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## MEASURING THE IMPACT OF ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT IN FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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FIRST-YEAR COLLEGE STUDENTS

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A Dissertation  
Presented to the  
Faculty of  
California State University,  
San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Education  
in  
Educational Leadership

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by  
Tanner M. Carollo  
June 2020

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## ABSTRACT

Research on academic entitlement (AE) in college students has provided support for its maladaptive nature. Students high in AE are reported to present greater levels of externality in the locus of control, exhibit behaviors and actions that are inconsistent with traditional academic norms, score lower on assessments, and hold expectations that are aligned with academic consumerism. However, research examining AE and its effects on student behavior have relied on AE scores collected after students have attained some collegiate experience and have yet to evaluate interventions that may reduce the corresponding implications of AE. Using survey data collected from 941 matriculating first-year college students, this study sought to identify demographic differences in pre-collegiate levels of AE; and determine the relative importance of AE in predicting first-term unit completion rates, the utilization of academic support services (i.e., tutoring and supplemental instruction), and first-year retention. Furthermore, this study sought to evaluate the mediating/moderating effect of participation in a freshmen seminar course. The results of this study were mixed. While sex difference in AE were found, and partial support was found for AE differences by first-generation status, AE differences by Pell Grant status, under-represented minority status, and freshmen seminar course enrollment were not supported. Furthermore, associations between the AE scales and first-term course completion rates, utilization of student academic support services, and first-year retention were not

supported. Given notable differences between survey completers and non-completers on several measures of academic performance, this study suggests that the reliance on voluntary survey completion may fail to secure responses from an academically entitled population. Furthermore, relying on a single measurement of academic entitlement in students prior to the attainment of collegiate experience fails to address the potential for the development of AE during the collegiate experience.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### Problem Statement

Academic Entitlement (AE) is the belief that one should receive positive academic outcomes despite minimal effort or work quality (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen & Farruggia, 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013). Students high in AE may view negative academic outcomes (e.g., bad grades) solely as a failure of the instructor or the university, and not the result of their effort or ability (Kopp & Finney, 2013). As such, academic entitlement may act as a barrier to effective teaching and learning (Reysen, Degges-White & Reysen, 2016) given that entitled students may fail to fully accept their role regarding their academic success (Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011). Furthermore, those high in AE are also a financial concern to university faculty, staff, and administrators, as their behaviors result in the excessive allocation of time and resources (Kopp & Finney, 2013). Despite the increase in empirical research in the area of academic entitlement, little focus has been paid to the relationship between the academic entitlement levels of incoming college freshmen and student success.

#### Purpose Statement

Pre-collegiate factors frequently examined to predict college success include such variables as gender, race, parental education, socio-economic status, financial aid status, high school GPA, ACT/SAT scores, and entry-level

college placement tests (Pedrini & Pedrini, 1974; Pritchard & Wilson, 2003). While often predictive, there are any number of additional factors that may influence a college student's success (Pritchard & Wilson, 2003).

One such factor that has been found to be particularly maladaptive is academic entitlement (Kopp & Finney, 2013). Speculated as the cause of myriad inappropriate student behaviors such as work avoidance and reduced effort (Kopp et al., 2011), student incivility (Kopp & Finney, 2013), and inappropriate classroom behaviors (Mellor, 2011), academic entitlement challenges the goals of educational achievement (Marrow, 1994) as entitled students fail to accept their role in academic success (Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011), and report lower levels of student engagement. Additionally, students high in AE may feel that they are deserving of good grades simply because they are paying tuition (Goodboy & Frisby 2014).

Given the nature of academic entitlement, and its impact on student behavior and academic success, the purpose of this study was to replicate and extend previous research on academic entitlement. Specifically, this study sought to identify demographic differences in academic entitlement; determine the relative importance of academic entitlement in predicting first-term unit completion rates, the utilization of academic support services, and first-year retention. Furthermore, when applicable, this study sought to evaluate the mediating/moderating effect of participation in a freshmen seminar course.

### Significance of the Study

While previous studies have provided support for the maladaptive nature of academic entitlement (Chowing & Campbell, 2009; Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011), there have been no studies that have sought to capture the pre-college enrollment levels of academic entitlement in first-year college students as a factor in predicting student success, the utilization of academic support services, and first-year retention. Furthermore, this study is the first that sought to examine to the mediating/moderating effect of a first-year seminar course, as previous researchers have hypothesized that first-year orientations designed to teach students self-regulated learning skills, and increase their sense of personal responsibility for their academic success, should decrease levels of academic entitlement (Chowing & Campbell, 2009).

### Theoretical Underpinnings

Strongly connected with academic outcomes and locus of control, motivation is one of the most studied concepts in educational research (Vallerand et al., 1992). Among the theoretical approaches used to understand academic motivation, self-determination theory (SDT) by Deci and Ryan (1985, 1995, 1997, 2008) represents a viable framework for understanding the differences in persistence and performance, as well as motivations exhibited in a classroom environment (Vallerand et al., 1992). SDT is a framework for understanding human motivation that emphasizes the importance of humans' intrinsic tendencies to develop behavioral self-regulation (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997).

Thus, the theory is focused on how human psychological needs serve as the basis for driving self-motivation (Deci and Ryan, 2000). This focus on intrinsic motivation makes it appear to be an essential theoretical facet in understanding academic entitlement (Frey, 2015) as intrinsic motivation, within SDT, refers to the inherent desire a person has to learn.

Encompassing one's innate drive to seek out challenges, increase abilities, and learn, Deci and Ryan (1985) found that students with intrinsic motivation presented a desire to learn, and sought undertakings that would allow them to learn. Conversely, Deci and Ryan found that students presenting external motivations were not driven by the opportunity to learn, rather they were motivated by the potential for rewards. While Deci and Ryan (2000) describe SDT as a continuum of motivation, ranging from the absence of motivation to external motivation then internal motivation, the theory focuses principally on the distinction between internal and external motivation. Thus, within SDT, the learners' motivation (Vansteenkiste, Lens & Deci, 2006) ranges between intrinsic, considered autonomous (i.e., it is enjoyable or exciting), and extrinsic (i.e., because it leads to a certain outcome) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Such a distinction is important, as research has found that the type of motivation sourced can lead to variations in the quality of the experience and performance (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Applied to an educational setting this becomes critical, as high-quality learning and creativity are the results of intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

According to SDT, motivation is directed by three human needs: autonomy

(the feeling that one can control their actions), competence (a sense of mastery), and relatedness (the feeling that one can interact with and connect to a larger social group) (Deci & Ryan, 2000). While intrinsic motivation is inherent within humans (Ryan & Deci, 2000), without an environment that nurtures these needs, humans are unlikely to develop a self-determined motivation (Frey, 2015). However, when these needs are met, intrinsic motivation is facilitated, rather than undermined (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

Theoretically, academic entitlement stems from the belief that rewards are dependent on external sources (Greenberger, Lessard, Chen & Farruggia, 2008; Kopp & Finney, 2013). Thus, academically entitled students would be reluctant to put effort towards achieving a goal they perceive as controlled by an external source. This connection is supported by empirical research reporting greater levels of externality in the locus of control in academically entitled students (Chowing & Campbell; 2009, Kopp & Finney; 2013). Given the connection between locus of control and academic entitlement, facilitating a shift from an external to an internal locus of control may advance student motivation for learning by building autonomy and perceived responsibility.

### Assumptions

This research operates from the assumption that academic entitlement is a maladaptive belief that, consistent with the literature, is a barrier to student success and pedagogical effectiveness. Additionally, this study assumes that students will respond to Chowing & Campbell's (2009) Academic Entitlement

Questionnaire (AEQ) using a honest assessment of their own beliefs and attitudes. Finally, this study assumes that the supplemental instruction and tutoring data provided to this researcher are complete and accurate.

### Delimitations

This study addresses academic entitlement within a university setting and does not seek to explore the external or internal factors responsible for creating the inherent sense of entitlement. It is assumed that the level of academic entitlement expressed is built upon learned experiences and/or personality characteristics that will not be evaluated within this study.

### Definitions of Key Terms

For this research, academic entitlement is defined as a reduced sense of personal responsibility for academic achievements, the belief that rewards are deserved independent of effort, the holding of unreasonable expectations of instructors, and excessively demanding attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. This definition embraces the two dimensions of Chowning and Campbell's (2009) Academic Entitlement Scale (AES): Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations.

In addition to defining academic entitlement, it is also important to provide definitions for the various demographic categories utilized in this study. For this study, a student is considered a Pell Grant recipient if they were awarded a Pell Grant in their first term of enrollment.

This study utilizes the U.S. Department of Education (1996) definition of a first-generation college student as an individual who does not have a parent/guardian with a four-year college degree. Where the educational status of only one parent/guardian is reported, the sole status will serve as the basis for the assignment. For example, if the first parent/guardian is reported as having a high school diploma as the highest level of education, and the second parent/guardian is reported as unknown, the student will be considered a first-generation college student.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) is defined as a research-based method for helping students succeed in difficult courses by providing them with additional instruction and support, with additional focus on improving test-taking, time management, and study habits. Offered as twice-weekly study sessions of 50 minutes, for this study, the total number of Supplemental Instruction sessions attended in the first-term of enrollment was used to measure participation.

While a variety of tutoring support services were available for students at the study site, for this study, only sessions supported by Undergraduate Studies were included. Similar to Supplemental Instruction, the total number of tutoring sessions attended in the first-term of enrollment was used to measure participation.

This study utilizes the under-represented minority construct, consisting of the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) coding

Ethnic/Race reporting categories of Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and American Indian/Native American), developed by the National Association of System Heads (The Education Trust, 2009).

As a measurement of student success, this study utilizes the first-term unit completion rate for each student. The completion rate was determined by dividing the number of units earned by the number of units attempted. While first-term GPA has been established as a predictor of first-year retention (Lopez-Wagner, Carollo & Shindlecker, 2013) and six-year graduation (Gershenfeld, Ward Hood & Zhan, 2016), the consideration of a unit completion rate, rather than GPA, allows for the inclusion of courses that rely on a Pass/Fail or ABC/No Credit grading basis.

### Summary

Nearly 30 years ago, Dubovsky (1986) described student entitlement beliefs as being comprised of five components: (a) knowledge is a right that should be provided to the student with minimal effort on the part of the student, (b) all necessary information and education is provided by others, (c) problems receiving the information by the student is the fault of the instructor, material, or the institution, and not the fault of the student, (d) students should have control of the course policies, and (e) students are consumers, and paying tuition entitles them to certain outcomes. Since that time, research has supported the position that these beliefs may act as impediments to student success (Reysen, Degges-White & Reysen, 2016) and represent a substantial strain to the university (Kopp

and Finney, 2012). Unfortunately, these attitudes and beliefs may be increasing in current generations of college students (Twenge, 2009).

In the next chapter, a review of the relevant literature will be provided, including a discussion of academic entitlement as a distinct, context-dependent construct that is particularly maladaptive in regards to student success.

Furthermore, the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of academically entitled, and its impact on student success will be detailed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section, a review of the relevant psychological entitlement, narcissism, and academic entitlement literature will be provided. Focusing primarily on academic entitlement (AE), the supported position is that AE is a distinct, context-dependent construct that is particularly maladaptive in regards to student success. Furthermore, the impact of the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of academically entitled students on university administrators, faculty, and programming will be discussed.

#### A Generation of Entitlement

General perceptions regarding entitlement and narcissism suggest that entitled levels in college students have increased over time (Twenge, 2006). Supporting this position, a meta-analytic review of over 200 studies found that self-esteem scores in college students were higher in the 1990s than they were in the 1960s (Twenge and Campbell, 2001). This increase likely developed out of the self-esteem movement of the 1990s (Twenge, 2006) and led to a generation of children and young adults expecting praise and rewards independent of actual effort and accomplishments (Millon & Davis, 2000). High self-esteem was cast as a necessity for success, so it became important for parents to do everything possible to increase the self-esteem of their children (Kopp and Finney, 2013); consequently, children were awarded based solely on participation, absent effort

or deservingness (Kopp and Finney, 2013) facilitating a generation who minimize personal responsibility for failure (Colvin 2000).

As the perception is that entitlement levels are rising, it is also important to acknowledge the claim that growing corporatization of higher education has an impact on the current generation of students (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2011). Institutions of higher education find themselves driven to compete for students through marketing and promises of success. This service provider model complicates the roles of students, left somewhere between that of a student and a consumer (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt). Such attitudes among college students facilitate a growing sense of disengagement stemming from the belief that the central purpose of higher education is economic (Flacks and Thomas, 1998). Rooted in this belief is student consumerism, an attitude that sees institutions of higher education as a place to meet pre-established needs (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). This shift also aligns with an increase in the number of students reporting that they are going to college to make more money (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002); thus, students may perceive a college degree as a product received as the result of paying tuition (Fairchild & Craig, 2014).

### Generalized Psychological Entitlement and Narcissism

To understand academic entitlement, it is necessary to first establish a review of psychological entitlement and narcissism (McLellan, C. & Jackson, D., 2017). Generalized psychological entitlement is a trait, opposite benevolence, on

the equity sensitivity spectrum (Huseman, Hatfield, & Miles, 1985) in which individuals hold beliefs of privilege over others (Raskin & Terry, 1998), and the expectation of reward or special treatment regardless of ability, performance, or effort (Harvey & Harris, 2010). Explicitly, generalized entitlement implies not that one will, but rather that one should obtain an outcome (Campbell, Bonacci, Shelton, Exline, & Bushman, 2010). While a certain degree of psychological entitlement is considered essential to human growth (Levin, 1970), as it allows people to recognize unfair treatment and acts as a motivating factor, excessive levels of entitlement can manifest in maladaptive behaviors (Anderson, Halberstadt & Aitken, 2013). High levels of psychological entitlement have been empirically linked to aggression, greed, and lack of forgiveness (Campbell et al., 2004), problems with personal relationships (Twenge & Campbell, 2009), and dissatisfaction (Twenge & Campbell, 2009). Within academia, students high in generalized entitlement were more likely to engage in dishonest research practices (Davis, Webster & King, 2008) and Anderson, Halberstadt, and Aitken (2013) found that levels of entitlement predicted lower examination scores when faced with challenging coursework. Interestingly, the researchers found that these results were mediated by the degree to which the students accepted personal responsibility for their performance on the final exam (Anderson, Halberstadt, & Aitken, 2013).

Within the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition (DSM-5), entitlement is a feature of narcissism (Emmons, 1987) and

specifies a sense of entitlement as criterion for the diagnosis of a narcissistic personality disorder. According to Raskin and Terry (1998), the Entitlement (ENT) subscale of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI; Raskin & Terry, 1998) may measure the most maladaptive aspect of narcissism and has shown a negative correlation with forgiveness (Exline, Baumeister, Bushman, Campbell & Finkel, 2004), and a positive correlation with such behaviors as hostility and aggression (Raskin & Terry, 1998).

Given the impact of entitlement beliefs on personality, Campbell et al. (2004) proposed that psychological entitlement is a unique individual difference, rather than an aspect of narcissism. In support of this proposal, Campbell et al. (2004) found that only 25% of the variance between a Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES; Campbell et al. 2004) was shared with the NPI. Additionally, the authors found that high scores on the PES were more predictive of self-centered behaviors than the NPI. Conceptualized further by Campbell et al. (2004), psychological entitlement is not domain-specific (e.g., "I deserve a raise because I show up to work"); rather it is a "stable and pervasive sense" (p.31) across contexts.

Like Campbell et al. (2004), Rose and Anastasio (2014) conceptualized psychological entitlement as a unique personality trait. Specifically, Rose and Anastasio noted that the distinction between psychological entitlement and narcissism lies in the role of other people. While, according to the DSM-5, a narcissist presents an exaggerated sense of self-importance, superiority,

grandiosity, and arrogance focused on the self, Campbell et al. (2004) suggest that those with psychological entitlement must consider others in that “one deserves more and entitled to more than others” (p.31). Therefore, the inclusion of others is a requirement in the presentation of psychological entitlement (Rose and Anastasio, 2014).

### Academic Entitlement as a Unique Construct

Relatively new to empirical research, the concept of academic entitlement was first proposed by Morrow (1994) when citing the emergence of a culture of incivility and expected academic achievement amongst university students, Morrow cautioned that the rise of entitlement was in opposition to academic achievement. Such entitlement attitudes could contribute to a loss of value regarding a college degree through a decrease in academic rigor and expectations. Rather than awarding degrees based on perceived entitlement, Morrow (1994) urged institutions and educators to rely on actual academic achievement. While delivered within the context of Apartheid, Morrow’s discussion led to the later research in academic entitlement.

Academic entitlement theoretically overlaps with psychological entitlement and narcissism (Greenberger et al., 2008). Moreover, previous research has demonstrated that both narcissism and psychological entitlement are positively correlated with academic entitlement (Chowing & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farraggiam, 2008; Menon & Sharland, 2011). Despite this overlap, academic entitlement is regarded as a distinct construct in which

entitlement expectations are exhibited specifically within an academic setting (Achacoso, 2002; Chowing & Campbell, 2009). This domain specificity distinction is important, as academically entitled students may not exhibit entitlement behaviors in other areas (Chowing & Campbell, 2009; Kopp, et al., 2011) such as family interactions, the workplace, or with friends.

Operational definitions have varied with reference to personal responsibility (Chowing and Campbell, 2009) and the expectation of outcomes that are unrelated to effort (Kopp et al., 2011). In an attempt to distinguish academically entitled students, Sessoms, Finney and Kopp (2016) proposed that students high in AE present three distinct characteristics: an external locus of control regarding their academics, the opinion that they deserve control over academic policies, and the view that students are consumers (i.e., paying tuition entitles students to good grades).

### Measuring Academic Entitlement

Though scales measuring psychological entitlement exist (PES; Campbell et al. 2004), the domain specificity of academic entitlement suggests that specific measures for academic entitlement are necessary as academic institutions may present context-dependent situations that result in the manifestation of entitlement beliefs not present in generalized entitlement measures (Kopp, Zinn, Finney, Jurich, 2011). For example, while entitled individuals may feel deserving of outcomes based on their sense of superiority over others, academically entitled students may not feel superior to others, but believe that it is the job of

the instructor to ensure they do well on a test. As such, while there is general agreement regarding the need to develop measures, and on the core elements of academic entitlement (Chowning and Campbell, 2009; Kopp et al., 2011; Sessoms, Finney and Kopp, 2016), variability exists among scales as to how AE is measured. Presented below are three of the more commonly cited measures of AE, along with descriptions of each.

In an unpublished dissertation on academic entitlement, Achacoso (2002) rooted the concept of AE in psychological entitlement (McLellan & Jackson, 2017). Defining entitlement as the feeling that “one ought to receive something,” Achacoso classified academic entitlement as a sense of entitlement specific to an educational setting. This 12-item scale utilized a two-factor structure: entitlement beliefs and entitlement actions measuring agreement, both utilizing a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly agree). In the scale’s development, Achacoso found Cronbach’s alpha for the factors were .83 and .91, respectively. The first factor, entitlement beliefs, measured attitudes of entitlement beliefs (e.g., “It is the instructor’s fault if I get a bad grade.”). This dimension was negatively correlated with time and resource management, as well as the regulation of effort. The second factor, entitlement actions, measured the respondent’s anticipated behavior (e.g., “I would argue with the instructor to get more points on a test.”). Analysis of this dimension found that peer learning and help-seeking behaviors were positively correlated with entitlement actions,

suggesting that entitled students were more likely to utilize adaptive strategies, rather than self-regulated behaviors and learning (McLellan and Jackson, 2016).

Greenberger et al. (2008) developed a 15-item scale ( $\alpha=.87$ ) measuring academic entitlement leveraging the Campbell et al. (2004) definition of entitlement entailing a sense of deservingness over others. Responses to the AE scale measured agreement (1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree) to statements such as “If I have attended most classes for a course, I deserve at least a grade of B”, and “Teachers often give me lower grades than I deserve on paper assignments.” As little information was provided regarding the development and structure of the scale, researchers are unable to determine whether the measure represents a unidimensional or multiple factor structure (Wasioleski, Whatley, Briihl & Branscome, 2014). As such, the scale developed by Greenberger et al. (2008) requires additional research to address the fitness of the items, as well as their associations (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011; Wasioleski, Whatley, Briihl & Branscome, 2014).

Chowning and Campbell (2009) developed a 15-item scale of academic entitlement based on the assumption that AE represents the expectation of academic success without taking responsibility for achieving success. Similar to Achacoso (2002), Chowning and Campbell (2009) conceptually proposed academic entitlement as composed of two dimensions: Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations. Responses for items on each dimension utilized a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree to 7=strongly

agree). The first dimension, Externalized Responsibility, consists of ten items measuring the extent to which students feel that they are responsible for their academic achievement (i.e., the grades that they receive). Students high in Externalized Responsibility believe that others (i.e., the instructor, the university, and their classmates) are responsible for helping them succeed and present a lack of personal responsibility regarding their academic success (Chowning and Campbell, 2009). The second dimension, Entitled Expectations, consists of five items that focus on the students' expectations of the instructor. For example, students high in entitled expectations tend to express inflated or unrealistic expectations regarding the role of the instructor and course policies. In the scale's development, item correlations for the Externalized Responsibility subscale ranged from .40 to .58, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81. For the Entitled Expectations subscale item correlations ranged from .27 to .51, with a Cronbach's alpha of .62. While the scale is presented as a measure of AE, and the subscales are correlated, it is important to note that Chowning and Campbell (2009) intended the Externalized Responsibility and the Entitled Expectations subscales to represent distinct constructs. As such, the scores of these scales are not to be summed together.

### Recent Academic Entitlement Findings

In previous sections of this review, various citations have supported the relationship between academic entitlement, general psychological entitlement, and narcissism (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, &

Farraggiam, 2008; Menon & Sharland, 2011). Despite this relationship, the domain specificity of academic entitlement supports its standing as a unique construct (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Kopp, et al., 2011). As such, studies of academic entitlement have reported its relationship to demographic differences, individual personality differences, academic outcomes, attitudes, and decreased student engagement.

### Academic Entitlement and Demographics

Consistent with the sex differences found in occupational and psychological entitlement domains (Hill & Fischer, 2001; Campbell et al., 2004; Hogue, Yoder & Singleton, 2007) men generally report higher levels of academic entitlement than women (Boswell, 2012; Chowning and Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al. 2008; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015; Wasieleski, Whatley, Briehl & Branscome, 2014). Further exploring sex differences in academic entitlement, Ciani et al. (2008) found that these differences persist regardless of the classroom setting, instructor, and year in school (i.e., student class level). Explanations for these sex differences theorize that socialization differences between males and females are responsible for the observed trend; in particular, males place greater value on the successful outcome of a task than females (Boswell, 2012). In opposition to these findings, Achacoso (2002) found that women presented higher levels of academic entitlement. The cause of the discrepancy in sex differences is not clear, although it is possible that the low

proportion of women in Achacoso's sample (women represented one-third of the sample) limited the generalizability of the study (Achacoso, 2002).

Despite the majority of research on academic entitlement taking place in North America, emerging investigations of demographic differences across countries highlight a growing culture of disruptive, uncivil, and disrespectful student behavior in the non-western world (McLellan and Jackson, 2017). In a comparison study of university students, Saudi Arabian women presented higher levels of academic entitlement than women in the United States sample (Blincoe & Garris, 2017). Rising student incivility has also been noted in the People's Republic of China (Clark and Spring, 2007) by faculty highlight the frequent occurrence of disruptive behaviors such as: arriving late for class, using a cell phone during class, and not paying attention. In a qualitative study, conducted in the People's Republic of China, examining student and faculty comments to open-ended survey questions, Clark et al. (2012) found that nursing students and faculty reported an academic culture lacking respect and understanding.

Further exploration of the relationship between academic entitlement and demographic variables is limited. While Boswell (2012) found that first-generation college students scored similar on levels of academic entitlement to students with a parent who has a four-year college degree, the classification of a first-generation student as an individual who does not have a parent with a 4-year college degree (U.S. Department of Education, 1996) may have created too broad of categories. Restricting the first-generation student definition as those

with a parent without any college experience, rather than a 4-year degree, may yield different results.

Notwithstanding the broad support for sex differences in levels of academic entitlement, and the limited evaluation of the relationship between parental education level and academic entitlement, studies examining the association with other demographics (e.g., race and financial need) are deficient. Although Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) found no differences in AE by race, the analysis did not provide enough evidence to evaluate potential issues (e.g., sample size by race and gender) and was predominantly White (56.6%). Echoing similar concerns regarding the lack of diversity, Wasieleski, Whatley, Briihl, and Branscome (2014) proposed that increasing the diversity of the sample when measuring academic entitlement could highlight cross-cultural differences, particularly when comparing those from individualistic cultures to those from collectivist cultures.

The absence of research examining academic entitlement by student financial status is particularly notable given the suggestion that a consumer perspective is, in part, attributable to academic entitlement beliefs (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011). Furthermore, as social class helps to shape the way individuals think, feel, and acts (Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng & Keltner, 2010), students receiving financial assistance may exhibit different levels of entitlement than students paying for their education using loans or personal finances. Supporting this position, Piff, Kraus, Côté, Cheng & Keltner (2010) found that

individuals from a higher social-economic status (SES) reported social values that aligned to their own needs, while those from a lower SES reported more concern for the wellbeing of others. Additionally, Piff (2013) found that social class had a positive relationship with psychological entitlement. Given these relationships and considering the theoretical role student consumerism plays in the development of academic entitlement (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2012), an examination of academic entitlement and educational funding source is warranted.

#### Academic Entitlement and Personality

Research examining the relationship between academic achievement and personality traits has found that successful academic performance shares a positive correlation to extroversion, agreeableness, and openness to experience (Laidra, Pullmann & Allik, 2007). Similarly, in a study conducted by Hakimi, Hejazi, and Lavasani (2011) using the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), conscientiousness accounted for 39 percent of the variance in academic achievement. Investigating the relationship between academic entitlement and personality dimensions, Chowning and Campbell (2009) found that extraversion, conscientiousness, and agreeableness were negatively correlated with the externalized responsibility subscale of academic entitlement while neuroticism was positively correlated with the externalized responsibility subscale (Chowning and Campbell, 2009). This relationship between AE and neuroticism is

particularity relevant to an understanding of academic entitlement as it measures an inability to accept responsibility (McLellan & Jackson, 2017).

In a study measuring Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy, Turnipseed and Cohen (2014), using Chowning and Campbell's (2009) measure of AE, found that psychopathy predicted externalized responsibility, while narcissism predicted entitlement expectations. Additionally, the authors found a positive relationship between entitlement expectations and Machiavellianism as well as narcissism. Such results are notable as those high in narcissism and psychopathy are inclined to academic entitlement (Turnipseed and Cohen, 2014). However, while research has found that levels of grandiosity (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) and perceived self-worth (Kopp et al., 2011) are higher in academically entitled students, self-esteem appears to have a negative relationship with academic entitlement (Chowning & Campbell's, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008). Similarly, when tested individually, self-esteem, self-efficacy, and college self-efficacy did not predict academic entitlement (Boswell, 2012).

Of note is the connection between academic entitlement and an external locus of control (Sessoms, Finney, and Kopp, 2016). In general, an external locus of control is represented by one perceiving a situation as being beyond their control, while an internal locus of control is characterized by one perceiving that they are able to control the situation and are responsible for the outcome (Findley and Cooper, 1983). Particularly maladaptive, an external locus of control

is associated with low levels of personal control, effort, mastery orientation (e.g., Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008). For example, Parker (1999) found that distance education students with an external locus of control were less likely to complete course work and more likely to drop out when compared to students with an internal locus of control. Similarly, Anderson, Halberstadt, and Aitken (2013) found that external locus of control predicted poor academic performance on examinations.

Theoretically, entitlement stems from the belief that rewards are dependent on external sources, thus academically entitled students would be reluctant to put effort towards achieving a goal they perceive as controlled by an external source (Kerr, 1985). This connection was supported by Sohr-Preston and Boswell's (2015) findings that students high in academic entitlement also reported greater levels of externality in locus of control. Such results are also consistent with the findings reported by Chowning and Campbell (2009) and, Kopp, and Finney (2013) regarding academic entitlement. Given the connection between locus of control and academic entitlement, facilitating a shift from an external to an internal locus of control may advance student motivation for learning by building autonomy and perceived responsibility.

#### Academic Entitlement and a Consumer Model of Higher Education

A consumer-like approach to higher education has also been proposed as a source of developed academic entitlement as students' increasingly view themselves as customers, rather than scholars (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich,

2011; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2011). As institutions seek to compete for students through marketing, students may perceive that their role as consumers allows them to hold certain expectations (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2011), and since they are paying for a service, they may believe that they are buying a product and/or opportunities (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich). As such, students holding customer orientations were more likely to expect unreasonable accommodations from instructors, report poor time management, and were less likely to engage in metacognitive learning strategies (McLellan & Jackson, 2017). In a phenomenological exploration of academic entitlement, student focus group discussions uncovered a “product value of education” theme (Singleton-Jackson, Jackson & Reinhardt, 2011). Specifically, students held certain expectations in regards to what they would get for their money. Such emphasis on education as a service erodes students’ commitment to learning for its own sake (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002) and complicates the student-instructor dynamic (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011).

### Academic Entitlement and Academic Success

As academically entitled students report that education should require minimal effort, that instructors bear the responsibility for their learning, and that they deserve positive academic outcomes, regardless of effort or performance, those high in AE represent a population of concern for administrators, faculty, and advisors (Sessoms, Finney & Kopp, 2016). Within a classroom setting, academic entitlement may result in uncivil student behaviors and actions that are

inconsistent with traditional academic norms such as texting, tardiness, and demandingness (Chowning and Campbell, 2009). Kopp and Finney (2013) extended these uncivil behaviors to include situations in which students fail to comply with university obligations and programming. The researchers found that students who skipped a mandatory university-wide testing session scored higher in academic entitlement than students who attended the session (Kopp & Finney, 2013).

Chowning and Campbell (2009) found that academic entitlement predicted student incivility. Specifically, when presented with vignettes describing various academic situations (e.g., homework policies, test preparation, and course grades) of inappropriate student behaviors, the researchers found that entitled students, specifically those scoring high on the Externalized Responsibility subscale, rated the behaviors as appropriate. Taylor, Bailey, and Barber (2015) found academic entitlement predicted counterproductive research behaviors in undergraduate students. Researchers found that study absences (i.e., the number of times a student signed up for but did not attend a research study), careless responding to survey items, and careless task responding, as measured by illogical responses, were predicted by academic entitlement (Taylor, Bailey, and Barber, 2015). Related to academic dishonesty, Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) found that students high in AE were more likely to report that they had engaged in academically corrupt behaviors (e.g., cheating, plagiarism, etc.). Such results led the authors to suggest that grades may be overvalued in

academically entitled students (Sohr-Preston and Boswell, 2015), and that, consistent with Greenberger et al. (2008), those high in AE may be willing to rationalize their behaviors as entitled students by presenting an extrinsic orientation focused on tangible rewards (i.e., “the ends justify the means”).

Examining students’ grades and levels of academic entitlement, Reysen, Degges-White, and Reysen (2016) found that AE was negatively correlated with GPA. When compared as a group, students considered academically at-risk (i.e., GPA less than 2.0) scored significantly higher in levels of AE than their non-at-risk peers (i.e., GPA above a 2.0) (Reysen, Degges-White & Reysen, 2016). While the results were significant, it is notable that men made up a much higher proportion of the at-risk group than the not-at-risk group, 59.4%, and 20.5% respectively. Given that previous research has found that men report higher levels academic entitlement than women (Boswell, 2012; Chowning and Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al. 2008; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015; Wasieleski, Whatley, Briehl & Branscome, 2014), the disparity in Reysen, Degges-White and Reysen’s (2016) sample is problematic.

Jeffres, Barclay, and Stolte (2014) found a similar relationship between academic success and academic entitlement. In a study of pharmacy students, those high in academic entitlement required more reassessments and more summer remediation interventions due to lack of success on reassessments, than their less academically entitled peers (Jeffres, Barclay & Stolte,2014). Such results are notable in that the relationship between AE and negative academic

outcomes are supported in both undergraduate (Reysen, Degges-White & Reysen, 2016) and graduate student populations (Jeffres, Barclay & Stolte, 2014).

Beyond a direct comparison of student grade outcomes, students' academic perceptions, motivations, and evaluations vary by levels of academic entitlement. Miller (2013) found that AE was negatively related to perceived grade fairness and university satisfaction, and Goldman and Martin (2014) found that academically entitled students communicated with their instructor to give the impression that they care about the course material, while seeking to have their grade increased (i.e., they communicated for sycophantic reasons). To examine the relationship between academic entitlement and instructor evaluations, Chowning and Campbell (2009) organized a laboratory experiment in which students completed ten short answer essay questions, after random assignment to a negative feedback or no feedback condition. In response to negative instructor feedback, Chowning and Campbell found that students high in levels of academic entitlement, specifically Externalized Responsibility, provided lower ratings to experiment graders in response to feedback. Additionally, regardless of negative or no feedback condition, students high in AE rated the experiment grader more negatively than those scoring low in AE (Chowning and Campbell, 2009).

Greenberger et al. (2008) suggest that academic entitlement may act as a coping strategy for students struggling to meet the academic demands and

requirements of a post-secondary institution. Faced with challenging academics, students may externalize the responsibility for their poor performance (Chowning and Campbell, 2009). Similarly, Reysen, Deggs-White, and Reysen (2016) speculated that AE might be a coping strategy employed by academically at-risk students attempting to protect their self-confidence and self-esteem by assigning the blame for their performance to an instructor. Thus, when confronted with external feedback that is in opposition to their perceived sense of self, students interpret the feedback as unfair and incorrect (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). Such a connection seems plausible given that an important aspect of academic entitlement is the reluctance to accept personal responsibility for meeting goals (Chowning & Campbell, 2009).

#### Academic Entitlement and Student Engagement

Evaluating the relationship between levels of academic entitlement and student engagement, Knepp (2016) found that entitled students reported decreased levels of student engagement. Specifically, students high in the Externalized Responsibility subscale (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) indicated lower levels of agreement to engagement items (e.g., “During class, I ask questions”) as measured by the Student Engagement Questionnaire (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). Furthermore, levels of academic entitlement predicted the three subscales of student engagement: behavioral, emotional, and cognitive. For each subscale, higher academic entitlement scores had an inverse relationship with engagement (Knepp, 2016). Extending his study to include schoolwork

engagement, Knepp found that academic entitlement predicted overall levels of schoolwork engagement and, as was the case with student engagement; academic entitlement predicted all three of the subscales: energy, dedication, and absorption, with higher academic entitlement scores associated with lower scores levels of schoolwork engagement (Knepp, 2016).

While representing a limited scope of student engagement, the findings nevertheless support the maladaptive nature and implications of academic entitlement on classroom, schoolwork, and university engagement (Knepp, 2016; Kopp & Finney, 2013).

Specifically, dealing with the beliefs and behaviors of academically entitled students requires additional attention, funds, and time by university staff, faculty, and administrators designed to engage and support students (Kopp and Finney, 2013). Furthermore, given the high financial cost of student support programs (e.g., tutoring, supplemental instruction, and co-curricular engagement events), avoidance of such programming by academically entitled students represents the potential for misplaced strategies.

### Strategies to Remediate Academic Entitlement

Despite the support of empirical research demonstrating the maladaptive nature of academic entitlement, beyond conjecture, there is little exploration of potential moderators. According to Wasieleski, Whatley, Briehl, and Branscome (2014), by making students aware of their entitlement beliefs, institutions can assist students in the development of effective strategies to

succeed; however, research supporting this assumption is unpublished. Similarly, Chowing and Campbell (2009) proposed that remediation of academic entitlement may be possible through first-year orientations, designed to teach students self-regulated learning skills, and increase their sense of personal responsibility for their academic success.

### Summary

Taken together, empirical research supports the maladaptive nature of academic entitlement on student success within the context of higher education. However, while previous studies have observed differences in levels of academic entitlement in college students along various groupings (e.g., sex, first-generation college student status, and GPA), no studies have sought to capture the pre-college enrollment levels of academic entitlement in first-year college students as a factor in predicting student success, support service utilization, and engagement in co-curricular campus programming. Furthermore, while proposed as an area for future study (Chowing & Campbell, 2009), the moderation effect of a first-year seminar course on the academic outcomes of academically entitled students has yet to be examined. In the following chapters, this research will further explore these factors. The methodology for this study will be discussed in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to replicate and extend previous research examining academic entitlement among university freshman students. Particular emphasis was given to identifying demographic differences in academic entitlement, determining the relative importance of academic entitlement in predicting grade point average, the utilization of student academic support services, and first-year retention. Additionally, when applicable, this project sought to evaluate the mediating/moderating effect of participation in a freshmen seminar on these variables.

#### Research Question

The primary question of this study was: In what ways, if any, does academic entitlement impact student success and support service utilization; and can the impact be mediated/moderated through participation in a first-year orientation course?

#### Research Design

According to Babbie (2010), quantitative research emphasizes the objective measurement and analysis of data collected through survey or the manipulation of archival statistical data to test for relationships amongst variables for a

population. As such, the research design employed for this study was quantitative in nature.

### Procedure

The Office of Institutional Research provided the archival student demographic, academic performance, utilization of student academic support services records, and survey data needed for this study. The Office of Institutional Research curated, merged, and de-identified all data for the requested population before dissemination. The base data included all first-year college students matriculating in fall 2017.

### Participants

Participants for this study were 2,517 first-year college students at a large, public, four-year university.

### Student Performance

Student performance data comprised the following data points: enrollment in a freshmen seminar course, term units attempted, term units earned, and first-year retention status.

### Student Support Services Utilization

For each student, term visitation counts were provided for tutoring and supplemental instruction. Because these services were only offered for certain courses, the student-level data included the number of courses enrolled, the

number of courses enrolled with tutoring support, and the number of courses enrolled with supplemental instruction.

### Measurement Tool

Prior to the first-day of classes, all matriculating first-year students were emailed a freshmen survey, which included the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES) developed by Chowning and Campbell (2009). This measure is comprised of 15-items with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree', and is assumed to measure two dimensions of AE, Externalized Responsibility and Entitlement Expectations. Table 1 details the questions for each dimension. The first dimension, Externalized Responsibility, consists of ten items measuring the extent to which students feel that they are responsible for their academic achievement and the second dimension, Entitled Expectations, consists of five items that focus on the students' expectations of the instructor. Past research has found item correlations for the Externalized Responsibility subscale ranged from .40 to .58, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81 and, for the Entitled Expectations subscale, item correlations ranged from .27 to .51, with a Cronbach's alpha of .62 (Chowning & Campbell, 2009).

Table 1. Academic Entitlement Scale

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Subscale/items
Externalized Responsibility subscale
1. It is unnecessary for me to participate in class when the professor is paid for teaching, not for asking questions.
2. If I miss class, it is my responsibility to get the notes. ( <i>Reverse</i> )
3. I am not motivated to put a lot of effort into group work, because another group member will end up doing it.
6. I believe that the university does not provide me with the resources I need to succeed in college.
7. Most professors do not really know what they are talking about.
10. If I do poorly in a course and I could not make my professor's office hours, the fault lies with my professor.
11. I believe that it is my responsibility to seek out the resources to succeed in college. ( <i>Reverse</i> )
12. For group assignments, it is acceptable to take a back seat and let others do most of the work if I am busy
13. For group work, I should receive the same grade as the other group members regardless of my level of effort.
15. Professors are just employees who get money for teaching.

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Externalized Responsibility subscale

- 4. My professors are obligated to help me prepare for exams.
  - 5. Professors must be entertaining to be good.
  - 8. My professors should reconsider my grade if I am close to the grade I want.
  - 9. I should never receive a zero on an assignment that I turned in.
  - 14. My teachers/professors should curve my grade if I am close to the next letter grade.
- 

Chowning & Campbell (2009)

### Demographic Differences

Previous research has found that men tend to report significantly higher levels of academic entitlement than women (Boswell, 2012; Chowning and Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al. 2008; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015, Wasieleski, Whatley, Briehl & Branscome, 2014). Notwithstanding the broad support for sex differences, studies examining the other demographic differences, such as under-represented minority status, first-generation status, and Pell Grant status, are limited. Therefore, to evaluate these differences, a series of Independent Samples T-tests were conducted to determine significant group differences. The results of these analyses determined which, if any, variables are treated as covariates in later mediating/moderating regression models.

### Identification of Associations

Prior to examining the mediating/moderating effect of a first-year orientation course, multiple regressions were conducted to examine the association between the academic entitlement subscales and first-term course completion rates, utilization of student academic support services, and first-year retention. These analyses will not include any covariates, as the purpose of the regressions is to determine the association between academic entitlement and the identified student success outcomes. The results of these regressions determined which, if any, association will be tested in later mediating/moderating regression models.

### Mediator/Moderator Regressions

Following the identification of significant covariates, the mediation/moderation effect of enrollment in a first-year seminar will be evaluated.

### Summary

This study utilized a quantitative approach relying on the objective measurement and analysis of data collected through survey data and the manipulation of archival statistical data to test for relationships amongst variables for a population. The results will be discussed in Chapter Four.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

Following the approval of the university's Institutional Review Board, the Office of Institutional Research provided the archival demographic, academic performance, utilization of student academic support services records, and survey data needed for this study. When received, all data was curated, merged, and de-identified.

#### Sample Demographics

Of the 2,517 students receiving the survey, a total of 941 (35%) completed the survey. Of note, survey completers differed from non-completers on several key factors. Specifically, when comparing incoming academic readiness characteristics, survey completers had higher incoming high school grade point averages ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .866$ ) than non-completers ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = .866$ ),  $t(2515) = 6.161$ ,  $p < .05$ ), as well as higher average SAT scores ( $M = 1012.85$ ,  $SD = .123.956$ ) than non-completers ( $M = 995.64$ ,  $SD = 121.173$ ),  $t(2427) = 3.362$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, when comparing post enrollment outcomes, survey completers earned higher grade point average in their first term ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = .874$ ) than non-completers ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ),  $t(2514) = 5.813$ ,  $p < .05$ ), and were retained in the first-year at a higher rate (89%) than non-completers (83%),  $t(2515) = 3.732$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Of the survey respondents, the sample consisted of 941 first-year college students, representing a 35% survey response rate (i.e., 2,517 received the survey). Of the respondents, 31.7% were males and 68.3% were females, with an average age of 18 at the start of the fall 2017 term. Applying the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) coding, 73.2% of the students identified as Hispanic, 8.1% as Caucasian, 5.8% as Asian/Pacific Islander, 4.9% as Non-Resident (Foreign), 3.5% as African American, 2.2% as two or more races, 2.3% as Unknown, and 0.1% as Native American. Overall, 64.8% of the participants were Federal Pell Grant recipients (i.e., received a Pell Grant in their first term of enrollment), 76.8% were under-represented minorities (i.e., African American, Hispanic, or Native American), and 54.2% were first-generation college students (i.e., first in their family to attend college). Table 2 summarizes the demographics of the study sample.

Table 2. Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender</i>		
Male	298	31.7
Female	643	64.8
<i>Race/Ethnicity</i>		
African American	33	3.5
Asian	55	5.8
Hispanic	689	73.2
Native American	1	<1

Non-Resident: Foreign	46	4.9
Pacific Islander	1	< 1
Two or More Races	22	2.3
Unknown	18	1.9
White	76	8.1
<i>Pell Grant Status</i>		
Pell Recipient	610	64.8
Did not Receive Pell	331	35.2
<i>First Generation Student Status</i>		
First Generation	510	54.2
Non-First Generation	298	31.7
<i>Note: N = 941</i>		

### Sample Characteristics

The sample scores on the Externalized Responsibility and the Entitled Expectation subscales are shown in Table 3. Overall, the first-term unit completion rate was 91.7% (SD=.179), the first-year retention rate was 89% (SD=.318), and 176 students (18.7%) enrolled in a freshmen orientation course.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics for the Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations Subscales of the Academic Entitlement Scale

Scale	Count	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Externalized Responsibility	941	2.17	.670
Entitled Expectations	940	4.10	1.11

## Data Screening

### Exploratory Factor Analysis

To explore the factorial structure of the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES) developed by Chowning and Campbell (2009), all 15 items of the measure were subjected to exploratory factor analysis. While there were some cross-loaded items, the overall two-factor structure of the instrument held. *Appendix TBD*

### Internal Consistency

Item-total correlations for the externalized responsibility subscale ranged from .10 to .44, and from .23 to .65 for the entitled expectations subscale. Additionally, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was computed for both subscales to measure reliability. For the ten-item externalized responsibility subscale, Cronbach's alpha was .721, and for the five-item entitled expectations subscale, Cronbach's alpha was .737. As the elimination of any one of the items from either of these subscales would not increase the value of Cronbach's alpha for either subscale, all 15 items of the AES (Chowning & Campbell, 2009) were retained.

## Results of the Study

### Hypothesis 1

Consistent with previous research findings that men presented higher levels of academic entitlement than women (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al. 2008; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015, Wasieleski, Whatley, Briihl & Branscome, 2014), male students scored higher ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = .677$ ) than women ( $M = 2.10$ ,  $SD = .656$ ) on the externalized responsibility

subscale of academic entitlement;  $t(939) = 4.697, p < .05$ . Additionally, male students scored higher ( $M = 4.22, SD = .1.14$ ) than women ( $M = 4.04, SD = .1.09$ ) on the entitled expectations subscale of academic entitlement;  $t(938) = 2.228, p < .05$ .

### Hypothesis 2

Extending Piff's (2013) finding that social class had a positive relationship with psychological entitlement, and the supported relationship between psychological entitlement and academic entitlement (Chowing & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farraggiam, 2008; Menon & Sharland, 2011), it was hypothesized that students receiving a Pell grant would score lower on the externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement than students not receiving a Pell grant.

This hypothesis was not supported. Pell grants students ( $M = 2.16, SD = .689$ ) scored comparably to non-Pell grant students ( $M = 2.17, SD = .691$ ) on the externalized responsibility subscale of academic entitlement;  $t(939) = -.031, p = .975$ . Similarly, Pell grants student ( $M = 4.08, SD = 1.09$ ) and non-Pell grant student ( $M = 4.14, SD = 1.14$ ) scores on the entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement were analogous  $t(939) = .771, p = .441$ .

### Hypothesis 3

Following the U.S. Department of Education (1996) definition of a first-generation college student as an individual who does not have a parent with a 4-year college degree, Boswell (2012) found that first-generation college students

scored similarly on levels of academic entitlement to students with a parent who has a four-year college degree. However, differences in college-going rates, reasons for attendance, and academic outcomes have been found between first-generation and non-first-generation students when defining first-generation students as those being the first in their immediate family to attend college (Balemian & Feng, 2013). Following this definition, it was hypothesized that first-generation college students would score lower on the externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement than non-first-generation college students.

This hypothesis was not supported. While it was hypothesized that first-generation college students would score lower on the externalized responsibility the reverse was found. First-generation college students ( $M = 2.21$ ,  $SD = .690$ ) scored higher than non-first-generation college students ( $M = 2.12$ ,  $SD = .640$ ) on the externalized responsibility subscale of academic entitlement,  $t(919) = 1.92$ ,  $p < .05$ ). Furthermore, there were no significant differences between first-generation college students ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = 1.12$ ) and non-first-generation college students ( $M = 4.04$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) on the entitled expectations subscale of academic entitlement,  $t(918) = .897$ ,  $p = .185$ .

#### Hypothesis 4

While previous studies did not find racial differences in levels of academic entitlement (Sohr-Preston & Boswell; 2015) when comparing the individual racial categories, it was hypothesized that underrepresented minorities (i.e., African

American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American) would score lower on measures of academic entitlement than non-underrepresented minorities.

This hypothesis was not supported. Underrepresented minorities ( $M = 2.17$ ,  $SD = .654$ ) scored comparably to non-underrepresented minorities ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = .721$ ) on the externalized responsibility subscale of academic entitlement;  $t(939) = .319$ ,  $p = .375$ . Similar results were found on scores for the entitled expectations subscale of academic entitlement, with no significant difference between underrepresented minorities ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) and non-underrepresented minorities ( $M = 4.07$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ),  $t(938) = .382$ ,  $p = .351$ .

#### Hypothesis 5

Jackson, Singleton-Jackson and Frey (2011) postulated that academically entitled students may fail to fully accept their role in academic success. As such, it was hypothesized that students deciding to enroll in a freshmen seminar course, designed to teach students self-regulated learning behaviors and increase their sense of personal responsibility, would score lower on measures on academic entitlement than students not taking the course.

This hypothesis was not supported. Students enrolling in a freshmen seminar course ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = .212$ ) scored comparably to students not enrolling in a freshmen seminar course ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = .669$ ) on the externalized responsibility subscale of academic entitlement;  $t(939) = 1.21$ ,  $p = .112$ . Similarly, students enrolling in a freshmen seminar course ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 1.09$ ) and students not enrolling in a freshmen seminar course ( $M = 4.11$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) did not

significantly differ in their scores on the entitled expectations subscale of academic entitlement  $t(938) = .616, p=.269$ .

### Hypothesis 6

Reysen, Degges-White and Reysen (2016) found that academically at-risk (i.e., GPA less than 2.0) students scored significantly higher in levels of AE than their non-at-risk peers (i.e., GPA above a 2.0). Seeking to extend this finding, it was hypothesized that externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement would predict first term course success, as measured by first-term unit completion rates.

This hypothesis was not supported. The externalized responsibility subscale did not predict the percent of first-term units completed,  $F(1,939) = .366, p=. 562$ . Similarly, the entitled expectations subscale of academic entitlement subscale did not predict the percent of first-term units completed,  $F(1,938)= .491, p=.484$ .

### Hypothesis 7

Kopp and Finney (2013) suggest that academically entitled students may be reluctant to put forth the effort required to achieve a goal they perceive as being controlled by an external source. Building on this position, it was hypothesized that the externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement would predict supplemental instruction participation rates in the first-term of enrollment.

This hypothesis was not supported. The externalized responsibility

subscale did not predict supplemental instruction,  $F(1,453) = 2.23, p = .136$ .

Similarly, the entitled expectations subscale did not predict supplemental instruction participation,  $F(1,453) = .018, p = .894$ .

### Hypothesis 8

Consistent with theoretical foundations presented in hypothesis 7, it was hypothesized that the externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement would predict the utilization of tutoring services in the first-term of enrollment.

This hypothesis was not supported. The externalized responsibility subscale did not predict the percent utilization of tutoring services,  $F(1,41) = 1.52, p = .224$ . Similarly, the entitled expectations subscale did not predict tutoring services,  $F(1,41) = .954, p = .334$ .

### Hypothesis 9

Psychological factors such as academic goals and academic self-efficacy can be used to predict college retention (Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley & Carlstrom, 2004). Given this relationship, it may be assumed that entitlement among college students may be maladaptive because, in part, entitlement is associated with an external locus of control. This connection is supported by empirical research reporting greater levels of externality in locus of control in academically entitled students (Chowing & Campbell; 2009, Kopp & Finney; 2013). As such, it was hypothesized that externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement would predict first-year retention

rates.

This hypothesis was not supported. The externalized responsibility subscale,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.000$ ,  $p > .05$ , and the entitled expectations subscale,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.617$ ,  $p > .05$ , of academic entitlement did not predict first year retention rates.

#### Mediator/Moderator Hypotheses

According to Wasieleski, Whatley, Brihl, and Branscome (2014), institutions can assist entitled students in the development of effective strategies to succeed by making them aware of their entitlement beliefs. Similarly, Chowling and Campbell (2009) proposed that first-year orientations, designed to teach students self-regulated learning skills and increase their sense of personal responsibility for their academic success, may remediate academic entitlement. As such, it was hypothesized that students completing a first-year seminar course, designed to develop responsible academic and personal attitudes, would mediate/moderate the relationship between the externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement and first-year academic success; specifically, first-term unit completion rates, supplemental instruction participation, the utilization on tutoring services, and first-year retention rates.

As significant associations between the academic entitlement subscales and the first-year student success metrics previously noted were not found, the mediator/moderator analyses were not conducted.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

#### Overview

Members of the millennial generation consist of those born between 1980 and 2000. According to Twenge (2006), as college students, millennials are more entitled than previous generations, present higher self-esteem scores, and are described as holding unrealistically high expectations regarding the attainment of professional jobs and advanced educational degrees (Reynolds, Stewart, MacDonald, & Sischo, 2006; Twenge, 2013). Explanations for these generational differences vary, but Twenge (2006) proposed that the self-esteem movement of the 1990's played a role in the generational increases in self-esteem and perceptions of entitlement. Viewed as a precursor to success, parents and schools sought to increase the self-esteem of children through participation-based reward structures, without consideration of actual effort or deservingness (Kopp and Finney, 2013).

Noting the growing culture of incivility and expected academic achievement amongst university students, Morrow (1994) cautioned educators that entitlement attitudes could result in a decrease of academic rigor and degrade the value of a college degree. These attitudes, although correlated with psychological entitlement and narcissism (Greenberger et al., 2008), represent a distinct construct known as academic entitlement, in which entitlement expectations are

exhibited specifically within an academic setting (Achacoso, 2002; Chowing & Campbell, 2009). Specifically, academic entitlement is characterized by a reduced sense of personal responsibility for academic achievements, the belief that rewards are deserved independent of effort, the holding of unreasonable expectations of instructors, and excessively demanding attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding the responsibility of the instructor and the institution to ensure academic success.

There is an extensive body of research supporting the maladaptive nature of academic entitlement within the context of higher education. In general, academically entitled students may view negative academic outcomes (e.g., bad grades) solely as a failure of the instructor or the university, and not the result of their effort and/or ability (Kopp & Finney, 2013). As such, those high in academic entitlement have been reported to present uncivil student behaviors and actions that are inconsistent with traditional academic norms (Chowning and Campbell, 2009), fail to attend mandatory activities (Kopp & Finney, 2013), and exhibit less mastery in knowledge and performance as measured by course grades and assessments (Jeffres, Barclay & Stolte, 2014; Reysen, Degges-White & Reysen, 2016).

While there is abundant research supporting the assertion that the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of academically entitled students may result in significant strain on university administrators, faculty, and programming, the novelty of this study was twofold. First, this study sought to capture the pre-

collegiate levels of academic entitlement in first-year college students; and, after accounting for various demographic differences, utilize academic entitlement as a factor in predicting academic outcomes and student support service utilization. Second, this study sought to assess the effect of a first-year seminar course on the academic outcomes and student support service utilization of academically entitled students.

Results supporting demographic differences in levels of academic entitlement were mixed. Consistent with the finding of previous research on academic entitlement, this study found that men presented a higher level of academic entitlement than women (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al. 2008; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015; Wasieleski, Whatley, Briehl & Branscome, 2014). These sex differences in academic entitlement are similar to the results found in occupational and psychological entitlement domains (Hill & Fischer, 2001; Campbell et al., 2004; Hogue, Yoder & Singleton, 2007) in which men score significantly higher than women. While an explanation for this difference was not sought within the context of this study, Boswell (2012) postulated that socialization differences between males and females are likely to play a role, as males tend to place greater value on the successful outcome of a task than females.

Extending the research on demographic differences in academic entitlement, this study sought to evaluate the relationship between academic entitlement and Pell grant, under-represented minority, and first-generational

college student statuses. Contrary to the findings of Piff (2013), in which social class had a positive relationship with psychological entitlement, Pell grant students did not score lower on measures of academic entitlement than non-Pell grant students. Such results were surprising given the theoretical role student consumerism plays in the development of academic entitlement (Kopp, Zinn, Finney & Jurich, 2011; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2012), as students paying for their education using loans or personal finances could perceive their academic success as the result of paying tuition.

When comparing groups, first-generation college students have been found to have lower college-going rates and poorer academic outcomes than non-first-generation college students (Balemian & Feng, 2013). However, when evaluating the relationship between academic entitlement and first-generation status, first-generation students scored higher on levels of externalized responsibility and similar on levels of entitled expectations to non-first-generation students. While an explanation for this difference was not sought within the context of this study, it is possible that, without a parent with a college degree, first-generation students are not fully aware of their role in their academic success.

The examination of the relationship between under-represented minority (URM) status and academic entitlement represented an extension of previous research conducted by Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015). However, in this study, rather than evaluate the individual race groupings, students identified as African American, Hispanic, or Native American were grouped into a larger URM group

before analysis. Despite this grouping, and consistent with the results of Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015), no differences were found in levels of academic entitlement. While previous studies suggested that the lack of diversity in the samples may have played a role in the lack of cross-cultural differences, this study was conducted using a sample that was 77% under-represented minority, yet continued to lack notable differences in academic entitlement.

In addition to the overall lack of consistent support for demographic differences in academic entitlement, this study did not find a relationship between enrollment in a first-year orientation course and levels of academic entitlement. Given Jackson, Singleton-Jackson and Frey's (2011) hypothesis that academically entitled students may fail to fully accept their role in academic success. This study postulated that students making the decision to enroll in an optional freshmen seminar course, designed to teach students self-regulated learning behaviors and increase their sense of personal responsibility, would score lower on measures on academic entitlement than students not taking the course. This assumption was not supported, as there were no differences in academic entitlement scores based on freshmen seminar course enrollment status. Similarly, attempting to expand on research conducted by Reysen, Degges-White, and Reysen (2016) that found that academically at-risk students scored significantly higher in levels of AE than their non-at-risk peers, this study hypothesized that academic entitlement levels would predict first-term unit completion rates. This association was not supported as academic entitlement

scores did not predict students' course success in the first-term of enrollment.

While previous research examining participation in supplemental instruction and tutoring by levels of academic entitlement are absent, building on Kopp and Finney's (2013) proposition that academically entitled students would be hesitant to put effort towards achieving a goal they perceive as controlled by an external source, this study's hypothesis that academically entitled students have lower levels of student support service use (i.e., supplemental instruction and tutoring utilization) was not supported. Lastly, despite research linking psychological factors such as academic self-efficacy to college retention (Robbins, Lauver, Le, Davis, Langley & Carlstrom, 2004), levels of academic entitlement failed to predict first-year college retention rates. Considering the fairly well-established findings on academic entitlement, as well as the postulated associations made by prior researchers, the lack of significant results found in this study may be the result of several key limitations that may have impacted the results.

### Student Sample

Before the first day of classes, all matriculating first-year students were emailed a freshmen survey which included the Academic Entitlement Scale (AES) developed by Chowning and Campbell (2009). Of the 2,517 students receiving the survey, a total of 941 (35%) completed the survey. Of note, survey completers had higher incoming high school grade point averages and SAT

scores when compared to non-survey completers. Given these preexisting differences, and the research suggesting that academically entitled students hold a reduced sense of personal responsibility for their academics (Reinhart, 2012), even going so far as to not attend mandatory university activities (Kopp & Finney, 2013), it is fair to postulate that, in general, academically entitled students may have been unwilling to participate in a voluntary survey.

Further strengthening the position that the voluntary nature of the survey may have resulted in a lack of academically entitled respondents, additional analysis found outcome differences in first-term grade point averages as well as first-year retention rates. Specifically, at the end of the first-term of enrollment, survey completers earned a higher-grade point average and were retained in the first-year at a higher rate than non-completers. Again, while such results cannot be correlated with levels of academic entitlement, as scores are unavailable for those not completing the survey, they do suggest possible individual differences between those completing and not completing the survey.

Another possible limitation related to the student sample concerns the collegiate experience of the respondents. According to Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, and Reinhardt (2011), there is a growing perception of amongst college students that the purpose of higher education is economic. This service provider model facilitates the attitude that institutions of higher education are a place to meet pre-established needs (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002) and receive a degree as the result of paying tuition (Fairchild & Craig, 2014). Following these concepts, it

is reasonable to suspect that, to some extent, academic entitlement may develop or increase in college students during their collegiate experience. As such, measuring academic entitlement prior to the first term of enrollment may not allow for academic entitlement to appear in a participant's responses.

### Academic Entitlement Scale (AES)

Chowning and Campbell's (2009) Academic Entitlement Scale (AES) consists of two dimensions: Externalized Responsibility and Entitled Expectations. The first dimension, Externalized Responsibility, consists of items measuring the extent to which students feel that they are responsible for their academic achievement while the second dimension, Entitled Expectations, focuses on the students' expectations of the instructor. In its original format, item correlations for the Externalized Responsibility subscale ranged from .40 to .58, with a Cronbach's alpha of .81. For the Entitled Expectations subscale, item correlations ranged from .27 to .51, with a Cronbach's alpha of .62. In a review of this scale, Kopp, Zinn, Finney, and Jurich (2011) noted concerns with the low-reliability score of the Entitled Expectations subscale. Specifically, they noted the possibility that some of the items relate to, but are distinct from the construct of academic entitlement. For example, Kopp et al. (2011) note that items such as "Most professors do not really know what they are talking about" appear to measure students' perception of instruction quality, rather than academic entitlement. Furthermore, Kopp et al. (2011) cited multiple issues in the structural stages of the scale's development.

Within the context of this study, while the overall two-factor structure of the instrument held, the cross-loading of some items suggests possible issues with item reliability. Furthermore, and consistent with a concern expressed by Kopp et al. (2011), several of the items present contexts that incoming students have not yet experienced. For example, without collegiate experience, respondents may have been unable to provide an accurate assessment on items like, “I believe that the university does not provide me with the resources I need to succeed in college” or “I believe that it is my responsibility to seek out the resources to succeed in college.” Taken together, the concerns expressed by Kopp et al. (2011), the cross-loading of items, and reliance on item context that may require some degree of college experience suggest potential limitations of Chowning and Campbell’s (2009) Academic Entitlement Scale in this study.

#### Student Support Services Utilization

Consistent with Kopp and Finney’s (2013) proposition that academically entitled students would be reluctant to put effort towards achieving a goal they perceive as controlled by an external source, this study hypothesized that the externalized responsibility and entitled expectations subscales of academic entitlement would predict student participation in tutoring. While these hypotheses were not supported, these results may be attributed to the lack of comprehensive tutoring data. At the university in which this study was conducted, tutoring services are provided by several student service areas, colleges, and academic departments; however, the data relied upon for this study were only

available from one functional area. Given this limitation, and the availability of additional tutoring services, it is reasonable to speculate that the tutoring data utilized in this study was insufficient.

### Recommendations for Future Research

There exists a substantial body of research supporting the position that academic entitlement may act as a barrier to effective teaching and learning (Reysen, Degges-White & Reysen, 2016) given that entitled students may fail to fully accept their role in academic success (Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011). While the present study does not add to the existing body of research substantiating the maladaptive nature of academic entitlement in higher education, the findings of the study do offer insight for future research.

As detailed in the limitations, survey completers and non-completers had notable differences on several measures of academic performance. As such, future research examining incoming levels of academic entitlement may benefit from assigning similar freshmen surveys as part of the orientation process, rather than an elective survey. While adding compulsory to-do items to the college intake process can be challenging, the finding that academic entitlement predicts levels of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive student engagement (Knepp, 2016) and university event participation (Kopp & Finney, 2013) suggests it is reasonable to assume that, in general, given the allowance for self-selection bias, academically entitled students may not take a survey they perceive as

voluntary. As such, by requiring students to complete an incoming freshmen survey measuring levels of academic entitlement, the outreach and programming that can be developed from the results may outweigh any associated costs.

Chowing and Campbell (2009) proposed that first-year orientations may remediate academic entitlement by teaching students self-regulated learning skills and increasing their sense of personal responsibility for their academic success. While this study initially sought to evaluate this proposition through various mediation and moderation hypotheses, the lack of significant associations between the academic entitlement subscales and the first-year student success metrics allowed no basis for the analysis. To better evaluate the impact of first-year orientations on academic entitlement, future research could utilize a pre-test/post-test survey design. This design would allow the researcher to better assess the effect of programming on academic entitlement.

### Conclusion

Given the maladaptive nature of academic entitlement and the negative outcomes associated with it reported in previous studies (Chowing & Campbell, 2009; Jackson, Singleton-Jackson, & Frey, 2011; Kopp & Finney, 2013), the purpose of this study was to replicate and extend previous research on academic entitlement. Specifically, this study sought to identify demographic differences in academic entitlement; determine the relative importance of academic entitlement in predicting first-term unit completion rates, the utilization of academic support

services, and first-year retention. Furthermore, when applicable, this study sought to evaluate the mediating/moderating effect of participation in a freshmen seminar course. While sex differences in academic entitlement were supported, additional hypotheses of this study concerning academic entitlement levels and demographic differences, first-term course success outcomes, retention, and the utilization of academic student support services were not supported. These results offer insight for future research on academic entitlement. In particular, this study suggests that the reliance on voluntary survey completion, or at least the utilization of an email campaign, may fail to secure responses from an academically entitled population. Alternatively, the standards and expectations faced by students are different in college when compared to high school (Venezia, Antonio, & Kirst; 2003). As such, relying on a single measurement of academic entitlement in students prior to having any experience with college coursework, faculty expectations or the support structures available in higher education may be ineffective, as it fails to address the potential for the development of academic entitlement during the collegiate experience.

#### Implications for Educational Leadership

Despite the lack of results presented in this study, considerable research supports the negative impact of academic entitlement on teaching, learning, and programming in higher education. Academically entitled students hold beliefs that include external attributions of responsibility for their academic success and unreasonable expectations of professors, institutions, and policies. Whether

these beliefs stem from generational changes (Twenge, 2006), perceptions of academic consumerism (Kopp et al., 2008), an association with a separate psychological construct (Chowning & Campbell, 2009), or a combination of all three factors, they are maladaptive in nature and, as Morrow (1994) suggested, are in opposition to the mission of higher education. While mission statements vary by institution, it is not unreasonable to assume that they share an underlying theme grounded in the goal to produce graduates who will be valued members of society, sharing a broad appreciation and understanding of the human experience, and possess the skills and techniques necessary to engage in self learning.

Sessoms, Finney and Kopp (2016) proposed that academically entitled students present three distinct characteristics: an external locus of control regarding their academics, the opinion that they deserve control over academic policies, and the view that students are consumers (i.e., paying tuition entitles students to good grades). Given this premise, educational leaders should make efforts to assess, through incoming and/or current student surveys, and address academic entitlement in their populations by leveraging orientation programming to make students aware of their academic entitlement and increase their sense of personal responsibility for their academic success. Furthermore, faculty members should be aware of, and unaccommodating to, students seeking to manipulate grade or classroom policy changes, as such actions ultimately reinforce the behaviors. Finally, administrators must fund programming seeking to remediate

academic entitlement in their student body and support faculty who seek to fairly enforce grading policies, despite student complaints, appeals, or other external factors.

APPENDIX A  
FACTOR LOADINGS OF THE 15-ITEM  
ACADEMIC ENTITLEMENT SCALE

Subscale/items	Factor 1: Externalized Responsibility	Factor 2: Entitled Expectations
Externalized Responsibility subscale		
1. It is unnecessary for me to participate in class when the professor is paid for teaching, not for asking questions.	.438	.205
2. If I miss class, it is my responsibility to get the notes. ( <i>Reverse</i> )	.544	.180
3. I am not motivated to put a lot of effort into group work, because another group member will end up doing it.	.504	.085
6. I believe that the university does not provide me with the resources I need to succeed in college.	.534	.236
7. Most professors do not really know what they are talking about.	.654	.242
10. If I do poorly in a course and I could not make my professor's office hours, the fault lies with my professor.	.616	.386
11. I believe that it is my responsibility to seek out the resources to succeed in college. ( <i>Reverse</i> )	.545	.138
12. For group assignments, it is acceptable to take a back seat and let others do most of the work if I am busy	.635	.211
13. For group work, I should receive the same grade as the other group members regardless of my level of effort.	.343	.265

15. Professors are just employees who get money for teaching.	.545	.338
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Externalized Responsibility subscale

4. My professors are obligated to help me prepare for exams.	.195	.594
5. Professors must be entertaining to be good.	.393	.651
8. My professors should reconsider my grade if I am close to the grade I want.	.362	.815
9. I should never receive a zero on an assignment that I turned in.	.149	.626
14. My teachers/professors should curve my grade if I am close to the next letter grade.	.286	.798

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(Chowning and Campbell, 2009, p. 982)

APPENDIX B  
IRB STUDY APPROVAL

**IRB #:** IRB-FY2019-164

**Title:** Examining the Moderating Effects of a First-Year Seminar Course on Academic Success and Academic Support Services Utilization

**Creation Date:** 2-12-2019

**End Date:**

**Status:** Approved

**Principal Investigator:** Tanner Carollo

**Review Board:** CSUSB Main IRB

**Sponsor:**

## Study History

<b>Submission Type</b>	Initial	<b>Review Type</b>	Exempt	<b>Decision</b>	<span style="color: orange;">Exempt</span>
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## Key Study Contacts

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