



Academic entitlement decreases engagement in and out of the classroom and increases classroom incivility attitudes

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Abstract

Previous research has indicated that academic entitlement can serve as a barrier between students and the benefits of a university education. As entitled students function as consumers and externalize responsibility for their learning outcomes, they risk lower grades and anti-intellectualism attitudes. This study explored how academic entitlement can be damaging to the student via engagement and social interaction deficits, as well as to faculty and the university at large through a lack of civility and appropriate classroom behaviors. One hundred ninety-seven undergraduate students completed scales on academic entitlement, student and schoolwork engagement, social adjustment to college, emotion regulation, plagiarism attitudes, classroom citizenship, and classroom incivility behaviors. Increased academic entitlement was associated with decreased engagement in and out of the classroom; poor social adjustment to university; poor academic emotion regulation strategies; a lack of appropriate classroom behaviors; and a greater acceptance of plagiarism, academic dishonesty, and incivility. Future research exploring how academic entitlement decreases university affiliation, commitment, and retention is recommended.

Keywords Academic entitlement · Student engagement · Classroom incivility · Student incivility · Anti-intellectualism

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1 Introduction

The rise of academic entitlement (AE) started as a line of research into the behaviors of millennial students (Trzesniewski et al., 2008), defined by the Pew Research Center as those born between 1981 and 1996 (Dimock, 2019). This line of investigation has now carried over to other generations (e.g., Generation Z in Fletcher et al., 2020) that more accurately represent the current cohort of traditional-age undergraduate students. An investigation by Keener (2020) revealed that individuals of the millennial generation, as compared to their nonmillennial counterparts, are susceptible to attitudes consistent with AE, as well as other related variables (e.g., narcissism, a lack of self-esteem, and lower levels of gratitude).

Chowning and Campbell (2009) provide a clear and concise definition of AE: "...the tendency to possess an expectation of academic success without taking personal responsibility for achieving that success" (p. 982). Jackson et al. (2020) define AE as the "tendency for students to expect unearned academic success, undeserved academic services, and/or unrealistic academic accommodations" (n.p.). Moreover, Edgar et al. (2020) point out that college students, regardless of year in school, tend to believe that simply showing up to class and completing most assignments are sufficient for a favorable grade outcome. Faculty, on the other hand, largely believe that achievement and quality of work – rather than mere effort – determine students' grades. Jackson et al. (2020) further state that, since the inception of the AE construct, some consistent themes have emerged as related factors: (a) expectations for reward without achievement, (b) avoidance of personal responsibility for learning, and (c) a consumerist mentality toward higher education.

While psychological entitlement can lead to both adaptive and maladaptive behaviors, AE has typically been viewed in a negative fashion (e.g., Keener 2020). Some scholars (e.g., Heffernan & Gates 2018; Singleton-Jackson et al., 2010; Zhu & Anandahalli, 2017) present a consumerist view in their conceptualization of AE. With this lens, students possess AE if they feel entitled to the goods that come with their academic career, despite their actual performance in class. Other researchers indicate that students with high AE lack personal responsibility and accountability with regard to educational achievement outcomes (Laverghetta, 2018). As they have paid for their education in the form of tuition and associated fees, the resulting degree and grade point average (GPA) are purchased instead of earned through challenging work and skill development (Schaefer et al., 2013).

Academic entitlement is not simply psychological entitlement found in a classroom setting (Greenberger et al., 2008). Instead, AE appears to be a separate construct that is only moderately correlated with psychological entitlement and narcissism (Boswell, 2012; Kurtyilmaz, 2019). Moreover, students scoring high in AE tend to possess high achievement anxiety, and are extrinsically motivated in their work. This extrinsic motivation strategy could stem from having a greater external locus of control. Feldman et al. (1983) found that students rely on an external locus of control when failure is perceived as a greater possibility; in the AE arena specifically, researchers have noted the linkage between AE and external locus of control (e.g., Fromuth et al., 2019; Ney & Fischweicher, 2021). At the same time, having an internal, rather than external, locus of control predicts stronger academic achieve-

ment (Valdés-Cuervo et al., 2015). AE leads to a vicious cycle in which self-worth increases without an accompanying increase in new knowledge and/or skills, negatively affecting future academic performance (Kruger & Dunning, 1999).

1.1 Academic entitlement, generational values, and shifts in academic culture

One potential driving factor behind the rise of AE could be changes in family dynamics and parenting. Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015) found that, in undergraduate-level women, healthier, more adaptive interactions and dynamics in the family of origin resulted in lower AE. One consideration is the shift to the more permissive, yet overinvolved parenting strategies practiced by the parents of millennials and Generation Z. Segrin et al. (2012) noted that so-called helicopter parenting is linked to greater entitlement in adulthood. Furthermore, as permissive parents enable their children and overrespond to their needs, they may be hindering a young adult's ability to function independently, a necessary trait for college adjustment and success (Barton & Hirsch, 2016).

A study by Fletcher et al. (2020) revealed a relationship between overparenting and AE in a sample of 343 undergraduate students (mostly white and female), which was mediated by the degree to which students believed that others expected perfectionism from them. The trait of neuroticism served as a moderator in the relationship – that is, for individuals who scored higher in neuroticism, a stronger link existed between overparenting and AE. Thus, the researchers concluded, “Students with overbearing parents and anxious personality traits are at increased risk of alienating professors with entitled attitudes and behaviors” (p. 348).

AE can adversely affect both student and faculty performance measures during the student's time in a particular course. Previous research has indicated that students higher in AE need more remediation work and are less successful in their courses overall (Jeffres et al., 2014; Laverghetta, 2018) found that AE is related to anti-intellectualism; neither concept is consistent with the tenets of a liberal arts education. AE appears inconsistent with the development of a mastery goal orientation – that is, focusing not on the development of skills and growth of knowledge, but instead on external factors, such as grades, graduation, and other tangible incentives (Crone et al., 2020; Kinne et al., 2022; Kopp et al., 2011).

Consistent with the consumerism view, Crone et al. (2020) assert that many individuals currently view a university education in a transactional manner, akin to goods and services being purchased. As such, college is no longer deemed a place for exploration, growth, and personal development above all else. Crone et al. (2020) further state that university faculty focus on achievement in terms of mastery, whereas students view achievement as synonymous with completion and graduation. Morrow (1994) was arguably one of the first to recognize that higher education was shifting focus toward achievement, rather than learning. A study by Goodboy and Frisby (2014) demonstrates that students can adopt a learning orientation or grade orientation in their approach to college-level studies. These authors found that students who are more grade-oriented also tend to score higher in AE, while a learning orientation is negatively correlated with AE.

1.2 Academic entitlement and individual differences

Within the AE research domain, Bonaccio et al. (2016) found that the externalized responsibility trait predicted lower course grades. Such a trait may be a defense mechanism for students, as AE has been linked to lower self-efficacy in academic coursework (Kinne et al., 2022). Per Elias (2017), GPA is negatively correlated with AE, such that higher performing students, as measured by GPA, are less likely to endorse AE attitudes. Also correlated, according to research evidence, are self-esteem and AE (e.g., Sohr-Preston & Boswell 2015). Crone et al. (2020) surmise that possessing AE beliefs may serve as a “coping mechanism” to “protect a threatened sense of self” (p. 280).

Prior research has found that, on average, men score higher in AE than other genders (e.g., Boswell 2012; Ciani et al., 2008; Sohr-Preston & Boswell, 2015). More recent studies, however, have demonstrated that the link between gender and AE may be more inconclusive than previously thought. For example, a study by Lemke et al. (2017) employed a cross-sectional design in 2009 and 2017 to assess AE in two random samples of roughly 200 students at a small liberal arts college. The investigators found that the percentage of students meeting criteria for AE significantly decreased from 2009 to 2017 (41–27% of each sample). Furthermore, the gender difference between students identifying as male and female, which was significant in the 2009 sample, disappeared in the 2017 sample. Similarly, a study by Edgar et al. (2020) did not detect significant gender differences in their study of AE among students at a large university in the southern United States. Finally, a study of physician assistant students by Ellis et al. (2021) found higher levels of grade-related AE in students who identified as female, non-white, and in the didactic phase of their training.

A combination of AE and grade orientation was found to negatively impact student learning outcomes (Vallade et al., 2014). College courses for these students are simply a means to an end for later employment and higher earning potential (Bunce et al., 2017; Knepp, 2016) found that students who scored higher in AE were less involved inside the classroom (i.e., less participation and engagement during class), as well as outside the classroom with their assigned schoolwork. Related to grades, higher AE attitudes were predictive of lower exam scores in students who felt challenged by the course (Anderson et al., 2013). At the same time, increased AE attitudes have been associated with students’ overestimation of their expected grades (Bertl et al., 2019). Overall, AE leads to a learning orientation that negatively impacts long-term mastery and conflicts with an institution’s goals of fostering educated, well-rounded, and enlightened graduates.

1.3 Academic entitlement and classroom behavior

Students with higher AE may feel that they should be able to achieve their desired grade in a course in whatever way they have chosen to showcase competency or effort. McCabe (1992) notes that, as testing became increasingly emphasized in academic spaces, the focus shifted toward obtaining extrinsically rewarding grades, as opposed to the intrinsic value of becoming an educated person. A greater acceptance of academic cheating can result from such a mindset shift. Shapiro (2012) found

that higher entitlement was associated with a greater tolerance for cheating; students endorsed the belief that first and second cheating offenses did not require as much punishment, as compared to a greater number of cheating offenses.

In more recent research, Stiles et al. (2018) found that AE was a significant predictor of participants' self-reported cheating in college. AE was also associated with enabling cheating behavior in other students. Further, Doerr (2021) posits that the relationship between AE and academic dishonesty may be especially pronounced in college students with greater privilege. That is, students who are white, male, and/or from middle-class backgrounds have greater opportunities to cheat (e.g., via access to test banks from membership in Greek life organizations).

For teaching faculty, the rise in AE poses a potential threat to career advancement, including opportunities for promotion and tenure. Negative student perceptions can become magnified due to universities' reliance on student evaluations in faculty assessment (Burke et al., 2019; Stout, 2000) argued that institutions are to blame for this situation, as lower educational standards have resulted in students who, despite lower academic performance and achievement, still demand high grades. In a seminal study, Chowning and Campbell (2009) found that AE is related both to increased incivility and a reduction in appropriate classroom behaviors. Students scoring high in AE tend to be more uncivil in classroom settings (Kopp & Finney, 2013; Kinne et al., 2022), and may refuse to comply with course, department, or institutional policies. Combining higher AE with an external locus of control can result in students blaming their instructor for a poor grade, incomplete assignment, or other undesired outcome.

In recent years, the concept of classroom justice, based on organizational justice theory, has gained prominence in higher education research. Classroom justice refers to students' evaluations of the fairness of outcomes or procedures in an instructional context, per Chory et al. (2017). AE and justice may be closely related; in another study, higher AE scores predicted lower scores on classroom justice (Vallade et al., 2014). This relationship was significant both for procedural justice related to the course policies and procedures, as well as distributive justice related to students' perceptions of fairness in grading (Kinne et al., 2022; Knepp, 2016) found an association between increased student AE and increased perceptions of faculty incivility behaviors in the classroom. Moreover, a review of previous research by Cassidy et al. (2016) noted that student incivility can function as a form of contra-power harassment (i.e., harassment or abuse from students toward faculty) and can occur in all facets of faculty life. Finally, a study conducted by Jiang et al. (2017) found that higher student AE was related to increased reporting of uncivil behaviors by instructors.

1.4 Rationale for current study

According to Zare (2021), the existence of AE can lead to “adverse effects on both students and instructors, influence the teaching effectiveness and the learning experience, and threaten academic integrity and quality” (p. 1). As such, understanding and mitigating AE in educational settings is a crucial component of improving the academic experience for all stakeholders involved. As noted above, much of the AE literature has been conducted with millennial generation students, many of whom

completed their undergraduate education nearly 2 decades ago. Experiences of traditional-age students in academia may have shifted since other AE studies were conducted. Thus, the current study provides insight into AE and its related variables in a younger cohort of college learners.

When AE is present at the student level, such attitudes may adversely impact learners' perceptions of faculty. In turn, these negative views can have repercussions on the retention, promotion, tenure offers, or other experiences of university faculty members, particularly those who depend on strong teaching evaluations for career advancement. With additional knowledge about the underpinnings and prevalence of AE and its associated factors, administrators can take this information into account when making faculty retention or promotion decisions.

As Turnipseed and Cohen (2015) state, students – particularly those scoring high in narcissism – may become aggressive toward faculty when faced with a low grade or other perceived obstacle. Many faculty are not trained in conflict management, and as stated previously, untenured and less experienced faculty may be concerned about negative end-of-term teaching evaluations. For these and other reasons, faculty may be more likely to acquiesce when confronted with entitled, uncivil student behaviors and expectations. In turn, instructors' acquiescence reinforces the students' entitled and uncivil behaviors. This cycle compounds the problem of AE, and makes it a systemic, far-reaching issue across the higher education landscape, rather than an isolated event between a particular student and faculty member.

Moreover, particularly with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, many colleges and universities have struggled with student recruitment and retention. At the same time, students have struggled with mental health, wellness, and a sense of belonging (Browning et al., 2021; Swani et al., 2022). Additional insight into the factors that may correlate with AE, including university engagement and adjustment to college, could provide benefits to higher education institutions seeking data-driven methods to implement a more positive student experience on their campuses.

1.5 Hypotheses

Taking the findings and implications of the prior investigations described above into consideration, the research team of the current study developed the following hypotheses to guide this project. First, it was our expectation that increased AE would relate to decreased work both in and out of the classroom (Hypothesis 1a). Additionally, Hypothesis 1b predicted that increased AE would result in lower student and school-work engagement. This would replicate the findings of Knepp (2016). It was also expected that increased AE would predict greater ability uncertainty, as entitled students would not be expanding their academic skill sets (Hypothesis 1c).

Furthermore, we anticipated that AE would relate to weaker social skills and interactions while at the university (Hypothesis 2a). It was further expected that increased AE would predict decreased social adjustment to college (Hypothesis 2b), lower academic context scores (Hypothesis 2c), and the use of poor academic emotion regulation strategies (Hypothesis 2d). The final hypothesis was that students scoring higher in AE would report attitudes that were more accepting of a negative classroom environment (Hypothesis 3a). It was expected that students with higher AE scores would

be less likely to perform citizenship behaviors in the classroom (Hypothesis 3b) and more likely to endorse uncivil behaviors in the learning environment (Hypothesis 3c).

2 Methods

2.1 Participants

One hundred eighty-two undergraduate students at a small midwestern university, situated in a city of less than 22,000 people, participated in a study about classroom thoughts and behaviors. The sample was predominantly women (76.4%) with an average age of 19.38 years ($SD=1.20$). Students were able to earn extra credit in the course of their choosing through research participation within the SONA system. There were no additional exclusionary criteria for the study, apart from the age requirement; as such, students under age 18 were not able to participate. Any undergraduate who met the age requirement and was enrolled in a course offering extra credit was eligible to participate in the current study. All collection and analysis methods were approved by the university's Institutional Review Board in advance of the research, under protocol number 695.

2.2 Materials

2.2.1 Ability Uncertainty Scale

The Ability Uncertainty Scale is a 12-item measure with scores along a 6-point scale (1=strongly disagree; 6=strongly agree; Lewis & Hodges 2015). One sample question is "I worry my abilities aren't good enough to do well in my major." Lewis and Hodges (2015) found strong reliability for the items on the scale ($\alpha=0.91$). Higher scores on the Ability Uncertainty Scale were related to lower social belonging, domain motivation, and intent to persist in one's major. In the current study, the internal consistency was $\alpha=0.92$.

2.2.2 Academic Context Evaluation Questionnaire

The Academic Context Evaluation Questionnaire examines student beliefs about their education and relationships with the faculty at their university (Rubio-Valdehita et al., 2014). This questionnaire consists of 28 items and utilizes a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree). A sample item from the questionnaire is "I believe the grades I've received so far are unfair." Rubio-Valdehita et al. (2014) found good reliability for the full scale ($\alpha=0.76$). Lower scores on the scale are related to greater feelings of overload and poorer academic performance. In the present study, the scale reliability was $\alpha=0.93$.

2.2.3 Academic Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

The Academic Emotion Regulation Questionnaire contains eight unique subscales across 37 items. The subscales each pertain to a different regulation strategy: (a) situation selection, (b) developing competences, (c) redirecting attention, (d) reappraisal, (e) suppression, (f) respiration, (g) venting, and (h) social support (Burić et al., 2016). The scale uses a 5-point Likert response scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). One sample item is “When I become very angry in school, I vent my rage on others.” In Burić et al.’s (2016) work, Cronbach’s alpha values ranged across the subscales from 0.63 to 0.85. Within the current study, the scale reliability ranged from $\alpha=0.67$ to 0.87.

2.2.4 Academic Entitlement Scale

The Academic Entitlement Scale is a 15-item measure consisting of two subscales: (a) externalized responsibility and (b) entitled expectations (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). The Academic Entitlement Scale is scored using a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). A sample question from the scale is “My professors are obligated to help me prepare for exams.” Reliability for the externalized responsibility subscale ($\alpha=0.81$) was stronger than that of the entitlement expectations subscale ($\alpha=0.62$). The internal consistency of the full scale in the present study was similar to that of the entitled responsibility scale in the initial study ($\alpha=0.68$).

2.2.5 Attitude Toward Classroom In/Civility Scale

This scale measures student opinions regarding 10 incivility behaviors that can occur in the classroom. The questionnaire features two subscales: (a) unintentional and (b) intentional (Farrell et al., 2016). The measure is scored using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = definitely wrong; 5 = definitely okay). A sample incivility item is “Making fun of a classmate who answered a question wrong.” Both subscales had good reliability in the initial study ($\alpha=0.83$ to 0.87). The reliability in the current study was $\alpha=0.74$ to 0.93.

2.2.6 Attitude Towards Plagiarism Scale

The Attitude Towards Plagiarism Scale measures students’ opinions on cheating with the use of a 7-item scale (Puga, 2014). Two of the seven items are used as filler, with the remaining items scored on a Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree). A sample item is “Everybody plagiarizes; it is not a serious fault.” The scale had acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha=0.74$), and within the original study, more than half of the sample admitted that they had plagiarized before. The scale reliability in the current study was $\alpha=0.64$.

2.2.7 Classroom Citizenship Behavior Scale

The Classroom Citizenship Behavior Scale contains 23 items and is scored using a 5-point Likert scale (0=never; 4=very often; Myers et al., 2016). The full scale consists of three subscales: involvement, affiliation, and courtesy. Sample questions from each subscale include “I raise my hand,” “I participate in study groups,” and “I throw away trash to keep the classroom clean.” Previous research noted that the subscales had a range of reliability values, from acceptable for the courtesy scale ($\alpha=0.65$) to strong for the affiliation ($\alpha=0.78$) and involvement ($\alpha=0.78$) scales. The internal consistency for the three scales in the current study ranged from $\alpha=0.71$ (courtesy) to $\alpha=0.92$ (affiliation).

2.2.8 Schoolwork Engagement Inventory

While this scale was originally developed for use with high school student samples, the questions themselves are relevant to a young adult, college-aged sample (Tuominen-Soini & Salmela-Aro, 2014). Items included are “My schoolwork inspires me” and “I feel happy when I am working intensively at school.” The Schoolwork Engagement Inventory uses an 8-point rating scale (0=never; 7=daily). The three subscales had good internal reliability ($\alpha=0.80$ to 0.87) and the full scale has been shown to be reliable as well ($\alpha=0.94$; Salmela-Aro & Upadaya 2012). The full scale in this study had strong internal reliability, similar to that of previous research ($\alpha=0.92$).

2.2.9 Social Adjustment to College Scale

This 11-item scale measures how students feel they are adjusting to the college environment using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree; Gray et al., 2013). A sample item is “I am pleased with my decision to attend this college.” Gray et al. (2013) found good internal consistency with this scale ($\alpha=0.87$). Within the current study, the internal consistency for this scale was strong ($\alpha=0.90$).

2.2.10 Student Engagement Questionnaire

The Student Engagement Questionnaire is a 22-item questionnaire with four subscales: agentic, behavioral, emotional, and cognitive (Reeve & Tseng, 2011). The questionnaire is scored with a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). Sample items are as follows: “I let my teacher know what I’m interested in” and “I listen carefully in class.” Previous research has found that each subscale in the questionnaire had good to strong internal reliability ($\alpha=0.78$ to 0.94 ; Reeve & Tseng 2011). The various subscales on the Student Engagement Questionnaire were also correlated with perceived autonomy, competence, achievement, and relatedness. The scale had strong internal reliability in the current sample ($\alpha=0.91$).

2.2.11 Procedure

Students were made aware of the study through the SONA research system, which was used to register for participation. On the SONA system, the study was generally described as an experiment on classroom thoughts and expectations. The informed consent document indicated that the purpose was to examine how student political ideology, upbringing, and thoughts about education can interact to influence the many ways that students relate to the university and the classroom experience. There was no direct notice before participation about the focus on academic entitlement. Following registration, participants were provided with the link to the study on the SurveyMonkey website. All questionnaires in this study were listed on a new page, with instructions at the top of each page, in the following order:

- Age/sex demographics and a lab-created student survey.
- Academic Entitlement Scale.
- Ability Uncertainty Scale.
- Classroom Citizenship Behavior Scale.
- Student Engagement Questionnaire.
- Academic Context Evaluation Questionnaire.
- Attitudes Toward Plagiarism Scale.
- Schoolwork Engagement Inventory.
- Academic Emotion Regulation Questionnaire.
- Social Adjustment to College Scale.
- Attitude Toward Classroom In/Civility Scale.

Data collection proceeded for the duration of 1 full academic year.

3 Results

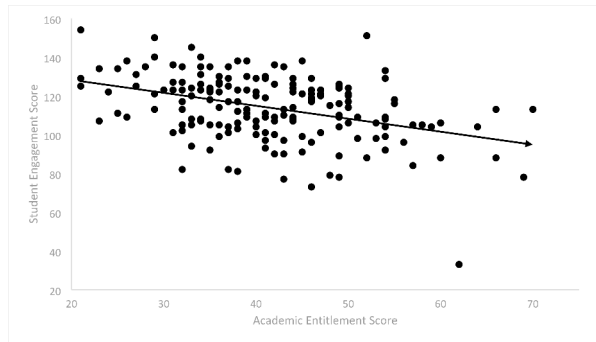
3.1 Data analysis

Total scores and subscale scores were compiled for all scales except the Academic Emotion Regulation Questionnaire, which does not have a total scale score. Linear regression analyses were used to test the three main hypotheses and their subcategories. To control for the familywise error rate from 28 total tests, the Holm-Bonferroni method was used. This approach is less conservative than the traditional Bonferroni correction, but is considered a balance in keeping power while controlling for Type 1 error rate (Holm, 1979). In terms of effect size, r values of 0.1 (small), 0.3 (medium), and 0.5 (large) were applied as conventions, which correspond to R^2 values of 0.01, 0.09, and 0.25, respectively (Cohen, 1988).

3.2 Academic entitlement and student performance

To examine the initial hypotheses (hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c), linear regression analyses were conducted on AE and student-focused outcomes. Inside the classroom,

Fig. 1 Relationship between academic entitlement and student engagement



AE scores predicted student engagement ($R^2=0.163$, $\beta = -0.403$, $F(1, 180)=35.00$, $p<.001$). As AE increased, overall engagement scores decreased. Within the subscales, AE predicted lower behavioral engagement ($R^2=0.172$, $\beta = -0.421$, $F(1, 180)=38.69$, $p<.001$), emotional engagement ($R^2=0.208$, $\beta = -0.460$, $F(1, 180)=48.43$, $p<.001$), and cognitive engagement ($R^2=0.089$, $\beta = -0.298$, $F(1, 180)=17.58$, $p<.001$), but not agentic engagement ($R^2=0.01$, $\beta = -0.104$, $F(1, 180)=1.97$, $p=.16$). Outside of the classroom, AE scores predicted schoolwork engagement ($R^2=0.085$, $\beta = -0.292$, $F(1, 180)=16.80$, $p<.001$). As AE increased, schoolwork engagement decreased. There were similar findings across all subscales, as increased AE scores predicted decreased energy ($R^2=0.062$, $\beta = -0.248$, $F(1, 180)=11.81$, $p<.002$), dedication ($R^2=0.132$, $\beta = -0.370$, $F(1, 180)=28.48$, $p<.001$), and absorption ($R^2=0.042$, $\beta = -0.204$, $F(1, 180)=7.81$, $p<.01$). Along with lower levels of engagement, AE was predictive of ability uncertainty ($R^2=0.140$, $\beta = 0.374$, $F(1, 180)=29.32$, $p<.001$). Increased AE scores were associated with greater uncertainty in students' own skills in their major. Figure 1 shows the impact of AE on student engagement.

3.3 Academic entitlement and social skills

To investigate the second set of hypotheses (2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d), AE was examined alongside the social and emotion scales. Within the university at large, AE predicted Social Adjustment to College scale scores ($R^2=0.090$, $\beta = 0.300$, $F(1, 180)=17.81$, $p<.001$). Increased AE was related to lower self-reported adjustment. AE also predicted scores on the Academic Context Evaluation Questionnaire ($R^2=0.224$, $\beta = 0.473$, $F(1, 180)=51.88$, $p<.001$). As AE increased, students reported feeling more isolated from peers and faculty, and felt their grades were unfair. These students also reported feeling unprepared for college-level studies, and that they were struggling to handle the complexity in their academic work.

Regarding academic emotion regulation, AE was significantly related to four of the eight subscales. AE significantly predicted situation selection ($R^2=0.137$, $\beta = 0.370$, $F(1, 180)=28.46$, $p<.001$), developing competences ($R^2=0.117$, $\beta = 0.342$, $F(1, 180)=23.80$, $p<.001$), venting ($R^2=0.074$, $\beta = 0.271$, $F(1, 180)=14.28$, $p<.001$), and social support ($R^2=0.100$, $\beta = -0.317$, $F(1, 180)=20.09$, $p<.001$). In each case, increased AE resulted in the usage of less adaptive strategies, such as venting and avoidance in situation selection. At the same time, AE was associated with decreased

Fig. 2 Relationship between academic entitlement and student engagement

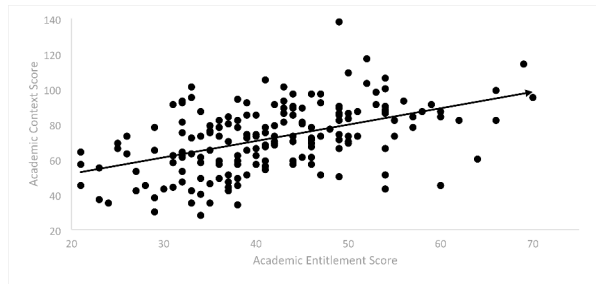
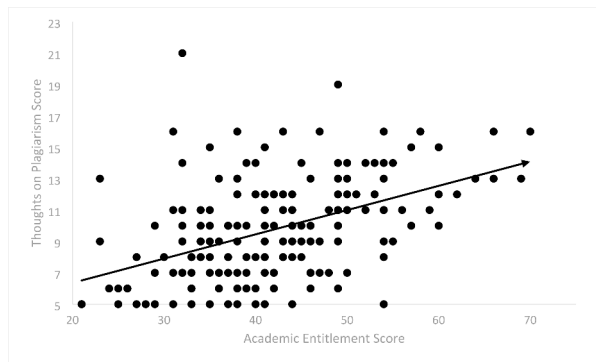


Fig. 3 Relationship between academic entitlement and thoughts on plagiarism



use of positive strategies, such as developing competences and social support. There is a trend toward significance related to the respiration subscale ($R^2=0.022$, $\beta = -0.165$, $F(1, 180)=5.05$, $p=.026$). Within the Holm-Bonferroni method, this finding was the 23rd lowest p value of the 28 total tests and required a p value lower than 0.008 to be considered a significant finding. Figure 2 displays the impact of AE on Academic Context Evaluation Questionnaire scores.

3.4 Academic entitlement and classroom behaviors

To test the final set of hypotheses (3a, 3b, and 3c), AE was examined in comparison with the scales related to classroom behaviors. AE significantly predicted classroom citizenship behaviors ($R^2=0.049$, $\beta = -0.222$, $F(1, 180)=9.33$, $p<.005$). Increased AE resulted in decreased performance of positive classroom citizenship behaviors, such as asking questions in class and showing respect toward classmates. Further analysis of the subscales found that increased AE significantly predicted decreases in the involvement ($R^2=0.07$, $\beta = -0.264$, $F(1, 180)=13.51$, $p<.001$) and courtesy scales ($R^2=0.04$, $\beta=0.217$, $F(1, 180)=8.93$, $p<.005$), but not the affiliation subscale ($R^2=0.00$, $\beta = -0.074$, $F(1, 180)=0.99$, $p=.32$). AE predicted scores on the Attitudes Toward Plagiarism Scale ($R^2=0.225$, $\beta=0.474$, $F(1, 180)=52.22$, $p<.001$). Increased AE resulted in more positive attitudes toward or justification of committing academic plagiarism.

Finally, AE predicted scores on the Attitudes Toward Classroom Incivility Scale ($R^2=0.141$, $\beta=0.376$, $F(1, 180)=29.64$, $p<.001$). Increased AE scores predicted

	AE	Student Engage	Schoolwork Engage	Ability Uncertainty	Social Adjustment	Academic Context	Classroom Citizenship	Plagiarism	Classroom Incivility
AE	1	-0.403	-0.292	0.374	-0.3	0.473	-0.222	0.474	0.376
Student Engage	-0.403	1	0.561	-0.408	0.195	-0.253	0.532	-0.23	-0.322
Schoolwork Engage	-0.292	0.561	1	-0.4	0.279	-0.269	0.356	-0.213	-0.215
Ability Uncertainty	0.374	-0.408	-0.4	1	-0.356	0.529	-0.188	0.248	0.045
Social Adjustment	-0.3	0.195	0.279	-0.356	1	-0.44	0.406	-0.2	-0.103
Academic Context	0.473	-0.253	-0.269	0.529	-0.44	1	-0.147	0.222	0.042
Classroom Citizenship	-0.222	0.532	0.356	-0.188	0.406	-0.147	1	-0.082	-0.149
Plagiarism	0.474	-0.23	-0.213	0.248	-0.2	0.222	-0.082	1	0.255
Classroom Incivility	0.376	-0.322	-0.215	0.045	-0.103	0.042	-0.149	0.255	1

Fig. 4 Correlation matrix heat map for main scale scores

greater acceptance of classroom incivility. Within the subscales, this relationship was consistent regardless of whether the uncivil acts were unintentional ($R^2=0.06$, $\beta=0.254$, $F(1, 180)=12.45$, $p<.002$) or intentional ($R^2=0.129$, $\beta=0.365$, $F(1, 180)=27.75$, $p<.001$). Figure 3 shows the relationship between AE and plagiarism attitudes. Figure 4 is a correlation matrix heat map showcasing the relationships among all the major scale scores.

4 Discussion

The first set of hypotheses in this study (hypotheses 1a and 1b) was broadly supported, in that student engagement inside the classroom and schoolwork engagement outside the classroom were negatively associated with AE. These findings lend further support to prior research (Knepp, 2016). Moreover, as was the case in Knepp (2016), agentic engagement was not related to AE in the present study; per Knepp (2016), agentic engagement is the most intentional form of student engagement, as compared to the other types. Reeve and Tseng (2011) elaborate on agentic engagement further, defining it as “the process in which students intentionally and somewhat proactively try to personalize and otherwise enrich both what is to be learned and the conditions and circumstances under which it is to be learned” (p. 258). Such a form of engagement may be unrelated to AE due to its higher-level nature; as compared to the other forms of engagement (behavioral, cognitive, and emotional), agentic engagement arguably represents a more advanced set of skills that require a self-directed learning approach to utilize. Entitled and less entitled students might be equally capable of exercising these higher-order skills.

Furthermore, hypothesis 1c was supported, as students with increased AE were more likely to report questioning their own abilities, particularly within their major. Our findings suggest that higher AE scores are more associated with detached and disconnected feelings in the classroom, lack of motivation to engage, and decreased interest in completing out-of-class work. This lack of engagement could be related to weaker skill development and ability uncertainty, and could potentially relate to lower future engagement as well. This makes sense given that higher scores on the AE scale have been related to increases on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and the Psychological Entitlement Scale, as well as decreases on the Need for Cognition scale (Chowning & Campbell, 2009). Further, as Kinne et al. (2022) note, poor educational outcomes are not the only factors associated with AE. Higher levels of AE can affect students on a personal level vis-à-vis associations with increased stress and

depression, as well as reduced self-esteem. In this way, individuals may experience the negative effects of AE long after their college careers are over.

Hypothesis a on the negative relationship between AE and weaker social skills and interactions with the university was largely supported by the data. Students with increased AE reported that they had not been socially adjusting well to college, supporting hypothesis 2b. This lack of social adjustment can relate to feelings of disconnection from the university, increased mental health concerns (as described above), and a decreased desire to engage with the academic components of the university.

The latter of these issues can be further observed in how increased AE was associated with lower academic context scores, supporting hypothesis 2c. Students reporting higher AE feel that their instructors are unfair; in addition, students are isolated from and distrustful of both faculty and peers. Of note, data in the current study were collected before the onset of the COVID-19 public health crisis. Godber and Atkins (2021) report that COVID-19 brought “extraordinary disruption” (p. 1) to colleges and universities. As noted above, there is growing anecdotal and empirical evidence from institutions of higher learning that student engagement has been adversely impacted by the pandemic (Lungu & Lungu, 2021). Therefore, a combination of entitled beliefs and the stress brought about by COVID-19 may become especially problematic for universities. Efforts aimed at alleviating feelings of apathy, burnout, and detachment from not only students, but other members of the university community as well, will likely present ongoing challenges in need of timely and creative solutions.

Students with low academic context scores may believe that college-level work is too complex, takes too long to complete, and is emotionally demanding. In our study, greater AE was associated with a negative universal view of students’ college experiences, supporting hypothesis 2d. As this finding suggests that students most vulnerable to AE tend to view the higher education experience more negatively overall, institutions of higher learning risk alienating these students or losing them altogether. Students with higher AE scores were more likely to use negative emotion regulation strategies (e.g., situation selection and venting) over positive ones (e.g., developing competencies and social support). By using situation selection, students with increased AE are disengaging from their studies as a means of coping, which could further relate to decreased engagement globally and weaker academic abilities. Students higher in AE were more likely to report a preference for venting instead of seeking help from others, which relates to the poor academic context scores and infrequent, low-quality social interactions. AE being associated with a preference for less adaptive coping strategies has the potential to impact individuals’ psychological adjustment and well-being post-college, as well as in their eventual careers.

Hypothesis a had broad support, as higher AE was associated with students being more accepting of behaviors that create a negative classroom environment. When the classroom climate becomes less civil and respectful, the learning and educational outcomes for students – not just those who are entitled – may be affected. The psychological safety of all students in the classroom – whether academically entitled or

not – may be harmed, which has the potential to disrupt the learning community and students' mastery of material. Supporting hypothesis 3b, increased AE was associated with fewer classroom citizenship behaviors being performed by the individual. Such students indicated that they were less likely to (a) raise their hands, (b) give examples of concepts under discussion in class, (c) provide positive feedback during class, and (d) volunteer to participate during class sessions generally. Hypothesis 3c was supported by results from two different scales. The relationship between AE and endorsement of plagiarism was one of the strongest relationships in the current study. Per Sohr-Preston and Boswell (2015), students who are more tolerant of these forms of academic dishonesty may endorse questionable ethical practices in other domains. For instance, in a study by Davis et al. (2008), entitled doctoral students were more likely to participate in ethically dubious practices as researchers.

Finally, increased AE was related to more accepting attitudes of classroom incivility behaviors. Increased AE was associated with more acceptance of both unintentional incivility (e.g., packing up belongings before class has ended, sending text messages during class) and intentional actions (e.g., spreading rumors, name-calling, and making fun of students who provide incorrect answers to instructors' questions). It is well-established in the higher education literature across academic disciplines that classroom incivility has been associated with a host of negative consequences for all parties involved (Strassle & Verrecchia, 2019). If left unchecked, incivility has the potential to escalate to the level of antisocial behaviors or even threats of physical violence (Spadafora et al., 2020). Uncivil behaviors can affect an individual learner, an entire class of students, faculty members, and the academy at large. Thus, any factors associated with an increase in classroom incivility are cause for concern, and stakeholders must come together to address their scope and impact.

The results from this study support previous research findings on the relationship between AE and student engagement (Knepp, 2016). Along with a lack of engagement, AE was associated with ability uncertainty and struggling in one's major. Such findings support the results of Bonaccio et al. (2016), with students placing blame externally for poor academic outcomes and lower course grades. Students with greater AE focus more on external outcomes and future job prospects, instead of goal mastery and knowledge-building within one's field of study. Therefore, these students may position themselves for weaker performance in future coursework (Kopp et al., 2011). As such, students risk failure in future courses, which in turn affects graduation ability and timing, and therefore, entry into the job market. Clearly, an external locus of control or inability to recognize one's own contributions to suboptimal academic outcomes can have deleterious impacts beyond the individual student's performance in a single course.

4.1 Limitations

The current investigation is not without its limitations regarding study design and implementation. The first limitation is a lack of objective grade scores as part of data collection. GPA was not collected, and with anonymous data collection, there was no way to examine GPA's impact as a separate post-hoc analysis. While students did

rate the degree to which they were struggling in their major on a subjective basis, we did not account for potential biases in their own thinking about grade levels. For example, are students high in AE more likely to believe that a certain grade level is “struggling” as compared with their peers? It is also unknown whether academically entitled students possess different levels of insight and self-awareness about how much they are struggling in their courses, as compared to less entitled individuals.

The second limitation is the lack of an instrument measuring retaliatory behaviors against the faculty. While the current study found that students high in AE were more likely to endorse incivility *thoughts*, there was no measure to determine if these students were conducting uncivil *behaviors* more frequently than their peers. Future research projects could delve further into the behavioral side of incivility and its relationship with AE.

4.2 Benefits and future research directions

The current investigation on AE confers several benefits. First, our study found that AE was associated with a variety of adaptive and less adaptive academic behaviors, both inside and outside the classroom. Across the study, most of these relationships were found to have medium to large effect sizes. These variables include, but are not limited to, student engagement with their institution (both within and outside of their courses), citizenship behaviors in the classroom, endorsement of academic dishonesty, a lack of civility toward instructors and peers, adjustment to university, use of healthy coping strategies, and negative perceptions of the college experience overall.

According to Kinne et al. (2022), AE has been shown to be directly related to a number of educational outcomes in both undergraduate and graduate students. As referenced previously, the possible impacts of AE are not limited to the university environment. Greater levels of AE can affect individuals on an emotional level in other aspects of their personal growth and development, as well as mental health. Thus, understanding the factors associated with academically entitled behaviors and beliefs are crucial.

Overall, AE results in negative outcomes for the student, their classmates, any faculty member with whom they have regular contact, and the university itself. Insofar as students view themselves as consumers of their university, they may feel that they are not earning the grades that have been paid for with tuition dollars. An external locus of control as related to AE can result in weaker academic performance and a greater likelihood of withdrawing from a course (Kirkpatrick et al., 2008; Ogden & Trice, 1986; Wang & Newlin, 2000). Students’ lack of self-efficacy can result in lower scores in their courses (Khan, 2013). AE may result in a boost to individuals’ self-worth only (Barton & Hirsch, 2016), without an accompanying improvement in academic skills. This can result in students feeling worthy of certain grades that they do not possess the skill set or study habits to earn.

The current research found that, beyond engagement, students are more likely to struggle socially, and show a preference for negative, uncivil behaviors within the classroom or learning community. Students with a consumerist view and greater AE will be primarily concerned with the self, while showing low concern for their instructors, leading to a desire to negotiate or argue with professors over a grade (Zhu

& Anagondahalli, 2017). For their part, faculty can feel increasingly like they are being asked to add customer service to an already full plate of job duties, which can cause conflict in their work life (Gates et al., 2015). From an emotional standpoint, Frey and Tatum (2016) highlight how parents can negatively impact a student's desire for traditional classroom instruction and delay the maturation process, thereby harming the student's social growth. Other research has noted that the consumer mentality, along with poor self-regulation, can create an attitude of academic entitlement, along with the grade haggling mindset (McLellan & Jackson, 2017).

Entitled attitudes not only affect students' own academic experiences in a negative fashion, but also the experiences of others. Students high in AE focus on their own consumerism mentality, rather than on the community-building component of the university experience. By accepting uncivil behaviors in the classroom, they can justify the harassment of faculty and other students as a means to restore power to themselves (Cassidy et al., 2016). They might then project their own incivility onto the instructor, as seen in Knepp (2016), which can result in poorer teaching evaluations. They may see plagiarism as a means to restore a lost classroom justice relationship (Vallade et al., 2014).

University instructors facing the greatest challenges with incivility and classroom disruptions tend to be younger, lower status (e.g., adjunct and junior faculty, graduate assistants), female-identifying, and members of racial and ethnic minority groups (Knepp, 2012). Such disparities then filter into the teaching evaluation system, leaving these groups of instructors at a disadvantage, and contributing to inequities within faculty ranks. Additionally, these instructors may be negatively impacted in terms of job retention, as well as decisions for tenure and promotion at liberal arts and teaching-first programs that rely heavily on student evaluation scores and comments.

While this study examined context measures that can influence how a student views their college experience, future research can explore specific issues about how AE relates to school climate, retention, attachment, and commitment to one's university. As previous research found that permissive parenting can lead to a rise in both AE and mental health concerns (Barton & Hirsch, 2016), anxiety and depression issues within this group of students should be further explored. Finally, while helpful to understand the negative impacts that AE has on academic culture, it is imperative to determine how to best reach and assist these students before they become isolated and closed off from engaging in courses and campus life.

Previous research has suggested that if the university is willing to give faculty members the skills and means to reduce AE behaviors, the institution can benefit as a whole (Cain et al., 2012). These approaches include a focus on increased student accountability through longitudinal assessments (e.g., portfolio assignments), and decreased reliance on traditional student evaluation methods. Such a paradigm shift nonetheless remains a difficult sell to university administrators, who may prefer the customer-centered approach of incorporating student evaluations into faculty continuation, tenure, and promotion decisions. However, by targeting increases in AE, the university will gain a student body that is more engaged in their work, better adjusted to campus life, and better suited to excel in their majors and potential future careers.

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Data Availability The dataset from this study, as well as regression analysis, correlation data for the heat map, and reliability files are available at: <https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/X2FSR>.

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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