

Students as Consumers of Knowledge: Are They Buying What We're Selling?

Jill A. Singleton-Jackson, Ph.D.
University of Windsor

About me and my course

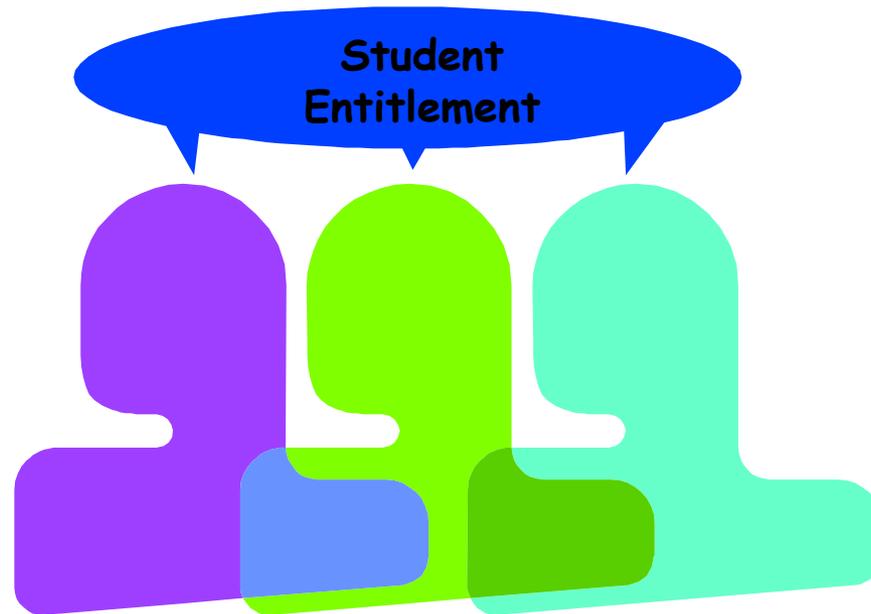
- Higher Education and psychology
 - Teaching and learning
- What I teach
 - Variety of psychology courses
 - Online course – Foundations of Academic Writing
 - Required course for first-year Faculty of Arts & Social Sciences and engineering
 - Enrolls over 2,000 students per term

Enough about me...

Let's get to know each other and engage
with this topic!

Please divide up into groups of four or five each.

- Discuss the title of this presentation.
- What does it mean to you?
- Can your group come up with a shared definition of Student Entitlement?



How I became interested in this topic

- *The Mall on a Saturday Night*
- *I'll Just Wait Then*
- *The Disneyland Approach*
- *Please Hold*

Recent publication by Ellen Greenberger
from University of California- Irvine

Greenberger, E., Lessard, J., Chen, C., & Farruggia, S.P. (2008). Self-entitled College students: Contributions of personality, parenting, and motivational Factors. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 37, 1193-1204.

The Commercialization of Higher Education – then and now

- In the past twenty-five years universities have increasingly engaged in “selling” their product to individuals and corporations (Bok, 2003).
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- Universities compete for customers much like rival retailers (Veblen, 1918).
 - 1900s – University of Chicago advertised to students and University of Pennsylvania established a “Bureau of Publicity.”
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- Will commercialization change the nature of academic institutions?

Bok, D. (2003) *Universities in the Marketplace: The Commercialization of Higher Education*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Here's how I've begun to study the topic of student entitlement:

- Focus groups to elicit qualitative responses to questions aimed at...
 - Expectations about what they will get from university
 - Expectations about professors, TAs, administrators
 - Perceptions of themselves as consumers of knowledge
- Six focus groups
 - 1 hour each
 - Total of 52 participants
 - Conducted in Fall of 2008*

* Faculty strike - 3 weeks, fall 2008

Participant Demographics

Percent	Demographic
88.5	Female
92.3	18 or 19 Years Old (Max=25)
71.2	Taking five courses
32.6	Social Sciences (17.3% Sciences)
76.9%	On campus 4 days a week or more

Participants' Reasons for Attending University

- 35.3 % Obtain a good job
- 27.5% to achieve a particular career goal (e.g., become a teacher)
- 9.8% To obtain an education or better self

What I have Found so far

- When asked what they expected from a university education
 - #1 response – “A job.”
 - “We put all our money and time into it – our receipt is our diploma; that’s what we get out of it.”
 - “An education should equal a career.”
 - “I can pass the classes – anyone and everyone can get an undergrad degree. But can I get a job?”
 - Value Meal orientation
 - “Books should be part of tuition.”
 - “Classes should be smaller.”
 - “Better buildings and prettier campus.”
 - “Parking is too expensive.”

Attendance and rounding

- When asked what just attendance should be worth
 - Passing is a minimum payoff for attending class
 - “It’s not fair to fail students in courses they need for their major .”
 - “You should get marks for just doing the work – not about quality.”
 - “You pay so much that if you are a hard worker and it’s not showing on test results you should still get credit for the course.”
- When asked about how they felt professors should handle rounding up of marks
 - Yes, absolutely yes!
 - “People pay a lot for tuition, and we can’t get that money back; we need to pass.”
 - “If someone will lose a scholarship then the prof should round up the mark.”
 - You don’t pay for marks.

Role of professors

- When asked to describe what they believed the role of professors to be
 - Professors need to be totally focused on students. We are hired experts who need to do our job.
 - “I paid for an expert.”
 - “For the time that they get off and the income they get paid, their focus should totally be us. They should do their job 110%. Don’t tell us to read chapters 3,4,5 and take notes. That’s not fair. “
 - “You have a Ph.D. in the field, don’t send me to a TA or GA.”
 - “They should tend to our needs.... but they do have 200 students. “
 - “Make us learn. Make us want to come to class. “
 - “They [profs] should devote all day to students. You get summers off.”
 - “We should get a lot more help from profs for the money we pay.”
 - “I have a great professor – he answers email immediately; he talks to us before and after class; he makes appointments all the time; he works for us!”

With regard to professors...

- Email
 - 24 isn't just a TV show
 - "Put "Important" in your subject line to highlight that you need the information right away, then they should answer you first."
- Late Assignments
 - Lighten up
 - "It should be okay to turn things in late because assignments and tests aren't about being on time, they are about knowledge shown."
- Coming late/leaving early from class
 - Don't sweat it.
 - "Not a problem to come late or leave early because we're paying for it so it's our issue (but don't be disruptive)."
- Cell phones
 - Can you take that outside?
 - "Sometimes I have to answer the call. I can't wait to leave the room to answer. Plus I get free incoming, so why should I pay to call back?"
- Office hours
 - Be there!
 - "Office hours aren't always convenient for me and then I have to do it [see the prof] on my own time."

Teaching Assistants

- When asked what they felt TAs should do for them
 - Know how to teach
 - “Speak English!”
 - “Our tuition pays for them; they should be mini-profs.”
 - “TAs should be tested to qualify to be a TA.”
 - Give us your time
 - “They need to have more office hours. If they are too busy to do this then they should not be a TA.”
 - “I have one who is great. Answers email that day; makes outside time for me; gets all the answers for me. “

Administrators

- When asked to describe what they believed the role of administrators to be
 - Waste not want not
 - “Administrators get paid too much money to do nothing.”
 - “They do nothing for us. All they care about is money “
 - “If it weren’t for students, they’d have no job. But for some reason they are higher than you.”
 - Open late and here to serve you
 - “They are here to help and they are more on our side than the professors.
 - “They do need to be more accessible because they close at 4:00.”
 - “They are so “far off” that they don’t care. They oversee profs who oversee us. They are untouchable and unreachable. The Dean should come to class.”

Shoppers or scholars?

- When asked if they perceived themselves to be customers of the university
 - We are paying and you are selling
 - “I am your salary at university.”
 - “We are buying our education.”
 - “The university treats us like customers. They see us as consumers.”
 - “The university is a company that offers a service and that service is to teach you something. Professors are the ones who do the teaching. The administrators organize the profs. I’m a client of the university.”
 - “I feel like the university is like some agency. I’m just purchasing a tutoring company. “
 - “Yes. How is this business going to run without the customer? We’re forced to buy so much, but we don’t always get the best customer service. You pay your money and then you choose to do the work or not. Pay for the product – teaching – and then go on your way and do your job. It’s like, I bought my education. Check!”

And another thing...

- A sense of desire (entitlement?) to control courses on the day-to-day level emerged
 - Set it up for me
 - “I want class to be catered to my individual learning style.”
 - “I didn’t sign up to read textbooks all day.”
 - “We should be able to vote on things for all our courses because we pay so much. Like the number of chapters on exams; when exams are held; how many papers we write. It’s fair to ask us.”
 - Exam woes
 - “They expect you to know 7 chapters for a midterm! Then you have 4 other classes and they don’t care.”
 - “I can’t have 8 chapters on a midterm because I have other things to do.”
 - “One prof gave us the exam questions ahead of time, but when you came to the exam she expected you to know so much more in depth than what she gave us. How are you supposed to do that? What do they want? Why aren’t they helping us in anyway?”
 - “No exams on weekends.”

Implications

How is this affecting higher education?

- Form groups based on your primary job (faculty, TA, administrator)

How is this affecting us?

1. Do you feel that student entitlement affects you? If so, how?
 2. What might you be doing to thwart student entitlement?
 3. What might you be doing to perpetuate student entitlement?
- * Discuss as a small group and then be prepared to share your thoughts with the room.

What can we take away from this?
How can we change the focus from
product to process?

