

Entitlement in HE: student and academic perspectives.

As higher education becomes increasingly marketised, is entitlement inevitable? This exploratory paper examines evidence of entitlement amongst students within HE, drawing from the perspectives of students and academics.

Entitlement within HE has attracted increasing attention from academics (e.g. Kelly 2010; Fullerton 2013; Gresse et al. 2014; Goldman 2016; Bonaccio et al. 2016; Elias 2017). Much of this work focusses on the US context and suggests that entitlement amongst students is increasing with negative impacts on student achievement (Anderson, et al. 2013; Jeffres et al. 2014), classroom behaviours, demands on academics (Lippmann et al. 2009) and perceptions of cheating (Elias 2017).

Academic entitlement has been defined as a 'tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without a sense of personal responsibility for achieving that success' (Chowning and Campbell 2009: 982). Anderson et al. (2013) see entitlement as deserving success. Singleton-Jackson et al.'s (2010; 2010a) work identifies reward for effort and perceived value as important facets of entitlement. Goldman (2016) highlights the importance of researchers counteracting the negativity associated with entitlement. Indeed Kelly (2010) identifies positive aspects of students' experiences of HE informed by entitlement: a more assertive approach; requirements for well-organised curricula and delivery; expectations of transparent processes.

The aim of this exploratory qualitative study is to explore students' and academics' experiences of entitlement amongst undergraduates. This research is based upon exploratory in-depth interviews with undergraduates and academics within a UK HEI. 20 students and 17 academics generated a dataset of 39 hours. A semi-structured research tool included entitlement as one of a range of issues related to HE. NVIVO 11 facilitated open-coding and thematic analysis. Creswell and Miller (2000) highlight the importance of prioritizing credibility when making inferences from data, with the researcher seeking to represent participants' meaning within the emerging themes of effort and expectation.

All participants related entitlement to aspects of HE associated with marketization (Molesworth et al. 2011), specifically identifying tuition fees as influencing entitlement. Students spoke about how much money they were investing in their education (all students were paying £9000 fees) and accompanying expectations. Whilst students didn't articulate this in terms of the terminology of value (Singleton-Jackson et al. 2010;2010a), notions of comparison between investment and provision were evident.

My first year everything was "I've paid for this, all of this should come to me. I'm paying my fees, I should get all of this", and almost sometimes being like over a lecture slide that's what I'm paying for. And I was sort of really, not bitter towards it, but feeling entitlement.

Student/male/year4/UK.

Academics were alert to the impact of tuition fees. For one academic, the striking comparison between investments students were making compared to his own experiences, gave students permission to be entitled. Students then are studying with tutors who have mixed views of whether entitlement is or is not a rational response to marketised HE.

Students reported feelings of entitlement related to expectations of their university and tutors, including perceived effort from tutors. Some students spoke about entitlement in terms of deserving access to resource, but in the main, expectation appeared to be the dominant theme (Chowning and Campbell 2009). One academic felt negatively about entitlement but could see why students would and indeed should have expectations about their HE experience.

And you know, I 'd really hope that I wouldn't approach to anything I ever do, feeling entitled to almost anything, but then, sometimes I would say actually because of the way HE has been marketised to such a high extent, that actually there is a level of, even though I think it makes me feel slightly uncomfortable saying it, and I don't think that this is a positive move. I think that students can, if you're paying that much money and you're getting into that much

debt, then absolutely you have certain recourse to have expectations that should be met. Whether that's entitlement I don't know.

Academic/male/21years in HE.

Whereas Anderson et al. (2013) speak about students' sense of deserving success, and some academics agreed, these ideas were absent from discussions with students. Some students spoke about more positive aspects of entitlement, responsibility and assertiveness (Kelly 2010). One high-performing student spoke about her feelings of entitlement to work in a silent environment and felt entitled to assert herself, telling other students to be quiet. Importantly conversations about feelings of entitlement appeared to be entirely related to teaching and resources related to the curriculum. There was no reference to entitlement towards broader opportunities universities offer. Feelings of entitlement are thus defined as: *Students' sustained expectations regarding their access to resources and tutors' time and effort which relate to the delivery of the curriculum and achievement of learning outcomes related to the curriculum.*

Effort was interesting. For some students, the effort they were putting into their studies was a reason to feel entitled to resources (Singleton-Jackson et al. 2010;2010a). For others, increasing understanding of the need to invest effort (as well as money) for success, appears to diminish feelings of entitlement. However even then, lack of access to (basic) resource can result in entitlement reasserting itself.

I don't really feel entitled any more I guess, I guess it's kind of gone....but then it's like little things when we go to the library and there isn't any space, that's when the entitlement starts to creep back because you think "actually we're entitled to find a seat in the library", that sort of thing because we do pay a lot of money.

Student/female/ year4/UK.

In summary this research suggests that undergraduates experience entitlement conceived as expectations of access to resource and tutors' time and effort. This is related to students' curricula-based experiences of HE and to students' financial investment. Expectations and effort are proposed as key themes to help us understand entitlement. Students' perceived effort appears to influence their responses to entitlement. Students are alert to academics' demonstration of effort: this may be an important factor within marketised HE and worthy of future study. Pedagogic strategies should facilitate discussion of expectations and demonstrate effort from academics.

References.

Anderson, D., Halberstadt, J. and Aitken R. (2013). Entitlement attitudes predict students' poor performance in challenging academic conditions *International Journal of Higher Education*. 2(2): 151-158 2013.

Bonaccio, S., Reeve, C. and Lysterly, J. (2016). Academic entitlement: Its personality and general mental ability correlates, and academic consequences *Personality and Individual Differences*. November 102: 211-216.

Chowning, K. and 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(4): 982-997.

Creswell, J. W. and Miller, D. L., 2000. Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice*. 39(3):124-130.

Elias, R. (2017) Academic entitlement and its relationship with perception of cheating ethics. *Journal of Education for Business*. 92(4):194-199.

Fullerton, D., S. (2013). What students say about their own sense of entitlement. *New Directions for Teaching & Learning*. Fall 2013 (135): 31-36.

Goldman, Z., W. (2016). Millennial students in the college classroom: Adjusting to academic entitlement. *Communication Education*. 65(3):365-367.

Gresse, W., G., Linde, B., J. and Schalk, R. (2014) Sense of deservingness: what are the entitlement beliefs of students in their anticipatory psychological contract? *Conference Proceedings of the G20 Youth Forum 2014*. Issue 2: 626-640.

Jeffres, M., N. Barclay, S., M. and Stolte, S., K. (2014) Academic entitlement and academic performance in graduating pharmacy students. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*. 78 (6): 1-9.

Kelly, P. (2010) Age of entitlement: How does physician assistant education change to accommodate the Generation Y student? *The Journal of Physician Assistant Education*. 21(4):47-51.

Lippmann, S., Bulanda, R., E. Wagenaar, T., C. (2009). Student entitlement: issues and strategies for confronting entitlement in the classroom and beyond *College Teaching*. 57(4):197-204.

Molesworth, M., Scullion, R. and Nixon, E. (eds.). (2011). *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer*. Routledge, Abingdon.

Singleton-Jackson, J., A., Jackson, D., L. and Reinhardt, J. (2010) Academic entitlement: exploring definitions and dimensions of entitled students. *The International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences* 5(9): 220-236.

Singleton-Jackson, J., A., Jackson, D., L. and Reinhardt, J. (2010a) Students as consumers of knowledge: are they buying what we're selling? *Innovative Higher Education*. 35(5):343-358.