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An analysis of university student academic self-entitlement: Levels of entitlement, academic year, and gender

Tiffany Brook Hartman

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An Analysis of University Student Academic Self-Entitlement:
Levels of Entitlement, Academic Year, and Gender

by

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Levels of Entitlement, Academic Year and Gender

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Dedication

To my husband, Jim, who taught me to believe in myself,
I am so blessed to share my life with you.

To my parents, Dean and Debbie, who taught me integrity, humility, and love,
You’re the best parents who ever walked the planet.

To my amazing sisters and best friends: Kristal, Jennica, and Shayla,
Thank you for your faith and support.

Last but not least, to my precious Ellie and Lucy, who were by my side every step of the way,
Thank you for your love and patience.
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Abstract

Academic self-entitlement is a rapidly increasing phenomenon that is becoming a problem in universities today. Self-entitled students expect high grades for minimal effort and tend to be highly demanding; they exhibit strong emotions when outcomes fail to meet their expectations. This type of student behavior increases the burden placed upon unprepared faculty, emphasizes performance goals rather than learning goals, and threatens to place the core values of education at stake. This study investigates whether relationships exist between student gender, year in school, and academic self-entitlement. University students were assessed using the Academic Entitlement Scale (Achacoso, 2002). A two-way MANOVA revealed significant differences by gender, with males more self-entitled than females. There also were significant differences by academic year in school, with students less self-entitled as they progressed from early undergraduate years to graduate school. There were no significant interactions for the effects of academic year in school and gender.
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Chapter 1: Introduction and Background

Introduction: Academic Self-Entitlement

Academic self-entitlement, the expectation of academic success without personal responsibility for achieving that success (Chowning & Campbell, 2009), is a fairly new phenomenon that has become increasingly evident as “Generation Y” has entered higher education. Generation Y, those individuals born between the years of 1981 and 2001, constitutes the largest population of today’s student body in colleges and universities. This group of students, also known as the “self-entitled,” “everyone gets a trophy” or the “A generation,” presents new challenges to university faculty (Black, 2010). Achacoso (2002) explains that entitlement, specifically academic entitlement, is a sense of moral imperative that is stronger than intense desire or hope, as students believe that a high grade is owed to them in exchange for minimal effort. Self-entitled students tend to exhibit strong emotions when expected outcomes are not achieved. In the typical student population, some students may feel frustrated, disappointed, and perhaps even guilty. However, self-entitled students may become angry and resentful when their expectations are unfulfilled. Additional characteristics of self-entitled students may include an apparent low degree of concern for how negative behavior affects others, a poor work ethic (coupled with the expectation of high grades), inappropriate or unrealistic expectations of instructor and/or instructor time, and inappropriate (emotional) reactions to constructive feedback from instructors and cheating (Achacoso, 2002).

Research Questions

When their unrealistic demands are not met, academic self-entitlement may cause self-entitled students to exhibit inappropriate behaviors (Achacoso, 2002), which might be
overburdening unprepared university faculty (Black, 2010). Additionally, self-entitlement behaviors may be changing overall perceptions of higher education from learning institutions to economic exchanges of money for tickets (diplomas) to a higher future income (Lippmann et al., 2009). This increasing phenomenon calls for investigation into what might be causing, perpetuating, and/or encouraging self-entitled behavior in university students. This study investigates the possible relationships between students’ levels of self-entitlement and their gender, as well as academic years in school.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to add to the currently small body of research investigating academic self-entitlement research through identification of possible relationships between academic self-entitled behavior and academic year, as well as academic self-entitled behavior and gender. Identifying relationships between these variables may help to support current and future research and, over time, assist in addressing and finding solutions to the problem of academic self-entitlement in universities. This study contributes to the understanding of academic self-entitlement and supports future research and discovery of solutions to a problem that is negatively affecting students, professors and universities as a whole.

**Significance of the Study**

Academic self-entitlement may produce consequences on both individual and societal levels. Self-entitled students tend to be more performance-oriented than mastery-oriented. Performance-approach goals, as seen in self-entitled students, are a serious concern in education because they imply selfishness and competitive focus rather than emphasizing learning goals and learning community norms. When students adopt performance or ego involvement goals, their focus is diverted from learning to the preserving of self-perceptions and public reputation.
Students who approach activities with performance or ego goals treat school activities as tests of their ability to perform rather than as opportunities to learn. Brophy (2010) emphasizes the importance of learning goals and outcome goals (striving to master the material), rather than learning goals and performance goals (striving to outperform one’s classmates or validate one’s ability) in successful student learning. Performance goals might cause concerns in students about competition and peer comparisons that can distract from focusing on learning (Brophy, 2010).

Self-entitled behaviors also have consequences for the university. Faculty can become overworked and overwhelmed. Faculty members may not be prepared to handle the unrealistic demands on their time that may arise while teaching self-entitled students. Self-entitled students expect their professors to go to great lengths to meet their needs and desires. They plead cases of dire negative personal consequences if demands for awarding of higher grades are not met. It is also not uncommon for these students to badger professors for higher grades than what were earned (Greenberger et al., 2008). In addition, it may be the case that while self-entitled students might be able to successfully navigate the academic experience with their check-the-boxes behaviors, they may not acquire the skills and knowledge that are necessary for successful performance in their future professions. Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010) further state that the core values of higher education are at stake. By “giving” degrees to everyone who feels entitled to receive them, we run the risk of rendering the award meaningless.

The purpose of this study is to raise further awareness to this rather new phenomenon of academic self-entitlement and help to identify possible relationships between self-entitled behavior and academic year as well as self-entitled behavior and gender. Suggesting these possible relationships (or lack thereof) may help to support current and future research and, over
time, assist in addressing and finding solutions to the problem of academic self-entitlement in universities.
Chapter 2 – Review of Related Literature

Education as an Economic Exchange

In recent decades, academia has witnessed a rise in the number of students who approach their professors to ask for higher grades, claim dire personal outcomes if they do not get these grades, and expect professors to accommodate their needs and demands (Greenberger et al., 2008). Academic self-entitlement is a growing issue in universities everywhere. Today’s college students are growing up in a world that is much different even from that of a decade ago. The outlooks and attitudes of today’s undergraduates are likely being shaped by dramatic advances in technology, growing levels of affluence and poverty, and shifts in the labor market (Lippmann, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009). The research of Twenge (2009) demonstrates this generational change in the attitudes and behaviors of students. In comparison to students of the past, students of Generation Y or “Generation Me” tend to score more highly on assertiveness, self-liking, narcissism, high expectations, and on measures of stress, anxiety, and poor mental health. Interestingly, Twenge (2009) found that the current generation also tends to score lower on measures of self-reliance than previous generations. It is no wonder that students’ attitudes and behaviors have changed.

Today’s generation of college students appear to be entering universities with certain incorrect expectations of what constitutes “A” work (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011). Zinn, Magnotti, Marchuk, Schultz, Luther, & Varfolomeeva (2011) found that students and faculty differ in how they would assign grades as students tend to give more weight to effort than faculty. It may be that students are giving more weight to their efforts due to an increased pressure in pursuit of a career in the future workforce. Lipmann et al. (2009) speculates that this
behavior might be explained by the current job market, in that it is sometimes the case that higher grades are needed to compete for certain jobs. This has created a new pressure for this generation: while a college education once nearly guaranteed future career success, the current generation is living in a different time in which that is no longer the case (Lipmann et al., 2009). Borden and Evenbeck (2007) recognize this pressure and further suggest that the recent expansion of access to higher education has caused an increase in the awarding of baccalaureate degrees, which have become the new entry-level credential for employment.

It seems that while college and university students once attended school to pursue their academic and intellectual goals, they now are viewing academia as an economic exchange, which thus changes their views on grades, the classroom experience, and so on. They seem to have the I-paid-for-my-A-so-give-it-to-me attitude (Lippman et al., 2009). A friend who is an adjunct instructor of 7 years at a major private university (who must remain anonymous) shared the experience she had when encountering a student who seemed to view education from an economic perspective. The student was enrolled in her associate level course that focused on college readiness and ensuring success in higher education. The assignment was a summative assessment for a unit covering reading comprehension and study skills and how the refinement of those skills can lead to academic and career success. The student was asked a reflective question about his reading comprehension skills, the unit, and how the material studied in the lesson would help him improve upon the reading comprehension skills he currently possessed. The response given by the student was, "reading comprehenzion isnt impoortan cuz it doezn git you monie." According to Hu (2005), from an economist perspective, grades are a reward for academic performance. If students view their report cards in Hu’s way, then it is no wonder that self-entitled behavior is on the rise.
Kopp et al. (2011) suggest that while it is a reality that university students are paying for a service, they may differ in their perceptions of what they are purchasing. While some students believe they are paying for interactions with professors, self-entitled students might believe they are merely purchasing diplomas and their complementing transcripts. They begin to see education as a "ticket" to more future income rather than a means to self-improvement (Lippman et al., 2009). It should not come as a surprise to learn that students, in general, are willing to "price shop" for high quality education at low costs. This could especially be the case for non-traditional students returning to school, creating new needs in universities: convenience, quality, low cost, and so on. (Borden & Evenbeck, 2007). Interestingly, Hemelt and Marcotte’s (2011) research indicates that as tuition increases at universities, students may seek out another institutions. Their data show that an increase in tuition and fees of even $100 is likely to result in a .23% decrease in a school’s enrollment. Kopp et al. (2009) point out that universities could be encouraging price shopping behavior when they heavily market to students. They suggest that perhaps some schools’ recruiting practices might carry over into academia and cause students to expect to experience a customer service interaction with their professors. It is apparent that an increasing number of students, possibly self-entitled students, also expect friendly, helpful staff. They do not appreciate waiting in line and are interested in learning only what is necessary to earn their degrees. Indeed, more students seem to view their educations not as goals for self-improvement but as a means of achieving higher levels of income (Achacoso, 2002).

**Motivation**

Student’s efforts can be motivated for a myriad of reasons, both intrinsic and extrinsic. Brophy (2010) defines mastery goals (intrinsic) as synonymous with learning goals. They entail developing a desire for deep understanding of course concepts. Brophy (2010) believes that
while learning and mastery goals are ideal, students sometimes need something more or different from mastery goals to help them succeed in certain situations. Sometimes while performance goals (extrinsic) are not ideal for learning, they can aid in short-term motivation. There are three types of performance goals: outcome, ability, and normative goals. Outcome goals focus on obtaining positive results such as earning good grades. Ability goals validate one’s ability such as confirming intelligence through schoolwork. Normative goals include social comparisons or trying to outperform other students (Brophy, 2010). Brophy (2010) states that while students sometimes need a small amount of extrinsic motivation, he suggests that in these cases teachers should focus on performance-approach goals rather than peer comparisons. Mastery and learning goals are usually associated with intrinsic motivation, while performance goals generally align with extrinsic motivation. Performance-approach goals are often seen in self-entitled students, which may suggest that they are extrinsically motivated. This poses a serious concern in education because performance goals divert attention toward selfishness and competitiveness rather than focus on learning goals and community norms. When students emphasize performance or ego involvement goals, they are more concerned with their public reputation than with the acquisition of knowledge. For these students, school activities soon become seen as tests of ability rather than as opportunities to learn. As previously stated, Brophy (2010) emphasizes the importance of learning goals and outcome goals (striving to master the material) rather than performance goals (striving to outperform one’s classmates or validate one’s ability) in successful student learning. The emphasis is on learning the material for the acquisition of knowledge rather than for competition with one’s peers. Carifio and Carey (2010) further explain that performance goals, or the desire to appear successful to others, can result in students’ taking on less difficult challenges in order to reduce outcome uncertainty and assure
success. Naturally, this same mentality could cause students to avoid challenging tasks because the risk of uncertainty is high, and performance-goal-seeking students sometimes possess a fear of failure. Twenge, Campbell, Hoffman, and Lance (2010) reviewed and compared data over time and discovered that society’s intrinsic and extrinsic values (e.g., status, money) have changed. They found that as time has progressed, the younger generations (particularly Generation Y or “GenMe”) show a decrease in intrinsic values and work ethic, in contrast to the older generations, who held more intrinsic values as well as a stronger work ethic.

Similar to Twenge et al. (2010), Pushkar and Conway (2007) found that age might be a predictor of intrinsic motivation. Nontraditional students in their study (aged 28 and older) showed more academic intrinsic motivation than traditional students, who were defined as students aged 21 and younger. Results of the study indicated that among undergraduates ranging from 18 to 60 years of age, older students reported higher levels of intrinsic motivation for learning. The authors stated that all undergraduates would at some point face middle and later life development. They believe that by strengthening the positive correlations between age, motivation, and positive affect in universities, undergraduates will become more resilient students who seek education for personal development that could result in lifelong learning. It may be not just age but years spent in school that can predict motivation in university students. Isiksal (2010) conducted a study measuring undergraduate students’ self-concept and motivation in relation to their years spent in school. It was found that seniors tended to score more highly on self-concept and intrinsic motivation scales than did students who had fewer years in school. Additionally, American students showed a steady decline in extrinsic motivation as they spent more time in school. Isiksal (2010) speculates that in the United States, university admission is relatively accessible and students usually enter higher education with individualistic goals, which
may account for the increase of intrinsic motivation in university students as time progresses.

In their study of university student perfectionism and motivation, Stoeber, Feast, and Hayward (2009) found that students with self-oriented perfectionism studied for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons, and students with socially-prescribed perfectionism studied for extrinsic reasons. Stoeber et al.’s (2009) findings might be partially explained by the results of Isiksal (2010). Although Stoeber (2009) did not investigate motivation and self-concept in relation to years spent in school, it might be the case that the students who scored more highly in intrinsic motivation were those who spent more time in school. Mills and Blankstein (2000) found results slightly different from those of Stoeber (2009). Socially prescribed perfectionism was positively correlated with extrinsic motivation, but self-oriented perfectionists were also motivated by extrinsic rewards for their academic success. The authors explain that socially prescribed perfectionism, and its relationship with motivation for recognition by others, decreased the likelihood of adaptive measures (such as seeking help), which can result in poorer academic performance. It is possible, then, that extrinsically motivated students, those who are motivated by the approval of others, might suffer from lower academic performance. Interestingly, extrinsic motivation is a characteristic of academic self-entitlement (Lippman et al., 2009).

Lyke and Kelaher Young (2006) conducted a study measuring university students’ motivation levels as they related to goal orientation, perception of classroom environment, and cognitive strategy. The researchers found that all three factors play a role in encouraging or discouraging intrinsic motivation. They stated that while university instructors cannot control students’ personal circumstances, they can certainly influence a positive classroom structure to encourage intrinsic motivation in their pupils. If instructors can influence intrinsic motivation in the classroom, one might question whether this could in turn increase academic performance.
Lynch (2006) studied whether motivational factors could be predictors of course grades in university students. He found that intrinsic motivation predicted course grades, especially in upper classmen, but extrinsic motivation did not. The study did find, however, that lowerclassmen tended to be extrinsically motivated, while upper classmen tend to be intrinsically motivated. Shell and Husman (2008) studied motivation in more depth. They examined the ways in which perceived control in academic classroom settings, goals, and motivation in university students affect academic strategic self-regulation. They found that positive patterns of control included high self-efficacy for learning strategies and high outcome expectancies for learning. Knowledge-building strategies were linked to high self-efficacy and high mastery goal orientation, and learned helplessness was linked to high outcome expectancy and external causal attribution. It is interesting that the traits related to self-entitled behavior, high outcome expectancy and external causal attribution, were also linked to learned helplessness. Perhaps it is the case that self-entitled students, those who expect high grades and project blame for their shortcomings externally, might have additionally learned to be helpless. If self-entitled students feel helpless, perhaps they don’t see any other options for getting good grades than to demand them.

**Grade Inflation**

Grade inflation, the overall awarding of higher-than-earned grades, coupled with the awarding of degrees for less than average performance, threatens to undermine the values of higher education. While self-entitled students might be able to navigate successfully the academic experience with their check-the-boxes behaviors, they may not acquire the skills and knowledge that are necessary for successful performance in their future professions. Some researchers, such as Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010), fear that the core values
of higher education are at stake. By “giving” degrees to everyone who feels entitled to receive them, they say universities run the risk of rendering the award meaningless. Gray (2008), similar to Singleton-Jackson et al. (2010), suggests that grade inflation without the accompanying acquisition of knowledge might lead to a undermining of standards in education. Cushman (2003) states that before modern times, education was seen as a privilege rather than a right and grades meant something much more than they do today. At the present time, suggests Cushman (2003), grades are virtually meaningless due to grade inflation. Rojstaczer (2009) is conducting a continual review of overall grade point averages in American institutions of higher learning, both private and public. The latest data show that in 1991 to 1992, the average Grade Point Average (G.P.A.) across the nation was 2.93. In 1996 to 1997 it was 2.99. In 2001 to 2002, it was 3.07. In 2006 to 2007, the average G.P.A. was a 3.11 (Rojstaczer, 2009). It is clear that even within the span of the studied 16 years, the average G.P.A. in American institutions of higher education had noticeably increased. It is possible that grade inflation, a technique used by some instructors and schools to retain students and, as some instructors and schools would argue, motivate the students, works to perpetuate the concern that degrees are being given to students who complete only minimal and/or substandard coursework. Dowling (2003) believes grade inflation to be a form of immorality. He compares this dishonesty, as he calls it, to cheating in poker. He explains that beating the system through grade inflation is similar to beating the house in a casino. Grade inflation, Dowling (2003) continues, is a form of cheating that demoralizes the honest students because it is possible that self-entitled students could be counted among those who feel that they benefit from grade inflation. Their demands are being met, their behaviors are being rewarded, yet honest, hard-working students could be paying the price through grade compression. Grade compression occurs when students of lower ability are
awarded the same grades that higher achieving students earn. It then becomes difficult to differentiate between higher achieving students and others when the grades given by the instructors are similar. High achieving students keep their grades, while lower achieving students see the benefit of a rise in their grade point averages without a change in effort or ability.

Grade inflation might be satisfying the demands of self-entitled students, but some researchers believe that it is also rendering this supposed measurement of academic performance meaningless. Wongsurawat (2009) evaluated admission data from 48 different law schools in the United States and found that as grades continue to inflate, law schools appear to place less emphasis on the importance of high grades for acceptance. Franz (2009) further noticed that grade inflation is becoming a societal problem. Due to grade compression, graduate schools and employers can no longer determine truly outstanding students from average students just by viewing transcripts. Hu (2005) explains that while educational institutions and society are aware of grade inflation, grades may continue to be on the rise since there is no other way to directly measure student performance in a class. Franz (2009) also offers that students’ nuisance or the pestering of instructors for higher grades contributes to grade inflation. It is suggested that instructors might give in to students in order to create less tension, but this may only encourage self-entitled behavior. Wongsurawat’s (2009) model shows that students are more likely to pester their instructors for higher grades if the following criteria exist: the professor is lenient, the studying cost is high, the reward from pestering is high, and the cost of pestering is low.

One might consider how grade inflation has slowly become the norm in higher education. Carifio and Carey (2010) explain that this artificial increase in grades is sometimes used in high schools as an inexpensive way to minimize drop-out rates; those who have inflated grades have
seen an overall increase in student retention. In addition to grade modification, some districts adopt programs in which students are allowed to submit and re-submit work until a minimally satisfactory grade is achieved or is given. Perhaps this high school instructor behavior contributes to the expectations that self-entitled students bring to higher education. This expectation, according to Germain and Scandura (2005), pressures instructors and universities into inflating grades as well. After spending both monetary and human resources to market to students, schools must continue to keep students happy, and giving high grades for minimal-to-average work appears to help schools retain students. In fact, Cushman (2003) suggests that administrators who speak out against grade inflation, whether or not their intentions are sincere, have their hands tied by the academic consumerism that they themselves have created. He believes it is often the case that some school administrators will express public distain toward grade inflation, yet construct their policies in ways that support the idea in order to satisfy certain types of customers (students) who are paying for a product (marketable grade point average).

Given the characteristics of self-entitled students, it is reasonable to consider the notion that it may be self-entitled students who are helping to perpetuate grade inflation by demanding certain grade outcomes.

There is an interesting perspective that the gradual overall increase in university grades since the 1960s could be attributed to the fact that through faculty evaluations, professors are being held more accountable for how well they serve students; the students are now grading the teachers who grade them (Germain & Scandura, 2005). These evaluations not only provide professors with feedback, but they may be also used to determine faculty reappointment and pay increases. Germain and Scandura (2005) suggest that since students’ answers are often biased and based on consumerism principles (cost of textbooks, amount of required homework) rather
than teaching effectiveness, instructors might be tempted to influence students’ evaluation answers. Evaluations have been shown to be especially important to adjunct faculty. Research suggests that these faculty members typically award students higher grades than tenured faculty, possibly because they need favorable marks from their students in order to secure future employment with the institution (Hu, 2055). Gray’s (2008) work involving the surveying of faculty in a research intensive university confirms that instructors are aware that grade inflation is happening in their schools and suggests that they inflate grades due lack of training, fear of job security, student behavior, and teacher evaluations. Again, keeping the students happy through grade inflation is one way to accomplish this. Cushman (2003) brings attention to the demoralizing nature of teacher evaluations, explaining that professors who have spent many years in serious pursuit of education are being evaluated by young people often half their ages, who know little to nothing about the subjects being taught. These evaluations, he says, are the epitome of consumerism in higher education. It would make sense to assume that these evaluations might be seen as a platform by which self-entitled students are able to achieve their demands. While grade inflation is typically seen as a negative phenomenon, Carifio and Carey (2010) warn that if schools try to change their current ways, then they need to do so carefully. If assigned a poor or failing grade, even a student with learning and outcome goals can become frustrated and lose motivation. Interestingly, Cushman (2003) describes students in their later years of college, typically seniors, as students who have learned how to play the academic system and tend to be those who engage in self-entitled behaviors.

**Self-Entitlement and Parenting Styles**

From a developmental perspective, the transition to higher education is a normal yet stressful part of adolescent life. It is obvious that some students may adjust more easily than
others. One of the greatest determining factors of students’ ability to transfer positively is their relationship with their parents (Wintre & Sugar, 2000). In fact, Cutrona, Cole, Colangelo, Assouline, and Russell (1994) found that parental social support, particularly when parents reassured students of their worth, was a stronger predictor of students’ grade point averages and achievement than was social support from friends or even romantic partners. Students who perceived reciprocity in their relationships with their parents were shown to better adjust overall to the university experience. Interestingly, this is especially the case for male students (Wintre & Sugar, 2000).

Greenberger, Lessard, Chen and Farruggia (2008) suggest that parenting styles and practices that cultivate inflated, unrealistic self-esteem in students can contribute to unstable behavior, such as aggressiveness, in the academic setting as well as other areas of life. Authoritarian or “helicopter” parenting, which may cause more distress in a child and more pressure to succeed, may be another cause of academic self-entitled behavior, according to Agliata and Renk (2009). They posit that the ideal parenting style is authoritative, in that it allows both child autonomy and parental involvement. In addition, Silva, Dorso, Azhar and Renk (2007) studied the relationships among the parenting styles that college students experienced in childhood, anxiety, motivation, and academic success in college. Their results found that authoritative parenting from fathers was related to decreases in college students’ anxiety levels, while authoritarian parenting was related to increases in anxiety levels. Furthermore, authoritative parenting from both fathers and mothers predicted college students’ grade point averages as well as their levels of motivation. Capron’s (2004) study also supports Agliata and Renk’s (2009) results. Capron (2004) studied four different parental pampering types as reported by undergraduates: overindulgent, overdomineering, overpermissive, and
overprotective. He found that in female students, overindulgence positively correlated with the behaviors of entitlement, exhibitionism, exploitiveness, and overall narcissism and was negatively correlated with self-sufficiency. For male participants, overindulgence positively correlated with entitlement and exhibitionism though only marginally with narcissism, yet was negatively correlated with self-sufficiency, just as it was with females. Overdomination (authoritarian parenting) negatively correlated with entitlement, exhibitionism, and overall narcissism in females but positively correlated with entitlement, exhibitionism and exploitiveness with male participants. Additionally, overprotective parenting of females positively correlated with entitlement, self-sufficiency, and vanity. The researchers concluded that overindulgent parenting showed the most potential for research and intervention early on as it positively correlated with most of the negative behaviors in both male and female students.

Parenting clearly does not begin immediately preceding the university experience. Researchers have investigated the ways in which childhood parenting has affected students during their university years. Renk, McKinney, Klein, and Oliveros (2005) studied parental discipline of female children. It was found that psychologically and physically assaultive discipline, as well as the girls’ current perceptions of their mother and father, was related to their self-esteem and levels of depression and anxiety in college. In another study, Flouri (2006) evaluated young children and their parents’ parenting strategies. She followed up 26 years later and found that parents’ interest in their children’s educations played a significant role in their children’s later educational attainment, particularly of the daughters. Since occupational and educational attainment in children is related to their mothers’ expectations, Flouri and Hawkes (2008) further investigated whether mothers’ expectation of their children was related to the children’s sense of control later in life. The results indicated that mothers’ expectations of their
daughters at age 10 were positively related to their senses of control at age 30. However, the mothers’ expectations had no effect on their adult sons’ outcomes. It is clear that proper parenting plays a very important role in determining the psychological wellness, attitudes, and behaviors in university students. It is certainly possible certain ways of parenting could encourage academic self-entitlement in some students.

**Gender**

Researchers such as Ciani, Summers, and Easter (2008) and Louie and Tom (2005) have suggested student gender and academic year in school as possible contributors to academic self-entitled behavior. However, the research base is limited. Ciani et al. (2008) studied the relationships between levels of academic self-entitlement and gender, as well as levels of academic self-entitlement and year in school. Their study found gender to be a significant predictor of self-entitlement levels (males more than females) and academic year to be of little significance in determining self-entitlement levels. Ciani et al. (2008) also speculate that gender/self-entitlement differences in academia are due partly to the history of the workforce: males still earn more than females and work shorter hours. Ciani et al. (2008) believes that females have been conditioned, over time, to expect less than males. A popular study that has been replicated several times is the surveying of males and females, inquiring what salary they would pay their own gender and what they would pay the opposite gender, if given the opportunity. The results are somewhat surprising. Hogue and Yoder (2003) confirmed previous research of depressed entitlement, showing that women, if given the choice, would pay themselves less than men and believe this is fair. If given the same option, men tend to agree that they would pay themselves more than women. Furthermore, even when possessing the same skill set, men tend to rate themselves as being more competent at any given task than women.
Desmarais and Curtis (1997a) found similar results in their variation of this study. In their survey measuring pay entitlement attitudes of university students, they found that men reported believing they deserved more pay than women, and women reported believing they were entitled to a lower income than men. When asked about wages earned over the summer break, it was found that men were paid more than women. The authors found it interesting that the gender gap in pay was so pervasive that it affected college students before they even entered full-time, year-round work. In a second study conducted by Desmarais and Curtis (1997b), the researchers found that women reported a lower entitlement to pay unless they were reminded of their previous income and experience beforehand. The authors conclude that gender influences overall pay entitlement, with men being more entitled and women being less entitled. Callahan-Levy and Messé (1979) found that females would pay themselves less than they would pay males, and females were less connected to their work and monetary rewards than were men. The authors attributed this to traditional gender roles.

Marini, Fan, and Beutel (1996) believe that motivation and job values may play a role in gender segregation in universities. While both males and females seem to equally value extrinsic rewards in their careers, more women value intrinsic rewards in their careers than do men. They value jobs that allow them to help others and jobs that make them feel worthwhile to society. According to Bradley (2000), who agrees with Ciani et al. (2008), the differences in gender entitlement seen in the workplace are reflected in academia. Jacobs (1999) discussed gender segregation in universities: while women constitute the majority of students in two-year degree programs and are the recipients of the majority of bachelor’s degrees, they remain segregated from men in the studies they pursue. Bradley (2000) found that women are more likely to graduate from education, the arts, humanities, social sciences, and law, while men are more
likely to graduate from the natural sciences, engineering, and mathematics. Furthermore, Bradley’s (2000) study indicated that women are less likely to graduate from top-tier elite universities than are men, and the majority of part-time students are nontraditional, older women who are enrolled in below-average institutions perhaps 3rd or 4th tier. The findings from Barone’s (2011) research agree with those of Bradley’s (2000). Barone’s (2011) results show it is evident that even in our current era, gender still tends to be a strong predictor of university majors, a stagnation that has remained relatively steady for the past three decades. Barone (2011) posits that this is due to deeply rooted cultural traditions of gender roles that have sex-stereotyped students into their respective curricular choices. Results showed that little difference was found over time and across nations. Another interesting parallel to the workplace is found in the Brown, Uebelacker, and Heatherington (1998) study in which grade point average expectations in university students based on gender was explored. While overall grade point averages did not differ significantly between males and females, the researchers found that men generally predicted higher grade point averages for themselves than women, who tended to be uncomfortable when asked the question. It might be the case that in this study, the male students felt themselves to be more academically self-entitled than the female students. It is interesting that the gender of the student may not be the only factor in entitlement behavior; the gender of instructors might also play a role in this phenomenon. Louie and Tom (2005) conducted a study revealing that the gender of both the student and the professor might play a role in levels of student entitlement. Louie and Tom (2005) found that male students tended to delay the completion of assignments when their professors were female. It might not just be the workplace that influences university gender differences; some members of the academy perpetuate this issue. Sumner and Brown (1996) found that females in college tend to ask other females for
career information and advice, while males tend to ask other males about career information and advice. As universities and the workplace seem to continuously mirror gender segregation from one another, Sumner and Brown (1996) believe that there has been little progress made in breaking the cycle. It is no wonder that gender segregation is present in our current society, particularly in higher education. It is also no wonder that males, who earn higher incomes in the workplace, seem to expect the same kinds of entitlement in the university. It is possible that this has created a population of males who are more academically self-entitled than females.

A Solution?

There has been some attempt to discover solutions to academic self-entitlement. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) conducted a study to determine if community service made a difference in student self-entitlement attitudes by cultivating positive moral development. The results of the study indicated that volunteer efforts within a community significantly reduce self-entitlement attitudes. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) suggest that universities incorporate community service learning into their curricula to reduce self-entitlement behaviors. While this might be progress toward reducing entitlement attitudes in universities, it may place more burdens on instructors. Professors traditionally work to juggle the responsibilities of teaching, service to the academic institution, and conducting research, often at the expense of one or the other. Male professors tend to spend more time researching at the expense of teaching, while female professors usually spend more time teaching at the expense of research (Link, Swann, & Bozeman, 2008). Years of experience are also a factor that affects both male and female professors. Hershberger (2005) states that faculty, particularly junior faculty, must also balance the newness of being a colleague and learning in the university. While school administrations insist that teaching should be the top priority of faculty, Link et al. (2008) state it is clear that
research is necessary to obtain tenure and promotions. Additionally, as state funding continues to be pulled from higher education and the demand for classes increases, professors (who are also serving on departmental committees, are constantly being asked to publicly speak and are mentoring students to graduation) are being asked by legislators and parents to teach more classes in order to accommodate more students without an increase of cost to university (Guliuzza, 1996). On top of everything else that is required of faculty, taking time to mentor students through community service projects just to reduce the prevalence of self-entitled behavior seems somewhat futile because it shifts the time spent working through issues with self-entitled students to time spent mentoring the same students through community service projects. Either way, professors might still be overly burdened if community service requirements are implemented in universities.

**Summary**

University students today seem to be viewing academia as an economic exchange, which is changing their views on grades, the classroom experience, and so on. This apparent means to an end appears to have caused education to be viewed as a “ticket” to more future income, rather than a means to self-improvement (Lippman et al., 2009). Performance-approach goals, as seen in self-entitled students, are a serious concern in education because they imply selfishness and competitive focus, rather than emphasizing learning goals and learning community norms (Brophy, 2010). Those who are motivated by the approval of others might suffer from lower academic performance (Lippman et al., 2009). Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010) are concerned that the core values of higher education are at stake because it seems that institutions are “giving” degrees to everyone who feels entitled to receive them, thus running the risk of rendering the award meaningless. It is possible that self-entitled students could be counted
among those who feel that they benefit from grade inflation. While their demands are being met, their behaviors are being rewarded; honest, hard-working students could be paying the price through grade compression. Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, and Farruggia (2008) suggest that parenting styles and practices that cultivate inflated, unrealistic self-esteem in students can contribute to unstable behavior such as aggressiveness in the academic setting. According to Agliata and Renk (2009), the ideal parenting style is authoritative, which allows both child autonomy and parental involvement. Ciani et al. (2008) speculates that gender and self-entitlement differences in academia are due partly to the history of the workforce. In the workforce, males still earn more than females. While overall grade point averages do not necessarily differ significantly between males and females, men generally predicted higher grade point averages for themselves than women, who tended to be uncomfortable when asked the question (Brown et al., 1998). It is possible that male students could be more academically self-entitled than the female students. Hoffman and Wallach (2007) suggest that universities incorporate community service learning into their curricula to reduce self-entitlement behaviors. While this might be progress toward reducing entitlement attitudes in universities, it may place more burdens on instructors. A better understanding of the economic exchange perspective, issues in motivation, university grade inflation, gender differences in education, and faculty workloads makes it clear that academic self-entitlement is a an important, growing issue that deserves further investigation.
Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology

Sample Selection

Student volunteers from were recruited through an announcement posted on the online school newsletter and through another announcement posted to the student portal. The announcements invited survey participation using the prompt “Are you getting what you expect from your school?” The term “self-entitlement” was not used in order to prevent participant bias. It was initially the intention to recruit only students having completed at least one semester of undergraduate course work. However, after a significant response from students in their first semester of university courses and after further consideration, it was determined that scale responses from first semester students could add value to the study. Since most surveys were completed in December, these students had essentially completed their first semester. Student participant numbers and type encompassed both undergraduate and graduate students, both male and female, ages 18 or older, with the ethnic backgrounds given in Table 1.
Table 1

*Student Demographics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Ethnicity and Gender</th>
<th>Percentage of Total Student Population (Academic Year 2011 (23,341))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian/Alaskan Native</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-resident Alien</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Racial</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Ethnicity Unknown</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The gender balance of the sampled student population was compared to the gender breakdown of the student population as a whole. The Fall Semester 2011 gender breakdown was determined to be 41 percent male and 59 percent female. The gender breakdown was then compared to the gender balance of the sample to determine how closely the sample mirrored the gender breakdown of the student population as a whole. The gender balance of the sample was 27.7 percent male and 72.3 percent female. The gender breakdown and gender balance of the sampled population is given in Table 2.
Table 2

*Gender Breakdown and Balance*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Fall Semester 2011 Gender Breakdown</th>
<th>Gender Balance of Sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>27.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>72.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Instrument**

The instrument used in this study was the Academic Entitlement Scale developed by M. Achacoso (2002): a self-report, 12-item questionnaire measuring academic belief in an academic context (see Appendix A). The 7-point Likert scale ranges from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” and consists of two subscales: entitlement beliefs, and entitlement actions. The first five questions relate to entitlement beliefs, and the last seven are in reference to their entitlement actions. Achacoso (2002) developed the scale by conducting open-ended interviews with five university faculty members, asking faculty to describe situations in which students exhibited entitlement behaviors. The initial 50-item questionnaire was tested by distribution to students in six focal groups. Students completed the questionnaire and offered suggestions. The second version of the scale contained 75 items. This version was administered to a group of undergraduate students, after which a factor analysis and a second confirmatory factor analysis were run. This process continued, and items that did not score highly enough were discarded until, eventually, 12 items remained. Achacoso (2002) reported that Cronbach’s Alpha for the entitlement belief subscale was .83 and .91 for the entitlement action subscale, which demonstrates a satisfactory degree of reliability for a new scale.
Procedures

After following the survey prompt, participants were taken directly to the survey site located at www.surveymonkey.com. The anonymous, online survey was open from December 5, 2011, until January 16, 2012. The informed consent page (see Appendix A) indicated that continuing with the survey would be taken for consent. Participants were also informed that, although the survey was anonymous and no attempt would ever be made to identify any participant, identifiable Internet Protocol (IP) address identifying information could be left behind in any online computer activity. Alternatives such as usage of public computers at libraries were suggested to voluntary participants in the event that they were uncomfortable using their own computers to complete the survey.

Participants were asked four preliminary questions to determine that they were at least 18 years of age, whether they had completed at least one prior semester of university coursework, their gender, and the number of years they had spent in school (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, and graduate student). Afterward, students completed the Academic Entitlement Scale designed by Achacoso (2002; See Appendix A). The 7-point Likert scale ranged from 1 = “strongly disagree” to 7 = “strongly agree” and consisted of two subscales: entitlement beliefs (first five questions) and entitlement actions (last seven questions).
Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

The survey sample initially consisted of 379 responses. Two of the participants indicated that they were not at least 18 years old, so their answers were discarded from the sample. An additional 41 participants did not complete the survey. The determination was made to exclude those responses from the data set, which left 336 responses for analysis. Of the remaining sample, 28 of the participants indicated that they had not completed at least one prior semester. While data collected from participants who had not completed at least one semester in university coursework were initially going to be excluded, those answers were retained. Because the K-12 experience may be influencing self-entitled behavior in universities (Carifio & Carey 2010), their data had the potential to add value to the study, as it is likely that those participants had recently left high school. Additionally, since the survey was conducted in December 2011, students had essentially completed at least one semester of university coursework. Once the final sample was identified, the data were reviewed to determine further analysis. The data were segmented into academic year and male and female gender groups as given in Table 3.
The freshmen and sophomore male data sizes were significantly lower than the other groups. As shown in Table 3, the female freshmen/sophomore group (34 and 41, respectively) was much larger than the male freshmen/sophomore group (7 and 9, respectively). Due to these smaller male data sizes, it was determined that the academic year should be collapsed into three groups (freshmen/sophomore, junior/senior and graduate) in order to have a more equal sample size across all groups. These three groups were then used to form the AcadYrCondensed variable. These three groups are listed in Table 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Freshmen/Sophomore</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Junior/Senior</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>93</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4

Condensed Participant Breakdown
After the academic year groups were collapsed, the independent variables remained gender and year in school. Three dependent variables were the scores from subscale 1, subscale 2, and the overall scale score. The scales were labeled as follows: (1) subscale 1 - entitlement beliefs; (2) subscale 2 - entitlement actions, and (3) the overall scale score. Due to the use of three dependent variables, it was necessary to run a two-way Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). A two-way MANOVA was used to examine the effect of gender and education level on academic self-entitlement. The dependent variables, entitlement beliefs, entitlement actions, and the combination of entitlement beliefs and actions were normally distributed for the groups formed by the combination of the levels of education level and gender as assessed by the Shapiro-Wilk test. There was homogeneity of error variance between groups as assessed by Levene's test for equality of error variances. Between-subject effects are presented in Table 5.
Table 5

**Between Subject Effects**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Type III Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>1569.307</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>313.681</td>
<td>2.460</td>
<td>.033</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>400.721</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>80.144</td>
<td>3.479</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>602.505</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>120.501</td>
<td>1.669</td>
<td>.142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>312206.229</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>312206.229</td>
<td>2447.312</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>30666.932</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>30666.932</td>
<td>1331.294</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>147237.157</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>147237.157</td>
<td>2038.963</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcadYrCondensed</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>340.572</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>170.285</td>
<td>1.334</td>
<td>.265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>231.635</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>115.913</td>
<td>5.032</td>
<td>.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>52.996</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>26.498</td>
<td>.367</td>
<td>.933</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>980.062</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>980.062</td>
<td>7.680</td>
<td>.006</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>235.605</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>235.605</td>
<td>10.229</td>
<td>.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>254.610</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>254.610</td>
<td>3.528</td>
<td>.061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AcadYrCondensed * Gender</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>199.274</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>99.637</td>
<td>.781</td>
<td>.459</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>103.971</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>51.985</td>
<td>2.257</td>
<td>.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>100.020</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>90.010</td>
<td>1.248</td>
<td>.299</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>40834.521</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>127.608</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>7371.340</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>23.035</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>23107.777</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>72.212</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>526834.000</td>
<td>320</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>53666.000</td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>257270.000</td>
<td>326</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Total</td>
<td>Total Scale</td>
<td>42403.828</td>
<td>325</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 1</td>
<td>7772.081</td>
<td>325</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sub Scale 2</td>
<td>23710.283</td>
<td>325</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. R Squared = .037 (Adjusted R Squared = .022)
b. R Squared = .052 (Adjusted R Squared = .037)
c. R Squared = .025 (Adjusted R Squared = .010)

Significant differences were found in academic entitlement by both gender and level, but no significant interactions were identified. In reviewing differences by gender, statistically significant differences were found in the Total Scale ($p = 0.006$) and the Sub Scale 1, Entitlement Belief ($p = 0.002$). On those scales, males had consistently higher entitlement scores than females. No significant differences between males and females were found on Sub Scale 2, Entitlement Actions. There were also differences by academic level (AcadYrCondensed). There were no statistically significant differences across levels in the Total Scale score or in Sub Scale
2 Entitlement Actions. However, there were significant differences across levels in Sub Scale 1, Entitlement Attitudes \((p = 0.007)\). Post Hoc Tukey tests were conducted to identify the areas of difference in academic levels. The only significant differences in individual comparisons are in Subscale 1; level 1 is significantly different from level 3 \((p = 0.033)\).

The AcadYrCondensed combined with Gender interaction found no statistically significant interactions between gender and level in the Total Scale (Entitlement Beliefs and Entitlement Actions), Sub Scale 1 (Entitlement Beliefs) or Sub Scale 2 (Entitlement Actions).

Figures 1, 2, and 3 provide a graphical illustration of the results discussed above. These illustrations give an idea of the significant differences between Total Scale (Entitlement Beliefs and Entitlement Actions; Figure 1), Sub Scale 1 (Entitlement Beliefs; Figure 2) and Sub Scale 2 (Entitlement Actions; Figure 3).

\[\text{Figure 1. Entitlement Beliefs and Actions: Profile Plot - Total Scale}\]

In Figure 1 above, academic year in school is plotted along the horizontal axis, and the interaction between entitlement beliefs and entitlement actions are plotted along the vertical axis.
The blue and green lines show how males (blue) interact with females (green) in terms of levels of self-entitlement. Here it can be noted that males seem to be consistently more self-entitled than females. However, around the junior to senior years, males begin to become even more self-entitled while females become significantly less self-entitled. This hints at a possible interaction not identified by the current research.

*Figure 2. Entitlement Beliefs: Profile Plot – Sub Scale 1*

In Figure 2, academic year in school is plotted along the horizontal axis and entitlement belief is plotted along the vertical axis. The blue and green lines show how males (blue) differ from females (green) in terms of levels of self-entitlement. Here it can be noted that males' entitlement beliefs seem to be higher than females, particularly in the first and second years of university and graduate school. During the third and fourth years of university, levels of entitlement beliefs become more similar. However, males continue to have higher levels of entitlement beliefs.
Figure 3. Entitlement Actions: Profile Plot – Sub Scale 2

In Figure 3 above, academic year in school is plotted along the horizontal axis and the entitlement action is plotted along the vertical axis. The blue and green lines show how males (blue) interact with females (green) in terms of levels of self-entitlement. Here it can be noted that it is possible that at some point during the first and second academic years, females exhibit higher levels of entitled actions than males. However, from that point forward, it might be the case that males exhibit progressively higher levels of entitlement actions while females exhibit progressively lower levels of entitlement actions. This suggests an interaction effect that this research was not able to identify.
Chapter 5: Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations For Future Research

Conclusions

Academic self-entitlement is the expectation of high academic marks without personal accountability for the possibility of failure to reach such success. It is evident that newer generations of college students are becoming increasingly self-entitled (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Academic self-entitlement can produce negative consequences for individuals and society. Self-entitled students often exhibit attitudes and behaviors consistent with performance goals, which emphasize competition and might distract students from focusing on learning (Brophy, 2010). Self-entitled behaviors also have consequences for the university. Unprepared faculty can become overworked and overwhelmed. Faculty members may not be prepared to handle the unrealistic demands on their time that may arise while teaching self-entitled students (Greenberger et al., 2008). Additionally, the core values of education might be at stake as an overproduction of degrees might threaten to render them meaningless (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson & Reinhardt, 2010). The purpose of this study is to raise awareness to the phenomenon of academic self-entitlement and to help to identify possible relationships between self-entitled behavior and academic year, as well as self-entitled behavior and gender.

This study analyzed the relationships between academic self-entitlement and gender as well as academic self-entitlement and year in school. The results indicated that there were significant differences in academic entitlement by gender. Significant differences were found in academic entitlement by both gender and level, but no significant interactions were identified. If future research determines that there is indeed an interaction between year in school and gender and if findings reveal that the speculation of these results is correct, then it is possible that during
the junior year when males become more self-entitled they may also become more extrinsically motivated. Conversely, as females become less self-entitled during the junior year, they may also become more intrinsically motivated.

**Limitations**

Due to the nature of the online survey, participation might have been more likely from those who have their own computers, as spending time on a public computer could have been limited or less likely than in the convenience of one’s own home. For these reasons, it is possible that socioeconomic status could have influenced the sample. It is possible that some potential respondents chose not to participate because they might have believed that electronic responses would be traced back to the user, despite assurance from the researcher that all participation information would be kept confidential. This is especially likely because the questions posed in the survey might be perceived as having the potential “label” one as “self-entitled.” It might be the case that self-entitled students who, according to Achacoso (2006) only want to do/learn what is necessary to earn their degrees, may not have been interested in participating in the survey. It is possible that responses from students who are not typically self-entitled may have comprised the vast majority of participation in this study. On the other hand, it is possible that self-entitled students might have particularly been drawn to the survey in order to voice strong opinions. Additionally, the survey opened near the end of the Fall semester of 2011. There is a chance that students could have been experiencing higher than usual stress levels during that point in the semester, resulting in stronger emotions toward their schoolwork and professors, which might have influenced the answers they provided in the survey. It is likely that the differences in gender were affected by the disparity between participation in males and females in the sample size. Males constituted only 27.6 percent of the participants. It is possible
that the results may be even more significant given a more equivalent representation of males.
The data analysis hints at interaction effects that might have been significant had there been
more males in the sample.

**Recommendations**

To more fully understand and raise awareness of the phenomenon of academic self-
entitlement, and help to identify possible relationships between self-entitled behavior and
academic year as well as self-entitled behavior and gender, studies similar to this should be
initiated. More studies should be conducted using two-way MANOVA statistical analysis
techniques. More data should be collected using additional universities in various geographical
areas in the United States and in other parts of the world. Future studies should evaluate the
literature to ascertain what studies have been conducted and what research still needs to be
pursued. Additional studies should move forward in evaluating other variables that may
contribute to academic self-entitlement. Very little is known about the phenomenon of academic
self-entitlement. As this phenomenon is better understood, better methods can be
treated this problem, such as service learning (Hoffman & Wallach, 2007).

The data obtained from studies of academic self-entitlement should be used to improve
the design of future surveys. The design impact of these future surveys should be addressed in
future studies involving freshmen, sophomores, juniors, seniors, and graduate students. Future
surveys may at some point enable a better understanding of academic level and degree of
academic self-entitlement. These types of studies may reveal a legitimate need for implementing
discovered treatments for varying degrees of academic self-entitlement in the university setting.
Academically self-entitled students, once discovered, should be used to test perhaps more global
societal solutions to the issue of academic self-entitlement. Other areas of self-entitlement
research might include examinations of parenting styles, peer interactions, and comparisons between generations of students. It may be helpful to conduct longitudinal studies following students from kindergarten through college in order to investigate any possible effects that teaching strategies in the K-12 setting may have on student self-entitled behavior once they reach university levels.
References


Appendix A: Sample of the Online Survey

Informed Consent

Dear Student,

I am a graduate student under the direction of Professor Alane Starko in the department of Teacher Education at Eastern Michigan University. I am conducting a research study to examine the relationships between gender, academic year in school and students’ attitudes regarding things that might happen in classes as a result. There is no direct benefit in your participation in this survey, but your input is valued and will help contribute to the knowledge base. In order to participate, you must be at least 18 years of age and have completed at least 1 prior semester of university coursework. In addition to taking the Academic Entitlement Scale, you will be asked to provide your gender and your academic year in school.

The survey is voluntary and will take you approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Please be informed that while your answers will remain anonymous, web-based responses are never “completely anonymous” because all transactions on the web leave some identifying information (such as IP address or other code) from the computer sending the response. Please be assured however, that your personal information will be kept confidential and no attempt will ever be made to identify any participants. If you would like to participate but are not comfortable using your personal computer, you may consider using a public computer at a local library, an Internet café or a computer located on campus.

All data will be compiled in the aggregate and no individual response to the survey will ever be identified. The results of the research study may be published, but your information will not be identified in any way. There is no known risk involved in your participation in this survey. There is no penalty for not participating and you may discontinue the survey at any time without penalty. Your participation is voluntary and by continuing with the survey, you imply your consent to participate.

Sincerely,

Tiffany B. Hartman
Dr. Alane Starko

This research protocol and informed consent document has been reviewed and approved by the Eastern Michigan University Human Subjects Review Committee for use from 12/1/2011 to 12/1/2012. If you have questions about the approval process, please contact Dr. Jon Margerum-Leys (734-487-1416) interim associate dean of the College of Education. Mail to: jmargerum@emich.edu.
Academic Entitlement Scale

The following is the Academic Entitlement Scale developed by Achacoso (2002). The 7-point Likert scale ranges from 1=”strongly disagree” to 7=”strongly agree.” There are two subscales: entitlement beliefs and entitlement actions. Prior to completing the scale, students were asked to provide information as to their gender, academic year in school, whether they are at least 18 years of age and if they have completed at least one prior semester of university coursework.

Academic Entitlement Scale (Achacoso, 2002)

Entitlement beliefs

1. Instructors should bend the rules for me.
2. An instructor should modify course requirements to help me.
3. I should only be required to do a minimal amount of thinking to get an A in a class.
4. I should get special treatment in my courses.
5. I cannot tolerate it when an instructor does not accommodate my personal situation.

Entitlement Actions

6. I would confront an instructor to argue about my grade.
7. If I thought a test/assignment was unfair, I would tell the instructor.
8. I would attempt to negotiate my grade with my instructor.
9. I would argue with the instructor to get more points on a test.
10. If I felt an instructor’s grading was unfair, I would tell the instructor.
11. If I felt I deserved a higher grade, I would tell the instructor.
12. I would demand that an instructor make an exception for me.
Appendix B: Permission Letter

EASTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY

Master’s Thesis PROPOSAL

Approval Form

Student Name Tiffany B. Hartman Date of Meeting 11.11.2011
Program of Study Educational Psychology ID# E 01022070

TENTATIVE TITLE OF PROPOSED THESIS

An Analysis of University Student Academic Self-Entitlement: Levels of Entitlement, Academic Year and Gender

COMMITTEE REPORT ON THESIS PROPOSAL

After review of the thesis proposal, the Thesis Committee certifies that:

✓ The proposal is satisfactory and the candidate may proceed.

[ ] The proposed research does NOT involve the use of human subjects OR

✓ The proposed research involves human subjects and will be sent to the College Human Subjects Review Committee prior to data collection.

[ ] The proposal is not satisfactory and the following deficiencies must be corrected:

Description of deficiencies


COMMITTEE SIGNATURES

Chair Name Alane Starko, Ph.D. Signature

Member Name Pat Robertson, Ph.D. Signature

Member Name Sylvia Jones, Ph.D. Signature

Member Name Signature

Member Name Signature

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF PROPOSAL APPROVAL

Date 11-11-11 Program Coordinator/Dept Head

Signed original form remains in the student’s departmental/program file.

Figure 1. Thesis proposal approval form. Note: some departments use a slightly different form, changing the titles for the persons who will sign the document (e.g., English, Psychology).