

## Book Review

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Kristin J. Anderson, *Enraged, rattled and wronged: Entitlement's response to social progress*. Oxford University Press, 2021, 238 pp. ISBN: 978-0197578438

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With the rise of public support for right-wing populism in the United States, Europe and beyond, it is crucial to continue to understand the psychological appeal of regressive phenomena. This considered, Kristin J. Anderson's book, *Enraged, Rattled and Wronged: Entitlement's Response to Social Progress* is a timely and unmissable read. Committed to giving context to Trump's political ascendancy, the book focuses on the overlooked and elusive ways in which entitlement – defined as “the inflated sense of deservingness one has as a result of power and the benefits of privilege” (p. 29) – operates at different *intersecting* nodes in perpetuating inequality. With each page, Anderson artfully exposes how entitlement silently sustains many gender, sexual, racial, and class oppressions which are detrimental to humanity, democracy, and the planet (p. 218).

As explained in the introduction of the book, it is precisely such a wide-angle take on entitlement and its connection to inequality that makes this text an important contribution. Although previously studied, entitlement has been mostly used to examine wage disparities (Major et al., 1984) and differing academic expectations (Chowing & Campbell, 2009) among men and women. Readers might also be familiar with existing research defining entitlement as a subcomponent of narcissism (Brown et al., 2009). Here, Anderson takes one step further by conceptualising entitlement as a *broad-ranging* obstacle to social progress and a *stand-alone* variable of interest for social change research. To support this thesis, Anderson interweaves a series of media stories, disconcerting socio-political anecdotes, and a review of experimental research on implicit bias within the field of social psychology. This assemblage highlights the well-researched and highly contextualised nature of the book, which allows Anderson to adequately capture in the book's various chapters the shifty workings of entitlement.

Chapter 1 first describes entitlement as a facet of power and privilege that manifests in the way dominant group members see themselves, what they are supposedly owed, and what their place in the world should be. Anderson proposes that entitlement often operates subconsciously, creating a set of expectations within the privileged that are difficult

to identify but that nonetheless motivate them to reinforce the social order from which they benefit.

Chapter 2 reviews empirical evidence on entitlements' "cruel cousins" (p. 43), referring to the attitudes and belief systems that correlate with entitlement in perpetuating inequality. Research has linked an inflated and illegitimate sense of deservingness to higher levels of overconfidence and immodesty, individualism and victim-blaming, hostility towards marginalised others, social dominance orientation, system justification beliefs, authoritarianism, and hostile and benevolent sexism. As proposed by this chapter, the underlying similarity between entitlement and its correlates is cognitive and attitudinal rigidity. The entitled have a psychological need to simplify reality, view the world in categorical and stereotypical ways, uncritically adhere to authority figures, and justify existing power imbalances and hierarchies – making them less tolerant to ambiguity, nuance, and change. Against the dangers of individualising entitlement as an attribute of *certain* individuals, Anderson also contends that this illegitimate sense of deservingness is a *structural problem* conditioned by the widely embraced social mores and customs of our time.

Chapters 3 and 4 investigate how the daily operation of teaching and parenting practices, peer dynamics, mass media and popular culture create the rules and boundaries of entitlement that are later internalised and perpetuated by dominant groups. Anderson claims that in these spheres, entitlement is routinely ascribed by unquestioningly positioning the white, cisgender, heterosexual boy/man as the normative social group occupying the centre-stage positions of all human affairs. As being seen as the societal norm creates the expectation of receiving preferential treatment and rewards, men – especially those benefitting from privilege in racial, class and sexual hierarchies – might embody and uphold an illegitimate sense of entitlement compared to other, less powerful groups.

Importantly, the text also acknowledges that *any* privileged position along one dimension can lead to a wrongheaded sense of deservingness in some social domains, irrespective of marginalised status in others. Attending to privilege and marginalisation as crosscutting helps Anderson explain why working-class white American men continuously vote against their own economic interests to preserve their racial privileges. Similarly, this explains why white women enact their racial privilege by calling 911 to punish people of colour for being "out of place" (physically, as well as symbolically in challenging the entitled sense of ownership of whiteness over public spaces and social life). Given the longstanding pattern of white female support for conservatism and racial oppression in the United States (Junn, 2017) and mainstream white feminism's erasure of women of colour from its agenda, Anderson's writing importantly attends to the nuances and complexities of entitlement and its role in impeding social progress.

This latter point is further explored in the closing chapters of the book. Although there is some repetition with earlier chapters, we believe such reiteration is key in order to push for the theoretical and analytical importance of entitlement in this final section. Chapter 5 advocates that power and privilege entitle people to engage in ignorant, self-serving, and violent behaviours. To exemplify this, we feel compelled to consider a troubling paradox that Anderson includes in this section. On the one hand, some men feel entitled to claim expertise and knowledge when they do not have it, accounting for phenomena such as

rising anti-intellectualism, whitesplaining, mansplaining, and paternalistic and controlling policies towards people of colour and women's bodies (p. 157). But, on the other, they also feel entitled to invoke the cultural myth of the "male bumbler" and claim cluelessness as an alibi to escape accusations of sexual coercion, harassment, and violence (p. 150). In similar ways, entitlement also emboldens the powerful to engage in whining and aggressive retaliation when they perceive their power and privileges to be questioned or threatened. Used to their place at the centre, dominant group members feel enraged by the slightest sign of progress, as seen in the attitudes and behaviours of Trump's voters when positioning themselves as victims – of feminism, affirmative action, immigration, LGBTQIA + rights, the Black Lives Matter movement, and mask-wearing, to name a few examples discussed by Anderson.


Chapter 6 advances that "the rage of the entitled" manifests in several ways, but hinges on a fragile relationship to whiteness and masculinity that utilises violence and oppression to reassert dominance and superiority. Entitled resentment acts as a tool to reinforce existing racial, sexual and gender hierarchies and their associated privileges. Consequently, those policies, political programmes and individuals that seemingly violate the status quo are halted and punished. Anderson illustrates this key idea with various examples of racist and sexist violence. For instance, in a context of demographic changes and affirmative action in the United States, Anderson defines rising violence against migrants and ethnic minorities as resulting from fears of "racial replacement" among whites (p. 184). Analogously, perceived threats to manhood and men's concerns about a decline in adherence to hegemonic masculinities characterise misogynist terrorism (stalking, revenge porn, trolling, doxing) and sexual and domestic violence as pathways to restore the masculine status of the dissed, rejected, outperformed, or "tricked" man (p. 202).

Whilst all these examples make the book a valuable resource for showcasing the disastrous consequences of entitlement, we also believe that, in line with Anderson's intersectional approach, more attention could have been placed on exploring multiple systems of power (especially those systems that tend to be under-/lesser-explored in mainstream feminist scholarship) and their relationship to entitlement. For example, Anderson's work could have benefitted from acknowledging ableism. Indeed, disability, too, intersects with the politics of gender, sexuality, class, and race. In the United States, for instance, disabled women are more vulnerable to sexual violence compared to non-disabled women and disabled men (Ledingham et al., 2022). To offer an additional example, in the same country, Hispanic and Black people with disabilities experience higher levels of arrest, as opposed to white people with disabilities (McCauley, 2017). In view of these intersections, we were expecting to see some interrogations of ableism as an entrenched aspect of power, especially because ableist rhetoric is a historical and contemporary tool invoked by the non-disabled powerful to justify their higher levels of privilege and entitlement compared to other groups (Wolbring, 2008). This can be seen, for example, in Trump's ableist rhetoric against Clinton to downplay her leadership ability, and in his attempts to repeal Obamacare through his constant attacks directed towards disabled people. As such, we encourage researchers to include an interrogation of ableism, and various systems of power, in future work on entitlement.

Notwithstanding this important omission, the book is a treasurable resource that can still inform many audiences due to the ample coverage of societal issues within its title. Anderson's writing validates marginalised groups' many lived experiences of discrimination, allowing opportunities for further sites of resistance and contestation against existing hegemonic powers. The text can also be eye-opening for entitled groups who must relinquish their undeserved grip on power and privilege. For instance, as white women, we both found important lessons of white humility when reading about white supremacist behaviours such as the centre-stealing character of "white women's tears" in discussions of racism (p. 193). Men can also find the book educational, as it can open a pathway towards questioning and challenging the violent behaviours that they engage in to sustain their patriarchal privileges and their social standing in male peer groups and society.

Everything considered, we believe that *Enraged, Rattled and Wronged* is a valuable resource for social change efforts. As social justice movements think through how to better society at the community and individual level, this book can help identify the oppressive rules of entitlement that unequally attribute status, attention, and privilege to some groups whilst ignoring, devaluing, and harming others. Based on this imperative political commitment, we are sure that Anderson's thesis will further inspire feminist research and resistance as much as it has stimulated our own thinking. We eagerly look forward to seeing how the book's ideas develop in subsequent contributions.

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