

Sense of entitlement in relation to academic expectations, attribution,  
failure and feelings of depression

A thesis submitted to  
the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science  
in  
Psychology  
Specialization in Neuroscience

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Canada

©2010 Evgueni Mamitchev

1\*1

Library and Archives  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*  
ISBN: 978-0-494-71590-1  
*Our file Notre référence*  
ISBN: 978-0-494-71590-1

NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protègent cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

1\*1

Canada

## **Abstract**

Sense of entitlement, which comprises an extreme manifestation of entitled and deserving attitudes, is commonly viewed as a stable and generally negative personality trait. It has been reported that that young people of the present generation (born between 1972 and 1992) express greater entitlement compared to those of previous generations, and anecdotal evidence suggests that this cohort of young individuals tends to have high or unrealistically high expectations that are sometimes difficult to attain. External attribution, (i.e., attributing the cause of the events to the external factors) which has been associated with elevated depressive symptoms, has also been found to be relatively high in young people. The present investigation examined the relations between sense of entitlement and academic expectations, attribution style, final course grades, and depressive symptoms and whether optimism moderated these relations. A sample of 146 male and female first year university students was used in the fall and a sample of 65 male and female was used in the winter term. Hierarchical regression analyses showed that sense of entitlement was positively related to general and distal academic expectations, but was not associated with proximal and specific academic expectations (e.g., grade expectations). As well, sense of entitlement was linked to high external attributions about negative life events and to the decrease in final course grades. No relation was found between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms. The implications of these findings are discussed in the context of well being and the need to limit inappropriate expectations.

## **Acknowledgement**

I wish to sincerely thank my advisor, Dr. Hymie Anisman, for his knowledge, ongoing support, guidance and encouragement throughout the project. I am very thankful to Dr. Michael Wohl for his expertise, support, assistance and accommodation. I would also like to thank Dr. Kimberly Matheson and Dr. Kim Hellemans for their valuable contribution.

I am very grateful to Natalia Lapshina, Andreena Pierre, Francesca Ruscito, Diane Sliz, Etelle Bourassa and all the lab members, who supported and helped me along the way. I am deeply thankful to my family, friends and colleagues for endless support and encouragement. Special thanks to Barbara Wexler.

## Table of content

	Page
Introduction	1
Sense of entitlement, personal goals, expectations and parenting	2
Sense of entitlement, academic stress, attribution and depression	3
False hope cycle and sense of entitlement	5
Sense of entitlement as an independent variable	6
Optimism as a moderator of effects of sense of entitlement	7
The present investigation	9
Hypotheses	10
Method	11
Participants	11
Procedure	11
Measures	13
Psychological Entitlement Scale	14
Academic Expectation Scale	14
Student Outcome Expectations Scale	15
Grade Expectations	15
Attribution (Multidimensional Locus Of Control)	16
Depressive Symptoms (Beck Depression Inventory)	17
Optimism (Life Orientation Test Revised)	17
Results	19
Initial Analyses	19

Correlations Among Variables	22
Main Analyses	24
Relationship between sense of entitlement and academic expectations moderated by optimism	24
Relationship between sense of entitlement and attribution style with optimism as a moderator	28
Relationship between sense of entitlement and final course grade with optimism as a moderator	29
Relationship between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms with optimism as a moderator	30
Discussion	33
Limitations	38
Implications	39
References	42
Appendices	52
Appendix A. Informed Consent	53
Appendix B-1. Debriefing. Session ONE	54
Appendix B-2. Debriefing. Session TWO	56
Appendix B-3. Debriefing....If you're feeling distress....	58
Appendix C-0 PES	59
Appendix C-1. Materials. Questionnaire Session One	60
Appendix C-2. Materials. Questionnaire Session Two	71
Appendix D Recruitment Notice	82

## List of Tables

Table		Page
1.	Summary of Overall Scale Descriptive Statistics	13
2.	Means, Standard Deviations and Differences Between Non-Drop Out and Drop Out Students.	19
3.	Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviations, F values, and $n^2$ for Grade Expected vs. Final in the Fall term)	20
4.	Means, Standard Deviations and Differences between Male and Female Students	21
5.	Correlations among Research Variables	23
6.	Results of regressing General Student Outcome Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	26
7.	Results of regressing Grade Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	27
8.	Results of regressing Academic Success Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	28
9.	Results of regressing Attribution due to Chance on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	30
10.	Results of regressing Final Course Grade on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	31
11.	Effects of Sense of Entitlement on Depressive Symptoms moderated by Optimism	31

## List of Figures

Figure		Pa
1.	Results of regressing General Student Outcome Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.	25
2.	Results of regressing Grade Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	27
3.	Results of regressing Final Course Grade on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	30
4.	Results of regressing Depressive Symptoms on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator	32

## Introduction

During the past three decades entitled and deserving attitudes among current generation of young people (born between 1972 and 1992) have noticeably risen in comparison to the previous generations (Campbell, 2004; Greenberger, 2008; Tzesnievski, 2008; Twenge, 2009, 2006, 2009; Twenge et. al., 2008; Twenge & Campbell. 2001, 2003). Predominantly anecdotal evidence suggests that students in this cohort who reside in North America feel they deserve higher course grades, longer paper extensions and more make-up options; expect teachers and professors to be exceptionally accommodating towards their personal circumstances and are stressed and frustrated when their expectations are not met (Greenberger, 2008; Twenge, 2006, 2009).

Deserving and entitled attitudes are commonly known as sense of entitlement (SE) defined as one's conviction that one is owed and/or entitled to more than others (Campbell, 2004; Twenge, 2006). It was previously shown that generalized SE or "the expectations of special privileges over others and special exemptions from normal social demands" (Raskin & Terry, 1988, p. 890) is often seen as a maladaptive personality trait (Campbell, 2004). It has been linked to a range of socially harmful maladaptive individual features such as greed, aggression (Baumeister, 1996; Campbell & Twenge, 2003), lack of forgiveness (Campbell, 2004), Machivellianism (McHoskey, 1995) hostility and deceitfulness (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Although evidence exists that sense of entitlement may be linked to high or unrealistically high expectations that are often hard to fulfill, this relationship has not been systematically examined by researchers in the academic context. The focus of the present study is to explore the relationship between sense of entitlement and academic expectations, academic outcomes and negative psychological outcomes such as depressive symptoms.

### **Sense of entitlement, personal goals, expectations and parenting**

Any personal goals, including academic goals, are ordinarily viewed as controllable, important and desirable (Lecci, Okun, & Karoly, 1994). Once identified as such, individuals accept their goals and begin persisting in efforts to achieve them (Erez & Kanfer, 1983). In addition, difficult and specific goals enhance performance (Locke & Latham, 1990; Mento, Steel, & Karren, 1987), as does objective and well-timed feedback (Bandura & Cervone, 1983; Becker, 1978; Strang et al., 1978). Yet, not all of the accepted, controllable, difficult and specific goals, supported by feedback, are reached.

According to a recent survey (Austin, 2002) approximately 80% of American freshmen expected to complete their studies with master's, Ph.D., M.D. or law degrees. However, less than 50% of these freshmen receive bachelor degrees, only 4% of the successful bachelor degree holders were granted a Ph.D. and just over 1% received M.D. degrees. Twenge (2009) found that between 1976 and 2000 the number of students who planned on earning a graduate degree doubled, although the number of degrees granted did not change considerably. She also found that more high school seniors presently expect to work as teachers, doctors, lawyers by the age of 30. Moreover, employers report that recent graduates have unrealistically fast job promotion and high salary expectations that weren't seen in previous generation of young employees (Leibmann-Smith, 2001; Twenge, 2006, 2009).

One of the common attributes of the current generation of young people is a belief that anything is possible (Twenge, 2006, 2009). People who are now in their twenties and thirties have repeatedly been told throughout their lives that they can be anything they desire when they grow up (Alexandra & Wilner, 2001). Researchers agree that today's young

people may be aiming too high. This, in part, may be explained by parenting practices.

Parents who have very high achievement expectations for their children and compare them with those who are more achieving may unwittingly promote emergence of entitled attitudes and inflated, unrealistically high and unstable self-esteem (Twenge & Campble, 2003).

Moreover, parents, who overindulge their children, might contribute to the formation of sense of entitlement in children through learning that they can get anything they want (Capron, 2004). Effects of these parenting practices are exacerbated if external rewards, such as monetary rewards, for high achievements are used (Deci, 1999). These effects may extend into various areas of young people's lives. Together with inflation of self-esteem, and an increase in entitled and deserving attitudes, greater external attribution is seen among North American college and university students relative to that of previous generations of students (Twenge, 2004, 2006, 2009). Furthermore, these attitudes were linked to decreased productivity and motivation, lower achievements (Twenge, 2006), and, once again, to depression (Peterson & Seligman, 1981).

### **Sense of entitlement, academic stress, attribution and depression**

Inability to achieve personal goals can have profound effects on an individual's self esteem, motivation and general psychological health (Abramson et al. 1989; Alloy et al. 1984; Lane, Jones, & Stevens, 2002; Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Peterson & Seligman, 1984; Robins, 1988, Sweeney, Anderson, & Baley, 1986). Regardless of whether people fail or succeed in achieving their personal goals they are inclined to explain to themselves the reasons why either happened. Some individuals tend to view their life events as controlled more by external forces such as chance and influence of more powerful others (external attribution), and others believe that they are actually in control (internal attribution) (Alloy et

al. 1984; Peterson & Seligman, 1981). In essence, according to attribution theory, the kind of explanation people use for their failures determines whether or not they will become depressed (Heider, 1988; Abramson, Seligman, & Teasdale, 1978; Peterson & Seligman, 1981; Seligman et al. 1979, 1984). Specifically, when a failure is viewed as global, stable and externally controlled, it will be more likely to result in depression (Kelley & Michela, 1980; Peterson & Seligman, 1984; Robins, 1988, Sweeney, Anderson & Baley, 1986).

Academic difficulties in general were found to be the most frequent causes of stress among college and university students (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987). Pressure to study, not having enough time, competition, peer pressure, and writing term papers appear to be the strongest stress contributors (Abouserie, 1994; Ainslie, 1996; Britton & Tesser, 1991; Shafer 1996). Academic stress was also linked to a range of negative outcomes including weak academic performance (Clark & Rieker, 1986; Felsten & Wilcox, 1992; Linn & Zeppa, 1984; Struthers et al. 2000), poor health (Greenberg, 1981; Lesko & Summerfield, 1989), anxiety and depression (Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987). In addition, the fact that Canadians aged 14-25 currently report high levels of depression (Patten & Juby, 2008) may, in part, be explained by the presence of academic stress. Moreover, one of the extreme outcomes of depression is suicide, which is the second leading cause of death among young adults aged 20-24 (Center for Disease Control Report, 1995). Indeed, more than a quarter of the overall population of four US universities admitted they had thought about attempting suicide, and 5% had attempted suicide. Those who attempted suicide described school-related stress and depression as the most frequent reason for this (Westefeld et al. 2005).

Students with high sense of entitlement who expect to do well in a course might be more likely to get the grade that is lower than they expected or even fail their course than do

students with low SE. It is possible that SE might be associated with attribution, depression and development of unrealistic expectations. In the present study it is proposed to examine this link as there have been no studies that examined the relationship between these variables and SE as an independent construct.

### **False hope cycle and sense of entitlement**

Polivy and Herman (2002) proposed a model that links stages of goal directed behavior, the information processing model of depression, unrealistic expectations, and failure attribution. It describes a "false hope cycle syndrome", that comprises a cycle of failures to reach the same goal on several attempts. According to the authors, initial goals may be viewed as achievable and realistic leading individuals to commit to its achievement and to feel in control of the outcomes. Previous failures may contribute to more inaccuracy in the assessment of the goal easiness and more prone to future failures (Kuhl & Helle, 1986; Polivy & Herman, 2002). For example, depressive moods associated with failures were found to impair memory capacity and other cognitive processes, such as, attention, perception, and central executive function, required for efficient planning and initiation of attainable objectives (Kuhl & Helle, 1986).

Failures to reach personal goals are also viewed as unresolved conflicts between present and ideal states consuming valuable cognitive resources (Bandura, 1990; Carver & Scheier, 1998). Usually, individuals estimate the amount of work required to reach a particular goal and are able to fine-tune their expectations and adjust their attainment strategies in accordance with the rising achievement challenges. However, such adjustments might not be as efficient in cases of certain cognitive deficiencies. During the early stage of this process (the achievement phase) some individuals may realize that it is more difficult for

them to achieve the goal than they thought. This revelation could lead to inhibition of persistence at goal, and subsequent failure and external attributions regarding this failure is often used as a rationalization or denial of failure (Armor & Taylor, 2003; Polivy & Herman, 2002). Inappropriate attribution of the outcomes and potential depressive moods associated with failure may contribute towards another attempt to reach the same goal in a similar way (Polivy & Herman, 2002). Individuals may interpret their failures so that they don't seem inevitable and may convince themselves that with few adjustments success is possible. Moreover, they may acknowledge that the goal is difficult but not impossible, and, fueled by memories of past limited successes, positive expectations and potential benefits associated with their goal achievement, they make further attempts that might ultimately turn into a cycle that is likely to continue indefinitely (Polivy & Herman, 2002). High sense of entitlement and unrealistically high academic expectations may aggravate such a cycle of hopes and failures promoting higher depression rate.

The false hope cycle model was developed based on health-related goals, such as losing weight, quitting smoking or drinking. It is likely, however, that it might be applicable in the context of achievement of important academic goals, since the similar variables are implicated. Sense of entitlement may potentially fit into the model of false hope cycle at the stage of expectations development. There have been no studies that examined relationship of SE as a part of false hope cycle. We anticipate that expectations may act as a moderator in the relationship between SE, failure, and repetitive failure.

### **Sense of entitlement as an independent variable**

Until recently, SE has been considered primarily as an attribute of narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). According to *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental*

*Disorders* (DSM-IV-TR, 2000), SE is one of the nine criteria used to diagnose NPD. It may appear outside of the diagnosis range, since a minimum of 5 items is required for NPD diagnosis to be elicited. Researchers currently view SE as either an independent concept or as a facet of NPD. Until recently entitlement was measured only as a subscale of NPI. Some researchers (Campbell, 2004; Greenberger, 2008) argued that NPI is not adequate enough tool and advancements have been made in the development of independent and more accurate measures of entitlement

Although SE was recognized as a psychological phenomenon since the early 1970s, few investigators studied the phenomenon until the last decade. A recently performed search (12/06/09) for the term a "sense of entitlement" in the LexisNexis Academic database returned more than 3000 mentions. This is far greater compared to 468 mentions in 2005, 293 in 2000 and only 114 mentions in 1995 (Greenberger, 2008) showing the increasing interest of this topic. In fact, growing advancements have been made into the structure of SE. It was commonly perceived as a unifactorial variable, but researchers now agree that SE may consist of more than one aspect and could interrelate with other self-concept structures, such as self-esteem and narcissism (Campbell, 2004).

### **Optimism as a moderator of effects of sense of entitlement**

Individuals vary in how positively they relate to the events in their lives, although, the majority tends to believe that they are more likely to experience positive events and are less likely to experience negative events regardless of the objective evidence (Carroll et al., 2006). Those, who naturally believe in more favorable outcomes and are hopeful that the good will ultimately prevail, are usually seen as optimists (Scheier & Carver, 1987; Taylor et al., 2000). Such overall positive expectancies were defined as

dispositional optimism and were related to various indices of psychological and physical health (Scheier & Carver, 1987; 1993). Dispositional optimists use coping strategies more effectively, and are healthier than pessimists (Scheier & Carver, 1992; 1993).

Dispositional optimism is a primary focus of the model of behavioral self-regulation (Carver & Scheier, 1981). It suggests that people are more likely to stay optimistic when they perceive that they can control either the outcome or its consequences. Moreover, those who expect to have control over their outcomes, believe they can act towards reaching increasingly more desired outcomes and avoid the occurrence of undesired outcomes (Carver & Scheier, 1981; Scheier & Carver, 1992; Shepperd et al., 1996). Researchers have proposed a possibility of a conceptual link between dispositional optimism and attribution style (Carver & Gaines, 1987; Scheier & Carver, 1987; Peterson & Bossio, 1991).

Both, dispositional optimism and optimistic attribution constructs have been studied independently, although dispositional optimism has received less attention than attribution style. Increasingly more studies have shown that dispositional optimism, along with being a strong predictor of physical health and general well-being, is associated with lower depressive symptoms and negative affect (Ahrens & Haaga, 1993; Andersson, 1996; Scheier, Carver & Bridges, 1994; Sweetman, Munz & Wheeler, 1993). At the same time, dispositional optimists were reported to often be unrealistically optimistic in trying to attain their personal goals and predicting their future outcomes (Carroll et al, 2006, Sweeny & Shepperd, 2007). Thus, individuals who believe that they are more deserving and entitled than others and who are unrealistically optimistic about it may be more likely to set their expectations too high. This association may exacerbate effects of sense of

entitlement on expectations creating more inaccuracy in the assessment of goal difficulty and complexity, interfere with choosing an adequate achievement strategy, and its effective management.

It was previously confirmed that overly optimistic individuals are poorly prepared for negative outcomes that might occur in the future (Carroll et al., 2006). According to a recent study, today's young people are approximately 2 to 3 times more optimistic in their personal goal assessments and in predicting its future outcomes relative to previous generations (Twenge, 2009). It is possible that in the context of academic achievement that an increase in sense of entitlement combined with an increase in overly optimistic views may lead to a higher rate of high or unrealistically high academic expectations and inadequate assessment of course difficulty. Since high or unrealistically high expectations are often hard or impossible to attain this may be linked to a higher rate of failure and depressive symptoms. Several researchers have been disputing validity of dispositional optimism due to a possible third variable confound. For example, dispositional optimism lost its predictive power in relation to depressive symptoms when the effects of neuroticism were controlled for (Boland & Cappeliez; 1997). Investigators agree that further research is needed on the predictive properties of dispositional optimism and this is another reason for inclusion of sense of entitlement into the equation.

### **The present investigation**

The present study was conducted to determine whether sense of entitlement, among other factors and independently from NPD, serves as a predictor of levels of academic expectations, academic performance, and psychological outcomes. Sense of entitlement may limit adjustment of the expectations, thus maintaining them at high level, regardless of

feedback received, which might be associated with high or unrealistic expectations. This, in turn, might be associated with low academic performance or failure. Sense of entitlement might be associated with attribution and directly or indirectly linked to the levels of depressive symptoms.

Both high optimism and sense of entitlement may be linked to the formation of high or unrealistically high expectations, and may be directly or indirectly linked to higher depressive symptoms. If optimism amplifies the effects of sense of entitlement, then highly entitled and optimistic students might have higher depressive symptoms than pessimistic students with low sense of entitlement. It is proposed to establish whether optimism moderates the relationship between sense of entitlement, and academic expectations, failure attribution, final course grades, and depressive symptoms.

### **Hypotheses**

It is hypothesized that students:

1) with high SE will have higher academic expectations and that optimism will moderate this relationship. Specifically, it is expected that students with higher levels of SE and optimism will have higher academic expectations.

2) with high SE will have lower final course grades and that optimism will moderate this relationship. It is expected that students with higher levels of SE and optimism will have lower final course grades than students with low SE.

3) with high SE will have higher external attribution and that optimism will moderate this relationship. It is expected that students with higher levels of SE and optimism will have higher external attribution than students with low SE.

4) with high SE will have higher depressive symptoms and that optimism will moderate this relationship. It is expected that students with higher levels of SE and optimism will have higher depressive symptoms than students with low SE.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

One hundred forty-six (54 males, 92 females) undergraduate students from a large Eastern Canadian University participated in the current study. They ranged in age from 17 to 30 years old ( $M = 19.34$   $SD = 2.07$ ). The majority of participants reported their ethnicity to be Caucasian ( $N = 92$ , 63.01%). The rest of the participants identified themselves as Chinese ( $N=11$ , 7.53%), Asian ( $N=12$ , 8.21%), Black ( $N=12$ , 8.21%), Filipino ( $n=2$ , 1.37%), Latin American ( $n=2$ , 1.37%), Korean ( $n=3$ , 2.05%), Aboriginal ( $n=2$ , 1.37%), and mixed ethnicity ( $n=10$ , 6.85%).

Of the original 146 people who participated in the first session, 65 (20 males, 45 females) participated in the second session. Participants who participated in both sessions ranged in age from 17 to 25 years ( $M = 19.13$ ,  $SD = 1.73$ ). The majority of participants reported their ethnicity to be Caucasian ( $N = 35$ , 53.84%). The rest of the participants identified themselves as Chinese ( $N=7$ , 10.76%), Asian ( $N=8$ , 12.30%), Black ( $N=6$ , 9.23%), Filipino ( $N=2$ , 3.07%), Latin American ( $N=1$ , 1.53%), Aboriginal ( $N=1$ , 1.53%), and mixed ethnicity ( $N=6$ , 9.23%).

### **Procedure**

The current study consisted of two sessions. The first session was held just prior to the midterm exam during the first term of an Introductory Psychology class. The second

session was held at the beginning of the second term shortly after the grades from that term's midterm were provided to the students. A single class was used to control for the professor's teaching style and difficulty of the exam.

Prior to the first session, a brief description of the study was posted on the course website. At the beginning of the experiment, participants were given instructions on how to fill out the questionnaires and an informed consent was obtained. Each participant was informed that the study would require access to their final course grades. Therefore, upon signing the consent form, participants indicated their agreement to grant permission for the principal investigators to approach their instructor for their grades. Participants' final fall course grades were obtained from the course instructor for both fall and winter terms. Final course grades were required in order to compare them with the final grades students expected to get in the middle of each term. Participants were assured that at the conclusion of the study their student identification number would be removed from the data set and replaced by a participant number code. Only the principal investigators had access to the responses and the coded information.

During both sessions, questionnaires were distributed to participants at the same time. Both sessions were held in the same auditorium. During the fall session participants were instructed to fill out a battery of the questionnaires assessing levels of entitlement, general academic and specific course grade expectations, optimism and depression. During the second session, participants were asked to complete the same battery of questionnaires and measures that assessed externality of attribution and levels of narcissism.

After each session, participants were debriefed and provided with contact information in case they wished to obtain more information about the study, had any ethical concerns, or

if they wished to seek help related to personal well-being and any other concerns related to the study. As remuneration, participants were given the option of receiving either a credit of 1% towards their final course grade (if enrolled in an Introductory Psychology course), or monetary compensation (\$10.00) for each session.

**Table 1.** Summary of Overall Scale Descriptive Statistics (Cronbach's  $\alpha$ , Range, Mean, Standard Deviations, score's average, and score's difference from the mid-point of a scale)

Name of the scale	$\alpha$	Range (low-high)	Mean( $\pm$ SD)	Mean/# of items	Difference from midpoint
Psychological Entitlement (PES)	.86	9-54	32.29 (8.98)	3.59	-.41***
Desirable Outcome Expectations	.79	9-54	32.29(8.98)	4.17	.17
Students'Outcome Expectations	.66	23-52	42.16(5.50)	2.64	.14***
Attribution Internal (LOC)	.46	-2-20	10.42 (5.46)	1.30	1.30***
Attribution Chance (LOC)	.80	-22 - 23	-1.28(9.25)	.16	-.16
Attribution Powerful Others (LOC)	.83	-2-20	-2.92(9.19)	-.37	-.37*
LOT-R	.86	6-37	23.73 (4.67)	2.37	-.63***
Optimism	.65	3-21	13.69 (2.99)	4.57	.57***
Pessimism	.70	3-21	13.90(2.66)	4.64	1.64***
Depressive Symptoms (BDI)	.87	0-44	9.93 (8.57)	.24	-1.26***

\* /is significant  $atp < .05$  \*\*\*  $t$  is significant  $atp < .001$

## Measures

Table 1 shows the Chronbach's  $\alpha$ , range, mean, and standard deviation of the conceptual scales of the study. In order for it to be accurately interpreted, each of the overall

mean of each of the scales was divided by the corresponding number of scale's items. A *t*-test was used to establish whether scales' item means were significantly different from the scales' midpoints.

**Sense of Entitlement.** The psychological entitlement scale (PES; Campbell et al., 2004) was used to measure levels of students' sense of entitlement (see Appendix A). Participants responded to a 9-item scale, e.g. "I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others". Responses to the scale items ranged between 1 (*strongly disagree*) and 7 (*strongly agree*). The items of the scale were discretely distributed among the items of other questionnaires in order to decrease the participants' awareness concerning what was being measured. Total scores were calculated, with higher scores indicating higher levels of sense of entitlement. Participants responded with overall moderately low scores on the Psychological Entitlement Scale (PES). Item's average score was significantly lower from the scale's mid - point,  $t(145) = -4.991, p < .001$ , yet still within lower moderate range (see Table 1). The scores of the scale were normally distributed,  $KS(145) = .987, p = .020$ .

**Academic expectations scale.** The academic expectations scale (AES) was created by the investigators in order to determine present levels of academic expectations among participants regarding their current course load (see Appendix A). The scale consists of 8-items, with responses ranging from 1 (*strong disagreement*) to 7 (*strong agreement*). Principal components analysis with Varimax rotation method and with Kaiser normalization was used in order assess the number of components of the scale. It revealed two main dimensions of the scale. The first dimension represented desirable outcome expectations (DOE), including such statements as "I know I will do well in University". The second

dimension represented non-desirable outcome expectations (NOE) consisting of items such as "I can't imagine ever failing an exam". Item #8 was excluded from the final analysis due to its weakening effect. Reliability analysis showed high internal consistency of DOE factor (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .79$ ) and low for NOE (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .53$ ). In general, participants reported moderate levels of desirable outcome expectations about their course. The mean item's score was not significantly different from the mid-point of the scale,  $t(145) = 1.907, p = .59$ . The test for normality showed a mild deviation,  $KS(146) = .076, p = .047$ . Square root and Log10 transformation did not improve upon normality of the scale's distribution. Thus, the raw scores were used for analyses

**Student outcome expectations.** General expectation related to students' long term academic goals, such as obtaining their degree, and expected benefits associated with these accomplishments were measured using the student outcome expectation scale (SOE; Landry, 2003) (see Appendix A). It consisted of 16 statements (e.g. "If I obtain a bachelors' degree I will get a fair shake in the job market"). Students were asked to express their opinions about each statement by stating whether they agree or disagree on a 4-item scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 4 (*strongly agree*). Descriptive analyses of the student outcome expectation scale showed that participants had overall moderately high levels of general academic expectations with the average item's score significantly higher than the mid-point of the scale,  $t(145) = 4.752, p < .001$ .

**Grade expectations.** Participants filled out a grade expectation table that was represented by a list of grades in a letter format ranging from A+ to D+ (see Appendix A). Participants were asked to check a box corresponding to their predicted final course grade. The predicted grades were further compared to the actual final course grades in

order to reveal the variety in levels of expectations. Students had overall moderately high grade expectations for their fall term.

**Attribution.** Levenson's multidimensional locus of control inventory (LOC; Levenson, 1981) was used to assess participants' external or internal attribution (see Appendix A). Students were asked to indicate on a 6-point scale the extent to which they agree or disagree with each of 24 statements. The scale measured internal control (e.g. "Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability"), powerful others (e.g. "I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people"), and chance control (e.g. "To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings") dimensions. Each of these dimensions was represented by 8 statements related to the external forces thought to be responsible for occurrence of the events in people's lives. The scale responses ranged between -3 (*strongly disagree*) to 3 (*strongly agree*) and scores for every factor were calculated by adding up the responses. Higher scores represented more external attribution beliefs and lower scores represented more internal attribution beliefs. Descriptive analysis on attribution due to chance subscales showed that the item's average was not significantly different from the mid-point of the scale, suggesting that, participants scores were overall moderate. Participants reported overall moderately high levels of internal attribution. The item's mean was significantly higher than the scale's mid-point. Overall levels of attribution due to powerful others were moderately low with the item's average significantly lower than the mid-point. All three subscales were normally distributed,  $KS(64) = .079, p = .020$ ,  $KS(64) = .089, p = .020$ , and  $KS(64) = .078, p = .020$  respectively.

**Depressive symptoms.** The extent to which participants reported experiencing depressive affect was assessed using the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI; Beck et al., 1961) (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contained 21 items of 4 to 6 statements expressing attitudes and opinions regarding various aspects of life. Statements in every group were ranging from non-depressive beliefs such as "I do not feel sad", coded "0" to statements expressing more depressive beliefs such as "I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it", coded "3". Participants were instructed to choose one of the statements in each group. Scoring for the scale was done by summing up the scores of all of the items. Scores 0 to 9 indicate that a person is not depressed, 10 to 18 indicate mild or moderate depression, 19 to 29 indicate moderate or high depression and 30 to 63 indicate severe depression. The BDI has been widely recognized as a reliable depression measure with high internal consistency. Participants reported generally low levels of depressive symptoms. An average item's mean of the scale was significantly lower than the scale's mid - point, and fell within the lowest interval. The test for normality returned significant results,  $KS(146) = .137, p < .001$ . Square root transformation was used to address the violation of normality,  $KS(146) = .066, p = .020$ . Transformed BDI scores were used for further analyses. Neither participants' age,  $F(10, 134) < 1$ , nor the reason why participants were taking the course (elective vs. required) did not yield a significant difference in the level of depressive symptoms,  $F(1, 143) < 1$ .

**Optimism.** Dispositional optimism was measured by the 10 items Life Orientation Test revised scale (LOT-R; Scheier et al., 1994; see Appendix A). Participants were asked to rate their responses on a 5-point scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 4 (*almost always*). Higher scores indicated more defined optimistic outlook, whereas lower scores pointed at more pessimistic personality. An optimism subscore was calculated summing up responses to the

items #1, 4, and 10 (e.g. "I'm always optimistic about my future"), where high scores showed high optimism. The pessimism subscore was calculated from items 3, 7, and 9 (e.g. "If something can go wrong for me, it will"). High scores on these items represented high levels of pessimism. Participants reported overall moderately low scores on the total scale with item's mean significantly lower than the scale's mid-point,  $t(145) = -16.255, p < .001$ . The item's average for both subscales was significantly higher than the mid-point,  $t(145) = 19.030, p < .001$  for optimism and  $t(145) = 22.353, p < .001$  for pessimism. Initial exploratory analyses showed mild deviation from normality for the total LOT scale,  $KS(145) = .084, p = .014$ , and the subscale of optimism,  $KS(145) = .079, p = .039$ . Strong deviation from normality was found for the subscale of pessimism  $KS(145) = .191, p < .001$ . Neither square root nor logarithmic transformation improved upon score's distribution of the scale, and thus the raw scores were used for further analyses.

## Results

### Initial Analyses

The initial analyses explored the descriptive characteristics of participants' scores on the variables of the study, including gender, age differences, and the differences between the groups of students who took part in both parts of the study and those who dropped out after the fall term and didn't complete the second part of the study in the spring term. Preliminary analyses showed that student who dropped out did not differ significantly from the students who didn't drop out on any of the psychological variables examined (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Means, Standard Deviations and Differences Between Non- Drop Out and Drop Out Students.

	<i>Non-Drop</i> <i>M(SD)</i>	<i>Drop Out</i> <i>M(SD)</i>	F
Age	19.17(1.76)	19.37 (2.26)	.307
Psychological Entitlement (PES)	32.38 (9.23)	32.92 (8.77)	.920
Desirable Outcome Expectations	21.48(5.76)	20.37(5.13)	1.516
Students' Outcome Expectations	43.03 (4.90)	41.48(5.87)	2.863
LOT-R	24.14(4.20)	23.42 (4.98)	.845
Optimism (LOT-R)	13.90 (2.39)	13.55(3.17)	.513
Pessimism (LOT-R)	13.64 (.17)	14.12(2.75)	1.183
Depressive Symptoms (BDI)	9.80 (8.66)	10.03 (8.55)	.027
Grades Expected (Fall)	77.32(1.06)	74.07 (.93)	5.340*
Grades Final (Fall)	76.47(1.55)	69.64(1.37)	7.340***

\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\*/ $p < .001$

The only significant difference between the groups was observed in the levels of expected grades and grades final. To examine whether expected grades were different from actual final course grades and whether grades of the "non drop out" group were different from those of "drop out" group, a 2 (grades: expected fall term, actual final fall, within subject) x 2 (non drop out, drop out, between subject) mixed design ANOVA was performed. The main effect of grades was significant,  $F(1, 144) = 2.90, p < .001, \eta^2 = .082$ , indicating that students generally expected significantly higher grades than their actual final course grades. The main effect varied by a significant 2-way interaction between "grade" and "drop out",  $F(1, 144) = 5.957, p = .016, \eta^2 = .040$ . In order to explore simple effects of "drop out" on the expected and final grades, data were split by the "drop out" condition, and a one-way ANOVA was run. The test revealed that in the "drop out" group expected grades were significantly higher than final grades. In the "non-drop out" group significant difference between expected and final grades was not evident (See Table 3). Students who dropped out had notably lower final grades than students who continued with the second section of the course and might have a tendency for not meeting their expectations. Even "drop outs" had significantly lower final course grades than that of "non-drop outs" only small differences in final grades were observed.

**Table 3.** *Descriptive Statistics (Mean, Standard Deviations, F values, and n for Grade Expected vs. Final in the Fall term).*

Grade Expected vs. Final Fall	Grade expected fall (%)	Grade final fall (%)	
	M (SD)	M (SD)	F      n2
Non-drop out	77.32(1.06)	76.47(1.55)	.996      .016
Drop out	74.07 (.93)	69.64(1.37)	15.775***      .163

\*\*\* $p < .001$

To test whether there was a simple effect of "drop out" on grades, two one-way ANOVA tests were conducted. The results showed that final course grades of the "non drop out" group were significantly higher than the grades of the "drop out" group,  $F(1, 144) = 7.340, p = .001$ . Students, who dropped out expected to have significantly lower grades in the fall than students who took part in both sessions of the study,  $F(1, 144) = 5.305, p = .023$  (see table 2). It was expected that "drop outs" would have lower grades than "non-drop outs", and, since there was no overall effect of dropping out on the rest of the study variables, a decision was made to collapse across the groups.

**Table 4.** Means, Standard Deviations and Differences between Male and Female Students

	<i>Male</i>	<i>Female</i>	
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	F
Age	19.19(2.03)	19.32 (2.08)	.149
Psychological Entitlement (PES)	31.54(9.00)	32.86 (8.95)	.732
Desirable Outcome Expectations	21.66(5.41)	20.45 (5.23)	1.719
Students' Outcome Expectations	41.04(6.13)	42.86 (5.04)	3.755
Grades Expected (Fall)	74.35 (9.20)	75.57 (8.56)	1.760
Attribution Internal (LOC)	10.40 (5.08)	10.43 (5.67)	.000
Attribution Chance (LOC)	-2.05 (8.91)	-.93 (9.48)	.199
Attribution Powerful Others (LOC)	-1.20(8.50)	-3.70 (9.48)	1.021
LOT-R	32.70 (5.29)	23.71 (4.27)	.000
Optimism (LOT-R)	13.72(3.36)	13.68 (2.78)	.006
Pessimism (LOT-R)	13.87 (2.79)	13.97 (2.58)	.045
Depressive Symptoms (BDI)	8.70 (9.42)	10.74 (8.00)	1.935
Grades Final (Fall)	71.11(11.71)	73.53 (13.45)	1.194

Finally, a series of one-way ANOVAs was performed on the outcome variables as a function of gender. These tests show that gender did not cause any significant variation among the variables (see Table 4). Thus, the data for males and females were pooled for further analyses.

**Correlations among variables.** As seen in Table 5, Pearson correlation analyses showed that higher sense of entitlement was associated with higher academic expectations (desired outcome expectations and student outcome expectations), attribution due to chance, and optimism, but not with depressive symptoms, grade final, and grade expected. Sense of entitlement did not correlate with internal attribution and attribution due to powerful others. This relationship was not explored in the subsequent analyses. Grade expected was positively correlated with desirable outcome expectations but had no direct relationship to sense of entitlement and student outcome expectations. Grade expected had a very strong positive correlation with final grade. The final grade was inversely related to pessimism and depressive symptoms. Greater depressive symptoms were not directly associated with higher sense of entitlement, but were positively linked to attribution due to chance as well as pessimism. Higher academic expectations, including desirable outcome expectations, student outcome expectations, and grade expectations, internal attribution, and optimism were negatively related to depressive symptoms.

**Table 5.** Correlations among Research Variables (N = 146)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Psychological Entitlement											
2 Desirable Outcome Expectations	.318**										
3 Students' Outcome Expectations	.254**	.129									
4 Grade Expected	.076	.310**	.023								
5 Attribution Internal (N = 64)	-.081	.205	-.079	.122							
6 Attribution Chance (N = 64)	.374**	-.221	.219	-.172	.046						
7 Attribution Others (N = 64)	.174	-.234	.046	-.216	.147	.675**					
8 Optimism	.281**	.425**	.142	.140	.219	.100	.003				
9 Pessimism	.004	-.320**	.045	-.303**	-.138	.256*	.257*	-.388**			
10 Depressive Symptoms	.002	-.303**	.061	-.198*	-.299*	.366**	.171	-.390**	.369**		
11 Grade Final	-.148	.133	-.105	.715**	.173	-.118	-.198	-.005	-.232**	-.196*	

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level (2-tailed).

## Main Analyses

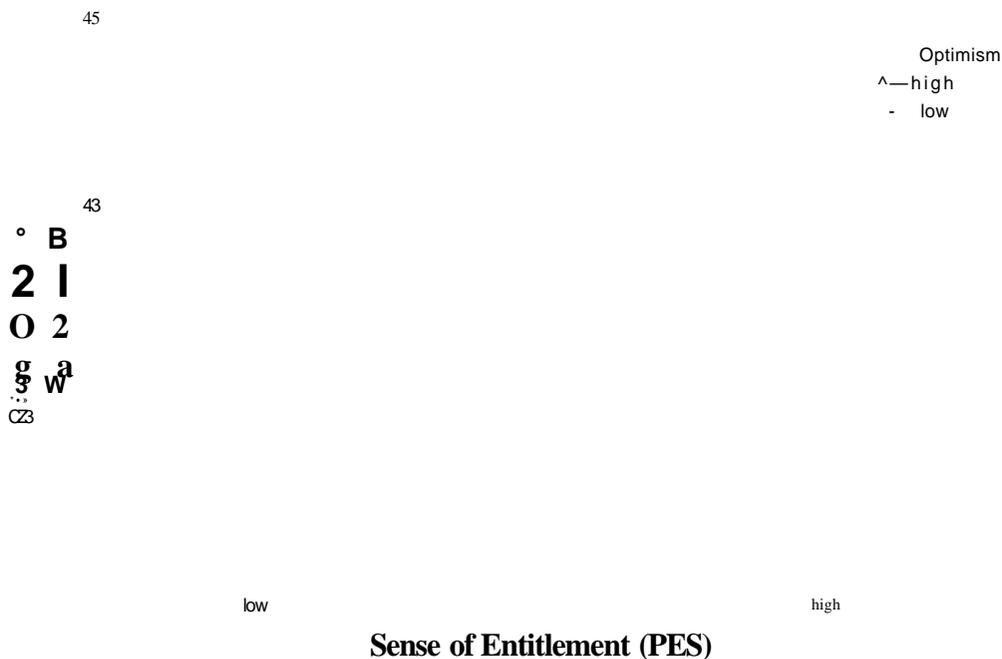
To examine a possible moderating influence of optimism on the effects of sense of entitlement a series of hierarchical regressions was conducted. Hierarchical regressions were performed on relationships between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms, expectations (student outcome expectations, desirable outcome expectations, and grade expectations), attribution style (internal, chance, and powerful others), and final course grades. All independent variables were centered. Moderating variable was created by multiplying sense of entitlement and optimism, both centered.

**Relationship between sense of entitlement and academic expectations moderated by optimism.** Three instances of academic expectations were explored: general student outcome expectations, grades expectations, and academic success expectations. Three hierarchical regressions were run where sense of entitlement was used as the main predictor, and academic expectations as an outcome variable. Optimism was used as a moderating variable for all three regressions.

***Student outcome expectations.*** When sense of entitlement was entered on the first step of the regression analysis it was found to be significantly related to academic outcome expectations,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .069$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 143) = 10.700, p = .001$  (see Table 6). As expected, increase in sense of entitlement significantly predicted increase in general academic outcome expectations. Entering optimism on step two showed that it was not a significant predictor of general academic outcome expectations,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .007$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 142) = 1.033, p = .311$ . However, the interaction of SE and optimism, entered on the third step, was significant,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .067$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 142) = 11.045, p = .001$ . As expected, optimism significantly moderated relationship between sense of entitlement

and academic outcome expectations. However, contrary to what was predicted, the expectations of students, who reported high levels of optimism, did not differ at levels of SE. Simple slope analyses revealed that increase in sense of entitlement significantly predicted increase in student outcome expectations among students with low ( $b = .26, t(1, 142) = 5.938, p < .001$ ). The biggest differences in scores on the expectations were observed among students who reported low optimism. As a result, the highest expectations were noted at high levels and the lowest at low levels of sense of entitlement (see Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** Results of regressing General Student Outcome Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.



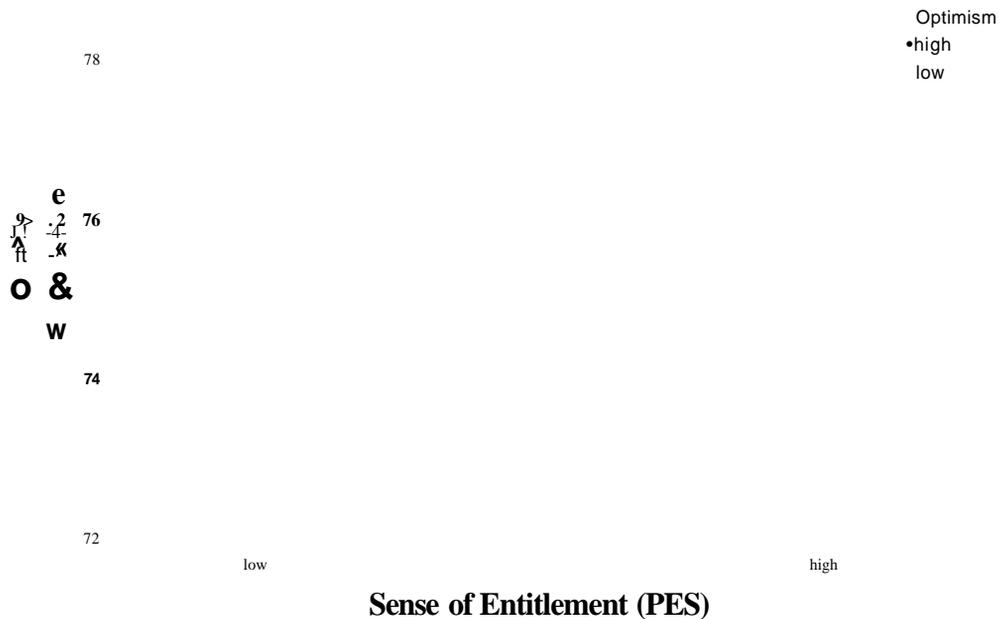
**Table 6.** Results of regressing General Student Outcome Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.

Predictor	$R^2$ change	R	B	Semi-partial
Step 1				
Sense of Entitlement	.069***	.263	.254***	.263
Step 2				
Optimism	.007	.275	.085	.085
Step 3				
Sense of Entitlement x Optimism	.067***	.378	-.263***	-.269

\*\*\* $p < .001$

*Grade expectations.* A hierarchical regression was performed to examine the relation between sense of entitlement and grade expectations with optimism as a moderator. Step one of entering sense of entitlement as the main predictor was not significant. Step two of entering optimism was also not significant; however, the interaction between sense of entitlement and optimism, which was entered on the third step, was significant,  $R^2$  change = .067,  $F$  change (1, 142) = 11.045,  $p = .001$  (see Table 7), indicating that there was a significant difference in the way sense of entitlement predicted grade expectations at different levels of optimism. According to the simple slope analyses, sense of entitlement significantly predicted increase in grade expectations only among students low in optimism ( $b = .20$ ,  $t(1, 142) = 2.549$ ,  $p = .012$ ). The largest differences in the grade expectations were observed between students with high optimism and students with low optimism at low levels of sense of entitlement. Small differences between low and highly optimistic students were observed at high levels of sense of entitlement (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2.** Results of regressing Grade Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator



**Table 7.** Results of regressing Grade Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.

Predictor	R change	R	B	Semi-partial
Step 1				
Sense of Entitlement	.004	<b>.067</b>	<b>.067</b>	<b>.067</b>
Step 2				
Optimism	.015	<b>.140</b>	<b>.128</b>	<b>.124</b>
Step 3				
Sense of Entitlement x Optimism	.271**	<b>.054</b>	<b>-.237**</b>	<b>-.235</b>

\*p < .05, \*\* p < **.01**, \*\*\* p < .001

**Academic success expectation.** Hierarchical regression was used to explore the relation between sense of entitlement and academic success expectations and whether these relations differed at levels of optimism. As expected, sense of entitlement strongly predicted an increase in academic success expectations, R change = .101, F change (1, 144) =

16.186,  $p < .001$ . Similarly, optimism was a significant predictor of academic success expectations,  $R^2_{change} = .122$ ,  $F_{change}(1, 143) = 22.545$ ,  $p < .001$ . Entering the two-way interactions between sense of entitlement and optimism did not reveal any significance (see Table 8). Thus, optimism did not moderate the relationship between SE and academic success expectations and its moderation effects did not differ depending on gender.

**Table 8.** Results of regressing Academic Success Expectations on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator

Predictor	$R^2_{change}$	R	B	Semi-partial
Step 1	.101***	.318	.318***	.318
Sense of Entitlement				
Step 2	.122***	.473	.365***	.369
Optimism				
Step 3	.015	.488	-.124	-.138
Sense of Entitlement x Optimism				

\*\*\* $p < .001$

#### **Relationship between sense of entitlement and attribution style with**

**optimism as a moderator.** Since the attribution questionnaires were distributed only in the second part of the study, the only participants who completed them were those who did not drop out from the second section of the course. A hierarchical regression was used to examine the effects of sense of entitlement on attribution due to chance and whether optimism moderated these effects. As expected, sense of entitlement was a significant predictor of attribution due to chance,  $R^2_{change} = .140$ ,  $F_{change}(1, 62) = 10.079$ ,  $p = .002$ , whereas optimism was not a significant predictor of attribution due to chance. Entering the two-way interaction between sense of entitlement and optimism and gender

was not significant either, indicating that the relationship between sense of entitlement and attribution due to chance did not vary significantly at levels of optimism (see Table 9).

**Table 9.** Results of regressing Attribution due to Chance on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator

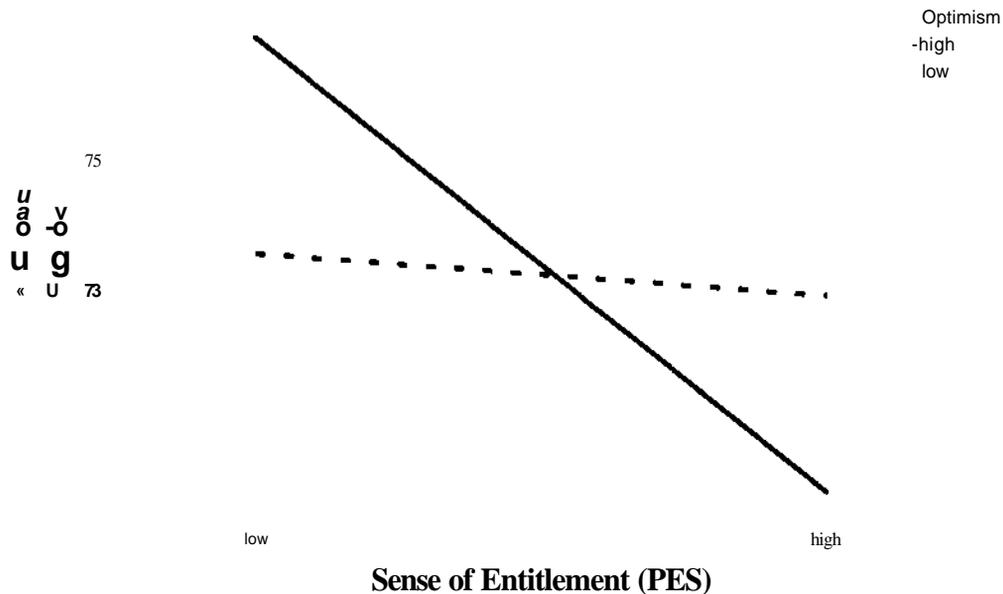
Predictor	R change	R	B	Semi-partial
Step 1				
Sense of Entitlement	.140**	.374	.374**	.374
Step 2				
Optimism	.001	.375	.026	.027
Step 3				
Sense of Entitlement x Optimism	.008	.386	-.095	.099

\*\*\* $p < .001$

#### **Relationship between sense of entitlement and final course grade with**

**optimism as a moderator.** A hierarchical regression was used to explore the effects of sense of entitlement on final course grades. Step one of entering SE was not significant,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .022$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 144) = 3.246$ ,  $p = .074$  (see Table 10). Entering the two-way interactions between sense of entitlement and optimism, was significant,  $R^2_{\text{change}} = .030$ ,  $F_{\text{change}}(1, 142) = 4.669$ ,  $p = .034$ . These results showed that the way sense of entitlement predicted final course grades differed with optimism. As shown in Figure 3, increased sense of entitlement among highly optimistic students predicted significant decrease in the final course grades with the simple slopes significantly different from zero ( $b = -.42$ ,  $t(1, 142) = -2.768$ ,  $p = .006$ ). The largest differences in the final course grades were observed between high and low levels of sense of entitlement among students who reported high optimism (see Figure 3).

**Figure 3.** Results of regressing Final Course Grade on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.



**Table 10.** Results of regressing Final Course Grade on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.

Predictor	$R^2$ change	R	B	Semi-partial
Step 1				
Sense of Entitlement	.022	.148	-.148	-.148
Step 2				
Optimism	.001	.153	.040	.038
Step 3				
Sense of Entitlement x Optimism	.030*	.232	-.178*	.176

\* $p < .05$

**Relationship between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms with optimism as a moderator.** Hierarchical regression was used to examine the relationship between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms and whether optimism moderated this relationship. The first step of the regression with SE as a predictor was not

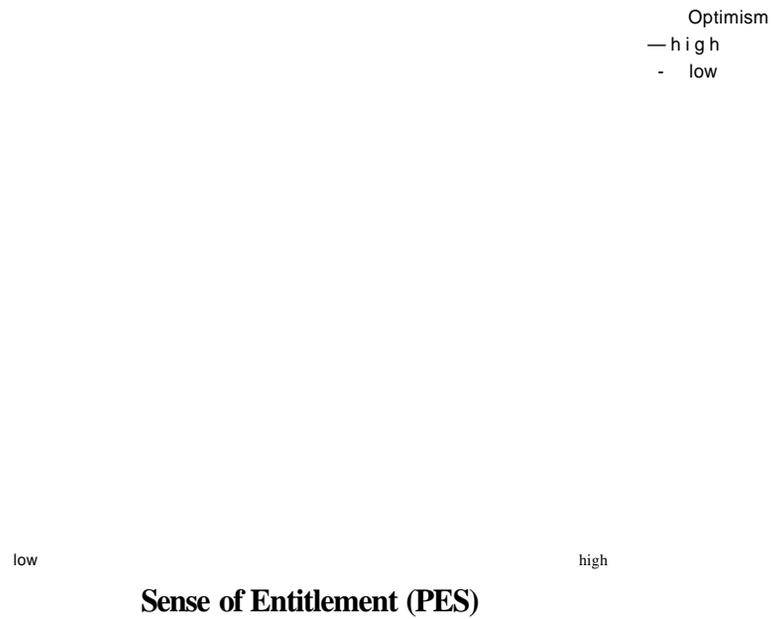
significant,  $R^2 \text{ change} < .001, F < 1$ . Entering optimism on the second step produced significant results,  $R^2 \text{ change} = .166, F_{\text{change}}(1, 143) = 28.434, p < .001$ . As expected, optimism had a strong buffering effect in relation to depressive symptoms (see Table 11). The interaction between sense of entitlement and optimism was significant,  $R^2 \text{ change} = .021, F_{\text{change}}(1, 143) = 3.139, p = .055$ , indicating that the relationship between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms varied significantly as a function of optimism. Indeed, as shown in Figure 4, simple slopes revealed that an increase in SE among highly optimistic students predicted an increase in depressive symptoms ( $b = .23, t(1, 142) = 2.964, p = .003$ ). Simple slope of low optimism was not significantly different from zero ( $b = .11, t(1, 142) = 1.454, p = .14$ ). The largest differences in depressive symptoms were observed at low levels of sense of entitlement. Specifically, highly optimistic students had significantly lower levels of depressive symptoms than students with low optimism. Small differences in depressive symptoms were noted at high levels of sense of entitlement. For all of the simple slope calculations a "ModGraph" method (Jose, P. E., 2008) was used.

**Table 11.** Results of regressing Sense of Entitlement on Depressive Symptoms moderated by Optimism.

Predictor	$R^2 \text{ change}$	R	B	Semi-partial
Step 1				
Sense of Entitlement	< .001	.002	.002	.002
Step 2				
Optimism	.166**	.407	-.424**	-.407
Step 3				
Sense of Entitlement x Optimism	.021	.433	.149	.160

\*\* $p < .01$

**Figure 4.** *Results of regressing Depressive Symptoms on Sense of Entitlement with Optimism as a moderator.*



### Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore the relations between sense of entitlement and academic expectations, attribution style, final course grades, and depressive symptoms, and to establish whether optimism acted as a moderator of these effects. Sense of entitlement has received only modest research attention and to a considerable extent the evidence concerning the topic is based on anecdotal evidence. Nevertheless, it was generally accepted that sense of entitlement is a stable personality characteristic that manifests in self-derived demands and expectations both of the self and of others that are often difficult to attain (Baumeister, 1996; Campbell, 2004; Greenberger, 2008; Twenge, 2004, 2006, 2009; Twenge & Campble, 2003). For example, students with sense of entitlement feel they deserve higher course grades, longer paper extensions and more make up options (Austin 2002, Twenge, 2006, 2009). It is often the case that these students expect to get Master's or PhD degrees and are confident that they will get high paying jobs right after university followed by rapid job promotion (Leibmann-Smith, 2001; Twenge, 2006, 2009).

As expected, it was found that sense of entitlement predicted academic expectations. Students with a high sense of entitlement believed that they would be more successful in their university courses and in attaining their degrees compared to students with low sense of entitlement. Moreover, students with high sense of entitlement expected that completion of their bachelor degrees would allow them to do better in their post-university lives than students with low sense of entitlement. In particular, they anticipated better and higher paying jobs, expected to be generally more successful and better professionally utilized, and believed they would have a more positive self image.

Such attitudes fit well into the belief system of highly entitled individuals, who think that they deserve and are entitled to more than others.

Contrary to prediction, participants who held a high sense of entitlement did not *expect* higher course grades. One possible explanation for this lack of association might be found in highly entitled students' attitude towards their performance. It is likely that these students may not be concerned about proximal issues such as grades in the course they are currently taking and view these issues as not relevant because they are focused on distal expectation. They might be more concerned with bigger goals, such as getting their degrees, getting high paying jobs that they believe they deserve, and doing well in life. Alternatively, it might be the case that all students have expectations of high grades, but they might believe this for different reasons. As a result, differences might not be evident in grade expectations among those with high and low SE.

In addition to being selectively and rigidly focused on distal expectations of achievement without paying enough attention to the proximal issues, another aspect of sense of entitlement might provide an additional explanation the absence of the relationship between sense of entitlement and grade expectations. It was noted previously that individuals with sense of entitlement have rigid and often inaccurate views of themselves and the world (Snow et al, 2001). These investigators also indicated that these individuals tend to avoid anything that might potentially challenge these views. For instance, they were likely to drop out of counseling sessions after only two or three meeting owing to their preconceived perceptions. Thus, it is possible that the tendency of entitled students not to pay attention to specific details of their actions could be also a part of their avoidant behavior as a tool to preserve their positive image and deliberately

or unintentionally keep away from any information that might potentially challenge this image. Therefore, not having accurate information or seemingly not caring about grades could be a result of such coping mechanism, which might serve to protect the self-image of an individual as a successful student.

As hypothesized, optimism moderated the relationship between sense of entitlement and academic expectations. An increase in sense of entitlement among students with low levels of optimism predicted an increase in student outcome expectations and grade expectations. Contrary to what was expected, increased sense of entitlement among highly optimistic students did not predict any changes in levels of grade expectations. One explanation of this could be that high levels of optimism among students with high sense of entitlement might elevate already heightened entitled and deserving attitudes. Therefore, participants with a high sense of entitlement and higher levels of optimism may be even more focused on the distal goals and pay even less attention to proximal goals than those who reported lower levels of optimism. In addition, highly optimistic participants with an elevated sense of entitlement might exhibit a stronger tendency for positive self-image protection. They might disregard or avoid searching for or acknowledging any potentially negative objective feedback about reaching their academic goals, and predicting outcomes of certain aspects of academic performance.

It was hypothesized and found, as did others (Kenny et al., 1998, Harvey & Martinko, 2009), that individuals with a sense of entitlement are strongly inclined to attribute negative outcomes in their to external factors (i.e., bad luck, blaming other people). Such tendency was recently described as a part of self-serving attribution bias

(Harvey & Martinko, 2009). The authors found that individuals with high sense of entitlement in addition to denying responsibility for negative events tend to take credit for positive outcomes. Blaming bad luck (and others) for their flaws and failures might not allow individuals with high sense of entitlement to adjust their achievement strategies adequately. This, in turn, could make them more prone to continue making the same mistakes over again. Thus, attributional bias, positive self- image protection, and inaccurate view of self and the world could diminish chances for positive outcomes and increase likelihood of failure. In line with such reasoning, the present research showed that participants with high levels of sense of entitlement received significantly lower final course grades than students with low levels. Moreover, high levels of optimism, in combinations with high levels of sense of entitlement were associated with an even lower final course grade, compared to participants with low levels of optimism and a high sense of entitlement.

Apart from high levels of optimism there could be another factor that might explain the relationship between sense of entitlement and final course grades. According to Cacioppo et al. (1986), some people have a high need for cognition, i.e., a need to engage in effortful cognitive activity. Individuals who feel entitled tend not to engage in such cognitive activity and are thus limited in their capacity to appraise the complexity of their everyday lives (Harvey & Martinko, 2009). In addition, Harvey and Martinko (2008) noted that entitled individuals were not keen on learning and willing to understand the causal links between their behavior and how it impacts themselves and others, thus lacking need for cognition regarding life complexities. They also found that entitled individuals were less capable of forming adequate attitudes concerning their situations

due to limited cognitive capacity, which diminishes their ability to note and understand every detail in the complexity of their lives. Results of the present study showed that an increase in sense of entitlement was associated with lower final course grades, which could in part be explained by lower need for cognition and limited cognitive capacity.

As hypothesized, it was found that an increase in sense of entitlement predicted an increase of external attributions. It was recently reported that current generation of young people (born between 1972 and 1992) tends to increasingly use external attribution and that there is a positive relationship between sense of entitlement as a subconstruct of narcissism and external attribution (Twenge & Campble, 2003, Twenge 2006, 2009). This study supported this evidence and confirmed the positive relationship between sense of entitlement as an independent construct measured by Psychological Entitlement Scale (Campbell et. al., 2004) and attribution.

Past research on the relationship between depressive symptoms and attribution style showed that individuals who use external attribution and believe that the events in their lives are controlled by external factors are more likely to suffer from depressive symptoms than those who believe that they are in control (Heider, 1988, Alloy et al. 1984; Peterson & Seligman, 1981). It was hypothesized that the increase in external attribution among individuals with high sense of entitlement would be associated with the increase in depressive symptoms. However, the results of the current study did not support the assumption that people who feel entitled would exhibit symptoms of depression. This might be a result of the self-serving attribution style that individuals with sense of entitlement tend to engage in. It was also found that optimism moderated the relationship between sense of entitlement and depressive symptoms. Particularly, the

increase in levels of sense of entitlement was associated with the increase in depressive symptoms but only among students who reported high levels of optimism. Such a positive relationship was observed within the low range of the scale, still indicating that highly optimistic students with high sense of entitlement exhibited only low levels of depressive symptoms. Students with a sense of entitlement had a tendency to use external attribution when explaining negative academic outcomes. Having no control over these outcomes doesn't seem to be associated with an increase in depressive symptoms. This is likely due to the self-serving attribution bias. Individuals with high sense of entitlement might preserve their positive self-image by employing the self-serving attributional bias to explain positive and negative events in their lives. Taking ownership for positive outcomes, blaming bad luck and others for negative outcomes, combined with a low need for cognition and a tendency to avoid potentially negative feedback might help these individuals remain low on depressive symptoms.

### **Limitations**

This study has several limitations that warrant comment. First, a high drop out rate in the second part of the study did not allow exploration of the sample to the full extent possible. Students who dropped out had significantly lower final fall grades than students who did not drop out. It was initially predicted that final grades and levels of academic expectations among "drop out" student with high sense of entitlement and lower grades in the fall term would not be significantly different from those in the winter term despite the fall term experience. This hypothesis was not tested because students who dropped out did not participate in the winter part of the study.

Another limitation of the study was an absence of the attribution questionnaire that would explore students' attitudes towards positive outcomes. It is likely that students with high sense of entitlement would report higher internal attribution when explaining the reason why they might have succeeded academically. This would permit confirmation as to whether these students engage in a self-serving attribution bias.

A further limitation of the study was the fact the data about academic expectations was collected 2 weeks before the first midterm. It is possible that some students might have had a good idea of what their grades might be, although grades expected were still significantly higher than the final course grades. Clearly, it will be necessary to collect data within the first two or three weeks of the first term in order to avoid potential biasing responses.

This study explored academic expectations and outcomes, but it lacked a measurement of academic effort. Knowing how much effort students with high sense of entitlement put into their coursework compared to that of students without sense of entitlement might allow further understanding of the academic achievement strategies they use. Also comparing levels of effort to the levels of academic expectations and outcomes among these students may provide additional insights into the particular aspects of their academic performance. We predict that students with high sense of entitlement would report lower levels of effort than those without it.

### **Implications**

Our findings suggest that first year students with high sense of entitlement represent a distinctive academic population that has a tendency for higher academic expectations and lower academic performance than students low in sense of entitlement.

This study suggested that these students are primarily focused on distal, general and global goals, such as getting their degrees, finding well-paying jobs and doing well in life. However, they were found to be not as concerned with proximal goals and details associated with them, which may in part explain their poor performance. Highly optimistic students with sense of entitlement have even stronger tendency for higher academic expectations and poorer performance. They are likely to be even less concerned about the small details and proximal goals than students with low optimism and high sense of entitlement.

The present study in part supported previous findings that students with high sense of entitlement are prone to self-serving attributional bias. That is they are likely to take credit for positive events in their lives and blame bad luck (or others) for negative events. They might be inclined to use this strategy because they tend to have inadequately positive and rigid perception of themselves and avoid anything that might challenge this perception, including taking responsibility for their own flaws.

Albeit speculative, and in many respects are well beyond the data of the present investigation, the present formulation is offered concerning SE in relation to performance. Specifically, individuals with a sense of entitlement might have limited ability to scrutinize and grasp the complexity of their situation. In addition, they might have a tendency not to seek key elements in their lives that would explain their successes or failures. Hence, these individuals might not realize what particular aspects of their achievement strategies helped them succeed. In addition, they might be likely to use the same achievement strategies which led them to failures without any revisions or adjustments according to the changes in their circumstances and regardless of the

feedback and because their belief that they deserve to succeed regardless of the strategy they use. These tendencies might make individuals with high sense of entitlement prone to subsequent failures. Also, it might be interesting to examine whether believing in being more entitled and deserving than others is a way of coping with particular cognitive deficits, which occur as a result of depressive moods (Kuhl & Helle, 1986). Moreover, positive self-image protection and sense of entitlement might be a part of this survival / coping mechanism.

Since individuals with high sense of entitlement might avoid information that could potentially undermine their positive self-image, educating them on the topic appears to be a problem. Developing a specific strategy or counseling technique that would allow such individuals to learn about negative impacts of sense of entitlement and develop more adequate and constructive ways of dealing with reality in their lives might help overcome many difficulties. These individuals could be more successful in conflict resolution and in avoiding repetitive failures, be less aggressive and hostile, as well as more open and empathetic. Implication of such strategies in the academic context may allow students with high sense of entitlement to be more successful. Having a more objective and detailed understanding of their circumstances might allow these students to develop more adequate achievement strategies and be more flexible and receptive towards feedback and change. As already indicated these views are highly speculative and remain to be empirically assessed.

### References

- Abramson, L. Y., Metalsky, G. I., & Alloy, L. B. (1989). Hopelessness depression: A theory-based subtype of depression. *Psychological review*, 96(2), 358.
- Abouserie, R. (1994). Sources and levels of stress in relation to locus of control and self-esteem in university students [Electronic version]. *Educational Psychology*, 14, 323.
- Ainslie, R. C, Shafer, A., & Reynolds, J. (1996). Mediators of adolescents' stress in a college preparatory environment. *Adolescence*, 31(124), 913.
- Aldwin, C, & Greenberger, E. (1987). Cultural differences in the predictors of depression. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 15(6), 789.
- Alloy, L. B., Peterson, C., Abramson, L. Y., & Seligman, M. E. (1984). Attributional style and the generality of learned helplessness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 46(3), 681.
- Ames, D. R., Rose, P., & Anderson, C. P. (2006). The NPI-16 as a short measure of narcissism. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 40(4), 440.
- Armor, D. A., & Taylor, S. E. (2003). The effects of mindset on behavior: Self-regulation in deliberative and implemental frames of mind. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(1), 86.
- Atkinson, R. C, & Shiffrin, R. M. (1968). Human memory: A proposed system and its control processes *The psychology of learning and motivation: II*. Oxford, England: Academic Press.
- Austin A. W. et al. (2002). *The American freshmen: Thirty five year trends*. Los Angeles: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA.

- Bandura, A. (1990). Perceived self-efficacy in the exercise of personal agency. *Journal of Applied Sport Psychology*, 2(2), 128.
- Bandura, A., & Cervone, D. (1983). Self-evaluative and self-efficacy mechanisms governing the motivational effects of goal systems. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 45(5), 1017.
- Baumeister, R. F., Smart, L., & Boden, J. M. (1996). Relation of threatened egotism to violence and aggression: The dark side of high self-esteem. *Psychological Review*, 103, 5-33.
- Beck, A. T., Ward, C. H., Mendelson, M., Mock, J., & Erbaugh, J. (1961). An inventory for measuring depression. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 4, 561.
- Becker, L. J. (1978). Joint effect of feedback and goal setting on performance: A field study of residential energy conservation. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(4), 428.
- Bransford, J. D., McCarrell, N. S., & Nitsch, K. E. (1976). Context, comprehension, and semantic flexibility: Theoretical and methodological implications. *Bulletin de Psychologic Special Annual*, 335.
- Britton, B.K. & Tesser, A. (1991) Effects of time-management on college grades. *Journal of educational psychology*, 83, 3, 405 -410.
- Campbell, W. K., Bonacci, A. M., Shelton, J., Exline, J. J., & Bushman, B. J. (2004). Psychological entitlement: Interpersonal consequences and validation of a self-report measure. *Journal of personality assessment*, 83(1), 29.
- Capron, E. W. (2004). Types of pampering and the narcissistic personality trait. *Journal of individual psychology*, 60(1), 77.

- Carey, B. (2003, July 28), A paradox of celebrity behavior; People who excel in extraordinary settings often don't do well in everyday situations, experts say. *Los Angeles Times, Health* (Part 6), p.1.
- Carver, C. S., & Scheier, M. F. (1998). On the self-regulation of behavior. New York, NY, US: *Cambridge University Press*.
- Clark, E.L., & Rieker, P.P. (1986). Differences in relationships and stress of medical and law students. *Journal of Medical Education*, 61, 32<sup>^</sup>-0.
- Deci, E. L., Koestner, R., & Ryan, R. M. (1999). A meta-analytic review of experiments examining the effects of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, 125, 627-668.
- Donnellan, M. B., Trzesniewski, K. H., Conger, K. J., & Conger, R. D. (2007). A three-wave longitudinal study of self-evaluations during young adulthood. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(2), 453.
- Erez, M., & Kanfer, F. H. (1983). The role of goal acceptance in goal setting and task performance. *Academy of Management Review*, 8(3), 454.
- Exline, J. J., Baumeister, R. F., Bushman, B. J., Campbell, W. K., & Finkel, E. J. (2004). Too Proud to Let Go: Narcissistic Entitlement as a Barrier to Forgiveness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 87(6), 894.
- Exline, J. J., Baumeister, R. F., Bushman, B. J., Campbell, W. K., & Finkel, E. J. (2004). Too Proud to Let Go: Narcissistic Entitlement as a Barrier to Forgiveness. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 87(6), 894.

- Felsten, G., & Wilcox, K. (1992). Influences of stress, situation-specific mastery beliefs and satisfaction with social support on well-being and academic performance. *Psychological Reports*, 70, 219-303.
- Foster, J. D., Campbell, W. K., & Twenge, J. M. (2003). Individual differences in narcissism: Inflated self-views across the lifespan and around the world. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 37(6), 469.
- Fowler, T., & Goldberg, L., (2003, June 8). Getting what they asked for: There's no paucity of perks at the top, but at least investors are getting a glimpse into the executive suite. *The Houston Chronicle*, p. 1.
- Greenberg, J. (1981). A study of stressors in the college population. *Health Education*, 12, 8-12.
- 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(10), 1193.
- Heider, Fritz (1988). *The notebooks, Vol. 5: Attributional and interpersonal evaluation.* Weinheim, Germany: Psychologie Verlags Union. 577 pp
- Harden, B. (2003, August 3). Microsoft millionaires grapple with wealth; stock - option riches leaves some uneasy. *The Washington Post*, A1
- Harvey, P., Martinko, M. J. & Gardner, W. (2009). An empirical examination of the role of attributions in psychological entitlement and its outcomes. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. Vol 30(4), May 2009, pp. 459-476
- Kelley, Harold H., Michela, John L. (1980). Attribution theory and research. *Annual Review of Psychology*. Vol 31, pp. 457-501

- Kuhl, J., & Helle, P. (1986). Motivational and volitional determinants of depression: The degenerated-intention hypothesis. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, 95(3), 247.
- Lane, A. M., Jones, L., & Stevens, M. J. (2002). Coping with failure: The effects of self-esteem and coping on changes in self efficacy. *Journal of Sport Behavior*, 25(4), 331.
- Leary, M. R., & Baumeister, R. F. (2000). The nature and function of self-esteem: Sociometer theory. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology*, Vol. 32. (pp. 1). San Diego, CA, US: Academic Press.
- Landry, C. Carol, (2003), Self-Efficacy, Motivation, and Outcome Expectation Correlates of College Students' Intention Certainty, Dissertation Abstracts, Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College
- Lecci, L., Okun, M. A., & Karoly, P. (1994). Life regrets and current goals as predictors of psychological adjustment. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 66(4), 731.
- Lesko W.A., & Summerfield, L. (1989). Academic stress and health changes in female college students. *Health Education*, 18-21.
- Lessard, J., Farruggia, S. P., Chen, C., & Greenberger, E. (March, 2006). Development of a multidimensional measure of self entitlement. *Poster presented at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence*. San Francisco, CA.
- Levenson, H., & Miller, J. (1976). Multidimensional locus of control in sociopolitical activists of conservative and liberal ideologies. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 33, 199-208.
- Liebmann-Smith, J. (2001, May 14), Is It September yet? *Newsweek*, p. 61.
- Linn, B.S., & Zeppa, R. (1984). Stress in junior medical students: Relationship to personality and performance. *Journal of Medical Education*, 59, 7-12.

- Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (2009). Has goal setting gone wild, or have its attackers abandoned good scholarship? *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 23(1), 17.
- Maltby, J., Macaskill, A., & Day, L. (2001). Failure to forgive self and others: A replication and extension of the relationship between forgiveness, personality, social desirability and general health. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 30(5), 881.
- McHoskey, J. (1995). Narcissism and Machiavellianism. *Psychological Reports*, 11, 755-759.
- Mento, A. J., Steel, R. P., & Karren, R. J. (1987). A meta-analytic study of the effects of goal setting on task performance: 1966-1984. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 39(1), 52.
- Nichols, M., (2003, August 1). Kids want their cake and just desserts. *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, p.1B.
- Patten, B. Scott, & Juby, H. A profile Of Clinical Depression In Canada (February 2008), *Community Health Sciences and Psychiatry Research, Data Centre Network, Research Synthesis Series: #1*
- Peterson, C, Bettes, B. A., & Seligman, M. E. (1985). Depressive symptoms and unprompted causal attributions: Content analysis. *Behaviour research and therapy*, 23(4), 379.
- Peterson, C, & Seligman, M. E. (1981). Helplessness and attributional style in depression: I. *Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening*, 18(1), 3.
- Peterson, C, & Seligman, M. E. (1981). Helplessness and attributional style in depression: II. *Tidsskrift for Norsk Psykologforening*, 18(2), 53.

- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (1983). Learned helplessness and victimization. *Journal of Social Issues*, 39(2), 103.
- Peterson, C., & Seligman, M. E. (1984). Causal explanations as a risk factor for depression: Theory and evidence. *Psychological review*, 91(3), 347.
- Polivy, J., & Herman, C. P. (2002). If at first you don't succeed: False hopes of self-change. *American Psychologist*, 57(9), 677.
- Raskin, R., & Terry, H. (1988). A principal-components analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory and further evidence of its construct validity. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 54(5), 890.
- Robins, C. J. (1988). Attributions and depression: Why is the literature so inconsistent? *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 54(5), 880.
- Robins, C. J., & Block, P. (1988). Personal vulnerability, life events, and depressive symptoms: A test of a specific interactional model. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 54(5), 847.
- Saumuelson, R. J. (2003, April 30) CEO welfare. *The Washington Post*, p. A23
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1987). Dispositional optimism and physical well-being: The influence of generalized outcome expectancies on health. *Journal of Personality.Special Issue: Personality and physical health*, 55(2), 169.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1992). Effects of optimism on psychological and physical well-being: Theoretical overview and empirical update. *Cognitive Therapy and Research.Special Issue: Cognitive perspectives in health psychology*, 16(2), 201.
- Scheier, M. F., & Carver, C. S. (1993). On the power of positive thinking: The benefits of being optimistic. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 2(1), 26.

- Scheier, M. F., Carver, C. S., & Bridges, M. W. (1994). Distinguishing optimism from neuroticism (and trait anxiety, self-mastery, and self-esteem): A reevaluation of the Life Orientation Test. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 67(6), 1063.
- Shafer, L. L. (1996). Gender differences in the transition to adulthood: An examination of work and family patterns for two cohorts of high school graduates. *ProQuest Information & Learning, Us*.
- Snow, J. N., Kern, R. M. & Curlette, W. L. (2001). Identifying personality traits associated with attrition in systematic training for effective parenting groups. *The Family Journal: Counseling and Therapy for Couples and Families*, 9, 102-108.
- Strang, H. R., Lawrence, E. C, & Fowler, P. C. (1978). Effects of assigned goal level and knowledge of results on arithmetic computation: A laboratory study. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 63(4), 446.
- Struthers, C.W., Perry, R.P., & Menec, V.H. (2000). An examination of the relationships among academic stress, coping motivation, and performance in college. *Research in Higher Education*, 41, 581-592.
- Sullivan, T. (2003, August 1). Rodriguez deal makes Rangers playoff strangers. *The San Diego Union-Tribune*, p. D1.
- Sweeney, P. D., Anderson, K., & Bailey, S. (1986). Attributional style in depression: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 50(5), 974.
- Taylor, S. E., & Armor, D. A. (1996). Positive illusions and coping with adversity. *Journal of personality*, 64(4), 873.
- Taylor, S. E., Kemeny, M. E., Reed, G. M., Bower, J. E., & Gruenewald, T. L. (2000). Psychological resources, positive illusions, and health. *American Psychologist*, 55(1), 99.

- Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2008). Do today's young people really think they are so extraordinary? An examination of secular trends in narcissism and self-enhancement. *Psychological Science*, 19(2), 181.
- Trzesniewski, K. H., Donnellan, M. B., & Robins, R. W. (2008). Is "generation me" really more narcissistic than previous generations? *Journal of personality*, 76(4), 903.
- Twenge, J. M. (2009). Generational changes and their impact in the classroom: Teaching Generation Me. *Medical education*, 43(5), 398.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, S. M. (2008). Generational differences in psychological traits and their impact on the workplace. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 23(8), 862.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2008). Increases in positive self-views among high school students: Birth-cohort changes in anticipated performance, self-satisfaction, self-liking, and self-competence. *Psychological Science*, 19(11), 1082.
- Twenge, J. M., & Foster, J. D. (2008). Mapping the scale of the narcissism epidemic: Increases in narcissism 2002-2007 within ethnic groups. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 42(6), 1619.
- Twenge, J. M., & Im, C. (2007). Changes in the need for social approval, 1958-2001. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(1), 171.
- Twenge, J. M., Konrath, S., Foster, J. D., Campbell, W. K., & Bushman, B. J. (2008). Egos inflating over time: A cross-temporal meta-analysis of the Narcissistic Personality Inventory. *Journal of personality*, 76(4), 875.
- Twenge, J. M., Konrath, S., Foster, J. D., Campbell, W. K., & Bushman, B. J. (2008). Further evidence of an increase in narcissism among college students. *Journal of personality*, 76(4), 919.

- Twenge, J. M. (2006). *Generation Me: Why today's young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled-and more miserable than ever before.* New York, NY, US: Free Press. 293 p.
- Twenge, J. M. (2009). *Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the age if entitlement.* New York, NY, US: Free Press. 340 p.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2001). Age and birth cohort differences in self-esteem: A cross-temporal meta-analysis. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(4), 321.
- Twenge, J. M., & Campbell, W. K. (2003). "Isn't it fun to get the respect that we're going to deserve?" Narcissism, social rejection, and aggression. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 29(2), 261.
- Twenge, J. M., Campbell, W. K., & Foster, C. A. (2003). Parenthood and Marital Satisfaction: A Meta-Analytic Review. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65(3), 574.
- Westefeld, J. S., Button, C, Haley T. James, Kettmannj. J. J., Macconnell, J., Sandil, R, Tallman, B.,(2006). College Student Suicide: A Call To Action  
*Death Studies*, 1091-7683, Volume 30, Issue 10, Pages 931 - 956
- Widiger, T. A. (2000). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders.* Washington, DC, US American Psychological Association; New York, NY, US: Oxford University Press.

**APPENDICES**

## APPENDIX A

## Informed Consent

*The purpose of an informed consent is to ensure that you understand the purpose of the study and the nature of your involvement. The informed consent has to provide sufficient information such that you have the opportunity to determine whether you wish to participate in the study.*

**Study Title: First Year Experience Study**

Study Personnel:                   Dr. Hymie Anisman (Faculty Sponsor, 520-2600 ext. 2699)  
  Dr. Michael Wohl (Faculty Investigator, 520-2600 ext. 2908)  
  Evgueni Mamitchev (MSc Candidate, 520-2600 ext. 2692)

Should you have any ethical concerns about this study please contact Dr. Avi Parush, Chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychology Research, at 520-2600 ext. 6026, or Dr. Janet Mantler, Chair of the Department of Psychology, at 520-2600 ext. 4173.

**Purpose and Task Requirements:** The purpose of this study is to assess students' experience in first year. Specifically, we are interested in how you are coping with your first year in University. You will be asked to complete series of questionnaires that assess your first year experiences thus far. This is a two part study. We will be contacting you again at the beginning of second term to ask you about your thoughts on the end of your first term and hopes for second term. Each session will take approximately 30 min. Note, we will also be asking you for permission to retrieve your final course grade from your professor. As mentioned below, this information will be kept confidential and your name will not be associated with any of the data collected, including your grade.

**Potential risk/discomfort:** Some people can become stressed when thinking about their attitudes, feelings and expectations regarding their grade and this course.

**Anonymity/Confidentiality:** All information collected in this study will remain confidential, and your identity kept anonymous. Your data will be labelled with a unique identification number, which will not be associated with your name or your informed consent form. The grades we will obtain from the course instructor will be associated with your identification number, not your name, and the course instructor will not have access to your questionnaire data. All questionnaires collected by the researcher will be kept secure and confidential.

**Right to Withdraw:** Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. If at any point you feel uncomfortable, you may decline to answer a question or withdraw entirely with no penalty.

*/ have read the above description of this study concerning my first year experience, and hereby consent to participate in this study. By clicking on "Agree ", I understand that my data will be used for research, publishing, and/or teaching purposes. My endorsement indicates that I agree to participate in this study and allow my data to be used for such purposes. I also grant consent to the researchers to obtain my midterm grades from the course instructor. This in no way constitutes a waiver of my rights, and I understand that I am free to withdraw at any point.*

Agree

No Thanks

APPENDIX B-1  
Debriefing, Session ONE.

Thank you for participating in this study!

*What are we trying to learn in this research?*

We know that many students find their first year at the university very challenging and stressful. We are also aware that transitioning into academic studying may not always be a positive experience: many students are worried and stressed about their midterms, final exams, and final course grades, as well as about handing in their assignment and managing their time. There might be many factors that contribute towards such feelings. By asking you about your opinions and attitudes towards the course we are hoping to establish what factors help you to succeed in the courses you are taking and identify factors that stand in the way of your top performance. One of the key issues we would like to address in this study is how student form their expectations about their academic performance.

Generally all first year students are under pressure of the course load, deadlines and necessity to adapt to the new academic environment. However, not all of the students may feel as anxious and worried about their courses. If not addressed, these feeling may become a real problem for some students. Feeling worried, stressed and anxious may affect your memory, your analytical and perception qualities, as well as the overall energy level, ability to focus and your motivation. Negative feelings regarding the academic experience may range from slight discontent to severe academically related stress and even depression. As you might be aware different people have different expectations and cope differently with negative outcomes. In the context of this study we are trying to establish why students have certain expectations about their academic successes and why these levels vary. The other question we are trying to answer in our study is how such academic expectations are related to the levels of anxiety and stress and how it is possible to reduce or avoid these negative feelings.

*Why is this important to scientists or the general public?*

We believe that examining the above relationships may produce results useful to researchers who are looking to better understand the phenomenon of unrealistic expectations, to clinicians who are looking to help chronically failing individuals, and to students who are hoping to objectively assess their academic abilities and resources, as an understanding of the factors that contribute to unrealistic expectations possibly will provide insight into developing new strategies of helping such individuals.

*What if I have questions later?*

For any questions or concerns relating to the research itself, please contact either the Principal Investigator, Evgueni Mamitchev, [emamitch@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:emamitch@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600, ext. 2692 or the Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Hymie Anisman [hanisman@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:hanisman@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600, ext. 2699, and Dr. Michael Wohl, [mwohl@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:mwohl@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600 ext. 2908.

For ethical concerns, please contact Dr. Avi Parush, Chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychology Research, at 520-2600 ext. 6026, or Janet Mantler, Chair of the Department of Psychology, at 520-2600 ext. 4173.

We realize that some questions may have produced feelings of anxiety. If as a result of participating in this study you are currently feeling any anxiety or distress, or if you experience any such feelings in the future, we suggest that you make an appointment with the Carleton University Health and Counseling Services, 520-6674.

APPENDIX B-2  
Debriefing. Session TWO.

Thank you for participating in this study!

*What are we trying to learn in this research?*

The purpose of this study is to establish whether students, who believe they are more deserving than other and have optimistic perceptions of the world, have higher or even unrealistic academic success expectations. We hope to find a link between this attitudes and failure to attain such high academic expectations and future academic success expectations.

*Why is this important to scientists or the general public?*

The issues of academic performance and academic stress have been studied by scientists around the world. Some researchers found that knowing about the difficulty of the material, the amount of work and time required to do well in class helps maintaining realistic course outcome expectations and reduces anxiety and disappointment associated with the final grades. Other studies show that people who feel that they are entitled to more than others are likely to be unrealistic in their expectations about achieving their goals. Hence, students, who feel that they will easily be among the top in the class may not be realistic in their assessment of the course requirements and their own resources and are likely to be unhappy with their final mark. In particular, they may experience discontent or even severe academically related stress and depression. In addition to this, some scientists found that failure to achieve goals due to unrealistic expectations increases the likelihood of future failures in achieving similar goals. They discovered that negative feelings associated with such failures may interfere with cognitive functions (e.g. attention, memory, action, problem solving, perception, etc.) that are required for efficient planning of goal-oriented actions.

We anticipate that students who believe that they are entitlement to more than others and have a strong tendency to optimistically view the world are more likely to have unrealistic academic expectations than realists without sense of entitlement. We believe that examining this relationship may produce results useful to researchers who are looking to better understand the phenomenon of unrealistic expectations, to clinicians who are trying to help chronically failing individuals, and to students who are hoping to realistically assess their academic abilities, as an understanding of the factors that contribute to unrealistic expectations possibly will provide insight into developing new strategies of helping such individuals.

*What are our hypotheses and predictions?*

We expect that optimistic students with higher levels of sense of entitlement will have high or unrealistically high academic success expectations. We also think that, students who scored high on sense of entitlement scale will be more likely to expect higher final course grades. As a result, we anticipate that students with a sense of entitlement will have more negative feelings associated with inability to meet their academic success expectations and goals. We also think that such students may have higher academic

success expectations in the second term despite the first term's experience than those students that do not have a sense of entitlement.

*What if I have questions later?*

For any questions or concerns relating to the research itself, please contact either the Principal Investigator, Evgueni Mamitchev, [emamitch@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:emamitch@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600, ext. 2692 or the Faculty Sponsor, Dr. Hymie Anisman [hanisman@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:hanisman@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600, ext. 2699, and Dr. Michael Wohl, [mwohl@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:mwohl@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600 ext. 2908.

For ethical concerns, please contact Dr. Avi Parush, Chair of the Carleton University Ethics Committee for Psychology Research, at 520-2600 ext. 6026, or Janet Mantler, Chair of the Department of Psychology, at 520-2600 ext. 4173.

*Is there anything that I can do if I found this experiment emotionally draining?*

We realize that some questions may have produced feelings of anxiety. If as a result of participating in this study you are currently feeling any anxiety or distress, or if you experience any such feelings in the future, we suggest that you make an appointment with the Carleton University Health and Counseling Services, 520-6674.

## APPENDIX B-3

## Debriefing....If you're feeling distress....

You have now completed all of the measures in our survey. One of the main goals of this study is to assess the well-being and levels of distress among members of your community.

Approximately 10-15% of people will suffer some degree of depression during their lifetime. With advances in modern medicine, most people can readily be treated for this illness, which if unattended can be long lasting and affect many aspects of one's life. The symptoms of depression comprise:

- Poor or depressed mood, or a reduction in the pleasure gained from otherwise positive experiences
- 9 Sleep disturbances
- Eating disturbances (loss of appetite, or overeating despite not being hungry), which may be linked to weight changes
- tp Lack of sexual interest
- 9 Fatigue and lethargy (you don't feel like doing anything)
- 9 An inability to focus (e.g., have a hard time reading)
- O Reduced interactions with family and friends
- # Thoughts of suicide

Someone who is depressed may experience several (3-4), but not necessarily all of the above symptoms.

**If you are experiencing any of the above symptoms, it is suggested that you either contact your family physician, or one of the organizations listed below. It is not a good idea to allow problems to continue or worsen, as trying to forget about them will typically not make them go away. Your family physician or counselor will usually be able to help you or to refer you to someone who can.**

sp If you have any worries or concerns about your personal well-being, you can refer to the following website to view a list of **Crisis Centres across Canada:**  
<http://www.suicideinfo.ca/csp/go.aspx?tabid=77>

If you don't have access to the internet, contact Emergency Services at your local hospital, or contact your family physician.

## APPENDIX C-0

PES

Please respond to the following items using the number that best reflects your own beliefs. Please use the following 7-point scale:

- 1 = strong disagreement
- 2 = moderate disagreement
- 3 = slight disagreement
- 4 = neither agreement nor disagreement
- 5 = slight agreement
- 6 = moderate agreement
- 7 = strong agreement

I honestly feel I'm just more deserving than others.	2	3	4	5	6	7
Great things should come to me.	2	3	4	5	6	7
If I were on the Titanic, I would deserve to be on the <u>first</u> lifeboat!	2	3	4	5	6	7
I demand the best because I'm worth it.	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not necessarily deserve special treatment.	2	3	4	5	6	7
I deserve more things in my life.	2	3	4	5	6	7
People like me deserve an extra break now and then.	2	3	4	5	6	7
Things should go my way.	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel entitled to more of everything.	2	3	4	5	6	7

## APPENDIX C-1

## Materials

QUESTIONNAIRES. SET SESSION ONE.

For each of the following scales, please READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY, and answer as truthfully as you can. Remember, you are free to stop at any point, or skip any questions that make you uncomfortable.

## Background Information

Student Number:

Gender:        M        F

Age: \_\_\_\_\_ years

What year of university are you currently in? \_1<sup>st</sup>\_\_\_\_\_2<sup>nd</sup>\_\_\_\_\_3<sup>rd</sup>\_\_\_\_\_4<sup>th</sup>

Major field of study: \_\_\_\_\_

I am taking PSYC 1000:

- a. Because it's a requirement for my program
- b. As an elective

If you are taking PSYC 1000 because it is REQUIRED, please answer the following:

If PSYC 1000 was not a requirement, would you still take it?

- a. Yes, absolutely.
- b. Maybe.
- c. No.

If you are taking PSYC 1000 as an ELECTIVE, please answer the following:

Why did you decide to take PSYC 1000:

- a. It sounded interesting.
- b. I heard good things about the professor.
- c. It sounded easy.
- d. All my friends were taking it.
- e. Doesn't everyone take psych when they're in first year?
- f. It was the only course that fit my schedule.
- g. It was the only course that wasn't full when I registered.
- h. I don't know
- i. Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

What is your ethnic background? (Please check one below)

- Chinese  
 South Asian (e.g., East Indian, Pakistani, Punjabi, Sri Lankan)  
 Black (e.g., African, Haitian, Jamaican, Somali)  
 Arab/West Asian (e.g., Egyptian, Iranian, Lebanese, Saudi, Turkish, Moroccan)  
 Filipino  
 South East Asian (e.g., Cambodian, Indonesian, Laotian)  
 Latin American  
 Japanese  
 Korean  
 Aboriginal  
 White  
 Other (Please indicate: \_\_\_\_\_)

Are you on any of the following medications (please check all that apply):

- Birth control pill  
 Anti-inflammatory (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Anti-depressives (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Anti-anxieties (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other Prescription drugs (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been in therapy? (please check the one that best applies)

- No, I have never been in therapy  
 Yes, but I am no longer  
 Yes, and still am

If yes, how long ago were you in, or have you been in therapy?

Began \_\_\_\_\_ month/year and continued until \_\_\_\_\_ month/year



ASE

Instructions: Please read each of the statements below carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by choosing one of the points among the 4 points below.

- 1 = strong disagreement
- 2 = moderate disagreement
- 3 = slight disagreement
- 4 = neither agreement nor disagreement
- 5 = slight agreement
- 6 = moderate agreement
- 7 = strong agreement

I know I will do well in University.

I will no doubt get the highest grades in my courses.

I expect that I will be among the top in my class.

I deserve more things in my life.

I am convinced that I have what it takes to do really well.

Failing is not an option for me.

If someone asked how to get the top grades, I would certainly know what to answer.

People like me deserve an extra break now and then.

6 7

I can't imagine ever failing an exam.

Things should go my way.

I'll do great, as I have always been one of the best.

I feel entitled to more of everything.

**GE**

1. Please complete the following statement by selecting one of the appropriate boxes:

I expect that my final PSYC 1001 F course grade will be:

- A+ (90-100%)
- A (85-89%)
- A- (80-84%)
- B+ (77-79%)
- B (73-76%)
- B- (70-72%)
- C+ (67-69%)
- C (63-66%)
- C- (60-62%)
- D+ (55-59%)
- D (50-54%)
- F (0-49%)

2. Please complete the following statement by selecting one of the appropriate boxes.

I expect that my final PSYC 1001 F grade quality point will be:

- 12
- 11
- 10
- 9
- 8
- 7
- 6
- 5
- 4
- 3
- 2
- 1

SOE

Instructions: Please read each statement below carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by marking your answer according to the 4 point key below. Mark your answer by completely filling in one and only one circle on the answer sheet.

1 = Strongly Disagree    2 = Disagree    3 = Agree    4 = Strongly Agree

- |   |          |          |          |
|---|----------|----------|----------|
| 1. An undergraduate degree will allow me to obtain a well-paying job.                               |          |          |          |
| 2. If I obtain a bachelors' degree I will get a "fair shake" in the job market.                     | <b>2</b> |          | <b>4</b> |
| 3. If I work hard enough, I will get this degree.   | <b>2</b> |          | <b>4</b> |
| 4. I am quick to admit I made a mistake.  | <b>2</b> |          | <b>4</b> |
| 5. I will disappoint my family and friends if I do not succeed in getting this degree.              |          |          |          |
| 6. I am always courteous, even to people who disagree with me.                                      |          |          |          |
| 7. Getting my undergraduate degree also means I will do better with the rest of my life.            | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |
| 8. I will have failed if I don't get my degree.   | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> |
| 9. I am sometimes irritated by those who ask favors of me.  |          |          |          |
| 10. Getting my degree means I will be able to achieve my future goals.                              |          |          |          |
| 11. If I know my interest and abilities, I will be able to get this degree.                         |          |          |          |
| 12. Earning my undergraduate degree will fulfill my more immediate personal and professional needs. |          |          |          |
| 13. I am proud when I make a good grade or do well  |          |          |          |

in a course.

14. Getting my bachelors' degree will allow me to meet my financial goals.

15. Obtaining my bachelors' degree will allow me to expand my interests and abilities.

16. If I complete my degree, I will feel very proud of myself.

## BDI

On this questionnaire are groups of statements. Please read the entire group of statements of each category. Then pick out ONE statement in that group which best describes the way you feel. Check off the number beside the statement you have chosen.

- |                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| 0                | = I do not feel sad  |
| 1                | = I feel sad or blue   |
| 2a               | = I am blue or sad all of the time and I can't snap out of it                      |
| 2b               | = I am so sad or unhappy that it is very painful                                   |
| 3                | = I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it                                     |
|                  |  |
| 2. <u>    </u> 0 | = I am not particularly pessimistic or discouraged about the future                |
| <u>    </u> 1    | = I feel discouraged about the future  |
| <u>    </u> 2a   | = I feel I have nothing to look forward to   |
| <u>    </u> 2b   | = I feel I won't ever get over my troubles   |
| <u>    </u> 3    | = I feel that the future is hopeless and things cannot improve                     |
|                  |  |
| 3. <u>    </u> 0 | = I do not feel like a failure   |
| <u>    </u> 1    | = I feel I have failed more than the average person                                |
| <u>    </u> 2a   | = I feel I have accomplished very little that is worthwhile or that means anything |
| <u>    </u> 2b   | = As I look back on my life, all I can see is a lot of failures                    |
| <u>    </u> 3    | = I feel I am a complete failure as a person                                       |
|                  |  |
| 4. <u>    </u> 0 | = I am not particularly dissatisfied   |
| <u>    </u> 1a   | = I feel bored most of the time  |
| <u>    </u> 1b   | = I don't enjoy things the way I used to   |
| <u>    </u> 2    | = I don't get satisfaction out of anything anymore                                 |
| <u>    </u> 3    | = I am dissatisfied with everything  |
|                  |  |
| 5. <u>    </u> 0 | = I don't feel particularly guilty   |

- 1 =1 feel bad or unworthy a good part of the time  
 2a =1 feel quite guilty  
 2b = I feel bad or unworthy practically of the time now  
 3 =1 feel as though I am very bad or worthless
- 0 =1 don't feel I am being punished  
 1 =1 have a feeling that something bad may happen to me  
 2 =1 feel I am being punished or will be punished  
 3a =1 feel I deserve to be punished  
 3b =1 want to be punished
- 0 =1 don't feel disappointed in myself  
 1a = I am disappointed in myself  
 1b =1 don't like myself  
 2 = I am disgusted with myself  
 3 =1 hate myself
- 0 = I do not feel I am any worse than anybody else  
 1 = I am very critical of myself for my weaknesses or mistakes  
 2a =1 blame myself for everything that goes wrong  
 2b =1 feel I have many bad faults
- 0 =1 don't have thoughts of harming myself  
 1 =1 have thoughts of harming myself but I would not carry them out  
 2a =1 feel I would be better off dead  
 2b =1 have definite plans about committing suicide  
 2c =1 feel my family would be better off if I were dead  
 3 =1 would kill myself if I could
10. 0 =1 don't cry anymore than usual  
 1 =1 cry more now than I used to  
 2 = I cry all the time now. I can't stop it  
 3 =1 used to be able to cry but now I can't cry at all even though I want to
12. 0 = I am no more irritated now than I ever am  
 1 = I get annoyed or irritated more easily than I used to  
 2 = I get irritated all the time  
 3 =1 don't get irritated at all the things that used to irritate me.
12. 0 =1 have not lost interest in other people  
 1 = I am less interested in other people than I used to be  
 2 =1 have lost most of my interest in other people and I have little feeling for them  
 3 =1 have lost all my interest in other people and don't care about them at all

13. \_\_\_0 = I make decisions about as well as ever  
 \_\_\_1 = I am less sure of myself now and try to put off making decisions  
 \_\_\_2 = I can't make decisions anymore without help  
 \_\_\_3 = I can't make decisions at all anymore
14. \_\_\_0 = I don't feel I look any worse than I used to  
 \_\_\_1 = I am worried that I am looking old or unattractive  
 \_\_\_2 = I feel that there permanent changes in my appearance and they make me look unattractive  
 \_\_\_3 = I feel that I am ugly or repulsive looking
15. \_\_\_0 = I can work about as well as before  
 \_\_\_1a = It takes extra effort to get started at doing something  
 \_\_\_1b = I don't work as well as I used to  
 \_\_\_2 = I have to push myself very hard to do anything  
 \_\_\_3 = I can't do any work at all
16. \_\_\_0 = I can sleep as well as usual  
 \_\_\_1 = I wake up more tired in the morning than I used to  
 \_\_\_2 = I wake up 1-2 hours earlier than usual and find it hard to get back to sleep  
 \_\_\_3 = I wake up early every day and can't get more than 5 hours sleep
17. \_\_\_0 = I don't get anymore tired than usual  
 \_\_\_1 = I get tired more easily than I used to  
 \_\_\_2 = I get tired from doing anything  
 \_\_\_3 = I get too tired to do anything
18. \_\_\_0 = My appetite is no worse than usual  
 \_\_\_1 = My appetite is not as good as it used to be  
 \_\_\_2 = My appetite is much worse now  
 \_\_\_3 = I have no appetite at all any more
19. \_\_\_0 = I haven't lost much weight, if any, lately  
 \_\_\_1 = I have lost more than 5 pounds  
 \_\_\_2 = I have lost more than 10 pounds  
 \_\_\_3 = I have lost more than 15 pounds
20. \_\_\_0 = I am no more concerned about my health than usual  
 \_\_\_1 = I am concerned about aches and pains or upset stomach or constipation or other unpleasant feelings in my body  
 \_\_\_2 = I am so concerned with how I feel or what I feel that it's hard to think of much else  
 \_\_\_3 = I am completely absorbed in what I feel

21. \_\_\_0 = I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex  
\_\_\_1 = I am less interested in sex than I used to be  
\_\_\_2 = I am much less interested in sex now  
\_\_\_3 = I have lost interest in sex completely

## APPENDIX C-2

## Materials

QUESTIONNAIRES. SET SESSION TWO.

For each of the following scales, please READ THE INSTRUCTIONS CAREFULLY, and answer as truthfully as you can. Remember, you are free to stop at any point, or skip any questions that make you uncomfortable.

## Background Information

Are you on any of the following medications (please check all that apply):

\_\_\_\_\_ Birth control pill  
\_\_\_\_\_ Anti-inflammatory (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Anti-depressives (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Anti-anxieties (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other Prescription drugs (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been in therapy? (please check the one that best applies)

\_\_\_\_\_ No, I have never been in therapy

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, but I am no longer

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, and still am

If yes, how long ago were you in, or have you been in therapy?

Began \_\_\_\_\_ month/year and continued until \_\_\_\_\_ month/year

ASE

Instructions: Please read each of the statements below carefully and indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement by choosing one of the points among the 4 points below.

- 1 = strong disagreement
- 2 = moderate disagreement
- 3 = slight disagreement
- 4 = neither agreement nor disagreement
- 5 = slight agreement
- 6 = moderate agreement
- 7 = strong agreement

I know I will do well in University.

I will no doubt get the highest grades in my courses.

I expect that I will be among the top in my class.

I deserve more things in my life.

I am convinced that I have what it takes to do really well.

Failing is not an option for me.

If someone asked how to get the top grades, I would certainly know what to answer.

People like me deserve an extra break now and then.

6 7

I can't imagine ever failing an exam.

Things should go my way.

I'll do great, as I have always been one of the best.

I feel entitled to more of everything.

**GE**

1. Please complete the following statement by selecting one of the appropriate boxes:

I think that if I was to take a course similar to PSYC 1001 F my final grade would be:

A+(90-100%)



A (85-89%)



A- (80-84%)



B+ (77-79%)



B (73-76%)



B- (70-72%)



C+ (67-69%)



C (63-66%)



C- (60-62%)



D+ (55-59%)



D (50-54%)



F (0-49%)



2. Please complete the following statement by selecting one of the appropriate boxes.

I think that if I was to take a course similar to PSYC 1001 F my quality point would be:

- 12 ●
- 11 ●
- 10 ●
- 9 ●
- 8 ●
- 7 ●
- 6 ●
- 5 ●
- 4 ●
- 3 ●
- 2 ●
- 1 ●



in a course.

14. Getting my bachelors' degree will allow me to meet my financial goals.

15. Obtaining my bachelors' degree will allow me to expand my interests and abilities.

16. If I complete my degree, I will feel very proud of myself.

## BDI

On this questionnaire are groups of statements. Please read the entire group of statements of each category. Then pick out ONE statement in that group which best describes the way you feel. Check off the number beside the statement you have chosen.

1.     0     = I do not feel sad  
        1     = I feel sad or blue  
        2a    = I am blue or sad all of the time and I can't snap out of it  
        2b    = I am so sad or unhappy that it is very painful  
        3     = I am so sad or unhappy that I can't stand it
  
2.     0     = I am not particularly pessimistic or discouraged about the future  
        1     = I feel discouraged about the future  
        2a    = I feel I have nothing to look forward to  
        2b    = I feel I won't every get over my troubles  
        3     = I feel that the future is hopeless and things cannot improve
  
3.     0     = I do not feel like a failure  
        1     = I feel I have failed more than the average person  
        2a    = I feel I have accomplished very little that is worthwhile or that means  
           anything  
        2b    = As I look back on my life, all I can see is a lot of failures  
        3     = I feel I am a complete failure as a person
  
4.     0     = I am not particularly dissatisfied  
        1a    = I feel bored most of the time  
        1b    = I don't enjoy things the way I used to  
        2     = I don't get satisfaction out of anything anymore  
        3     = I am dissatisfied with everything

5. \_\_\_0 =1 don't feel particularly guilty  
 \_\_\_1 =1 feel bad or unworthy a good part of the time  
 \_\_\_2a =1 feel quite guilty  
 \_\_\_2b = I feel bad or unworthy practically of the time now  
 \_\_\_3 =1 feel as though I am very bad or worthless
6. \_\_\_0 =1 don't feel I am being punished  
 \_\_\_1 =1 have a feeling that something bad may happen to me  
 \_\_\_2 =1 feel I am being punished or will be punished  
 \_\_\_3 a =1 feel I deserve to be punished  
 \_\_\_3b =1 want to be punished
7. \_\_\_0 =1 don't feel disappointed in myself  
 \_\_\_1a = I am disappointed in myself  
 \_\_\_1b =1 don't like myself  
 \_\_\_2 = I am disgusted with myself  
 \_\_\_3 =1 hate myself
8. \_\_\_0 = I do not feel I am any worse than anybody else  
 \_\_\_1 = I am very critical of myself for my weaknesses or mistakes  
 \_\_\_2a =1 blame myself for everything that goes wrong  
 \_\_\_2b =1 feel I have many bad faults
9. \_\_\_0 = I don't have thoughts of harming myself  
 \_\_\_1 = I have thoughts of harming myself but I would not carry them out  
 \_\_\_2a =1 feel I would be better off dead  
 \_\_\_2b =1 have definite plans about committing suicide  
 \_\_\_2c =1 feel my family would be better off if I were dead  
 \_\_\_3 =1 would kill myself if I could
10. \_\_\_0 = I don't cry anymore than usual  
 \_\_\_1 =1 cry more now than I used to  
 \_\_\_2 =1 cry all the time now. I can't stop it  
 \_\_\_3 =1 used to be able to cry but now I can't cry at all even though I want to
12. \_\_\_0 = I am no more irritated now than I ever am  
 \_\_\_1 = I get annoyed or irritated more easily than I used to  
 \_\_\_2 = I get irritated all the time  
 \_\_\_3 =1 don't get irritated at all the things that used to irritate me.
12. \_\_\_0 = I have not lost interest in other people  
 \_\_\_1 = I am less interested in other people than I used to be  
 \_\_\_2 =1 have lost most of my interest in other people and I have little feeling for them  
 \_\_\_3 =1 have lost all my interest in other people and don't care about them at all

13. \_\_\_0 =1 make decisions about as well as ever  
 \_\_\_1 = I am less sure of myself now and try to put off making decisions  
 \_\_\_2 =1 can't make decisions anymore without help  
 \_\_\_3 =1 can't make decisions at all anymore
14. \_\_\_0 =1 don't feel I look any worse than I used to  
 \_\_\_1 = I am worried that I am looking old or unattractive  
 \_\_\_2 =1 feel that there permanent changes in my appearance and they make me look unattractive  
 \_\_\_3 =1 feel that I am ugly or repulsive looking
15. \_\_\_0 =1 can work about as well as before  
 \_\_\_1a = It takes extra effort to get started at doing something  
 \_\_\_1b =1 don't work as well as I used to  
 \_\_\_2 = I have to push myself very hard to do anything  
 \_\_\_3 =1 can't do any work at all
16. \_\_\_0 - I can sleep as well as usual  
 \_\_\_1 =1 wake up more tired in the morning than I used to  
 \_\_\_2 =1 wake up 1-2 hours earlier than usual and find it hard to get back to sleep  
 \_\_\_3 =1 wake up early every day and can't get more than 5 hours sleep
17. \_\_\_0 = I don't get anymore tired than usual  
 \_\_\_1 =1 get tired more easily than I used to  
 \_\_\_2 =1 get tired from doing anything  
 \_\_\_3 = I get too tired to do anything
18. \_\_\_0 = My appetite is no worse than usual  
 \_\_\_1 = My appetite is not as good as it used to be  
 \_\_\_2 = My appetite is much worse now  
 \_\_\_3 =1 have no appetite at all any more
19. \_\_\_0 = I haven't lost much weight, if any, lately  
 \_\_\_1 =1 have lost more than 5 pounds  
 \_\_\_2 =1 have lost more than 10 pounds  
 \_\_\_3 =1 have lost more than 15 pounds
20. \_\_\_0 = I am no more concerned about my health than usual  
 \_\_\_1 = I am concerned about aches and pains or upset stomach or constipation or other unpleasant feelings in my body  
 \_\_\_2 = I am so concerned with how I feel or what I feel that it's hard to think of much

- \_\_\_\_\_3 = I am completely absorbed in what I feel  
 else
21. \_\_\_\_\_0 = I have not noticed any recent change in my interest in sex  
 \_\_\_\_\_1 = I am less interested in sex than I used to be  
 \_\_\_\_\_2 = I am much less interested in sex now  
 \_\_\_\_\_3 = I have lost interest in sex completely

## LOC

Please rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements by circling the number on the rating scale following each one.

1. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends mostly on my ability.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

2. To a great extent my life is controlled by accidental happenings.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

3. I feel like what happens in my life is mostly determined by powerful people.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

4. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on how good a driver I am.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

5. When I make plans, I am almost certain to make them work.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

6. Often there is no chance of protecting my personal interests from bad luck happenings.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

7. When I get what I want, it's usually because I'm lucky.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

8. Although I might have good ability, I will not be given a leadership responsibility without appealing to those in positions of power.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

9. How many friends I have depends on how nice a person I am.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

10. I have often found that what is going to happen will happen.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

11. My life is chiefly controlled by powerful others.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

12. Whether or not I get into a car accident is mostly a matter of luck.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

13. People like myself have very little chance of protecting our personal interests when they conflict with those of strong pressure groups.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

14. It's not always wise for me to plan too far ahead because many things turn out to be a matter of good or bad fortune.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

15. Getting what I want required pleasing those people above me.

Strongly disagree	-3	-2	-1	+1	+2	+3	Strongly agree
-------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----------------

16. Whether or not I get to be a leader depends on whether I'm lucky enough to be in the

right place at the right time.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

17. If important people were to decide they didn't like me, I probably wouldn't make many friends.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

18. I can pretty much determine what will happen in my life.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

19. I am usually able to protect my personal interests.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

20. Whether or not I get into a car accident depends mostly on the other driver.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

21. When I get what I want, it's usually because I worked hard for it.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

22. In order to have my plans work, I make sure that they fit in with the desires of people who have power over me.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

23. My life is determined by my own actions.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

24. It's chiefly a matter of fate whether or not I have a few friends or many friends.

Strongly disagree      -3      -2      -1      +1      +2      +3      Strongly agree

APPENDIX D  
Recruitment Notices

*1. Information to be posted on the course website:*

Want to earn grade-raising credit?

We are conducting research with your PSYC 1001 F course on unrealistic academic expectations, sense of entitlement, academic success expectations and academic outcomes. The study will take place over two (2) sessions, the first before your final course grades are posted, and the second after your final grades are posted, and can be done from the comfort of your own home! The on-line study will consist of completing a series of brief questionnaires, and should take about 15 to 30 minutes per session. You can earn 1% in grade-raising credit towards your PSYC 1001 F course and 1% towards your PSYC 1002 or \$10 in gift certificates. Please note, that it is important that if you do decide to participate that you complete both sessions.

A link to the study website will be posted along with your final course grade, and will be available for 4 week following the posting of the grades. Your participation will be greatly appreciated, as this is the only class we are studying. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact the researcher in one of the manners listed below. Thank you and we hope you will all take the time to participate!

Experiment Title: Your First Year Experience Study

Experiment Number

Experimenter's Name: Evgueni Mamitchev ([emamitch@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:emamitch@connect.carleton.ca), 520-2600 ext. 2692)

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Hymie Anisman ([hanisman@carleton.ca](mailto:hanisman@carleton.ca), 520-2600 ext. 2699)

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Michael Wohl ([mwohl@connect.carleton.ca](mailto:mwohl@connect.carleton.ca); 520-2600 ext. 2908)

*2. Information to be posted along with link to study:*

Now that you know your final course grade and if you are interested in completing the study on unrealistic academic success expectations, mentioned on your course website and in-class, please click on the link below. The study will take about 20 to 30 minutes to complete, and you will receive 1% in grade-raising credit or \$10 in gift vouchers for this session. Please be sure to read the informed consent carefully, and follow all instructions closely. Thank you!