

STUDENT ENTITLEMENT IN HIGHER  
EDUCATION: THE INVESTIGATION OF  
CONTRIBUTING PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS  
AND VARIATION AMONG ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

By

ASHLEY M. KEENER

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Northeastern State University

Broken Arrow, Oklahoma

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Thesis Approved:

Dr. Jam Khojasteh

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Thesis Adviser

Dr. Laura Barnes

---

Dr. James May

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Name: ASHLEY M. KEENER

Date of Degree: MAY, 2015

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Abstract: A growing concern among educators is that a sense of entitlement is running rampant within the American culture. Instructors report anecdotal evidence suggesting there is an increase in academic entitlement (AE) among college students. Faculty state they see evidence of AE exhibited in different ways. For example, students may exhibit blatant incivility, make unreasonable requests, or engage in academic dishonesty. The present study deconstructs the relationship between AE, three subcomponents of narcissism (Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness), self-esteem, and gratitude. The findings suggest that AE is predicted by a combination of four of the variables: Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, self-esteem, and gratitude. Additionally, the study examined whether mean levels of AE differ based on four classifications of academic disciplines and gender. The students' reported majors were identified as Investigative, Artistic, Social, or Enterprising according to Holland's (1997) theory. Findings suggest that males report slightly more AE than females and that students found in the Social disciplines report statistically significantly less AE than the other three disciplines. Implications for educational practitioners and future research are discussed.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In 2013, Megan Thode, a graduate student, filed a \$1.3 million lawsuit against Lehigh University for a C+ grade she received in 2009. Ms. Thode claimed that the grade prevented her from finishing a master's degree in counseling and human services and the lawsuit would compensate for the earnings she would have made as a state-certified counselor. Thode's legal argument hinged on the idea that she received the grade because her professor was displeased with her classroom conduct and disagreed with her effort to support the rights of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) community. However, the universities' legal team claimed that Thode demonstrated unprofessional behavior, such as swearing and having emotional outbursts while attending class. Thode is not the first student to sue her university because she was unhappy with a grade. Two lawsuits were filed in 2012 against Thurgood Marshall School of Law because two students received Ds and, in 2007, a student sued the University of Massachusetts at Amherst because they received a C in a political philosophy class. None of the aforementioned students won their cases (Kingkade, 2013).



### *Defining Academic Entitlement*

The previously mentioned stories are examples of academic entitlement (AE). An ongoing effort to clearly understand the perceptions and behavioral manifestations associated with AE continues to be an ongoing process as research unveils new information about the construct. There are a variety of definitions for AE. Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, and Farruggia (2008) define AE as having “expectations of high rewards for modest effort, expectations of special consideration and accommodation by teachers when it comes to grades, and impatience and anger when their expectations and perceived needs are not met” (p. 1194). Chowning and Campbell (2009) describe AE as “...the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success...” (p. 982). More recently, Kopp, Zinn, Finney, and Jurich (2011) concluded that there are five facets to AE based on contemporary literature. The authors were interested in creating a measure of AE that was well-grounded in theory and covered the breadth of the construct. These five facets include: (1) knowledge is a right that should be delivered with a minimum of effort and discomfort on the part of the consumer/student, (2) others (i.e., the professor and/or university) will provide all of the education that will be necessary to succeed, (3) problems in learning are due to the inadequacies of the teacher, the system, or the course, rather than to the student’s own inadequacies, (4) students deserve control over university policies, and (5) certain outcomes are deserved (e.g., a final grade of A) because the student pays tuition (Kopp et al., 2011). While these definitions may vary to some extent, it is evident they are primarily complementary and share a central commonality—that one deserves certain accolades and special attention despite the exclusion of mental exertion

and/or appropriate effort. Furthermore, because students' academically entitled attitudes may devalue the educational process through decreased effort and increased incivility, researchers argue, such attitudes are likely detrimental to the classroom setting. For example, Shapiro (2012) found that students who report a greater sense of entitlement demonstrate a higher tolerance towards academic dishonesty, such as cheating behavior. Other research suggests there is a relationship between AE and attitudes reflecting little concern to acting in the best interest of others. For example, Menon and Sharland (2011) found that academic entitlement and an exploitative attitude (i.e., an increased willingness to exploit others for personal gains) are positively related. Consequently, students who insist on unjustified special accommodations from faculty will most likely cultivate distress for both the student and the instructor, thus, creating an antagonistic environment.

### *Statement of the Problem*

#### *Narcissism and Self-Esteem*

Extant literature has suspected that AE is positively related to narcissism because an inflated sense of entitlement is a subcomponent of general narcissism (Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008). Therefore, it's reasonable to postulate there would be a positive relationship between the two constructs. Greenberger et al. (2008) found that academic entitlement is positively related to an overall sense of entitlement and to narcissism among students. However, inflated self-esteem, which has been associated with the growth of self-centered attitudes, appears to be inversely-related to AE. According to Greenberger et al. (2008) students who scored high on AE also reported a

low and/or unstable sense of self-esteem. These findings appear contradictory. If there is a positive correlation between narcissism and AE why wouldn't there be a positive correlation between self-esteem and AE? Kopp et al. (2011) suspects that previous findings regarding AE, such as the negative correlation between self-esteem and AE, may be suspect due to inadequate scales. Kopp and colleagues have evaluated three existing measures of AE and noted they contain questionable psychometric properties. The three measures include the *Academic Entitlement scale*, or AES (Achacoso, 2002), the Greenberger et al. (2008) *Academic Entitlement Scale*, and the Chowning and Campbell (2009) *Academic Entitlement Scale*. The AES was represented empirically by two factors: Entitlement Beliefs and Entitlement Actions (Kopp et al., 2011). Kopp et al. (2011) argue that the scale development was ambiguous; it is unclear whether the items were written to cover the breadth of the construct or just particular dimensions of AE. The authors also note methodological concerns regarding the structural stage and external stage of the validity process. Kopp et al. (2011) state that little information concerning the development of the *Academic Entitlement Scale* created by Greenberger et al. (2008) was provided by the authors; thus, it is difficult to determine whether the scale is a valid measure of AE. The Academic Entitlement Scale developed by Chowning and Campbell (2009) represented two aspects of AE: Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations (Kopp et al., 2011). The authors state that some items appeared to be distinct from AE, and again, did not adequately cover the breadth of the construct. For example, certain items appeared to represent work avoidance or quality of instruction opposed to student entitlement (Kopp et al., 2011).

## *Gratitude*

Kopp et al. (2011) discussed the benefits of integrating appropriate interventions to reduce levels of AE in students. Based on previous literature, the authors indicate that infusing gratitude into students may be a useful method in countering AE. For example, there appears to be advantages to ruminating on one's blessings. Emmons and McCullough (2003) found that listing one's benefits on a weekly basis was associated with more positive appraisals of one's life and that self-guided daily gratitude exercises cultivated higher levels of daily affect. Additionally, the study found that focusing on gratitude may lead to prosocial behavior. Subjects who were instructed to list things they were grateful for on a daily basis were more likely to have helped someone resolve a problem and/or offered emotional support (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). Saucier and Goldberg (1998) found that participants who rated themselves as grateful also rated themselves as more agreeable. The authors also noted that when participants rated other people as grateful, they also rated them higher in agreeableness. McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, and Larson (2001) speculate "agreeable people might be more grateful because they find gratitude to be a useful mechanism for maintaining positive relationships" (p. 260). Moreover, one would expect traits such as agreeableness to be negatively correlated with narcissistic traits, which may potentially inhibit gratitude and interfere with positive interpersonal relationships. Interestingly, there is evidence that suggests gratitude may be an adaptive trait. Experimental gratitude interventions have been successful in enhancing people's short-term moods and physical function; therefore, aiding to one's well-being and adjustment (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). Consequently, Kopp et al. (2011) suggests that it could be promising to use certain university organizations, such as a community

service learning program, to lower entitlement attitudes. Despite these propitious suggestions, it is unclear whether gratitude is related to AE. Determining whether a negative relationship exists between the two constructs may support implementing such interventions. In other words, do students who report feeling less grateful report higher levels of AE?

### *Academic Disciplines*

There are no studies, to my knowledge, that assess the effects of various academic disciplines in relation to AE. The comparison of different academic disciplines could potentially yield important information concerning the prevalence of student entitlement. In other words, do students who opt for certain majors demonstrate higher levels of AE? Certain studies have examined whether AE is fostered in the academic setting and these studies suggest that AE does not increase over time (Ciani et al., 2008; Boswell, 2012). Findings also suggest professors have little influence over student entitlement (Ciani et al., 2008). However, Ciani et al. (2008) indicated that seniors were more likely to negotiate certain outcomes (e.g., grades) than freshman. Due to these conclusions, the authors posit that AE may be more of a stable characteristic rather than the result of classroom context. Additionally, Boswell (2012) reported that AE did not vary according to upper-level students and lower-levels students. However, the authors state that these findings should be interpreted cautiously because very few junior and senior level students participated in the study. If AE is a stable trait, engendered in students at an early age or related to certain personality characteristics, than specific students (e.g., those who report higher levels of AE) may be drawn to certain majors. Some research indicates that individuals who possess certain personality characteristics are potentially

drawn to certain academic disciplines and/or careers (Holland, 1997; Smart, Feldman, & Ethington, 2000). For example, business majors tend to be lower in traits such as agreeableness and openness than non-business majors (Lounsbury, Smith, Levy, Leong, & Gibson, 2009). These studies will be discussed in more detail in the literature review.

### *Research Hypotheses*

The current study adds to existing literature by determining if AE is predicted by three subcomponents of narcissism (i.e., Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness), self-esteem, and gratitude. Therefore, a multiple regression analysis will be conducted. It is hypothesized that participants who report higher levels of narcissism will report higher levels of AE. Furthermore, participants who report both lower levels of self-esteem and gratitude will report higher levels of AE. The proposed research seeks to examine how much variance in AE can be accounted for by a combination of Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, Entitlement/Exploitativeness, self-esteem, and gratitude.

Additionally, the current study aims to determine if there is a mean difference in levels of student entitlement based on academic disciplines and gender. Specifically, a 4 X 2 factorial ANOVA will be conducted in order to examine if levels of AE differ based on Smart et al.'s (2000) classification of academic disciplines (i.e., Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising) and gender (i.e., male & female). Smart et al.'s (2000) classification system is based on Holland's (1997) theory and is discussed in the literature review. Males are expected to report more AE than females. Additionally, subjects within the

Investigative and Enterprising disciplines are expected to report more AE than the Social and Artistic disciplines.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### *Historical Perspective*

In the words of Sternberg (2012) “a strange new breed of students has invaded our universities” (p. 551). These students are often coined Millennials and there is no shortage of them. Millennials are a generation of individuals born roughly between the years 1982 and 2002 (Much, Wagner, Breitreutz, & Hellenbrand, 2014) with students from this cohort first entering college in the fall of 2000 (Howe & Strauss, 2003). Sternberg (2012) estimates that Millennials will be enrolled in college beyond 2020. Millennials are said to possess many characteristics, and, at times, these characteristics are perceived as negative. Millennial cynics have used adjectives such as narcissistic, lethargic, delusional, and coddled to describe the generation and some of the previous research may support these assumptions. For example, Twenge and Campbell (2009) reported in a sample survey of 18 to 25-year-olds that eighty one percent of them selected being rich as their most important goal followed by being famous (51%). Additionally, the authors indicated that narcissistic personality traits rose as quickly as obesity from the 1980s according to data collected from 37,000 college students. Greenberger et al. (2008)



speculates that Millennials may have adopted some of these characteristics due to parents and/or adults rewarding them for minimal accomplishments or mere participation.

Whether one perceives this population in a negative or positive manner, there is increasing concern that this cohort of Millennials, bent on instant gratification and imagined prerogatives, have flooded the classrooms and transformed their narcissistic tendencies into student entitlement.

The fascination with this new breed of students seems to have ignited a growing interest in AE. However, the notion that students may possess an inclination to act or feel entitled is not an entirely new concept. Morrow (1994) discussed the characteristics of an entitled culture and the implications it can have on educational achievement. He suggested that entitled beliefs can potentially diminish responsibility and foster an external locus of control. In other words, the entitled student may lack accountability and claim their failure is a result of the instructor, the university, or the curriculum opposed to oneself. He warned that the “culture of entitlement may delegitimize the field of education by inducing radical skepticism about its point or purpose” (p. 34). He affirmed that educational achievement should echo appropriately applied effort or skill and that achievement is, on average, cooperative by nature. In other words, academic achievement is due to the effort of the student, professor, and university working in a collaborative manner to cultivate intellectual and personal growth. Morrow (1994) stated:

Such a community is needed for the discovery, maintenance and articulation of the interpersonal standards of achievement which give shape to such activities.

When Newton said (if he did) that he “stood on the shoulders of giants” he was acknowledging this point. Newton was not the “winner” in some kind of

individualistic competition, and we do not assess his achievements in these terms.  
(p. 37)

However, students who embody the characteristics of entitlement may be less likely to admit that their accomplishments were due to collaborative effort. According to Morrow's (1994) theory they may be more interested in public acknowledgement which may inspire fraudulent ways of earning recognition, such as cheating. Additionally, he mentioned these achievements, which are often presented in the form of "artifacts" (e.g., a diploma), may be "linked to materialistic gains," such as more "lucrative employment" (p.37). Current literature resonates with Morrow's (1994) theory and suggests that academic entitlement may be partially due to student-as-customer perceptions. These perceptions will be discussed in succeeding sections. Rather than viewing education as a materialistic product, Morrow (1994) defines attending college as a form of "epistemological access" or learning how to actively participate in the academic setting (p. 40). In essence, academic achievement or epistemological access is not solely dependent on external forces, but is additionally dependent on an active student. Furthermore, this kind of access or participation cannot be bought, sold, or delivered to those who pay their fees. The student must learn to be genuinely engaged and demonstrate sincere appreciation to those that have helped them accomplish their achievements. Morrow (1994) profoundly expressed:

The learner needs to have a certain kind of humility and respect for the practice in which she is trying to become a participant; if that practice is an academic practice then epistemological access will depend on the learner acknowledging the authority of the practice and its outstanding participants...To the extent that

the learner see herself as a victim, a consumer or exploited worker, rather than as a novice participant in the practice in question, it is unlikely that she will achieve epistemological access. (p. 41)

In sum, Morrow's (1994) concerns are relevant in today's higher education. The notion that the culture of entitlement devalues the significance of academia may be imbued with negative consequences. Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2010) proposed two very important questions: (1) do we want to award degrees to everyone who feels entitled to these degrees or (2) do we want to inspire students to put forth skill and effort that is necessary for achievement? Morrow's (1994) philosophical stance was a starting point regarding the implications of student entitlement in higher education.

### *Recent Research*

Extant literature suggests that AE may be domain specific or a distinct construct (Greenberger et al. 2008; Boswell, 2012). For example, Chowning and Campbell (2009) report that AE is distinguished from generalized psychological entitlement because students can exclusively exhibit entitlement in the academic setting. Students can feel unjustified entitlement regarding grades they did not earn but not perceive entitlement to unearned positive outcomes in other domains, such as the home or workplace. Some scholars suspect that AE may have been engendered in students at an early age due to unearned accolades from teachers and parents (Twenge, 2006; Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Boswell, 2012). Another concern is that universities are fostering AE. For example, some studies have attributed AE to grade inflation (Lippmann et al. 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Grade inflation refers to the rise in GPAs or the number of As awarded

to the student. Grade inflation may foster AE by providing rewards for minimal or mediocre effort. Finney and Finney (2010) found that student-as-customer (SAC) perceptions are prevalent. In other words, students are likely to view their college education as any other economic exchange rather than immersing themselves in intellectual pursuits. These perceptions can have negative implications on the student. For instance, students who maintain SAC perceptions are more likely to engage in behaviors that are not conducive to success as a student, such as complaining, feeling entitled to certain outcomes, and being less involved in their education (Finney & Finney, 2010). Furthermore, academically entitled attitudes have been linked to the manifestation of detrimental behaviors within the classroom setting, such as an increase in cheating and the likelihood of exploitation (Menon & Sharland, 2011; Shapiro, 2012).

#### *Narcissism, Self-Esteem, and AE*

AE is commonly viewed as a self-centered disposition characterized by a pronounced lack of accountability. Numerous studies have suspected that there could be a link between AE and narcissism. Studies indicate that narcissism tends to “coalesce around themes of self-absorption, exhibitionism, arrogance, and general feelings of entitlement” (Ackerman, Witt, Donnellan, Trzensniewski, Robins, & Kashy, 2011, p. 68). Menon and Sharland (2011) found that narcissism and AE are positively correlated and are significant predictors of an exploitative attitude. Another factor suspected to influence both AE and narcissism is use of the internet (Greenberger et al., 2008; Boswell, 2012). Social networking sites, such as Facebook, are hypothesized to encourage a sense of entitlement and narcissism by reinforcing self-promotion (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that narcissistic personality

characteristics, including entitlement, are directly related to time spent social networking (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010). Furthermore, Boswell (2012) found that greater social network usage predicted higher levels of AE. Academically entitled students may be drawn to social networking sites because they allow the student to receive praise and attention in the absence of accomplishment and effort (Twenge & Campbell, 2009; Boswell, 2012).

Studies with North American college students have linked AE with self-esteem. Rosenberg (1989) defined self-esteem as positive feelings towards one's self. Greenberger et al. (2008) found that more academically entitled students report lower self-esteem. Therefore, these "findings do not support the view that entitled attitudes in the academic domain are a reflection of exaggerated self-esteem" (Greenberger et al., 2008, p. 1197). Greenberger et al. (2008) describes this finding as "anomalous" due to the moderately positive relationship regarding narcissism and AE (p. 1201). Furthermore, studies indicate that narcissists have a highly positive self-concept leading them to believe that they are better than others on a plethora of different dimensions (Menon & Sharland, 2011). Therefore, these findings are contradictory. A negative relationship between self-esteem and AE may support the idea that AE is an independent construct, specific to the classroom setting.

One of the most widely used measures of narcissism is the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, commonly referred to as the NPI-40. (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The Narcissistic Personality Inventory is a 40 item forced-choice scale that can be broken down into subscales (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Although some researchers (e.g., Greenberger et al., 2008) have focused on NPI-40 total scores, it may be useful to

examine the subscales, as well as total scores, in relation to AE. Ackerman et al. (2011) argue the NPI-40 contains conceptual underpinnings that may lead to confusion due to a mixture of adaptive and maladaptive content. In other words, narcissism can be portrayed as either normal or pathological (Ackerman et al., 2011). Normal or adaptive narcissism involves strategies that allow one to promote a positive self-image, such as “asserting healthy dominance within social hierarchies, demonstrating adaptive self-enhancement, and striving for success in achievement related contexts” (Ackerman et al., 2011, p. 68). On the other hand, pathological or maladaptive narcissism involves grandiosity and vulnerability. Grandiosity is a reflection of behaviors that are detrimental to interpersonal relationships, such as exploitativeness, exhibitionism, and entitlement. Additionally, grandiose individuals may be imbued with an overinflated sense of self and demonstrate arrogant attitudes. In contrast, vulnerability is characterized by a fragile sense of self, emotional volatility, and internalizing pathology (Ackerman et al., 2011). Ackerman and colleagues assessed the dimensional structure of the NPI-40 and found three underlying structures: Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness. The findings suggested that the Leadership/Authority subscale of the NPI-40 was associated with more normal or adaptive traits of narcissism. For example, this personality dimension is linked to “confidence, assertiveness, and leadership potential,” and is “unrelated to the impulsive aspects of psychopathology and Machiavellianism (Ackerman et al., 2011, p. 82). Conversely, the Grandiose Exhibitionism and Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscales were associated with pathological or maladaptive narcissism. The Entitlement/Exploitativeness dimension of narcissism appears to be more socially noxious, contain more maladaptive outcomes

(Ackerman et al., 2011) and is linked to “lower self-esteem and extraversion as well as higher mood variability and neuroticism” (Gentile, Miller, Hoffman, Reidy, Zeichner, & Campbell, 2013, p. 1121). On the other hand, Grandiose Exhibitionism is linked with higher self-esteem, extraversion and lower neuroticism” (Gentile et al., 2013, p. 1121) and “moderately associated with impulse antisociality, Machiavellianism, and counterproductive school behaviors” (Ackerman et al., 2011, p. 75). Therefore, specific subscale scores of the NPI-40 may yield more unique information about AE and its’ relationship to narcissism. One may expect the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale to account for more of the variability in AE given that student entitlement is associated with exploitativeness and lower self-esteem (Menon & Sharland, 2011; Greenberger et al., 2008). The current study aims to explore this possibility. However, the NPI-13 will be used to measure narcissism which was derived from the NPI-40 and consists of 13 items (Gentile et al., 2013). Gentile et al. (2013) created the NPI-13 for the sake of increased efficiency and to provide three subscale scores (i.e., Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, Entitlement/Exploitativeness) as well as a total score.

### *Gratitude and AE*

One construct that has not been examined in relation to AE is gratitude. McCullough, Emmons, and Tsang (2002) define the grateful disposition as “a generalized tendency to recognize and respond with grateful emotion to the roles of other people’s benevolence in the positive experiences and outcomes that one obtains” (p. 112). McCullough et al. (2001) suggest that individuals with grateful dispositions are more successful in the interpersonal world due to particular traits. For example, one would expect individuals with grateful dispositions to be high in agreeableness and the facets of

agreeableness, such as trust, compliance, and modesty. Additionally, people who tend to be more agreeable, which is one of the characteristics of the Big Five personality factors (i.e., openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism), do well in social relationships due to less conflict and greater adjustment (McCullough et al., 2001). Given that people who exhibit high levels of AE maintain a tendency to display an exploitative attitude one would expect a negative relationship to exist between AE and gratitude.

In light of the Big Five personality factors, McCullough et al. (2002) found that gratitude was positively correlated with agreeableness and extraversion and negatively correlated with neuroticism. McWilliams and Lependorf (1990) indicate that narcissistic individuals are not likely to express gratitude to others due to an over reliance on self-sufficiency. In other words, expressing gratitude would be unpleasant to a narcissist because it would require them to admit that their well-being is, to some extent, dependent on others. Furthermore, McWilliams and Lependorf (1990) suggest that narcissistic people may find other means to responding to those that have helped them, such as expressing approval or feigning indifference. Additionally, it is reasonable to postulate that higher levels of AE would be associated with lower levels of gratitude since a positive relationship exists between AE and narcissism.

Grateful people report themselves as being less materialistic and envious than less grateful people (McCullough et al., 2002). Those who possess a grateful disposition are more willing to depart with materialistic possessions, less envious of the material wealth of others, less likely to feel that material wealth is connected with success in life, and less likely to perceive material wealth as being connected to happiness (McCullough et al.,



2002). Therefore, there is evidence to support the notion that acquiring material success is an unimportant factor in the happiness of the grateful person. In relation to AE, studies have suggested that students may perceive their academic experience as an economic exchange where universities simply provide a service (Finney & Finney, 2010). A qualitative study conducted at a mid-sized Canadian university revealed students are likely to view themselves as consumers (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010). A phenomenological approach was utilized by asking participants consumer related questions. Subjects were also asked to divulge information regarding their educational experiences. One of the primary themes that emerged during the semi-structured interview was the “product value of education” where “35.5% of the participants reported they wanted to obtain a good job” when asked why they chose to attend the university (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, p. 350). Moreover, a customer orientation towards education emerged when one participant blatantly stated, “we put all our money and time into it [getting an education]. Our receipt is our diploma, and that’s what we get out of it” (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, p. 350). Interestingly, the authors reported that only 9.8% of the students suggested they recognized the value of learning opposed to attending the university for the purposes of “job training” (p. 350). Another theme deemed “social promotion” indicated that students may devalue the learning process when one participant claimed, “you should get marks for just doing the work. [It’s] not about quality” (Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010, p. 351). This comment was in relation to professors accommodating students because they pay tuition or, in other words, are purchasing a product. The aforementioned research may support the idea that entitled students are materialistic if they view earning a diploma as simply paying for a product.

It is believed that gratitude is an adaptable trait that possesses the potential to garner mental and physical benefits. Emmons and McCullough (2003) asked participants to list things in their life that they were grateful for over a nine week period. Overall, participants in this condition were more optimistic about the upcoming week, reported fewer physical complaints, and exercised more regularly opposed to participants who were asked to list daily hassles or neutral life events. In a more intensive study, participants were asked to maintain diaries for 13 days and document things they were grateful for on a daily basis (Emmons & McCullough, 2003). The results suggested that participants in the gratitude condition experienced higher levels of positive affect and were more likely to exhibit prosocial behaviors (e.g., helping someone in need or offering advice). Therefore, research indicates that gratitude can potentially strengthen social bonds and foster emotional well-being. A type of psychotherapy developed in Japan, known as Naikan therapy, has shown to be effective in producing positive existential guilt and feelings of gratefulness via confronting one's debt to the world (Hedstrom, 1994). This therapeutic practice is slowly being adopted, yet slightly modified, in Western cultures. In sum, research indicates that gratitude may ameliorate psychological disorders, demonstrate incompatibility with negative affect, strengthen socially supportive relationships, and elicit more kindness from a benefactor (Bono & McCullough, 2006). Furthermore, Bono and McCullough (2006) suggest that "gratitude can be facilitated through relatively simple psychological interventions" and are immensely realistic in nature (p. 154). If gratitude is, indeed, an adaptable trait then using it as a mechanism to reduce levels of student entitlement may prove effective as Kopp et

al. (2011) had suggested. This notion may be the first step to combating student entitlement and reducing its ramifications in higher education.

### *Academic Disciplines and AE*

The notion that AE may be fostered in the academic setting has been explored in previous studies. However, whether students, who possess higher levels of AE, are drawn to certain majors is still questionable. In other words, do levels of AE vary according to different academic disciplines? John Holland (1997) developed a classification system based on the premise that individuals exhibit certain abilities due to inherited characteristics and environmental circumstances that can ultimately influence one's occupational choices or academic preferences (Smart et al., 2000). The classification system includes six personality types: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional. These individual personality types are thought to contain a "distinctive pattern of competencies, interests, and preferred activities and to seek out environments that reward their distinctive attributes" (Smart et al., 2011, p. 35). Table 1 briefly summarizes the six personality types and their preferred activities and self-perceptions. As shown in Figure 1, the hexagonal model is an important feature of Holland's (1997) theory. The hexagon is intended to reflect the similarity among the six personality types. Smart et al. (2000) note the "relative similarity of the types is inversely proportional to the distance between any pair in the model" (p. 40). For example, the Investigative type is the most similar to the Realistic and Artistic types and least similar to the Enterprising type (Smart et al., 2000). Although people may relate to all of the personality types to some degree, they are generally more compatible with one or two of

Table 1

*The six personality types and their preferred activities and self-perceptions*

Personality Type	Description
Realistic	Realistic individuals prefer activities that involve order and the manipulation of objects, such as tools and machines. They perceive themselves as conservative and socially inept. They value practicality and tangible/material accomplishments.
Investigation	Investigative individuals prefer activities that involve systematic investigation, observation, and creativity. They perceive themselves as curious, logical, complex, prudent, precise, and scholarly. They value the act of learning and imparting knowledge to others.
Artistic	Artistic individuals prefer activities that involve freedom, ambiguity, and the creation of art or products. They perceive themselves as expressive, individualistic, emotional, unconventional, intuitive, and sensitive. They value creative expression and nonconformity.
Social	Social individuals prefer activities that involve the manipulation of the self or others and interpersonal or educational involvement. They perceive themselves as empathetic, personable, giving, helpful, responsible, and open-minded. They value humanitarianism and fostering the welfare of others.
Enterprising	Enterprising individuals prefer activities that involve organization, the manipulation of others, and the pursuit of economic gain or financial reward. They view themselves as interpersonal, popular, aggressive, persuasive, and confident. They value social status and material success.
Conventional	Conventional individuals prefer activities that involve order, the manipulation of

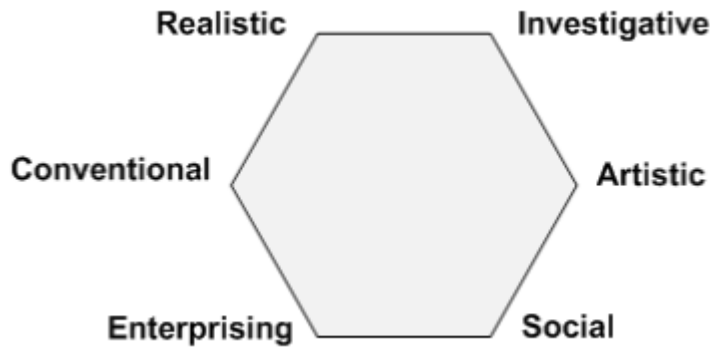
data, record keeping, and filing. They perceive themselves as conforming, orderly, and prudent. They value financial and material success.

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these orientations more than others. In relation to classifying students according to their academic majors, a study conducted by Smart et al. (2000) determined that very few college students and faculty belong to the Realistic and Conventional categories. The authors state that “the majority of the Realistic and Conventional vocations/majors are not represented by four-year institutions” (p. 64). For example, Realistic types are described as enjoying practical activities such as working with tools/machines and are thought to avoid activities associated with educational or interpersonal practices. In relation to an educational setting, these individuals would most likely be found in technical schools. Conventional types are more likely to be drawn to activities that involve record keeping, filing, organization, or reproducing materials and are described as enjoying clerical or secretarial work (Smart et al., 2000). Due to these occupations not requiring advanced degrees one is less likely to find these types in college settings. Therefore, the present study has omitted the Realistic and Conventional categories based on the concept that students will be underrepresented within these categories. Table 2 displays some of the majors associated with the Investigative, Artistic, Social, and Enterprising disciplines according to Smart et al. (2000).

A study conducted by Smart and Thompson (2001) examined faculty members in Investigative, Artistic, Social, and Enterprising environments and the emphasis they placed on their students developing certain competencies. The authors found that faculty members associated with each of the environments rewarded students for the

development of particular skills relevant to their discipline. For example, faculty in the Investigative fields placed greater emphasis on analytical skills while deemphasizing skills associated with the Enterprising fields, such as persuasion and leadership abilities.



*Figure 1.* Holland's (1997) Hexagonal Model. Retrieved from <http://sourcesofinsight.com/6-personality-and-work-environment-types/>

In relation to AE, if students who exhibit entitlement are more apt to negotiate and demonstrate incivility one might expect students grouped in the Enterprising disciplines to demonstrate higher levels of AE. Moreover, Lounsbury et al. (2009) found that business majors reported lower agreeableness and openness scores than non-business majors. The authors state that “the emphasis in most business schools on competition, grades, individual achievement, and the pursuit of the bottom line in corporations may reduce an individual’s inclination to be kind, generous, equable, and helpful to peers” (p. 202). The authors also note that business majors scored higher on assertiveness which indicates an association with dominance. Conversely, a positive relationship between agreeableness and the Social and Artistic disciplines have been demonstrated (Tokar, Fischer, & Subich, 1998).

Table 2

*Classification of academic disciplines according to Smart et al. (2000)*

Investigative	Artistic	Social	Enterprising
General Biology	Fine Art	History	Law
Botany	English	Philosophy	Communications
Microbiology	Foreign Languages	Theology	Journalism
Marine (Life) Science	Literature	Education	Computer Science
Chemical Engineering	Music	Nursing	Journalism
Astronomy	Speech	Library Science	Business
Chemistry	Theater	Psychology	Marketing
Mathematics/Statistics	Music	Social Work	Management
Pharmacy	Art Education	Political Science	Business Education
Premedical	Architecture	Women's Studies	Public Affairs
Economics		Anthropology	
Geography			

Research on AE has consistently demonstrated that males are more prone to entitlement than females (Boswell, 2012; Ciani et al. 2008; Greenberger et al. 2008). Therefore, it would not be surprising to discover that more AE is exhibited in male dominated disciplines, such as the STEM (i.e., science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. Diekman, Clark, Johnston, Brown, and Steinberg (2011) note that women tend to value communal goals (i.e., working with or helping others) and that STEM careers are often perceived as not fulfilling these goals. The authors found that women consistently endorsed communal goals more than men and that communal goals negatively predicted attitudes toward STEM careers. Additionally, women are

underrepresented in business school (Kennedy & Kray, 2013). Kennedy and Kray (2013) sought to examine this underrepresentation by determining if women find ethical compromises more unacceptable than men. The findings indicated that when jobs required one to make more ethical compromises women demonstrated less interest in the jobs and exhibited more negative reactions concerning “ethically questionable decisions aimed at increasing profit and social status” (57). If women, on average, gravitate towards communal values and are more concerned with moral decision-making than one would expect women to demonstrate less student incivility and, thus, report lower levels of student entitlement.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, AE appears to be a complex phenomenon. Research has demonstrated the construct is positively related to narcissism and inversely related to self-esteem – a confounding discovery (Greenberger et al., 2008). These findings are further muddled due to the methodological concerns of some narcissistic personality inventories, such as the NPI-40, and their interpretations (Ackerman et al., 2011). Additionally, the link between AE, student-as-consumer perceptions, and exploitativeness suggest entitled students may be less prone to experiencing gratefulness (Finney & Finney, 2010; Menon & Sharland, 2011). Extant literature suggests that AE is not fostered within the academic setting and does not increase over time (Ciani et al., 2008; Boswell, 2012). However, due to the lack of sample size in previous studies these assumptions are, at best, tenuous. (Boswell, 2012). Additionally, research suggests that students who opt for certain academic disciplines may be more prone to AE (Smart & Thompson, 2001; Tokar et al., 1998; Dickman et al., 2011; Kennedy & Kray, 2013). The present study intends to further



dissect AE by exploring three possibilities: (1) determining if student entitlement is predicted by particular dimensions of narcissism, determining whether a relationship exists between student entitlement and gratitude, and (3) determining if students within certain academic disciplines exhibit, on average, more student entitlement.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Participants*

A total of 571 participants were collected from two large Midwestern institutions for the current study. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 68, with a mean age of 26 ( $SD = 9.64$ ). The sample consisted of 66% females and 34% males. In regards to education level, approximately 12% were freshmen, 11.5% were sophomores, 27.2% were juniors, 19.2% were seniors, and 30.2% were graduate students. In regards to ethnicity, 76.2% indicated they were White/Caucasian, 6.5% were Asian or Pacific Islander, 4.7% were American Indian or Alaskan Native, 4.6% were multiracial, 2.3% were Hispanic or Latino, 2.3% were Black or African American, and .9% preferred not to answer. A convenience sample was collected from both institutions and the participants were not offered any incentives for participation.

#### *Measures*

Four different instruments were used for the purpose of this study. The Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (AEQ) (Kopp et al., 2011), the Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13 (NPI-13) (Gentile et al., 2013), the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE)

(Rosenberg, 1989), and the Gratitude Questionnaire-6 (GQ-6) (McCullough et al., 2004).

#### *Academic Entitlement Questionnaire*

The AEQ is an 8 item measure of academic entitlement. Participants were expected to respond to the items using a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). Two example items from the scale included “It is the professor’s responsibility to make it easy for me to succeed” and “Because I pay tuition, I deserve passing grades.” The 8 items were summed to form a composite score with higher scores representing higher levels of student entitlement. Cronbach’s coefficient alpha for the current study was .86.

#### *Narcissistic Personality Inventory-13*

The NPI-13 is derived from the NPI-40, a 40 item self-report measure of trait narcissism, and contains both a total score and three subscale scores (Leadership/Authority; Grandiose Exhibitionism; Entitlement/Exploitativeness) (Gentile et al., 2013). Participants are asked to respond “agree” or “disagree” to 13 items such as “I find it easy to manipulate people” and “I like having authority over other people.” The 13 items can be summed to form a total score with higher scores representing higher levels of narcissism. Additionally, each of the items contained within a particular subscale can be summed to form a score with higher levels representing higher levels of that specific component. Due to the original scale containing 40 items, Gentile and colleagues were interested in creating a more efficient measure of narcissism. In a study conducted by Ackerman et al. (2011) the authors found the NPI-40 supported a three-factor structure (Leadership/Authority; Grandiose Exhibitionism;

Entitlement/Exploitativeness). Gentile et al. (2013) described Ackerman and colleagues study as a “rigorous analysis” of the underlying factor structure of the NPI-40, and therefore, aimed to create a shorter measure of the construct based on the same three-factor structure (p. 1120). The authors suggest that the scale exhibits strong construct validity due to the total scores of the NPI-13 “resulting in patterns of convergent and discriminate validity that are nearly identical to the NPI-40 ( $r = .88, p < .001$ )” (p. 1130). Additionally, the subscale scores of the NPI-13 were found to be highly correlated with the subscale scores of the NPI-40 (NPI-13 vs. NPI-40, Leadership/Authority subscale,  $r = .82, p < .001$ ; NPI-13 vs. NPI-40, Grandiose Exhibitionism subscale,  $r = .84, p < .001$ ; NPI-13 vs. NPI-40, Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale,  $r = .86, p < .001$ ) (p. 1130). Among the 13 items ( $\alpha = .73$ ) there are four Leadership/Authority items ( $\alpha = .66$ ), five Grandiose Exhibitionism items ( $\alpha = .65$ ), and four Entitlement/Exploitativeness items ( $\alpha = .51$ ). Gentile et al. (2013) state that although lower internal consistency was present in the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale, “lower reliability in this subscale is not uncommon and does not appear to limit its correlations with important external criteria” (p. 1122). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha for the current study was .70 (Leadership/Authority,  $\alpha = .54$ ; Grandiose Exhibitionism,  $\alpha = .70$ ; Entitlement/Exploitativeness,  $\alpha = .44$ ).

### *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*

The RSE is a unidimensional scale that measures positive self-regard. Participants are expected to respond to 10 items on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 4 (*strongly disagree*). Example items from the scale include “I feel that I am a person of worth” and “I feel that I have a number of good qualities.” A total of five of the

items are reverse coded. The items were summed to form a total score with higher scores representing higher levels of self-esteem. Robins, Hendin, and Trzesniewski (2001) state “previous studies have reported alpha reliabilities for the RSE ranging from .72 to .88” (p. 153). Cronbach’s coefficient alpha for the current study was .89.

### *Gratitude Questionnaire-6*

The GQ-6 measures the frequency in which people experience gratefulness. The questionnaire consists of 6 items and is measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 7 (*strongly disagree*). Sample items include “I have so much in my life to be grateful for” and “I am grateful to wide variety of people.” A total of two items are reverse coded. Once the items are reverse coded, the items were summed to form a total score with higher scores representing higher levels of gratefulness.

According to McCullough et al. (2004) the GQ-6 was moderately correlated with satisfaction with life ( $r = .53$ ), vitality ( $r = .46$ ), happiness ( $r = .50$ ), optimism ( $r = .51$ ), and hope ( $r = .67$ ) suggesting the grateful disposition is a distinct construct. In order to examine convergent validity, McCullough and colleagues assessed the relationship between participant ratings of their own grateful dispositions with external observer perceptions (i.e., friends, relatives, or romantic partners of the participants). The results indicated a modest but significant relationship between the participants’ ratings and the observers’ ratings ( $r = .33, p < .01$ ) (McCullough et al., 2004). In regards to discriminate validity, the GQ-6 was negatively correlated with negative affect ( $r = -.31$ ), anxiety ( $r = -.20$ ), and depression ( $r = -.30$ ) (McCullough et al., 2004). McCullough et al. (2004) reported internal consistency reliabilities in the range of  $\alpha = .80$ . Cronbach’s coefficient alpha for the current study was .83.

## *Procedure*

IRB approval was obtained from both public institutions prior to the recruitment of participants. One of the institutions is classified as a land grant institution with an enrollment of approximately 23,000 students, whereas, the second institution has an enrollment of approximately 9,000 students. At the first institution, a mass email was sent out to the student body. The email contained an invitation to participate in the study, participant rights, the primary investigator's contact information, and a link to Survey Monkey that contained the four measures. The surveys were administered over a three-to-four month period. Participants were asked to complete the questionnaires through self-administration software in order to provide anonymity and to minimize the tendency for respondents to answer questions in a manner that would be viewed favorably by others (i.e., social desirability bias). In order to collect any additional participants, instructors were contacted via email at the second institution and were asked to administer the questionnaires during one or more of their classes. The questionnaires were only administered by the primary investigator once they were invited to the class. The students were informed they would remain anonymous and, therefore, were asked to be as truthful as possible when completing the surveys. Students who agreed to participate were given information regarding the purpose of the study, their rights as a participant, and the primary investigator's contact information for personal keep. In both cases, the questionnaires were structured in the following order: the NPI-13, the RSE, the GQ-6, and the AEQ. However, the participants were not required to complete the questionnaires in a particular order, and therefore, were capable of viewing all the questionnaires at the same time.

### *Classification of Academic Disciplines*

In order to examine whether AE varies across academic disciplines, students' reported majors were classified as Social, Enterprising, Investigative, or Artistic. The classification of students' academic majors is adopted from Holland's theory (1997). Holland's theory posits that an individual's occupational or academic major is an expression of one's personality and can be classified according to six theoretical or dominant personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional). These "personality types are assumed not only to have a distinctive pattern of competencies, interests, and preferred activities but also to search for environments that reinforce and reward their distinctive attributes" (Smart et al., 2000, p. 35). However, the Realistic and Conventional categories were not included in the present study because "the majority of the Realistic and Conventional vocations are underrepresented within four-year institutions" (Smart et a., 2000, p. 64). Thus, students' reported majors were either classified as a Social (32%), Enterprising (23%), Investigative (34%), or Artistic (8%) discipline. Table 3 displays a portion of the reported majors for the current study and their appropriate classification.

Table 3

*Portion of the reported majors for the current study and their classification*

Social	Enterprising	Investigative	Artistic
Counseling	Entrepreneurship	Physiology	English
Education/ Educational Leadership	Hotel and Restaurant Administration	Engineering (chemical, computer, aerospace, electrical, etc.)	Theatre  Graphic Design
Leadership Studies	Business	Chemistry	Studio Sculpture
Health promotion	Agricultural Business/Communications	Animal Science	Architecture
Human Development and Family Science	Marketing	Genetics	Studio Art
Agricultural Education	Strategic Communications	Physics	Art
Career and Technical Education	Finance	Mathematics/Statistics	Spanish
	Marketing	Biochemistry/Molecular Biology	Trumpet performance/Vocal Music Education
	Accounting	Geography	Music
	Multimedia Journalism	Environmental Science	
History	Sports Management/Sports	Zoology	Fashion Merchandising
Political Science	Media		



## CHAPTER IV

### FINDINGS

#### *Multiple Regression Analysis*

A multiple linear regression model was conducted to determine if AE could be predicted by gratitude, self-esteem, Leadership/Authority (LA), Grandiose Exhibitionism (GE), and Entitlement/Exploitativeness (EE). Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened for incompleteness and violation of assumptions. A total of 62 participants were identified as having missing values and were excluded from the analysis resulting in a total of 509 participants. In relation to multicollinearity, the variance inflation factor was less than 5 and tolerance was greater than .10 suggesting multicollinearity was not an issue (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). A display of points in the scatterplot of studentized residuals against predicted values and studentized residuals against values of the independent variables suggested independence was a reasonable assumption due to the points falling relatively within a band of -2.0 to +2.0 (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). Additionally, the Durbin-Watson statistic (1.890) indicated that the assumption of independent errors had been met (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). However, the points did not fall randomly within the scatterplots. This provides evidence that the assumption

of homogeneity remained unsatisfied. The assumption of normality was assessed via examination of the unstandardized residuals. The S-W test for normality suggested the assumption was not met,  $SW(509) = .969, p < .001$ . Casewise diagnostics were examined including Cook's distance, centered leverage values, DfBeta values, and Mahalanobis distance in order to determine if certain cases were exerting undue influence on the model. The residual statistics in the output indicated that the maximum value for Cook's distance was .090 and the maximum centered leverage value was .058 suggesting there was no undue influence. Additionally, for the standardized DFBETA values, there were no values greater than the absolute value of 2.0 indicating a lack of undue influence. Mahalanobis distance is used as a "test statistic value with the chi-square distribution and measures the distance from each case to the mean of the independent variable for the remaining cases" (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012, p. 695). Given an alpha level of .05 and six degrees of freedom (five independent variables and one dependent variable), the chi-square critical value was 12.59. According to the residual statistics, the maximum Mahalanobis distance value was 29.261 suggesting there were outliers in the data. Additionally, the studentized residuals were examined. Lomax and Hahs-Vaughn (2012) state "studentized residuals with an absolute value greater than 3 are considered outliers" (p. 690). According to the data, 6 values were identified as outliers. Therefore, the multiple regression analysis was first run with the outliers and, again, without the outliers.

The descriptive statistics for each variable are reported in Table 4. As shown in Table 5, the zero-order correlations among the variables tended to reach statistical significance. A correlation matrix displaying Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each

Table 4

*Descriptive Statistics for Gratitude, Self-esteem, LA, GE, EE, and AEQ scale*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gratitude	36.21 (6.03)	5.53
Self-Esteem	31.17 (3.11)	5.13
LA	2.62 (.52)	1.5
GE	0.97 (.24)	1.21
EE	1.55 (.39)	1.14
AE	18.69 (2.34)	8.49

*Note:*  $n = 509$ ; item-level means are reported in parentheses

measure is shown in Table 5. The results of the analysis indicated that a significant portion of the total variation in AE was predicted by gratitude, self-esteem, LA, GE, and EE,  $F(5, 503) = 26.103, p < .001$ . Approximately 20% of the variation in AE could be accounted for by the model ( $R^2 = .21$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .20$ ). The unstandardized partial slopes, standardized partial slopes, standard errors,  $t$ -values, and significance levels for each predictor are displayed in Table 6.

Individually, the following predictors were statistically significant: gratitude,  $t(503) = -4.73, p < .001$ ; self-esteem,  $t(503) = -5.05, p < .001$ ; LA,  $t(503) = 2.77, p = .006$ ; and GE,  $t(503) = 3.92, p < .001$ . The unique relationship between each statistically significant predictor and AE was assessed via computing the squared semi-partial correlations. Gratitude accounted for 4% of the variance in AE above and beyond self-esteem, LA, GA, and EE; self-esteem accounted for 4% of the variance in AE above and beyond gratitude, LA, GE, and EE; LA accounted for 1% of the variance in AE above

and beyond gratitude, self-esteem, GE, and EE; and GE accounted for 2% of the variance in AE above and beyond gratitude, self-esteem, LA, and EE.

Table 5

*Correlation Matrix with Alpha Coefficients*

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. AE	(.86)					
2. Gratitude	-.35**	(.83)				
3. Self-Esteem	-.31**	.51**	(.89)			
4. LA	.09*	.11**	.21**	(.54)		
5. GE	.20**	-.08*	.08*	.13**	(.70)	
6. EE	.16**	-.10**	.08*	.39**	.29**	(.44)

*Note:* \* Significant at .05; \*\* significant at .01. Cronbach's alpha presented on diagonal.

*Multiple Regression Analysis with Excluded Outliers*

As previously mentioned, the multiple regression analysis was run with and without the outliers. The strength of the zero-order correlations among gratitude and AE and self-esteem and AE improved slightly (i.e., a change in magnitude of  $|\cdot 02|$ ). However, the strength of the zero-order correlations among AE and three subcomponents of narcissism decreased slightly in magnitude (i.e., a change in magnitude of  $\leq |\cdot 03|$ ). Additionally, approximately 20% of the variation in AE could still be accounted for by the model ( $R^2 = .21$ , adjusted  $R^2 = .20$ ). The same predictors remained significant (i.e., gratitude, self-esteem, LA and GE) and accounted for the same percentage of unique

variance in AE. In sum, the removal of the outliers did not appear to significantly improve the model.

Table 6

*Summary of Regression Analyses*

Effects	$\beta$	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept		39.93			
Gratitude	-.22	-.34	.07	-4.73	.000
Self-Esteem	-.24	-.40	.08	-5.05	.000
LA	.12	.69	.25	2.77	.006
GE	.16	1.15	.29	3.92	.000
EE	.06	.43	.34	1.28	.203

*Tests of Group Differences*

In order to determine if the mean level of student entitlement differed based on academic disciplines (i.e., Social, Enterprising, Investigative, and Artistic) and gender (i.e., male and female) a 4X2 factorial ANOVA was conducted. Prior to analysis, the dataset was screened for incompleteness and violation of assumptions. A total of 34 participants were identified as having missing values and were excluded from the analysis resulting in a total of 537 participants. The assumption of normality was tested via an examination of the residuals. The S-W test for normality suggested that the assumption was not met,  $SW(537) = .95, p < .001$ . Furthermore, according to Levene's

test, the homogeneity of variance assumption was not met [ $F(7, 529) = 2.52, p = .015$ ]. Participants were not randomly assigned to groups. However, an examination of the residuals against the levels of the independent variables provided evidence that the assumption of independence was met due to a random display of points around 0.

Descriptive statistics are reported in Table 7. The interaction of academic disciplines by gender and the main effect for gender was not statistically significant. However, the main effect for academic disciplines produced statistically significant results,  $F(3, 529) = 5.85, p = .001$ . The effect size for academic disciplines was small (partial  $\eta^2 = .03$ ) and the observed power was .95.

Table 7

*Descriptive Statistics*

Discipline	Male			Female			Total		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>
Social	15.62	6.6	29	16.61	6.96	145	16.45	6.9	174
Investigative	18.98	8.52	90	18.76	7.52	101	18.86	7.99	191
Artistic	19.46	11.79	13	20.54	8.59	35	20.25	9.44	48
Enterprising	22.23	11.03	44	19.13	7.91	80	20.23	9.22	124
Total	19.27	9.37	176	18.15	7.59	361	18.52	8.23	537

A Post hoc analysis was conducted given the statistically significant main effect. Specifically, all possible pairwise contrasts were examined using Tukey HSD tests. For the main effect of academic disciplines, Tukey HSD post hoc comparisons indicated that

subjects within the Social disciplines ( $M = 16.45$ ,  $SD = 6.90$ ) reported statistically significantly less student entitlement than students in the three other disciplines (Enterprising,  $M = 20.23$ ,  $SD = 9.22$ ; Investigative,  $M = 18.63$ ,  $SD = 7.99$ ; and Artistic,  $M = 20.25$ ,  $SD = 9.44$ ). In other words, students that selected majors within the Social disciplines were less likely to adhere to academically entitled attitudes than students that selected majors within the Enterprising, Investigative, and Artistic disciplines. While the group means are still fairly low, this translates to about  $\frac{1}{2}$  scale point difference between the Social and Artistic or Enterprising students.

#### *Alternative Procedures*

Several alternative procedures were conducted due to the assumption of normality and homogeneity not being satisfied: the Kruskal-Wallis test, the Welch procedure, and the Brown-Forsythe procedure. Given that there was only one statistically significant main effect (disciplines), the following procedures were conducted for that factor. Results to the one-way ANOVA are shown in Table 8.

The Kruskal-Wallis test is recommended when no normality assumption has been met (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). The procedure works as follows. The observations on the dependent variable are ranked from highest to lowest and group membership is disregarded. The purpose of this procedure is to test whether “the mean ranks are different across the groups such that they are unlikely to represent random samples from the same population” (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012, p. 313). Therefore, the null hypothesis would state, the mean rank is the same for each group. Alternatively, the research hypothesis would suggest the mean rank is not the same for each group. The

Kruskal-Wallis test indicated a statistically significant effect of academic disciplines on levels of student entitlement,  $\chi^2 (3, N = 538) = 17.34, p = .001$ .

The Welch test and Brown-Forsythe procedure are recommended for the heteroscedasticity condition (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). Research suggests that each of these procedures are more powerful than the  $F$  test under heterogeneity (Lomax & Hahs-Vaughn, 2012). The Welch procedure,  $F(3, 175.47) = 7.09, p < .001$  and the Brown-Forsythe procedure,  $F(3, 254.94) = 5.97, p = .001$  also indicated a statistically significant effect of academic disciplines on levels of student entitlement.

Table 8

*One-way ANOVA*

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Group	1313.362	1	437.787	6.667	< .001
Error	35063.138	534	65.661		
Total	36376.500	537			



## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Academically entitled students are thought to expect special considerations, accommodations, and high rewards from faculty and/or educational institutions despite minimal effort on the behalf of the student (Greenberger et al., 2008). Although AE has garnered more scholarly interest over the last decade there is still much to be learned about the construct. The current study aimed to uncover a relationship between specific personality characteristics and AE as well as determine if students who exhibit higher levels of student entitlement are more likely to be drawn to certain academic disciplines.

#### *Narcissism, Self-Esteem, Gratitude, and AE*

Findings suggest that the following hypotheses were supported: (1) a weak to moderate positive correlation exists between three subcomponents of narcissism (Leadership/Authority, Grandiose Exhibitionism, and Entitlement/Exploitativeness) and AE, (2) a moderate negative correlation exists between self-esteem and AE, and (3) a moderate negative correlation exists between gratitude and AE. Interestingly, the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale of the NPI-13 was not a statistically significant

predictor of AE. The results of the present study seem contradictory given the Entitlement/Exploitativeness factor of the NPI-40 is negatively related to lower self-esteem and positively related to mood variability (Gentile et al., 2013). Additionally, previous studies have found that AE is related to general psychological entitlement and an increased interest in exploiting others for personal gains (Menon & Sharland, 2011; Greenberger et al., 2008). It is possible the psychometric issues associated with the NPI-13 affected the results. The present findings may be due to the limited number of items contained within the NPI-13 and the low internal consistency of the Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale. Gentile et al. (2013) recommends potentially strengthen the NPI-13 Entitlement/Exploitativeness subscale by including additional items with another measure, such as the *Psychological Entitlement Scale*. However, the authors assert the subscale still contains good criterion validity. Among the three subcomponents of narcissism, Grandiose Exhibitionism accounted for the most unique variance in AE. Ackerman et al. (2011) noted that both Entitlement/Exploitativeness and Grandiose Exhibitionism tend to be associated with maladaptive narcissism. Grandiosity is known to be a reflection of arrogance, interpersonal relationships characterized by exploitativeness, a sense of general entitlement, and magnified self-esteem (Ackerman et al., 2011). Furthermore, the authors found a moderately positive relationship between fearless dominance, counterproductive school behaviors, and the Grandiose Exhibitionism subscale of the NPI-40. Fearless dominance is defined as an “interpersonally dominant orientation characterized by thrill seeking and a lack of anxiety” and counterproductive school behaviors simply represents misbehavior at school, such as demonstrating disrespect towards others (Ackerman et al., 2011, p. 74).

Both Grandiose Exhibitionism and Entitlement/Exploitativeness share commonalities, although, Entitlement/Exploitativeness is considered to be the more socially toxic aspect of narcissism.

Understanding how student entitlement can be resolved is essential for educational practitioners. Existing literature has linked AE with student and/or classroom incivilities (Shapiro, 2012; Menon & Sharland, 2011). Classroom incivilities can include, but are not limited to, arriving late to class, unjustifiably leaving early, or engaging in any behaviors that could be classified as intentionally rebellious or emotionally disruptive (Hirschy & Braxton, 2004). According to Feldman (2001), there are two essential reasons to recognize and address classroom incivilities: (1) failure to address incivility damages the learning environment, and (2) challenging classroom incivilities can avert disruptive behaviors from the same or other students in the future. The results from the present study indicate that the strongest predictors of student entitlement were self-esteem and gratitude. Additionally, gratitude demonstrated the strongest correlation ( $r = -.35$ ) with AE. The findings provide evidence that gratitude may potentially combat entitlement among college students. Kopp et al. (2011) suggested using certain university organizations, such as a community service learning program, to lower entitlement attitudes. However, the effect size of the current study was small and the benefits of implementing such interventions remains unclear. Nonetheless, positive outcomes may arise from promoting gratefulness, such as lowering levels of student entitlement.

*Academic Disciplines and AE*

Extant literature has found that, on average, males tend to be more academically entitled than females (Boswell, 2012; Ciani et al. 2008; Greenberger et al. 2008). Findings from the current study somewhat supported this hypothesis. Males reported slightly more AE than females; however, there failed to be a statistically significant difference between the genders. Students in the Social disciplines reported the least amount of entitlement followed by the Investigative fields. Interestingly, students within the Artistic disciplines reported the most entitlement followed by the Enterprising disciplines. Initially, it was hypothesized that students within the Social and Artistic disciplines would demonstrate the least amount of AE due to individuals within these disciplines exhibiting higher levels of agreeableness (Tokar et al., 1998). However, Artistic types can also be seen as expressive, defiant, independent, sensitive, and emotional (Holland, 1997; Smart et al., 2000). Furthermore, Artistic environments tend to foster flexibility, unstructured endeavors, and emotional expression. If this is the case, it would not be surprising to find that students majoring in the Artistic disciplines were more likely to agree with some of the items on the AEQ, such as “I should be given the opportunity to make up a test, regardless of the reason for my absence” or “if I don’t do well on a test, the professor should make tests easier or curve grades.” These students may perceive certain items as a form of flexibility opposed to a sense of entitlement. Smart and colleagues note that individuals in Artistic environments “cope with others in personal, expressive, and unconventional ways” (p. 47). However, it remains unclear how these personal and unconventional forms of expression are conveyed. Studies in the future may want to evaluate if these behaviors are expressed in a healthy manner or if they are linked to student/classroom incivilities. Although the Artistic disciplines

contained the smallest subset of students (N = 48), levels of AE varied the most within this field. Approximately 58% of the students in the artistic disciplines reported English as their major. Future research may benefit from collecting a larger and more heterogeneous sample of students contained within this field.

Conversely, students within the Social disciplines reported the least amount of entitlement. This was not surprising given Social types tend to be concerned with fostering positive social interactions, and are invested in ensuring the welfare of others (Holland 1997; Smart et al., 2000). Individuals within this group are typically described as “cooperative, helpful, understanding, and empathetic” (Smart et al., 2000, p. 36). Similarly, they gravitate towards environments that reward them for friendliness and humanitarianism and cater to the development of interpersonal skills, such as teaching and/or mentoring (Smart et al., 2000). It would be interesting to determine if students within these fields demonstrate less student/classroom incivility. Future research could assess whether the aforementioned skills are fostered via faculty members and if these skills result in less classroom disruptions and entitled beliefs.

Holland’s (1997) theory contains three basic assumptions: self-selection, socialization, and congruence. *Self-selection* asserts individuals can be classified according to six personality types and that they intentionally seek out environments that complement their individual personality type (Holland 1997; Smart et al., 2000). This assumption has been used to assist students in selecting appropriate academic majors and clarifying career aspirations. *Socialization* involves the opportunity for individuals to interact with environments that are compatible with their dominant personality type. Smart et al. (2000) states “each academic environment is assumed to provide

opportunities for people to engage in a distinctive set of activities and to develop a distinctive set of competencies” (p. 52-53). Finally, *congruence* posits that each individual will flourish in a congruent environment. Person-environment congruence has been found to yield greater stability, satisfaction, and achievement (Smart et al., 2000). It cannot be assumed that the students included in the present study met these three assumptions. In other words, students may have selected their major due to other forces other than appropriate self-selection, such as parental, social, or financial pressures. Future research should evaluate the accuracy of the student’s specified major and personality type in relation to AE.

### *Limitations*

The results from the present study allow one to assess the particular characteristics associated with academically entitled students. Taken together, AE does not appear to be as prevalent as once suspected. Among 553 participants (18 were excluded due to missing values) the reported mean for AE was 18.71 (Median = 17, Mode = 8). However, the response rate was low (approximately 5%) given the survey was sent out to 5,000 students at one of the institutions. Stevens (2009) remarks that respondents tend to differ from nonrespondents in significant ways and this may result in misleading findings. It would not be surprising to find that more entitled students would decline participating in the survey. Therefore, it remains unknown how rampant AE is in higher education. Additionally, a convenience sample was employed. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2012) state that convenience sampling takes place under two conditions: (1) seeking participants in order to study existing groups and (2) recruiting participants based on whoever happens to be available. Therefore, it is difficult to describe the population

from which the sample was drawn and one must be cautious when generalizing the results to other populations. Nonetheless, the findings from the current study suggest that AE is a complex phenomenon that may be affected by a plethora of different factors.

### *Conclusion*

AE has been linked with student incivility and may be demonstrated via cheating, class disruptions, devaluation of the educational process, and exploitativeness (Shapiro, 2012; Menon & Sharland, 2011); therefore, the phenomenon continues to warrant close investigation. Despite the previously discussed limitations, this study was the first to deconstruct the relationship between narcissism and AE and empirically link student entitlement to gratitude and the selection of academic disciplines. The findings may help educational practitioners identify and cope with students who exhibit student entitlement.

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## APPENDIX A

### Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1989)

1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.
2. At times I think I am no good at all.
3. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.
5. I feel that I do not have as much to be proud of.
6. I certainly feel useless at times.
7. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.
9. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.
10. I take a positive attitude toward myself.



## APPENDIX B

Narcissistic Personality Inventory – 13 (Gentile, Miller, Hoffman, Reidy, Zeichner, & Campbell, 2013)

1. I like having authority over other people.
2. I have a strong will to power.
3. People always seem to recognize my authority.
4. I am a born leader.
5. I know that I am a good person because people keep telling me so.
6. I like to show off my body.
7. I like to look at my body.
8. I will usually show off if I get the chance.
9. I like to look at myself in the mirror.
10. I find it easy to manipulate people.
11. I insist on getting the respect that is due to me.
12. I expect a great deal from other people.
13. I will never be satisfied until I get all that I deserve.

## APPENDIX C

### Gratitude Questionnaire – 6 (McCullough & Tsang, 2004)

1. I have so much in my life to be thankful for.
2. If I had to list everything that I feel grateful for, it would be very long list.
3. When I look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for.
4. I am grateful to a wide variety of people.
5. As I get older I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history.
6. Long amounts of time can go by before I feel grateful to something or someone.

## APPENDIX D

### Academic Entitlement Questionnaire (Kopp, Zinn, Finney, & Jurich, 2011)

1. If I don't do well on a test, the professor should make tests easier or curve grades.
2. Professors should only lecture on material covered in the textbook and assigned readings.
3. If I am struggling in a class, the professor should approach me and offer to help.
4. It is the professor's responsibility to make it easy for me to succeed.
5. If I cannot learn the material for a class from lecture alone, then it is the professor's fault when I fail the test.
6. I am a product of my environment. Therefore, if I do poorly in class, it is not my fault.
7. I should be given the opportunity to make up a test, regardless for the reason for my absence.
8. Because I pay tuition, I deserve passing grades.

APPENDIX E

Please provide the following demographic information:

Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Birth Year \_\_\_\_\_

Ethnicity:

\_\_\_ Hispanic or Latino

\_\_\_ American Indian or Alaska Native

\_\_\_ Asian

\_\_\_ Black or African American

\_\_\_ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

\_\_\_ White

\_\_\_ Other

Attending University \_\_\_\_\_ Major \_\_\_\_\_

Freshmen \_\_\_ Sophomore \_\_\_ Junior \_\_\_ Senior \_\_\_ Graduate Student \_\_\_

VITA

Ashley M. Keener

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: STUDENT ENTITLEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE INVESTIGATION OF CONTRIBUTING PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS AND VARIATION AMONG ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES

Major Field: Educational Research and Evaluation

Biographical: I was born on August 29, 1985 to Lori Kay Keener and Dennis Keith Keener.

Education:

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational Research and Evaluation at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in May, 2015.

Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Mental Health Psychology at Northeastern State University, Broken Arrow, Oklahoma in 2011.

Experience: I have conducted an internship at OSU's Center for Rural Health. The internship consisted of entering and coding both quantitative and qualitative data, running and interpreting data analysis, and constructing summary reports. I have maintained a graduate assistantship with my advisor since January 2014 and am currently working at the Center for Health Sciences as a research assistant. My responsibilities have included: conducting scholarly literature searches, developing and implementing independent research projects, manuscript editing, and tutoring graduate students in REMS related courses, such as Introduction to Statistical Methods, Research Design, Educational Measurement, and Analysis of Variance.