

## Predicting Academic Entitlement in Undergraduates

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Academic entitlement (AE) is a common source of frustration for college personnel. This investigation examined predictors (self-concept, academic dishonesty, locus of control, and family functioning) of AE in male and female college students. Academic dishonesty and the interaction between locus of control and family functioning significantly predicted AE. Males reported significantly higher levels of AE, and the interaction between locus of control and family functioning was significant only for females. Future research should address possible developmental pathways to AE in adulthood to further understanding of this problematic belief system.

There has been recent concern among college faculty in the United States and other developed nations over seemingly increasing levels of academic entitlement (AE) among students. That is, students have reportedly become more demanding and even belligerent regarding their perceived right to receive excellent grades in their classes regardless of actual effort and learning (Cain, Romanelli, & Smith, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; Greenberger, Lessard, Chen, & Farruggia, 2008; Schaefer, Barta, Whitley, & Stogsdill, 2013; Singleton-Jackson, Jackson, & Reinhardt, 2010). AE, described as early as the eighties (Dubovsky, 1986), appears as a distinct construct rather than an offshoot of an overall attitude of privilege (Greenberger et al., 2008).

AE is sometimes referred to or likened to student consumerism, or the view that students are paying customers for their education and deserve the same customer satisfaction and service as any other type of consumer (Correa, 2006; Delucchi & Korgen, 2002; Fullerton, 2013; Schings, 2009). Students who espouse this quid pro quo mentality expect that an A will be the outcome for tuition payment; a degree with a high GPA is purchased rather than earned (Schaefer et al., 2013). Dubovsky's (1986) early description of this phenomenon included five components: (a) knowledge is a right that students should access with little effort and discomfort, (b) teaching staff should provide all needed information and direction required for course success, (c) the instructor is responsible for an individual student's performance in a class, (d) all students should be recognized equivalently despite differences in individual effort, and (e) hostile confrontations with school faculty are acceptable whenever a student is unsatisfied. All five of these aspects are often bemoaned at professional conferences and less formal gatherings of university faculty and staff (e.g., Benton, 2006; Gill, 2009); however, empirical investigations regarding the antecedents and consequences of AE are only beginning (Anderson, Halberstadt, & Aitken, 2013).

The current investigation examined predictors of AE for both male and female college students, with focus on the previously supported predictors of self-concept (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Greenberger et al., 2008), academic dishonesty (Greenberger et al., 2008; Menon & Sharland, 2011) and locus of control (Chowning & Campbell, 2009), plus the additional predictor of overall family functioning as a potential moderator. The next sections of this document will provide more in-depth rationale for including these study constructs.

### Literature Review

#### Self-Concept

Various elements of students' self-concept have been blamed for the seeming generational rise in AE. Self-concept refers to one's global view of the self, though it is often described as synonymous with related or precursory elements such as self-esteem and self-efficacy (Bong & Clark, 1999; Bong & Skaalvik, 2003). Some have suggested that the recent cultural push to boost students' self-esteem has created a generation of entitled students who expect adulation for modest to no effort (see Lippman, Bulanda, & Wagenaar, 2009). Blame has focused on the "self-esteem movement" that characterized primary and secondary education during the 1980s; the movement emphasized a shift in focus from correction of student mistakes to feeling good about oneself despite academic shortcomings (Stout, 2000; Twenge, 2006). Critics of the movement assert that its focus minimized academic failure and maximized self-esteem, thus encouraging poor personal responsibility for academics but great expectations for above-average grades (e.g., Colvin, 2000). However, studies linking self-esteem (belief in one's overall worth; Rosenberg, 1965) or self-efficacy (belief that one is capable of achieving a particular goal; Bandura, 1977) to AE have tended to find inverse rather than positive relationships (Boswell, 2012; Greenberger et al., 2008; see Baer & Cheromukhin, 2011, for an exception). That is,

students harboring doubt about their abilities may be most likely to exhibit AE. In such cases, AE may serve a protective function or foster a self-serving or hedonic bias (as described in Weiner, 1985) by diverting blame for failures or mediocre performance from the self to college faculty (Achacoso, 2002; Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Based on these findings and rationale, self-concept was included in the prediction of AE, with association in the negative direction anticipated.

### **Academic Dishonesty**

It makes sense that students focused on the outcomes instead of the process of college education would be willing to bypass some of the expected effort and participate in cheating, plagiarism and the like (Karlins, Hargis, & Balfour, 2012). For example, individuals who are highly entitled may believe that academically dishonest behaviors are more acceptable, given that they may increase the likelihood of academic success. This is consistent with previous research indicating that entitlement attitudes are predictive of deliberate attempts to cheat (Brown, Budzek, & Tamborski, 2009). Indeed, past research has found that college students exhibiting more AE engage in more academic dishonesty (Greenberger et al., 2008) or more tolerance of such behavior (Shapiro, 2012). Academic dishonesty, thus, was included as a predictor of AE, with a positive relationship expected.

### **Locus of Control**

As described in the section on self-concept, AE may grow out of frequent deflection of blame for poor performance to others, such as college faculty. Self-serving biases such as blame deflection are consistent with an external locus of control. That is, individuals with an external as opposed to an internal locus of control view their life circumstances as being determined by others instead of themselves (Rotter, 1966). Indeed, meta-analytic findings suggest that individuals greater in externality are significantly more likely to utilize this self-serving attribution style (Campbell & Sedikides, 1999). Not surprisingly, AE has been associated with a more external locus of control; academically entitled individuals externalize responsibility for academic success (Achacoso, 2002; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Kopp & Finney, 2013). Developing AE may be more likely in those possessing a more external locus of control because such a worldview has been linked to lower academic performance (Kirkpatrick, Stant, Downes, & Gaither, 2008) and lower confidence about the ability to personally achieve academic success (Boswell, 2012), thus calling for deflection of blame or a self-serving bias. A more external locus of control was therefore anticipated to predict AE.

### **Family Functioning**

In seeking a possible culprit for the development of AE, it appears tempting, based on informal venting sessions among college personnel, to blame parents. College-level educators easily point fingers at those who reared their students before they enrolled in a particular university (Zaslow, 2007); however, little research has addressed pre-college environmental factors as predictors of AE. As mentioned previously, some blame parents for encouraging overly inflated self-esteem and a subsequent sense of entitlement, but investigation so far has supported a different potential path to developing AE. The limited evidence addressing family factors as linked to AE has targeted specific aspects of parenting (i.e., perceived achievement pressure; see Greenberger et al., 2008). Thus far, AE appears more likely to stem from elevated emphasis on extrinsic rewards and tangible signs of achievement (i.e., awards, good grades; e.g., Schaefer et al., 2013) than from overly indulgent coddling by parents. In other words, those entering college after years of only gaining praise, approval or notice when obtaining concrete markers of achievement may have come to view those markers as the whole point of education. Developmental research supports the notion that parenting focused on extrinsic rewards contributes to an extrinsic motivational orientation and lower academic performance, while parental encouragement and autonomy support predict a more intrinsic motivational style (i.e., engaging in activities for the joy of learning itself; Ginsberg & Bronstein, 1993).

Other aspects of parenting have been targeted as early contributing factors to exhibiting entitlement (not necessarily AE) in adulthood. In particular, overly involved parenting (also referred to as “helicopter parenting”) has been linked to adult entitlement (Segrin, Woszildo, Givertz, Bauer, & Murphy, 2012) and greater external locus of control (Padilla-Walker & Nelson, 2012). Parents stepping in frequently to resolve all problems for their children and adolescents may undermine self-efficacy by robbing offspring of opportunities to engage in and master skills needed for success in adulthood, including college situations. These findings bolster the argument for an association between family-of-origin characteristics and AE.

The current study, rather than focusing on specific parenting practices, included family functioning (or dysfunction) in a more general sense. Parenting practices like achievement pressure and over-involvement may reflect a more global pattern of overall family dysfunction. Any family environment lacking emotional closeness or support may encourage the development of entitlement beliefs, either directly as part of a self-serving or hedonic bias (see Weiner, 1985) or indirectly via externalizing blame and taking a

victim mentality (see Twenge, Zhang, & Im, 2004) by leaving those reared in such a family lacking value for their own potential and abilities. Feeling frustrated and powerless, students entering college from less functional family environments may be eager to seek outside culprits to blame when faced with any academic disappointment.

Family functioning additionally was suspected to interact with causality orientation (i.e., locus of control) in predicting AE. Family functioning was included as a potential moderator to allow for the possibility that a more external locus of control would be even more strongly associated with a greater sense of AE among students reared in a more dysfunctional, distant or non-supportive family environment. Likewise, students coming from more supportive or positive family environments may be less likely to develop a sense of AE even when inclined to a more external locus of control. More negative family functioning, then, was hypothesized to amplify the relationship between a more external locus of control and AE.

### Sex Differences

While past studies indicate male college students exhibit more AE than female students (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al., 2008; Greenberger et al., 2008), research has yet to address whether pathways to developing AE differ for males and females. Mean differences have repeatedly been supported, but investigation has largely stopped at testing these group differences. Differences in patterns of prediction or explanatory models have been neglected thus far. This study allowed that AE may be predicted by different factors in male versus female college students. The hypotheses and exploratory analyses carried out are summarized below.

### Hypotheses

1. Self-concept, academic dishonesty, locus of control, and family functioning would predict AE.
2. Family functioning would moderate the link between locus of control and AE.
3. Male college students would report higher levels of AE than female college students.

In addition to these hypotheses, this study explored potential differences in study constructs by generational status (i.e., whether at least one parent has earned a four-year college degree or not), race, and year in college. The present investigation additionally explored possible sex differences in the pattern of results for hypotheses 1 and 2.

## Method

### Participants

The convenience sample consisted of 401 college undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology classes at a public university in the southern United States. Class sections ranged from 40 to 100 students and included a mixture of online and traditional classes. Out of the full sample, 398 participants' data were complete on all proposed predictor variables and were included in statistical analyses. For exploratory analyses, 392 participants completed all relevant sections completely. Data were missing because of skipped items and sections. Sample demographics are summarized in Table 1. For primary analyses, participants included 188 males (47.40%) and 209 females (52.60%). The average age was 20.01 years ( $SD = 3.86$ ). The sample was predominantly White (56.60%) with 18.70% African American, 5% Asian, 5% Hispanic or Latino, and 4% Native American, Aleut, or Aboriginal peoples. One hundred ninety-two (47.09%) participants reported having a parent with a four-year college degree. The Institutional Review Board reviewed and approved this study.

### Measures

**Demographic information.** Participants completed questions regarding their sex, race, age in years, and whether at least one parent had earned a four-year college degree.

**Self-concept.** Multiple survey measures were employed to assess aspects of self-concept relevant to the college experience. The Rosenberg self-esteem scale (1965) is one of the most widely used measures of self-esteem in behavioral research. This self-report measure includes 10 items rated on a Likert scale ranging from 0 (strongly disagree) to 3 (strongly agree) with a maximum score of 30 possible and with higher scores indicating higher self-esteem. Half of the items require reverse scoring before calculating the final score. Sample items include, "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure," and, "I am able to do things as well as most other people." The Rosenberg self-esteem scale has exhibited good internal consistency and adequate test-retest reliability (Robins, Hendin, & Trzesniewski, 2001; Schmitt & Allik, 2005). In the current study, the Rosenberg self-esteem scale exhibited strong inter-item reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .88$ ).

The general self-efficacy scale (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995) was created to assess a general sense of perceived self-efficacy with a goal of predicting coping with daily hassles and adapting to a variety of

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics for Study Constructs*

Measures	Mean	SD
1. Academic entitlement (AE)	41.93	12.46
2. Self-concept	105.22	18.23
3. Academic dishonesty	1.19	1.64
4. Locus of control	64.08	8.47
5. Family functioning	137.42	29.11

stressful events. This self-report scale is composed of 10 items rated on a 4-point Likert scale with no reverse scoring (1 = not at all true, 2 = somewhat true, 3 = moderately true, 4 = exactly true), yielding a maximum possible total score of 40. Higher scores are indicative of higher general self-efficacy. This scale was designed to assess perceived self-efficacy, or the optimistic self-belief that one can perform unfamiliar or difficult tasks or cope with hardship. Sample items include, "It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals," and, "I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort." Previous studies utilizing the General Self-Efficacy Scale have reported internal consistency, as measured with Cronbach's alpha from .76 to .90 (e.g., Luszczynska, Scholz, & Schwarzer, 2005). In this sample, Cronbach's alpha was .86.

The course self-efficacy subscale of the college self-efficacy inventory (Solberg, O'Brien, Villarreal, Kennel, & Davis, 1993) also was included in creating the composite construct of self-concept. The course self-efficacy subscale assesses perceived confidence in one's ability to successfully perform tasks necessary for college course success (i.e., researching a term paper or keeping up to date with schoolwork) using a 7-item, 10-point (1 = not at all confident to 10 = extremely confident) Likert-type scale. That is, higher scores indicate more confidence that the respondent can handle and master the tasks required in college-level courses. The course self-efficacy subscale has previously demonstrated adequate internal consistency (Boswell, 2012; Soldberg & Villarreal, 1997). Cronbach's alpha was .86 for the current sample.

Because of considerable theoretical similarity and statistically significant bivariate correlations among Rosenberg self-esteem scale, general self-efficacy scale, and course self-efficacy scores ( $p < .01$ ), the final composite score for self-concept was computed by summing the total scores for the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, general self-efficacy scale, and course self-efficacy subscale ( $M = 105.22$ ,  $SD = 18.23$ ).

**Academic dishonesty.** The degree to which participants had engaged in cheating, plagiarism, and

similar behaviors was assessed with nine items from the academic dishonesty assessment (Watson & Sottile, 2010). The yes/no items describe specific acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., submitting others' work as one's own, using instant messaging through a cell phone, or handheld device during a quiz or exam) and two more general items address whether the respondent has cheated or has been caught cheating. Items were scored such that an answer of "no" was coded as 0 and "yes" was coded as 1. Inter-item reliability for this scale was adequate in the current sample (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .74$ ). The final academic dishonesty score was computed by summing all items ( $M = 1.19$ ;  $SD = 1.63$ ).

**Locus of control.** The degree to which participants reported an internal locus of control was assessed using 20 items available from the international personality item pool (Goldberg et al., 2006). Items were scored on a 4-point (1 = strongly disagree to 4 = strongly agree) Likert-type scale with a mixture of positively- and negatively-scored items. Sample items include, "I believe that my success depends on ability rather than luck," and, "I believe that the world is controlled by a few powerful people." The items were scored and totaled such that a higher score reflected a more internal locus of control ( $M = 64.08$ ;  $SD = 8.47$ ). Inter-item reliability for this scale in the present study was strong (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ).

**Family functioning.** General quality of family functioning during childhood and adolescence was assessed retrospectively with the family-of-origin scale (Hovestadt, Anderson, Piercy, Cochran, & Fine, 1985). The 40-item self-report instrument measures global perception of family health using a 5-point (1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree) Likert-type scale. It contains a mixture of positively- and negatively-scaled items. Sample items include, "Differences of opinion in my family were discouraged," and, "I found it easy to understand what other family members said and how they felt." Items were scored and tallied such that higher total scores indicated a more positive or healthy view of family

functioning while being raised ( $M = 137.42$ ;  $SD = 29.11$ ). The family-of-origin scale has repeatedly demonstrated adequate to good reliability (see Manley, Wood, Searight, Skitka, & Russo, 1994). In this study, Cronbach's alpha was .97, indicating strong inter-item reliability.

**Academic entitlement.** AE was assessed using the academic entitlement scale (Chowning & Campbell, 2009), a 15-item instrument answered on a 7-point (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree) Likert-type scale. Sample items include, "I should never receive a zero on an assignment that I turned in," and, "My professors are obligated to help me prepare for exams." Two items require reverse scoring, and higher scores indicate a greater degree of feeling owed good grades and achievements regardless of work or performance ( $M = 41.93$ ;  $SD = 12.46$ ). As with previous studies (e.g., Boswell, 2012) inter-item reliability for the AE Scale was high for this sample (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .81$ ).

### Procedure

Data collection occurred online. Students received course credit for participation. Participants accessed the questionnaire via a weblink posted by the primary investigator on the psychology department's participant recruitment site. They were required to complete the survey in one session. Instructions stated that participants were allowed to skip any items with which they felt uncomfortable.

### Results

Analyses proceeded in several steps. First, sex differences in construct means were examined with one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Results are summarized in Table 2. Males reported statistically significantly higher levels of AE [ $F(1,396) = 26.09$ ;  $p < .01$ ]; this result supported the study's third hypothesis. Males also reported significantly less internal locus of control or a more external locus of control [ $F(1,394) = 8.37$ ;  $p < .01$ ]. Next, students who had at least one parent earning a four-year college degree or higher were compared on study constructs to those who did not have a parent earning a four-year college degree or higher (see Table 2). The only difference detected involved locus of control, such that participants with at least one parent having earned a college degree ( $n = 191$ ) reported a significantly less internal locus of control or a more external locus of control. ANOVA also was used for comparisons by race and year in college, but no significant differences emerged in these analyses.

Next, relationships among study constructs were examined with bivariate correlational analysis (see Table 3 for summary of results). Self-concept ( $r = -.28$ ), academic dishonesty ( $r = .23$ ), and family functioning's

( $r = -.20$ ) relationships with AE had small-to-moderate effect sizes; the relationship between AE and locus of control ( $r = -.38$ ) had a moderate effect size (Cohen, 1988). As anticipated, AE was statistically significantly ( $p < .01$ ) correlated with all proposed predictors and in expected directions, provided preliminary support for the first hypothesis.

Finally, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to predict AE from self-concept, academic dishonesty, locus of control, family functioning, and the interaction between locus of control and family functioning. The assumptions of normally distributed residuals, linearity, lack of multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were all examined, and analyses revealed no evidence for violation of these assumptions. All predictors, with the exception of the interaction term, were centered in that the mean for each predictor was subtracted from the individual scores. Centering yielded means of zero, and individual centered scores reflected distance from the mean. Multiple regression analysis proceeded in two steps. The first step included all individual or simple predictors. The second step added the interaction term. Results are summarized in Table 4. In the first step, all predictors but self-concept were significant. In the full model including the interaction term, hypotheses were partially supported, with academic dishonesty ( $\beta = .21$ ;  $p < .01$ ) but not self-concept ( $\beta = -.04$ ) appearing as a statistically significant predictor. This was only partially consistent with the first hypothesis. However, the interaction term (locus of control X family functioning) emerged as a significant predictor ( $\beta = .11$ ;  $p < .05$ ); this finding supported the study's second hypothesis (see Figure 1 for a graph of the interaction). The  $R^2$  for the first model was .19, and only increased to .21 when the interaction term was added, indicating the full model still accounted for a fairly small amount of variance in AE.

After examining the model with the entire sample, males and females were analyzed separately to test whether patterns would be similar in both sexes. As seen in Table 4, patterns of significance were similar for self-concept and academic dishonesty, but the family functioning score was not a significant simple predictor for either sex. Moreover, the interaction between locus of control and family functioning was only statistically significant for females. Model fit for the full model including the interaction term, as indicated by  $R^2$ , was better for males ( $R^2 = .23$ ) than for females ( $R^2 = .16$ ), but still quite small.

Since self-concept did not emerge as a significant predictor of AE in any of the multiple regression models despite ample previous evidence indicating it likely would be, the investigators again conducted all analyses including the individual scales used to create the self-concept composite score. Neither the Rosenberg self-esteem scale, general self-efficacy scale, nor college self-efficacy subscale score by itself was a statistically significant predictor of AE when examined with academic dishonesty, locus of control, family functioning and the interaction term.

Table 2  
Summary of ANOVA Results

Measure	Mean (SD)		df	F
	Males	Females		
Academic entitlement	45.20 (13.16)	39.00 (11.03)	1,396	26.09 **
Self-concept	103.46 (18.96)	106.79 (17.45)	1,395	3.32
Academic dishonesty	1.31 (1.87)	1.08 (1.38)	1,394	2.02
Locus of control	62.79 (8.37)	65.23 (8.41)	1,394	8.37 **
Family functioning	136.05 (25.12)	138.65 (32.29)	1,395	.79
	Parent degree		No parent degree	
Academic entitlement	42.61 (12.01)	41.32 (12.54)	1,392	1.09
Self-concept	105.03 (16.74)	105.37 (19.65)	1,392	.04
Academic dishonesty	1.26 (1.66)	1.09 (1.58)	1,391	1.11
Locus of control	63.06 (8.41)	65.07 (8.48)	1,392	5.60 *
Family functioning	139.21 (29.29)	135.45 (29.00)	1,391	1.64

Note. \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Table 3  
Correlations Among Study Constructs

Measure	1	2	3	4	5
1. Academic entitlement	--	--	--	--	--
2. Self-concept	-.28 **	--	--	--	--
3. Academic dishonesty	.23 **	-.07	--	--	--
4. Locus of control	-.38 **	.70 **	-.09	--	--
5. Family functioning	-.20 **	.26 **	.05	.34 **	--

Note. \*\*  $p < .01$ .

Figure 1  
Interaction Between Locus of Control and Family Functioning in Predicting Academic Entitlement

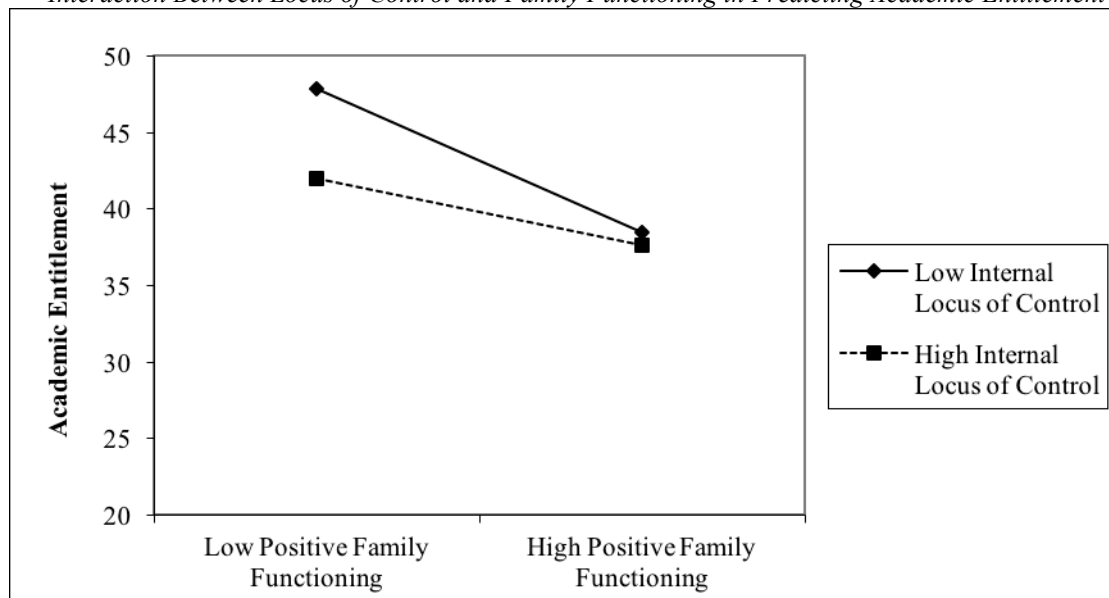


Table 4  
*Multiple Regressions Predicting Academic Entitlement*

Sample	Predictor	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$	<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>
Entire sample ( <i>N</i> = 398)	Step 1				.19
	(Constant)	41.93	.57		
	Self-concept	-.03	.04	-.04	
	Academic dishonesty	1.57	.35	.21 **	
	Locus of control	-.44	.09	-.30 **	
	Family functioning	-.04	.02	-.10 *	
	Step 2				.20
	(Constant)	41.51	.59		
	Self-concept	-.03	.04	-.04	
	Academic dishonesty	1.57	.35	.21 **	
Locus of control	-.41	.09	-.28 **		
Family functioning	-.06	.02	-.13 **		
Locus of control X family functioning	.01	.00	.11 *		
Males ( <i>n</i> = 188)	Step 1				.23
	(Constant)	44.24	.87		
	Self-concept	.02	.06	.03	
	Academic dishonesty	1.73	.46	.25 **	
	Locus of control	-.56	.14	-.35 **	
	Family functioning	-.05	.04	-.09	
	Step 2				.23
	(Constant)	43.77	.93		
	Self-concept	.02	.06	.03	
	Academic dishonesty	1.72	.46	.24 **	
Locus of control	-.54	.14	-.34 **		
Family functioning	-.06	.04	-.12		
Locus of control X family functioning	.01	.00	.09		
Females ( <i>n</i> = 210)	Step 1				.14
	(Constant)	39.57	.73		
	Self-concept	-.08	.06	-.13	
	Academic dishonesty	1.09	.53	.14 *	
	Locus of control	-.23	.13	-.18	
	Family functioning	-.04	.02	-.11	
	Step 2				.16
	(Constant)	39.15	.75		
	Self-concept	-.09	.06	-.14	
	Academic dishonesty	1.10	.52	.14 *	
Locus of control	-.19	.13	-.15		
Family functioning	-.05	.02	-.15 *		
Locus of control X family functioning	.01	.00	.15 *		

*Note.* All predictors were centered except for interaction terms. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ .

### Discussion

AE, while becoming of increasing interest to the scholarly community, remains poorly understood as a developmental outcome. In fact, potential developmental pathways explaining how an individual comes to enter college or some other educational

environment with a sense of entitlement have largely been neglected in research. Building upon the progress already made in linking AE to various individual factors and demographic characteristics, this study was designed to introduce family functioning while growing up as a potential moderator of causality orientation (i.e., locus of control) links with AE. Results of the current

investigation indicate that AE tended to be highest in students who were male, high in academic dishonesty, and had a more external locus of control. Furthermore, family functioning appeared to moderate the relationship between locus of control and AE such that those with a more external locus of control and more negative perceptions of family functioning were most likely to report high levels of AE. Female college students, in particular, exhibited this interaction.

This is not the first study to support sex differences in AE or in its development. Results are consistent with others finding significantly higher AE in males than females (Boswell, 2012; Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Ciani et al., 2008). Previous explanations for this sex difference have focused on differences in socialization, with males socialized to place greater value on success and task competence (see Boswell, 2012). This emphasis on success and status may encourage downplay of the countless struggles and commitment typically required to achieve the end result. Of course, the current findings introduced far more questions than they answered.

Consistent with the study hypotheses, AE had both significant bivariate and predictive relationships with academic dishonesty; individuals reporting greater AE tended to report greater academic dishonesty. Individuals high in AE may devalue the process of education while overvaluing its tangible outcomes, such as the transcript with a high GPA. Indeed, previous research supports this conceptualization. For example, Greenberger et al. (2008) found that individuals high in AE are characterized by an extrinsic orientation toward academics and place less emphasis on the intrinsic values of education such as learning and self-development. Those high in AE may view themselves as more deserving of academic rewards, therefore rationalizing an “ends justify the means” mentality to achieve academic success. The significant relationship between AE and academic dishonesty demonstrated in the current study is consistent with other research yielding relationships between entitlement attitudes and dishonest behaviors. For example, Davis, Wester, and King (2008) found that highly entitled psychology doctoral students were more likely to engage in ethically questionable research practices. Moreover, dishonest self-promoting behaviors have been related to similar forms of entitlement. For example, those high in victim entitlement (Zitek, Jordan, Monin, & Leach, 2010) and narcissistic entitlement (Tamborski, Brown, & Chowning, 2012) were more likely to engage in unfair behaviors designed to benefit themselves, even at the expense of others.

AE also had a significant inverse bivariate and predictive relationship with locus of control; individuals high in AE tended to report greater externality in locus of control. The externalization of responsibility for

academic success often seen in individuals high in AE (Chowning & Campbell, 2009; Kopp & Finney, 2013) may be facilitated by an external locus of control. Indeed, the belief that one’s situation and prosperity are determined by others (e.g., external locus of control; Rotter, 1966) is certainly consistent with the belief that others are responsible for one’s academic success. Externality facilitates a self-serving bias or hedonic bias in which individuals deflect blame for perceived failure and is also associated with a victim mentality (Twenge et al., 2004; Weiner, 1985). Following an undesirable academic outcome, students may perceive themselves as the victim of an unfair grading policy and believe they are entitled to more favorable academic rewards. This is supported by previous findings that induction of a victim mentality increases entitlement attitudes (Zitek et al., 2010).

In partial support of the first study hypothesis, AE was inversely related to self-concept at the bivariate level; however, once the effects of academic dishonesty, locus of control and family functioning were controlled for, self-concept no longer explained a significant proportion of AE. The significant inverse bivariate relationship between AE and self-concept suggests that the self may be protected by entitlement attitudes following perceived failure. However, the loss of its significant relationship once controlling for the effect of other study variables suggests that self-concept’s relationship with AE is not a direct one and may be explained by other individual differences such as locus of control.

The most novel element of this study was the inclusion of family functioning as a potential moderator of the link between causality orientation (i.e., locus of control) and AE. Our results are consistent with prior studies demonstrating greater external locus of control in children and adolescents reared in more dysfunctional family environments (involving divorce and father absence) and more internal locus of control when experiencing family environments characterized by warmth, protectiveness, consistency and attentiveness (see Twenge et al., 2004 for a review of these studies). Basically, children reared in less predictable or supportive homes appear to feel less in control of their own destinies, perhaps including their academic trajectories. The current findings suggest that more negative family functioning strengthened the link between external locus of control and development of AE, meriting further investigation going beyond simple or direct relationships.

Furthermore, conducting separate regression analyses for males and females produced slightly different patterns of results, with family functioning serving as a statistically significant moderator for females only. Specifically, those female undergraduates recalling a more negative family



environment and expressing a more external locus of control were most likely to display AE. Lack of support, or at least lack of perceived support, from family members combined with lack of ownership of one's own accomplishments may facilitate deflection of blame and avoidance of self-awareness (consistent with a self-serving or hedonic bias; see Baer & Cheryomukhin, 2011 and Weiner, 1985) such that a victim mentality ensues (see Twenge, et al., 2004) and educators become obvious targets for hostility when academic performance fall short of goals.

Finding different patterns of prediction for males and females sparks questions about the role of family interactions in development of causality orientation and whether there are sex differences in the importance of family functioning in how offspring come to view their place in their own environments. Since replication and further research is certainly warranted, we can merely speculate how AE in males may grow out of personal factors and attitudes toward education with little connection to how they perceive their own family functioning. Females' potential for developing AE may depend more on a combination of individual factors and environmental qualities such as support and openness experienced within their home environment as attitudes toward education take shape. Without continuing research incorporating complex models of prediction, only conjecture is possible.

#### Limitations and Future Directions

While these preliminary results support the notion of separate pathways to the development of AE for males and females, more research with different samples, measures, analysis, and design is clearly needed. Model fit was rather low for the regression analyses, suggesting that predictors explaining more of the variance in AE were left out of the current study. Future investigators of the predictors of AE should strive to identify these other predictors. Likely candidates would be intrinsic versus extrinsic motivation, other individual factors, identity development status and different measures of parenting and family environment.

An additional limitation of the current study was the use of convenience sampling. Our sample was recruited exclusively from one public university in the southern United States. Moreover, the participants in the sample predominantly identified as White, potentially limiting generalizability to more ethnically diverse college groups. Future research should aim for a sample with greater diversity of racial and ethnic identity, as well as university location and university type (e.g., public, private, four-year, post-graduate).

Importantly, family functioning was assessed retrospectively rather than concurrently. To date, little to no research has tracked the development of AE longitudinally. The present study's findings would be strengthened

considerably if corroborated by such prospective studies beginning in childhood or adolescence and continuing across the transition to higher education. Such investigations would better address the following questions:

1. When do AE beliefs first appear?
2. When do AE beliefs relate to problems in academic, social and other domains?
3. Do parents tend to socialize sons differently than daughters in a manner conducive to development of entitlement beliefs?
4. Do specific parenting behaviors predict the development of AE, and do such behaviors predict development of AE similarly for boys and girls?

These suggested questions are merely a sampling of the problems that could be tackled with longitudinal research on AE. Prospective studies are more complicated and difficult to carry out, but progressing forward in understanding or even preventing this characteristic that so exasperates college faculty in diverse geographic areas will stall without these more intensive research designs.

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