

The Demographics of Academic Entitlement in Grading

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Abstract. Within academia few constructs are so often talked about yet so poorly understood as academic entitlement. Using AE scales, this study evaluates the latent variables of AE in grading as well as the relationship of these factors to demographic variables including gender, nationality, and age. Using a factor analysis, three latent variables were found including effort expectancy (EE), academic sociopathy (AS), and negotiation (Ne). Analysis revealed reliable relationships between these factors and the demographic variables. These results suggest trends in the level and type of AE based on gender, age and ethnic identity, therefore, it may be possible to combat AE conflict with awareness of expectations and communication about rights and responsibilities of the student and instructor.

Introduction

Existing research into academic entitlement typically involved understanding the structure of the construct. Previous studies have shown the relationship between AE and narcissism and other personality characteristics (Raskin & Terry, 1988; Campbell, W. K., et al, 2004). Most other research has involved uncovering the latent factors of AE (Chowning & Campbell, N. J., 2009). To date, no research has been conducted specifically examining the relationship between demographic variables and AE. Because of this lack of research regarding potential demographic correlates to AE, this research aims to address any such relationships. Using existing items from these scales relating to grades, the goal of this research is to understand the relationship between gender, ethnicity, nationality issues, and age and the latent factors of AE as it relates to grading. It is expected that the results of a factor analysis will demonstrate that academic entitlement in grading involves comparable factors to those for the broad construct of AE and that the gender, ethnicity, nationality and age of the students will be significantly related to the grading AE factors.

Methods

Academic Entitlement Questionnaire

A focus group of undergraduate psychology students was created to analyze the existing measures of AE and choose which items addressed grading directly. 23 items were selected for the current research. The AE items were presented as statements which participants could respond to on a five point Likert scale in terms of how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the statement. Demographic data were also collected.

Participants

352 undergraduate students completed the questionnaire. 227 of the participants identified themselves as female. 315 students reported being born in the United States. Age of participants ranged from 17 to 56.

Procedure

The questionnaire was made available online with the Wichita State University research system, SONA.

Results

Factor analyses were conducted on the 23-item AE measure with the use of the PROMAX rotation method. Velicer's Minimum Average Partial (MAP) Test was run in order to determine the number of factors within this measure. A principal axis analysis using a PROMAX with a Kaiser normalization rotation and pairwise deletion was conducted on the factors to determine factor loadings. Three factors were confirmed and labeled as Effort Expectancy (EE), Academic Sociopathy (AS) and Negotiation (Ne).

Independent t-tests were conducted on the interaction of factor scores and gender. The AS factor (which did not meet the standard for equal variances) suggested a significant difference between males ($M=.210$, $SD=.991$) and females ($M=-.128$, $SD=.847$); $t(346)=-3.210$, $p < .003$. The Ne factor also showed significant differences between males ($M=.231$, $SD=.991$) and females ($M=-.135$, $SD=.864$); $t(346)=3.758$, $p < .001$. Using an ANOVA, there was a significant effect for ethnicity on factor EE [$F(3, 328) = 5.314$, $p < .001$] and factor AS [$F(3, 328) = 5.049$, $p < .003$].

A between subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of nationality issues on factor scores. There was a significant effect of nationality issues on factor EE [$F(2, 343) = 5.353$, $p < .006$] and factor MA [$F(2, 343) = 3.430$, $p < .04$].

Using a Pearson product-moment correlation a significant correlation was found between age and factor EE [$r = -.181$, $n=350$, $p < .002$], and factor AS [$r = -.141$, $n=350$, $p < .01$].

Discussion

The three factors found here are consistent with three of the five factors found in existing research. This suggests that even within a sub-category of AE, grading, the characteristics of AE remain.

Demographic analyses supported conclusions that may contradict previous assumptions about AE. First, the data suggest that males score higher on average on AS and Ne. This implies that males tend to support more unethical practices, confrontation and negotiation in achieving a desirable grade. Results also indicate that white students score lower on EE and AS, suggesting that white students believe effort should be considered less in grading than Asian and Hispanic students and white students are less likely to endorse unethical behavior to achieve a desired grade. This same trend on these two factors was shown for nationality, with US born students scoring lower on EE and AS than their foreign-born counterparts. Age related negatively to both of these factors. This suggests that younger students believe effort should be considered more in grading than older students and younger students are more likely to endorse unethical behavior to achieve a desired grade.

Understanding these variables, their correlates and their utility becomes quite beneficial to universities and their instructors. Understanding academic entitlement can better enable us within academia to anticipate students' expectations of both their teachers and their institutions, and thereby better respond to those expectations. One important step will be to set clear expectations within the classroom. This step is especially relevant to the findings of this current study. Looking at grading independently, classroom expectations become clearer through the use of these three factors.

Conclusions

1. The factors of AE in grading are consistent with those found in the general AE construct
2. Males are more likely to endorse negotiation and unethical behavior in the pursuit of desired grades.
3. White students are less likely than Asian and Hispanic students to believe effort should be considered in grading and unethical behavior is acceptable to obtain a desired grade.
4. US born students are less likely to believe effort should be considered in grading and unethical behavior is acceptable to obtain a desired grade.
5. The older the students, the less likely they are to believe effort should be considered in grading and unethical behavior is acceptable to obtain a desired grade.

[1] Raskin, R., & Terry, H. (1988). A principal-components analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and further evidence of its construct validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 890-902.

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[3] Chowning, K., & Campbell, N. J. (2009). Development and validation of a measure of academic entitlement: Individual differences in students' externalized responsibility and entitled expectations. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 101, 982-997.