THE ROLE OF GENDER IN THE FORMATION OF PERCEPTIONS OF GREED, AND
SUBSEQUENT SOCIAL REACTIONS

BY

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Abstract:
There is little work done that looks into gender and perceptions of greed. Using information from the first experiment in Anderson, (2014), this thesis looked at the possible role of gender in the formation of perceptions of greed as well as some of the subsequent social reactions. Two hypotheses were formed off of previous work done in the subject area. The first hypothesis is that even with distributive injustice, inference of selfish motive to acquire, and relative deprivation held constant, females will have greater perceptions of greed because males tend to view competition and aggression as normal, whereas females do not. The second hypothesis is that because of the greater perceptions of greed, females will also have greater moral outrage and personal anger. The data that was supposed to be used to find results was lost due to computer failure. Therefore, no conclusions could be found, only hypothetical possibilities.

Introduction:
Greed surrounds everybody. Many believe that it is synonymous with gluttony, selfishness, acquisitiveness, and indulgence. Some social interactions that greed can threaten are business and other common transactions, such as whether or not to lend a friend some money, or which business a person wants to purchase supplies from. If a person is seen as greedy, the likelihood of a transaction going through is low because there is a greater chance for distancing away from those who are perceived as greedy (Anderson, 2014).

However, there has yet to be a true consensus on a literary definition of what greed is, what are the social psychological workings that form greed, as well as the subsequent social reactions. Not only does the limited research not cover the underlying social
psychological workings, but also the research fails to fully cover how the perception of
greed arises among people (Sarna, 2010). There is even less research looking into how
gender plays a role in either creating perceptions of greed, or having different attitudinal
outcomes to greedy perception.

This Honors Thesis will outline a theory for whether different genders have
different social psychological antecedents that lead them to form perceptions of greed as
well as different attitudinal outcomes when faced with a dilemma created to foster greedy
behavior.

Since, to the best of my knowledge, there is no research on gender differences in
greed perceptions, and the resulting social reactions, other findings regarding gender
differences in social dilemmas can help to gain an understanding if there is an effect of
gender. The information for this study will measure greed perceptions in a social dilemma.
This is because each gender is expected to react differently to greedy situations that can be
simulated in a social dilemma and those differences can be used to hypothesize the
expected outcome of each gender.

Social dilemmas are defined as “a collective action situation in which there is a
conflict between individual and collective interest” (Dawes, 1980). In this situation, an
individual can profit from selfishness, if no one else chooses to be selfish as well. If
everyone chooses the selfish option, the whole group looses out. Sometimes, when too
many of the group members choose to pursue an individual profit rather than behave in the
group’s long term interests, dilemmas can arise. The findings about gender differences in
social dilemmas will be the basis of predicting gender differences in perceptions of greed
by helping to show that the groups differ in processing and moral formation (the creation
of morals), especially in a dilemma created to foster greedy behavior. This will be expanded upon later in the text. I will then outline hypotheses regarding these differences. My goal is to promote an understanding of gender differences in “how individuals arrive at perceptions of greed, and how they treat individuals that they perceive to be greedy” (Anderson, 2014).

This study reanalyzes data taken from Anderson (2014). The basic claim of that dissertation is that, “greed is associated with a desire for excessive materialistic gains, such as with money or the accumulation of valuable possessions” (Anderson, 2014). With this in mind, if someone concludes that there is an uneven ratio of resources that is not favorable to the person, because the other person accumulated an excessive amount of valuable possessions, there will be a perception of inequity and injustice, leading to a perception of greed.

According to Anderson (2014), perceptions of greed have three antecedents, distributive injustice, inference of selfish motive to acquire, and relative deprivation. There are also several potential outcomes. Two relevant attitudinal outcomes are personal anger and moral outrage. The model suggests that distributive injustice is moderated by both inference of selfish motive to acquire and relative deprivation, and lead to the perceptions of greed. Once perceptions of greed are established, they lead to personal anger and moral outrage. A diagram to show this relationship is shown below.
Distributive injustice refers to the perception of inequity and injustice when there is an unfavorable, uneven ratio of resources. The inference of selfish motive to acquire refers to a person assuming that another person is actively pursuing the over-reward, and did not obtain it because of a beneficial situation. Personal anger is similar to generalized anger, but only occurs when the person experiencing personal anger has their own, personal efforts impeded by the actions of the other (Anderson, 2014). Moral outrage is the anger resulting from a moral principle being violated (Anderson, 2014; Batson et. al., 2007; Montada & Schnieder, 1989).

The experiments done by Anderson (2014) were conducted in a laboratory setting, and used a common-pool resource (CPR) dilemma to explore the relationships between the variables. A common-resource dilemma occurs when there is a group of two or more decision makers who independently and simultaneously decide how much of a resource to extract from a common-pool of resources. Therefore, the amount that an individual draws from the resource pool reduces the value of future withdrawals. Another feature of a CPR dilemma is that whatever is left in the pool with propagate at some rate, 1.5 in this case, for
withdrawal in the future (Anderson, 2014). If a person chooses to extract as much as possible from the group, they will in turn benefit the most individually, but will hurt the collective group in the long run. This is because there is less that is being propagated in the end, and leaving less for others to withdrawal in the future. The CPR created a setting that is specifically relevant for studying greed perceptions because features of a CPR dilemma are well suited to exploring relative deprivation (the feelings that occur when a person is placed in an undesirable condition, state, or outcome), inference of ulterior motives, and perceptions of greed. This is because a person may choose to be selfish and take all that they can, which will in turn hurt the group, and leave others with less. However, if the person decides to take less, then they are benefiting the group as the whole. That decision to take more or less creates the environment for relative deprivation and perceptions of greed to arise. Since the decisions are made independently and simultaneously, a setting of tension between self-interests and the collective interests of both individuals is created. This tension creates a perfect situation to observe whether or not a person feels relative deprivation, assumes the other person wants to take more, and the subsequent perceptions of greed. This study used $16 as the initial resource. Each person involved could withdraw as much as $8 and any money left in the pool is multiplied by 1.5 then divided in half and given to the participants.

According to Simpson (2003), “males and females approach moral problems in distinct ways, with females emphasizing relationships and care...” Based on this, there is a reason to expect that females will want to create an environment that reduces aggression and competition, so that there is a greater chance for strong and caring relationships, rather than hostility. To this same point, “Males are more likely to view self-interested
behavior as natural, whereas females are more likely to place equal weight on their own and others’ well being” (Simpson, 2003). This statement provides evidence for men wanting to take more than women. Along these same lines, Simpson (2003) also states that, “male role includes norms that encourage competition and aggression... female role not only deemphasizes aggression but also emphasizes avoidance of aggression from other or harm to oneself” (Simpson, 2003). This means that males may have a greater tendency to take more and leave less for others, while women will foster an environment where everyone receives more of an equal share. However, if everything is held equal, since women want a more equal environment, they will be more apt to see the situation as more greedy compared to men. This is especially true since men see competition and aggression as natural, whereas women do not. Based on this logic, there will be less distributive justice and greater selfish motive to acquire in males rather than in females. Men see taking behavior as natural, rather than women, who see the taking behavior as not only unnatural, but also something that ruins the peaceful, caring and equal environment they want to create. This also leads to the conjecture that women may be more susceptible to personal anger and moral outrage because the hospitable, equal, and avoidance of aggression that women tend to create and this desire will be threatened.

Moreover, Anderson (2014) in her first hypothesis states that, “The interaction of a distributive injustice and a perceiver’s inference of an actor’s selfish motive to acquire causes perceptions of greed.” With this in mind, if someone concludes that there is an uneven ratio that is not favorable to the person, there will be a perception of inequity and injustice. This perception is also called distributive injustice. Since women are likely to create a more equal situation, as stated by Simpson (2003), then it is likely that they will
have greater perceptions of distributive injustice because they are more sensitive to when the conditions are not equal. Since men are more likely to take more, and not so sensitive to equal conditions they are more likely to experience less distributive injustice.

Although distributive injustice is a necessary condition to perceive a person as greedy, it does not imply that the actor must also pursue the over-reward. Therefore, motive comes into play as another condition to perceptions of greed. There needs to be the perception of the observer that the other person is actively trying to take more, and was not just lucky in the unfair situation. Both conditions need to be present to cause perceptions of greed. For the current study, it could be assumed that men will have a greater motive towards taking greater amounts, compared to women who will take less, and have less motivation to take. This could be taken further to suggest that since men feel it natural to take more, they would assume the other participant will do the same, and will have a greater inference of selfish motive. However, women may be expected to have a weaker inference of selfish motive, and weaker perceptions of greed.

One finding that Anderson (2014) discussed was the role of relative deprivation in the creation of perceptions of greed. She found that relative “deprivation moderated the relationship between the interaction of a distributive injustice and an inference of a selfish motive to acquire, and perceptions of greed, such that the stronger the relative deprivation, the stronger the relationship between the interaction of a distributive injustice and an inference of a selfish motive to acquire and perceptions of greed” (Anderson, 2014). There have been extensive studies done on relative deprivation, which are outlined by Davis (1956). This research has determined that “the observer feels a difference between their status and their actor's status, that this difference is attributable to an undesirable status
and a preferred status respectively, and lastly that this difference will result in relative deprivation for the observer and relative gratification for the greedy actor” (Anderson, 2014). With increasing status difference, there is a greater relative deprivation.

Desmarais and Curtis (1997) describe a study suggesting that men and women will differ in feelings of relative deprivation. They conducted an experiment testing whether there was a discrepancy between men and women when they were left in charge of allocating their own pay. They discovered that women allocated less pay to themselves than did men, even after outperforming the coworker. This result suggests that men are more likely to take more from the pool than women. This result combined with the conclusion from Anderson’s first study that states what the role of relative deprivation is, indicate that since men are more likely to take more from the pool, they will experience less relative deprivation. Since men take more, they are more likely to be placed in a position that is desirable.

Anderson’s third hypothesis, “Perceptions of greed will have a positive relationship with personal anger” (Anderson, 2014), is built off the rationale that “as individuals experiencing a distributive injustice at the hands of another, participants would therefore be expected to experience personal anger stemming from perceptions of greed” (Anderson, 2014). If all of the antecedents are held constant, it is difficult to say whether or not men or women would have stronger perceptions of greed. However, since men see competition and aggression as natural, they are less likely to have strong perceptions of greed, whereas women will have strong perceptions of greed. Since there is a positive relationship between perceptions of greed and personal anger, then women will in turn have greater personal anger as well.
To continue, Anderson’s (2014) fourth, and final hypothesis is, “perceptions of greed will have a positive relationship with moral outrage.” To look more into this hypothesis, one needs to see greed as a morally reprehensible act. Going with the idea that greed is the desire to accumulate excessive material objects, it is understandable to assume that there is an unfairness and morality component in regards to greed. Other works have already shown that there is a large association between immorality and unfairness (Bies, 1987; Cropanzano, Goldman & Folger, 2003). When gender is looked at with the same understanding of personal anger stated above, it is likely that women will also experience greater moral outrage.

Overall, the two main hypotheses looked at in this study are that even when controlling for motive to acquire, and relative deprivation between the genders, females will still perceive others as more greedy because men see competition and aggression as normal. Which would have been tested with a 3-way ANOVA.

Another hypothesis is that with greater perceptions of greed, females will also experience greater personal anger and personal outrage because of their desire to have greater equality. This hypothesis would have been tested with a regression looking at Moral Outrage, Personal Anger, and gender.

**Methods:**

The experiments done in this study were the same as Anderson (2014).

**Participants:**

170 students from the University of Arizona general population of undergraduate students participated in this study. The participants were half males and half females, were
paid based on the decisions made during the experiment, and received class credit in an amount determined by their instructors.

**Design:**

This study employed a 2 (motive/no motive) x 2(low/high acquisition behavior) between subjects design. This resulted in four conditions: Low acquisition behavior – no motive to acquire, low acquisition behavior – motive to acquire, high acquisition behavior – no motive to acquire, and high acquisition behavior – motive to acquire. The participants were randomly assigned to each condition, with 39-46 independent observations in each condition.

**Procedure and Manipulations:**

When the participants first arrive at the laboratory, they were told they would be randomly paired with another person for the study. The participants were really paired up with a fictitious opponent whose behavior was manipulated described later. The participants were led to individual rooms, given instructions, and then told they would be part of a 2-person CPR experiment, explained earlier in the paper. The initial pool that the available to the participants was $16. Each participant could choose to withdraw any non-negative integer amount up to $8. Whatever was left in the pool was then multiplied by a factor of 1.5, and the remaining amount was divided equally and added to the participant’s initial withdrawal. Once the participant made their initial withdrawal, an experimenter entered the room and calculated the final pay out on a worksheet, which was given to the participant. After, the participants answered a series of questions measuring their reactions to the person they thought was the other participant, their own feelings, and their experiences in the laboratory session.
**Manipulations:**

The first factor manipulated was how much was taken by the other for the purpose of creative different levels of distributive injustice. This was manipulated through the randomly assigned acquisition behavior of the other participant. In the low acquisition (fair) conditions, the withdrawal of the other participant was low ($2), and in the high acquisition (unfair) conditions, the withdrawal of the other participant was the full amount possible ($8).

The second manipulated factor was the (no) motive to acquire. In the motive to acquire conditions, participants were informed that the other participant in the experiment would make his or her decision regarding how much to withdraw from the resource pool on their own. This instruction was given both orally and in written form. Participants in the no motive to acquire conditions were informed that the other participant would withdraw based on a lottery determined by an eight-sided die. Instructions were given both in oral and written form. After the participants made their decisions, and any payout was calculated, the participants were informed of the results of the experiment and given a post experimental questionnaire (details of which are located in the appendices). This PEQ included measures of perceptions of greed, relative deprivation, personal anger, moral outrage, outcome fairness, the number of economics classes taken, and demographic information. The measures relevant to this current study are perceptions of greed, relative deprivation, personal anger, moral outrage, and gender. The order of the measures was counterbalanced within the study. The money was given to the participants based on the decisions they made throughout the experiment, after the PEQ was completed. The study
debriefing was administered when all experiments were complete and all data was collected. This was for an effort to control subject pool contamination.

**Measures:**

The first measure, perceptions of greed, was assessed with two measures. The first, a 4-item scale developed by Grégoire et al. (2010) to measure firm greed. This scale is reported to have acceptable reliability at $\alpha = .90$. The items from their scale were modified to refer to the other participant in the experiment, rather than the firm. These items were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale. The full text of these questions is included in Appendix 1. The second measure of perceptions of greed was developed by Anderson and Gilliland (2014) to measure perceptions of greed directly. These items were modified to account for the laboratory setting. The three items used in this study were “How greedy was the other participant in this experiment,” “Compared to the average person, how greedy would you say the other participant was in this experiment,” and “How greedy do you think most other people would say the other participant was in this experiment?” The items were scaled on a 1 (not at all greedy) to 5 (very greedy) scale and showed a reliability of $\alpha=.78$ to .90.

The second measure, relative deprivation, was measured with both an objective and subjective measure. The objective measure consisted of calculating the difference between the manipulated withdrawal from the resource pool and the participant's withdrawal from the resource pool. When the manipulated withdrawal was more than the participant's the participant was put in a state of relative deprivation. There was a possibility, in the low acquisition conditions, of the participant to experience relative gratification if their withdrawal was larger than the manipulated amount. Any relative gratification was coded
as zero in an effort to focus on relative deprivation. The subjective relative deprivation measure was collected by asking the participants, “To what extent do you feel as if you lost out as compared to the other participant?” This item was measured on a 1 (not at all) to 5 (a great deal) scale.

The third measure, personal anger was measured by using the anger subscale from the Positive and Negative Affect Scale (PANAS; Watson, Clark & Tellegen, 1988). This subscale asks participants to rate the degree to which they feel mad, irritated and angry and is measured on a 1 (do not feel at all) to 10 (feel stronger than ever have) scale. The full text of this can be seen in Appendix 1.

The fourth measure, moral outrage was measured by two separate measures. The first was an adaption of Beugré’s (2012) 4-item moral outrage subscale. Moral obligation, moral accountability, and moral outrage comprise Beugré’s deontic justice scale (DJS). This scale, and its counterparts have demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity, as well as a reliability of α=.85. The original scale items were modified to reference the participants themselves. The second measure for moral outrage also included four items. The full list of items for both of these measures are located in Appendix 1. All items in both measures were measured with a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale.

**Results:**

For the results below, data was lost at the last second of trying to complete this honors thesis, therefore it is all hypothetical and is only used to diagram what the expected results would look like if the actual tests were done. The first hypothesis would be tested using a between subjects 3-way ANOVA using the same conditions as Anderson (2014), but then also looking at gender. The expected results are presented in Table 1.
Table 1: Gender’s Role in Perceptions of Greed as a Function of Distributive Injustice and Inference of Motive to Acquire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Motive</th>
<th>No Motive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Injustice</td>
<td>Males’ averages vs Females’ averages</td>
<td>Males’ averages vs Females’ averages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributive Justice</td>
<td>Males’ averages vs Females’ averages</td>
<td>Males’ averages vs Females’ averages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The result values of the what would have been shown in this table would then have been placed into a graph to create something that would have looked like the graph below.

Graph 1: Males Versus Females in Relation to Perceptions of Greed as a Function of Distributive (In) Justice and Inference of (No) Motive to Acquire
For the second hypothesis a regression using the two independent variables of distributive (in)justice and (no) motive and one dependent variable (gender) would have been done to show results similar to the ones shown in the graph below.

Graph 2: Males V Females in Relation to Personal Anger and Moral Outrage

Further analysis of the results would have given more detail into the effect size of the conditions with each condition and would have been able to tell us more about different gender differences within each condition and whether or not they followed the same pattern as discussed above. These results would have also helped to unveil whether or not relative deprivation still moderates the relationship between distributive injustice and inference of selfish motive to acquire. Data would definitely be necessary to see the true differences in gender when looking at the factors of how greed perceptions are found as well as the social repercussions such as moral outrage and personal anger.
Discussion:

Since there is no data to base any conclusions on, it is hard to say if the two hypotheses: That even with everything held constant, Females will still perceive others as more greedy, and that because of these greater perceptions of greed, females will also have greater moral outrage and personal anger, were supported or not. However, if the results were similar to the graphs that were shown in the results section, then this would both provide support for the hypotheses, as well as the research done by Simpson (2003), which states that men see aggressive and competitive situations as more natural than do women, and that women actually try to avoid aggressive situations. The graphs above are only hypothetical and give an example of what the graphs would be expected to look like if these hypotheses were supported. What the graphs would also help to show is the possibility of there being a gender difference between the conditions, meaning that it may be possible that females may not be higher than males in each of the conditions.

There were some limitations to this study. One limitation was that since it was not a real person acting against the participant, it is not possible to see a true reaction between people. Also, since gender was not told to the participant, it is not possible to tell if there would be stronger perceptions of greed towards one gender or not. Meaning if the participant knew that the other participant was a male, would they have reacted differently than without that knowledge? It cannot be said with the hypothetical data collected. Also, this study only took a look into moral outrage and personal anger as subsequent social reactions. These are only some of the possible outcomes to perceptions of greed, and further research would need to be done to see what else arises out of greed. It could also be noted that the population of the study were not diverse enough. All of them were taken
from undergraduate students. Students may have something that is inherently different in them compared to the general population that would skew the results. Also, there is no test to see whether or not the results of females having greater perceptions of greed is really because of their want to foster a less competitive and aggressive situation or because of something else. Further studies would need to be done to break apart possible reasons for females having greater perceptions of greed.

This study helps to further the knowledge of gender differences, specifically when each gender is placed in a situation where greed is a high possibility. These findings could be used to foster interactions that limit the possibilities for greed to arise, leading to calmer and less aggressive transactions.

**Appendix 1:**

(Taken from Anderson (2014))

*Full text of the scale measuring perceptions of greed (Gregoire, Laufer & Tripp, 2010), modified for this study:*

The other participant did not intend to take advantage of me (1) ... intended to take advantage of me (7)

The other participant was primarily motivated by my interest (1)...their own interest (7)

The other participant did not try to abuse me (1)...tried to abuse me (7)

The other participant had good intentions (1)...had bad intentions (7)

*Full text of the PANAS, with introduction and anger subscale highlighted (*)*
Please rate very carefully the degree to which you are currently experiencing each of the following feelings (circle one number on each scale):

Joyful, Afraid, Appreciative, Guilty, Scared, Mad*, Self-fulfilled, Grateful, Irritated*, Blue, Thankful, Delighted, Angry*, Successful, Gloomy, Sorry, Nervous, Remorseful, Happy, Proud, Sad

These items were measured on a 1 (do not feel at all) to 10 (feel stronger than ever have) scale.

Full text of the moral outrage measure (Beugré, 2012), modified for this study

I feel sad when I see that I am being unfairly treated

It bothers me when I see that I am not being fairly treated I feel saddened by injustices done to me

I am concerned by unfairness done to me

All items in this scale were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale.

Full text of the moral outrage measure developed for this study (items interspersed)

It makes me angry when I witness a moral violation

If I see someone commit a moral violation, I get angry

Moral violations make me angry

When I hear about people or organizations committing moral violations, it makes my blood boil
All items in this scale were measured on a 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) scale.

**Demographic and control variables**

Participants were asked their gender, and the number of economics classes they have taken (a control).

**References:**


Gilliand, S.W., & Anderson, J.S. (2013). Justice, relative deprivation and blame: Disentangling constructs to understand cognitive and emotional reactions to greed. Manuscript submitted for publication.


