski, 2011; Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., in press). The first of these dimensions, active entitlement, is based on protecting one’s own rights while neglecting others’ interests and doing so through means of self-assertion. Active entitlement is positively related to an internal locus of control, high self-esteem, and approval of hierarchical social order (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009). Passive entitlement, the second dimension, is based on seeing the social world as a net of obligations between individuals and public institutions with concentration on one’s own group interest. This attitude is related to the expectation that society and government will provide allowances for citizens. Passive entitlement is positively correlated with an external locus of control, egalitarian social order, acceptance of a welfare state and a left-wing economic ideology but negatively correlated with self-esteem (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009). Finally, revengefulness – the third dimension - may be defined as “difficulties in forgiving sustained insults” (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009, p. 160). It is unrelated to self-esteem (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009), but it correlates negatively with agreeableness, openness to experience, and collectivism (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2010). Revengefulness is also related to a negative vision of the social world including low levels of interpersonal trust and a strong belief that life represents a zero-sum game (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2012). This last dimension is based on protection of self-interest when it is violated and is preventive in character.

Subjective Well-being: Concept and Dimensions

Subjective well-being refers to the positive self-evaluation of one’s own life (Andrews & Robinson, 1991). Diener (1984) reviews distinct definitions of subjective well-being and concludes that there are three common points in the field: first, that SWB is subjective. That is, it can be understood only in the context of individual experience. Second, that it is positively oriented: it assumes experiencing positive outcomes, and it is not equal to the absence of negative factors, as many other psychological measures do. Finally, it is global in that it reflects an overall assessment of one's life. It is generally considered that this life assessment is made on cognitive and affective basis. Thus, there are two dimensions of SWB: cognitive (operationalized by life satisfaction) and affective (lower negative affect and higher positive affect). Despite SWB being correlated with other psychological variables such as self-esteem and psychological well-being, it is distinct from both of them.

Materialism, Subjective Well-being, and Entitlement

Few studies address the relationship between entitlement and subjective well-being. Most of those that do exist have been conducted from the “narcissistic” perspective described above. A major problem with past research on entitlement and subjective well-being was that it adopted a one-dimensional approach to entitlement. The present study employed a three-factor model of
entitlement and, at the same time, allowed for specific predictions on its relationship with well-being. This paper addresses the following three research questions: (1) Is there a relationship between the dimensions of entitlement and materialism?; (2) Is there a relationship between the dimensions of entitlement and subjective well-being?; and, (3) Are there relationships among materialism, SWB, and entitlement?

“Narcissistic” entitlement, which shares similarities to active entitlement, is directly linked to materialism (see Lash, 1979; Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Given that entitlement is a multidimensional phenomenon, and that active entitlement is expressed in self-assertion and self-promotion (both related to self-interest), one might expect that the relationship between entitlement and materialism applies only to active entitlement. Revengefulness – which includes protecting of own interests when it is violated by others - can be expected to be positively related to materialism, as well. Passive entitlement, however, is a manifestation of social solidarity norms with respect for mutual obligations favoring group interests. Hence, for passive entitlement, a negative relationship with materialism should be expected. In fact, studies on values and entitlement also suggest distinct relationships between materialistic values and entitlement dimensions. Active entitlement and revengefulness have been found to be positively correlated with power, achievement, and hedonism, whereas passive entitlement has been reported to be negatively correlated with power and positively correlated with benevolence and universalism (Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Baran & Piotrowski, 2011). Given the current knowledge in the field, we expected positive correlations between materialism and active entitlement and revengefulness, but negative relationships with passive entitlement (Hypothesis 1) in response to the first research question exploring the relationship between entitlement dimensions and materialism.

Despite the limited number of studies exploring the relationship between entitlement and life satisfaction, one could expect that the dissatisfaction would promote entitlement as a reaction to feelings of unfairness resulting from a perceived discrepancy between actual and desired outcomes. Studies of narcissism also point to lower life satisfaction among narcissistic individuals who manifest higher levels of entitlement (Bishop & Lane, 2002; Raskin & Terry, 1988). Recent studies of the dimensions of entitlement point to potentially different relationships between active and passive entitlement, as well as the relationship between revengefulness and well-being. Active entitlement is related to higher self-esteem and an internal locus of control (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009). Given that relationship, it should therefore be related positively with well-being. The negative relationship between passive entitlement and self-esteem (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009) and negative relationship between egalitarianism and life satisfaction (Bălţătescu, 2005) points to a potential negative relationship between this variable and subjective well-being. Life satisfaction correlates positively with interpersonal trust (for a review see Bălţătescu, 2009), and is also related to basic personality traits, correlating negatively with neuroticism (Dobrikova, 2010). Because revengefulness is negatively related with interpersonal trust (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2012) and positively with neuroticism (Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2011), it could be related negatively with subjective well-being (Hypothesis 2) in response to the question of the relationship between the dimensions of entitlement and subjective well-being.

**The Current Study**

The present study was designed to examine the relationship between entitlement attitudes, subjective well-being, and materialism. SWB incorporated Polish adaptations of measures of its two dimensions: cognitive (measured by Satisfaction with Life Scale of Diener, 1984) and affective (measured by Affective Balance Scale of Bradburn, 1969, after Piedmont, 2007). The current project employed the Materialism Scale (Zawadzka, 2006), which contains items based on global statements, which has been validated for use with the Polish population. A review of the research indicated that no prior published study directly examines interrelations between entitlement, materialism, and well-being. The sample evaluated in the current project was
conducted using a general Polish sample from distinct socio-economic levels, educational backgrounds, and geographic areas.

**Method**

**Participants**
The sample consisted of 534 participants (48.6% male, 51.4% female), ranging in age from 15 to 76 years old ($M = 34.29$, $SD = 13.58$). One third of the participants (32.2%) lived in rural areas, while 11.8% resided in small towns, 19.7% in a medium-sized towns, 20.8% in cities with a population below half million of residents, and 15.5% in cities with a population exceeding half a million residents. Thirty one percent of participants had elementary school education, 32.7% high school-level education, and 30.1% higher education. Self-reported socio-economic status of respondents family (on 7-point scale) was $M = 4.02$ ($SD = 1.20$). Participants were rewarded for their time with a small financial gratification (points in research agency loyalty program, which they could exchange to offered products). The research was conducted with support of ARIADNA, the Polish Internet research panel.

**Measures and Procedure**

**Demographics.** Participants completed a demographic questionnaire in which they indicated their age, gender, family economic status (on 7-point scale, answers range from 1 – *significantly below average*, to 4 – *average*, to 7 – *significantly above average*), education level (1- elementary, 2 - professional elementary school, 3 - medium-level education, 4 - higher education-BA, 5 - higher education – MA, categories 1 with 2 and 4 with 5 were pooled), and the size of their place of residence (1 - village, 2 – small town with less than 20,000 inhabitants, 3 - medium town: 20,000–99,000 inhabitants, 4 – city: 100,000 to 500,000 inhabitants, 5 – big city: above 500,000 inhabitants).

**Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS).** The SWLS is a 5-item scale developed by Diener, Emmons, Larson & Griffin (1985, Polish version Juczynski, 2001). The SWLS provides a measure of global life satisfaction. Items are in Likert scale format with options ranging from 1 (*I strongly disagree*) to 7 (*I strongly agree*). Reliability of the SWLS is high, $\alpha = .87$ (Diener, 1984). Validity of scale has been demonstrated prior research (Pavot & Diener, 1993).

**Affective Balance Scale (ABS).** The ABS (Affective Balance Scale, Bradburn, 1969 after Piedmont, 2007, Polish version Czapiński & Panek, 2005) serves as a measure of the frequency with which an individual experiences specific emotions. The scale consists of 10 items, five related to positive emotions and five related to negative. Respondents are asked how often they experienced particular emotion during past year and answer in Likert scale format with responses ranging from 1 (*Never*) to 5 (*Very often*). The validity of the ABS is well-established (Bradburn, 1969, after Piedmont, 2007). Overall affective balance is calculated by subtracting negative emotions frequency to positive emotions.

**Entitlement Questionnaire.** The Entitlement Questionnaire was developed by Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska (2009) and has been implemented in 27 different countries (Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., in press). The 24-item scale serves as a measure of entitlement attitudes. It consists of three subscales – active entitlement, passive entitlement, and revengefulness - each consisting of 8 items. The four items for revengefulness are reversed meaning. Response options on the scale range from 1 (*I strongly disagree*) to 6 (*I strongly agree*). Originally developed in Poland (36-item version), the Entitlement Questionnaire has been translated and adapted to numerous languages using a process of translation, back translations and simultaneous translations (Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Piotrowski (...), Wills-Herrera, in press). Validity of the scale was demonstrated in several studies, including a general Polish sample ($N = 1,900$) (Piotrowski & Żemojtel-Piotrowska, 2009; Żemojtel-Piotrowska & Piotrowski, 2011; Żemojtel-Piotrowska, Baran & Piotrowski, 2011).

**Materialism Scale** (Zawadzka, 2006). An abbreviated, 5-item version of the Materialism Scale was employed in the present study. The Materialism Scale serves as a measure of materialism defined as the willing possession of many goods and satisfaction with possessing them. Scale answers range from 1 (*I absolutely agree*) to 5 (*I absolutely disagree*).
All participants were administered the preceding scales in the following order: demographic questions, SWLS, Affective Balance Scale, Entitlement Questionnaire, and Materialism Scale. On the basis of used measures one global indicator of the well-being was calculated by adding standardized mean scores for: SWLS and Affective Balance. Data were collected by used CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interview) system – participants are randomly recruited from general research panel. Research panel contains presently about 80 000 participants, and it is representative for internet-users population in Poland.

Results and Discussion

Descriptive Statistics
Mean scores, standard deviations, and reliabilities of measures are reported in Table 1. All reliabilities were at acceptable levels. Due to the non-homogenous nature of active entitlement (as comprised by self-assertion and self-enhancement, see Żemojtel-Piotrowska et al., in press) and revengefulness (as comprised in half by reversed items) the best indicator of reliability is the Spearman-Brown rho test.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Measures Used in Study 1 (N = 534)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>α</th>
<th>Spearman-Brown rho</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SWLS</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS: PA</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>.84</td>
<td>.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABS: NA</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>.79</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active entitlement</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive entitlement</td>
<td>4.56</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revengefulness</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td>.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: SWLS – Satisfaction with Life Scale, ABS – Affective Balance Scale, PA – positive affect, NA – negative affect

Correlational Analyses
Table 2 reports correlations between entitlement attitudes, materialism, and subjective well-being. As predicted by Hypothesis 1, active entitlement was positively correlated with SWB, whereas correlations between passive entitlement and revengefulness with subjective well-being were both negative. As anticipated by Hypothesis 2, only a focus on individual interest, such as in the case of active entitlement and revengefulness, was significantly related to materialism. Passive entitlement correlated negatively with materialism, but it was unrelated with subjective well-being.

Table 2: R-Pearson Correlations between Entitlement Attitudes, Materialism, and Well-Being (N = 534)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AC</th>
<th>PA</th>
<th>Revengefulness</th>
<th>Materialism</th>
<th>Well-being</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>.10*</td>
<td>.03</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>.23***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-.11*</td>
<td>-0.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RV</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.16**</td>
<td>-.23***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materialism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-0.02</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: AC – Active entitlement; PA – Passive Entitlement, RV – Revengefulness.

*p < .05; **p < .01; p < .001 (2-tailed).
**Regression Analyses**

In order to examine more complex interrelations between entitlement attitudes, materialism, and subjective well-being, hierarchical regression analyses were performed separately for each dimension of entitlement. Entitlement attitudes were entered into the equation as the predicted variable, and materialism and subjective well-being were predictors.

To control for demographic variables, data for age, gender, family economic status, and education level were introduced to the regression model in the first step. Based on the preliminary correlational analyses, we did not control for size of population of one’s town of residence. In the second step, mean scores for materialism and the summarized indicator of subjective well-being were introduced into the equation. A possible interaction between materialism and subjective well-being was tested in the third step of the analyses (see Table 2).

**Table 3: Multiple Hierarchical Regression Analyses for Entitlement Attitudes (N = 534)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Active entitlement</th>
<th>Passive entitlement</th>
<th>Revengefulness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 1</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.01 (-0.15)</td>
<td>-.10** (-2.36)</td>
<td>.04 (1.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.66)</td>
<td>-.09* (-2.05)</td>
<td>-.06 (-1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>.05 (1.16)</td>
<td>-.16*** (-3.59)</td>
<td>.01 (0.30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status</td>
<td>.13** (2.97)</td>
<td>-.10* (-2.27)</td>
<td>-.05 (-1.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.02*</td>
<td>.05***</td>
<td>.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 2</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.05 (-1.23)</td>
<td>-.11* (-2.41)</td>
<td>.06 (1.41)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.72)</td>
<td>-.09* (-2.06)</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.81)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>.02 (0.52)</td>
<td>-.16*** (-3.62)</td>
<td>.02 (0.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status</td>
<td>.03 (0.58)</td>
<td>-.11* (-2.27)</td>
<td>.02 (0.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>.27*** (6.60)</td>
<td>.01 (0.24)</td>
<td>.30*** (7.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
<td>.23*** (5.02)</td>
<td>.02 (0.45)</td>
<td>-.24*** (-5.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.12***</td>
<td>.05***</td>
<td>.14***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model 3</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-.05 (-1.20)</td>
<td>-.10* (-2.61)</td>
<td>.06 (1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>-.03 (-0.78)</td>
<td>-.08 (-1.90)</td>
<td>-.04 (-0.84)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education level</td>
<td>.02 (0.55)</td>
<td>-.16*** (-3.66)</td>
<td>.02 (0.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family status</td>
<td>.02 (0.39)</td>
<td>-.10* (-2.05)</td>
<td>.01 (0.31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Materialism</td>
<td>.18*** (2.55)</td>
<td>.21** (2.89)</td>
<td>.24*** (1.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Well-Being</td>
<td>.03 (0.21)</td>
<td>.47*** (3.32)</td>
<td>-.36** (-1.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MaterialismoWell-being</td>
<td>.23 (1.50)</td>
<td>-.52*** (-3.36)</td>
<td>.14 (0.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjusted R²</td>
<td>.13***</td>
<td>.07***</td>
<td>.14***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Entries are standardized regressions coefficients, T-ratios in parentheses.

* p < .05. ** p < .01. *** p < .001.

Active entitlement was predicted by higher family status in the first step, $F(4, 527) = 3.14, p = .014$. Higher levels of materialism and well-being predicted active entitlement, $F(6, 526) = 13.21, p < .001$. There were no interaction effects for materialism and well-being, $t(532) = 1.50, p = .133$.

Passive entitlement was predicted by lower education level, lower family status, younger age, and gender (higher among women), $F(4, 529) = 7.32, p < .001$. Passive entitlement was unrelated to materialism and well-being; however, there was a strong interaction between these two predictors, $t(532) = -3.36, p < .001$. Simple slope analyses revealed that among individuals with low levels of well-being, passive entitlement was predicted by higher levels of materialism, $β = .22, p < .001, t(125) = 2.51$. Among individuals with average levels of well-being, materialism did not predict passive entitlement level, $β = -.08, p = .192, t(274) = -1.31$, as well as among individuals with higher levels of well-being, $β = -.09, p = .303, t(129) = -1.03$ (see Figure 2). Thus, passive entitlement seems to be positively related to materialism, but only among people with low levels of reported well-being, suggesting a focus on self-interest among people experiencing dissatisfaction (see Kasser, 2002).
Revengefulness was unrelated with demographic factors, $F(4, 532) = 0.83, p = .474$. It was predicted by higher level of materialism and lower level of SWB, change $F(2, 382) = 42.93, p < .001$. There were no interaction effects for materialism and SWB on revengefulness, $t(532) = 0.94, p = .348$.

Generally, results confirmed Hypothesis 1 by identifying a positive relationship between materialism, active entitlement and revengefulness. However, the anticipated negative relationship between materialism and passive entitlement was not observed. This last relationship appeared more complex than assumed. Additional in-depth analyses revealed a positive relationship between materialism and subjective well-being only among individuals with lower than average level of SWB. Hypothesis 2 was also confirmed in general – active entitlement was positively related with SWB, whereas revengefulness was related with SWB negatively. Passive entitlement was not significantly related with SWB.

We decided against analyses of SWB as a mediating factor between materialism-entitlement since materialism was not related to SWB. As a result, “Path A” in the potential equation was insignificant ($\beta = -.02, p = .691, t(533) = -0.40$) and the basic condition for mediation was not fulfilled (see Preachard & Hayes, 2008). As a result, it can be said that this relation is not mediated by SWB for any dimension of entitlement.

Conclusions

Our results confirmed that entitlement attitudes are related to materialism and subjective well-being. These relationships depend, however, on the type of entitlement. Active entitlement and revengefulness are based on protecting individual interests. In the case of active entitlement, self-promotion and self-assertion dominate, while in the case of revengefulness, protection of endangered interest and tendency to reciprocate insults. Both of these attitudes were positively
related to materialism, however their relationships with SWB were opposite: positive attitudes were related to active entitlement and negative attitudes to revengefulness. The relationship between passive entitlement, SWB, and materialism was more complex than assumed. Despite the negative correlations between passive entitlement and materialism, further in-depth analyses revealed a positive relationship between materialism and passive entitlement among people with lower levels of subjective well-being. Results suggest that the interrelations between materialism, SWB, and entitlement may depend on success in fulfillment of materialistic goals. It is possible that materialistic people who have successfully met their needs are, in turn, more active in self-promotion and self-assertion. These results in line with Twenge & Campbell’s (2009, see also Twenge, 2006) analyses. In their assessment of American society, these authors report the surprising phenomenon of narcissistic entitlement stemming from a materialistic culture without the underlying fragile and diminished self-esteem typical for the narcissistic personality (see Miller et al., 2011 for more details on differences between grandiose and vulnerable narcissism and their consequences).

On the basis of the described results one could assume that materialistic people who fail in their attempts to satisfy their (materialistic) needs tend to be more revengeful and have higher expectancies toward others (people and institutions). Passive entitlement - based on belief in obligations - could be an expression of the social solidarity norm, but only among people with higher well-being and greater life success.

The present study examined the relationships between materialism and entitlement in a more nuanced manner than has been observed in previous work. Materialism could promote entitlement attitudes, especially those facets which stem from focus on self-interest. These relations are not always mediated by (or at least related to) lower subjective well-being. Although materialistic life goals may result in higher dissatisfaction (see Kasser, 2002) and higher dissatisfaction could result in higher level of some aspects of entitlement (namely revengefulness and passive entitlement), it is possible that even those individuals satisfied with their material possessions may demonstrate an increasing level of active entitlement (see also Twenge & Campbell, 2009).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

The present research has some significant limitations. Most of studies on materialism and its outcomes, including Twenge & Campbell (2009) have been conducted with American (or English-speaking) samples. For this reason, one could assume that our research, employing a Polish population, cannot be directly compared to the past research in the field. The level of materialism measured by Materialism Value Scale (MVS, see Richins & Dawson, 1992) was similar among Polish and American business students (Tobacyk et al., 2011), indicating that possible cultural differences may not be as large as one could assume. Moreover, the use of a self-report measure of materialism, instead of asking about participant values hierarchies, allows for generalizing obtained results to non-Polish populations in spite of possible cultural differences in values hierarchies. Furthermore, all presented analyses are correlational in character. For this reason, the assumed direction of interdependencies between the three assessed variables is rather speculative and should be tested experimentally in the future. Given these limitations, any conclusions must be considered preliminary in character, suggesting a need for further research.

Note

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