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MAJOR ARTICLE

Permissive parenting and mental health in college students: Mediating effects of academic entitlement

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Student mental health may suffer due to unreasonable expectations associated with academic entitlement; permissive parenting may be one source of these expectations. The authors examined the role of academic entitlement as a mediator of the relationship between permissive parenting and psychological functioning. **Participants:** Participants were 524 undergraduate students at a single institution (52% female; age range = 18–22). Data collection was completed in May 2011. **Methods:** Cross-sectional design. Participants completed online self-report measures of parenting styles, academic entitlement, stress, depressive symptoms, and well-being. **Results:** Permissive parenting was associated with greater academic entitlement and, in turn, to more perceived stress and poorer mental health. Mother/father differences were found in some cases. **Conclusions:** Academic entitlement may partially explain why permissive parenting is detrimentally related to mental health for college students. Implications for academic affairs and counseling include helping students develop an appreciation of the role of self-regulation in college success.

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College student; depression; entitlement; parenting style; stress; well-being

For older adolescents and emerging adults, entrance into college involves a period of adjustment that can last from a few months to a few years. During this period of transition,¹ traditionally aged college students are typically required to take on more personal responsibility as they work toward greater independence.² A growing subset of students, however, is encountering mental health difficulties within the college setting, as evidenced by the increasing numbers of students seeking mental health services through college counseling centers.³ Mental health difficulties, such as depression, stress, and the lack of well-being (such as self-esteem⁴), have been found to negatively correlate with academic success and college persistence.^{4–6} One possible explanation for these mental health difficulties may be significant changes from the expectations of the home environment to those of the college environment. Specifically, the precollege parenting behaviors experienced by some incoming students may not prepare them for the demands of college.

Research supports the assertion that parenting behaviors are associated with outcomes in the college setting.^{7,8} For example, students whose parents are caring, but not overprotective, experience less anxiety, depression, and academic problems as they adjust to college.⁷ Similarly, authoritative parenting behaviors (warm with appropriate control) are linked to lower incidence of college

student depression and anxiety and better adjustment to college, positive goal orientation, and appropriate self-regulatory behaviors,^{1,8–10} whereas permissive parenting behaviors (warm but with low control) are related to greater levels of student negative affect.¹

Permissive parenting and parenting behaviors that share characteristics with permissiveness (eg, enabling, overindulgence, overresponsiveness to perceived children's needs) may particularly hinder students' preparedness for the independence expected at college. Permissive parents tend to avoid limit-setting with their children, allowing children to control their own behaviors with few maturity demands.¹¹ Baumrind¹¹ states that permissive parents view themselves as resources to be used by their children and do not insist that their children conform to external standards.

Baumrind¹² asserts that permissive parenting was introduced as a positive antidote to parenting control in the latter half of the 20th century. The alternative viewpoint was that parental control stifled the development of children's self-will, which in turn affects children's happiness.¹² Parenting with indulgence may also be employed in order to increase children's self-esteem, particularly among the more elite¹³—a by-product of the self-esteem "movement," wherein the avoidance of negative appraisals and criticism was thought to protect children's self-worth.^{14,15}

Of concern, however, is how efforts to increase self-esteem lead to the *artificial* inflation of self-worth, a characteristic with strong associations to narcissism and entitlement.¹⁴ Baumrind suggests that permissive parenting leads children to become selfish, demanding, and inconsiderate,¹² and some research indicates that permissive parenting predicts children's narcissism.¹⁶ Overparenting, which shares the trait of unnecessarily high responsiveness to the perceived—but often not real—needs of children (becoming a “resource” as per Baumrind's¹¹ depiction), has been associated with higher levels of narcissism and entitlement among adult children.^{17,18}

Entitlement, particularly that which is evidenced in the academic setting (“academic entitlement”), may create dissonance for students who are negotiating the college setting. Academic entitlement refers to students' belief that they are owed more in the academic setting than is commensurate with their effort,¹⁹ as well as demanding attitudes towards college authorities.²⁰ Attitudes of academic entitlement are the cause of some administrative consternation and concern, perceived as problematic behaviors that consume professors' time and present obstacles to student success.^{15,21} Research confirms that academic entitlement shares negative associations with student mental health, behaviors, and attitudes in the college setting. For example, entitled students experience anxiety about grades and are more likely to cheat in their classes.²⁰ Further, entitled students are likely to have lower genuine self-esteem²² and are more likely to endorse academically inappropriate or uncivil behaviors^{22,23} and evaluate assessors poorly who give them negative feedback on tests.²² Sex differences may also exist; academic entitlement is more prevalent among male students.^{20,24}

Entitlement among college students may cause problems because, in part, entitlement is associated with an external locus of control,²² which includes a tendency to credit external forces for one's success and blame others for one's failures. Certainly, this locus becomes problematic when transitioning to a setting, such as college, wherein expectations for self-regulation, an internally focused set of behaviors and attitudes (eg, goal-setting, self-monitoring, and using task strategies²⁵), are high.

Although academic entitlement was related to authoritarian parenting style in Greenberger and colleagues'²⁰ research, we propose that permissive parenting behavior, with its emphasis on meeting children's perceived needs and low insistence on complying with external demands, may also share associations with academic entitlement.

The purpose of our study, therefore, was to examine the potential mediating effect of entitlement on the association between permissive parenting behaviors and measures of college student mental health. In order to

obtain a well-rounded understanding of mental health, assessment of both the presence (well-being) and absence (depression, stress) of good mental health were measured. Further, because previous research indicates that the effects of parenting styles differ according to sex of the parent as well as the child,¹ we conducted separate analyses by parent and student sex. We predicted that, in general, academic entitlement would mediate the positive relationship between permissive parenting and poor student mental health, such that greater entitlement would strengthen the deleterious relationship between permissive parenting and poor mental health. Further, we hypothesized that these associations would be stronger among parents and children who share the same sex.

Methods

Participants

Participants included 524 undergraduate students at a southeast, mid-sized public university. Participants enrolled in various psychology or education courses during the 2010–2011 academic year were recruited through an electronic data collection system that allows potential participants to determine which studies they would like to participate in, and then voluntarily enroll. Participants were awarded research credits that were used either as extra credit or to fulfill a course requirement. In this institutional review board–approved study, participants completed surveys online in a location of their choosing, after having first clicked through an electronic informed consent. Completion of the survey took approximately 30 minutes; data regarding participants is detailed in Results.

Measures

The Parental Authority Questionnaire (PAQ)²⁶ assesses levels of authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive behaviors evidenced by each parent, under the assumption that no parent's behaviors cleanly and consistently fall under a single parenting style. The PAQ consists of 30 items and 3 subscales (10 items per subscale) that measure authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive parenting behaviors and characteristics. Statements are phrased in the past tense and often use the phrase “As I was growing up,” therefore assessing past parenting behaviors. Participants were instructed to give a rating for each parent or primary male/female caregiver. Respondents rated items on a 5-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree*), resulting in separate scores for mothers (or female caregivers) and fathers (or male caregivers). Higher scores on each subscale indicate greater levels of that

parenting style; for the present study, only permissive parenting scores were examined (sample item: “While I was growing up my [mother] felt that in a well-run home the children should have their way in the family as often as the parents do”). Internal consistencies for this subscale in the original scale development study, using an undergraduate student sample, were acceptable (Mothers’ Permissiveness, $\alpha = .75$; Fathers’ Permissiveness, $\alpha = .74$)²⁶; for our study, internal consistencies were slightly stronger (Mothers’ Permissiveness, $\alpha = .79$; Fathers’ Permissiveness, $\alpha = .81$).

The Academic Entitlement (AE) scale²⁰ consists of 15 items that measure respondents’ agreement, on a 6-point Likert scale (*strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*), to statements reflecting academic entitlement. Higher scores on the AE scale reflect greater levels of academic entitlement (sample item: “A professor should be willing to lend me his/her course notes if I ask for them”). Original tests of the scale using undergraduate students yielded excellent internal consistency ($\alpha = .87$)²⁰; internal consistency for the AE scale in our study was similarly strong, $\alpha = .90$.

The scales of Psychological Well-Being (PWB)–short version^{27–29} consists of 39 items that constitute 6 scales, all of which demonstrated acceptable internal consistency with an undergraduate sample in the original short-scale development study: Autonomy ($\alpha = .81$ in original study²⁷), Environmental Mastery ($\alpha = .78$)²⁷, Personal Growth ($\alpha = .72$)²⁷, Positive Relations With Others ($\alpha = .80$)²⁷, Purpose in Life ($\alpha = .81$)²⁷, and Self-Acceptance ($\alpha = .81$)²⁷. Higher scores on the Autonomy scale indicate independence and ability to resist social pressures to think in a particular way (sample: “I judge myself by what I think is important, not by the values of what others think is important”; 8 items, $\alpha = .76$ in our study). Higher scores on the Environmental Mastery scale indicate a sense of competence in managing the environment and control over external activities (“In general, I feel I am in charge of the situation in which I live”; 6 items, $\alpha = .70$). Higher scores on the Personal Growth scale indicate an openness to new experiences and a sense of one’s potential (“I think it is important to have new experiences that challenge how you think about yourself and the world”; 7 items, $\alpha = .79$). Higher scores on the Positive Relations With Others scale indicate warm, satisfying, and trusting relationships with others, as well as a concern about the welfare of others (“I feel like I get a lot out of my friendships”; 6 items, $\alpha = .83$). Higher scores on the Purpose in Life scale indicate a sense of directedness and meaning to life (“I have a sense of direction and purpose in life”; 6 items, $\alpha = .84$). Higher scores on the Self-acceptance scale indicate a positive attitude and acceptance toward the self (“I like most aspects of my personality”; 6 items, $\alpha = .83$).

The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale (CES-D)³⁰ is a 20-item scale that measures depressive symptoms. Participants rated their experiences of depressive symptoms within the past week (sample: “I had trouble keeping my mind on what I was doing”) using a 4-point Likert scale (*rarely or none of the time, some or a little of the time, occasionally or a moderate amount of time, and most or all of the time*). Higher scores indicate greater levels of depressive symptomatology. In a recent study of undergraduates, the CES-D demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha = .91$)³¹; internal consistency for the CES-D in our study was also $\alpha = .91$.

The Perceived Stress Scale (PSS)³² consists of 14 items that measure respondents’ experience of stress symptoms within the past month (sample: “In the last month, how often have you felt nervous and ‘stressed’?”). Respondents rated each item on a 5-point Likert scale (*never, almost never, sometimes, fairly often, and very often*); higher scores indicated greater levels of stress. Previous research with college students indicates adequate internal consistency ($\alpha = .84$ – $.86$).³² Internal consistency for the PSS in our study was $\alpha = .78$.

Statistical analyses

One-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were run to assess for sex differences on the mediator variable, entitlement, as well as 2 outcome variables, symptoms of depression and anxiety, which have historically demonstrated sex differences. As well, zero-order correlations among study variables were run separately for male and female participants (Table 1). Subsequently, the mediating role of academic entitlement on the relation between permissive parenting and adjustment was tested, and, additionally, we examined sex as a potential moderator of the mediation effect. Simple and moderated mediation models were tested using a bias-corrected bootstrapping method, with the assistance of the PROCESS macro for SPSS.³³ Per recommendations by Hayes,³⁴ the number of bootstrap samples for bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals (CIs) was set at $k = 5000$, and significance was set at a 95% CI. Thus, if the bootstrapped CI does not contain zero, we may conclude with 95% confidence that the indirect effects of the independent variable on the outcome variables is not zero, and reject the null.

Results

Fifty-two percent of the 524 participants were female ($n = 271$). Respondents ranged in age from 18 to 22 ($M = 19.41$, $SD = 1.40$) and were predominantly Caucasian (81%, $n = 427$), followed by African American (8%,

Table 1. Zero-order Pearson correlations for male and female participants among measures of permissive parenting, academic entitlement, and college adjustment.^a

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Permissive Mother	—										
2. Permissive Father	.49** (.62)**	—									
3. Academic Entitlement	.26** (.43**)	.30** (.32)**	—								
4. CES-D	.12 (.16)**	.14* (.08)	.21** (.37)**	—							
5. PSS	-.01 (.10)	.05 (.13)*	.11 (.31)**	.70** (.66)**	—						
6. PWB Autonomy	-.03 (-.19)**	-.16** (-.22)**	-.25** (-.32)**	-.32** (-.41)**	-.31** (-.41)**	—					
7. PWB Environmental Mastery	-.12 (-.16)**	-.15* (-.15)*	-.22** (-.30)**	-.52** (-.53)**	-.58** (-.59)**	.51** (.58)**	—				
8. PWB Personal Growth	-.23** (-.23)**	-.28** (-.21)**	-.33** (-.41)**	-.35** (-.39)**	-.26** (-.32)**	.46** (.54)**	.55** (.56)**	—			
9. PWB Positive Relations With Others	-.06 (-.16)**	-.17** (-.14)*	-.09 (-.21)**	-.48** (-.48)**	-.42** (-.44)**	.41** (.43)**	.51** (.55)**	.39** (.47)**	—		
10. PWB Purpose in Life	-.20** (-.18)**	-.19** (-.19)**	-.22** (-.32)**	-.43** (-.51)**	-.42** (-.50)**	.44** (.53)**	.71** (.77)**	.69** (.63)**	.44** (.55)**	—	
11. PWB Self-acceptance	-.13* (-.18)**	-.18** (-.14)*	-.18** (-.36)**	-.58** (-.62)**	-.52** (-.57)**	.55** (.57)**	.73** (.78)**	.68** (.63)**	.58** (.68)**	.78** (.80)**	—

Note. CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; PWB = scales of Psychological Well-Being (scale name follows).
^aTop values are for female participants ($n = 271$); values in parentheses are for male participants ($n = 253$).

* $p \leq .05$; ** $p \leq .01$.

$n = 42$), Hispanic (2.7%, $n = 14$), and Asian (2.7%, $n = 13$). All other respondents (5%, $n = 28$) classified themselves as “other.” All respondents included in this data set provided ratings for a primary female caregivers, and all but 2 (99.6%, $n = 522$) provided ratings for a primary male caregiver.

At the bivariate level, for both males and females in our study, greater permissive parenting from mothers/primary female caregivers and fathers/primary male caregivers (hereafter referred to simply as “mothers” and “fathers”) was associated with higher levels of academic entitlement, and, for both sexes, having a permissive father was negatively related to all of the psychological well-being subscales. For male participants, mothers’ permissiveness was negatively related to all PWB subscales, whereas for female participants, mothers’ permissiveness was negatively related to all PWB subscales except for Autonomy, Environmental Mastery, and Positive Relations With Others. For females, but not males, permissive fathering was associated with depressive symptoms, whereas for males, but not females, permissive mothering was related to more depressive symptoms. For both males and females, academic entitlement was associated with more depressive symptoms, and with lower levels of all PWB subscales, except for, in the case of females, positive relations with others. In addition, for both sexes, perceived stress was related to greater depressive symptoms and to lower levels of all PWB subscales. For males, academic entitlement was related to perceived stress (see Table 1).

In ANOVA models, and as hypothesized, men endorsed significantly greater levels of entitlement ($M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.96$) than women ($M = 2.62$, $SD = 0.91$; $F[1, 522] = 18.10$, $p < .01$). Further, women ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.52$) indicated significantly higher levels of stress than men ($M = 2.75$, $SD = 0.49$; $F[1, 522] = 4.79$, $p < .05$). Yet, despite these outcomes, no tests of moderated mediation indicated significant moderation by participant sex; thus, total, direct, and indirect effects (through academic entitlement) of permissive parenting on outcome variables are presented and discussed collapsed across participant sex (Table 2).

There was partial support for our mediation hypotheses. To begin, for mothers’ and fathers’ permissive parenting, academic entitlement was a significant mediator for the outcomes of depressive symptoms and PWB Environmental Mastery, as each total effect point estimate dropped out of significance upon inclusion of academic entitlement as a mediator, and as no CIs crossed zero. Whether originating from a student’s mother or father, permissive parenting was related to academic entitlement and, in turn, to greater depressive symptoms and less environmental mastery. Although no father-specific full mediation findings emerged, the mediating effect of academic entitlement on the relation between permissive parenting and PWB Autonomy, PWB Positive Relations With Others, and PWB Self-acceptance was significant for mothers; in each case, more permissive parenting was related to greater entitlement and, in turn, to poorer psychological well-being.

Table 2. Unstandardized regression coefficients for total, direct, and indirect effects of permissive parenting on college adjustment measures through academic entitlement.^a

Outcome measure	(a) Direct effect of permissive parenting on academic entitlement	(b) Direct effect of academic entitlement	(c) Total effect of permissive parenting	(c') Direct effect of permissive parenting	(ab) Indirect effect of permissive parenting (through academic entitlement)	Bootstrap 95% confidence intervals (LL, UL)	Total effect model fit (<i>R</i> ²)
CES-D	.52 [*] .44[*]	.15 [*] .15[*]	.11 [*] .08[*]	.03 .01	.08 [*] .07[*]	.05, .12 .04, .10	.02 [*] .01[*]
PSS	—	.11 [*] .10[*]	.03 .05	-.03 .01	.06 [*] .04[*]	.03, .09 .02, .07	.00 .01
PWB Autonomy	—	-.23 [*] -.20[*]	-.12 [*] -.21[*]	.00 -.12[*]	-.12 [*] -.09[*]	-.17, -.08 -.13, -.05	.01 [*] .03[*]
PWB Environmental Mastery	—	-.20 [*]	-.16 [*]	-.06	-.10 [*]	-.16, -.05	.02 [*]
PWB Personal Growth	—	-.19 [*] -.29[*] -.28[*]	-.17 [*] -.30[*] -.30[*]	-.08 -.15[*] -.18[*]	-.08 [*] -.15[*] -.12[*]	-.14, -.04 -.21, -.10 -.17, -.08	.02 [*] .06[*] .07[*]
PWB Positive Relations With Others	—	-.14 [*]	-.16 [*]	-.09	-.07 [*]	-.13, -.02	.01 [*]
PWB Purpose in Life	—	-.12 [*] -.23[*] -.23[*]	-.23 [*] -.28[*] -.25[*]	-.18 [*] -.16[*] -.15[*]	-.05 [*] -.12[*] -.10[*]	-.10, -.01 -.19, -.07 -.16, -.06	.02 [*] .04[*] .04[*]
PWB Self-acceptance	—	-.23 [*] -.22[*]	-.21 [*] -.21[*]	-.10 -.11[*]	-.12 [*] -.10[*]	-.18, -.06 -.15, -.05	.03 [*] .03[*]

Note. CES-D = Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale; PSS = Perceived Stress Scale; PWB = scales of Psychological Well-Being (scale name follows).
^aTop values in each cell are for Mothers' Permissiveness; bottom (bold) values in each cell are for Father's Permissiveness.
^{*}*p* ≤ .05.

For several models, the total effect remained significant when academic entitlement was accounted for, suggesting partial mediation, including for PWB Personal Growth and PWB Purpose of Life, for both mothers and fathers. In each case, more permissive parenting was related to greater entitlement and, in turn, to less well-being; of note, partial mediation suggests that permissive parenting may operate through one or more other mediators (or a more complex model) for its remaining effects on the outcomes. Partial mediation for fathers only also emerged. Permissive parenting by fathers was related to PWB Autonomy, PWB Positive Relations With Others, and PWB Self-acceptance, at least in part, via academic entitlement.

Finally, Hayes³⁴ asserts that significant indirect effects among variables can exist, even when there is no evidence of a direct association between the independent variable and the outcome measure. Such an indirect-only effect emerged between permissive parenting and perceived stress; there were no significant total or direct effects of permissive parenting on the PSS, and permissive parenting is related to stress only via its influence on academic entitlement.

Comment

We examined the relations between permissive parenting, academic entitlement, and positive and negative mental health outcomes in a sample of college students.

In general, at the bivariate level, permissive parenting was related to higher scores of academic entitlement and lower scores on all markers of well-being, particularly for male respondents. Academic entitlement was associated with greater levels of depressive symptoms and less of most types of psychological well-being. Interestingly, with regard to depression, cross-sex relations existed with permissive parenting; that is, for females, fathers' permissiveness was related to depressive symptoms and, for males, mothers' permissiveness was linked to more depression.

In mediation models, also supporting our hypotheses, we found that the negative effects of permissive parenting on student mental health can be explained, in part, by the sense of entitlement students have. Specifically, academic entitlement appeared to account for much of the relationship between permissive parenting by both mothers and fathers and student outcomes of depression and a low sense of environmental mastery. Further, academic entitlement significantly mediated the effects of permissive parenting by mothers on poorer student outcomes in the areas of autonomy, relationships with others, and self-acceptance.

In other cases, academic entitlement played a partial role in the relationship between permissive parenting and student mental health outcomes. For example, academic entitlement partially mediated the relationship between permissive parenting and poorer student well-being in the areas of personal growth and purpose of life.

For permissive fathering, academic entitlement partially mediated the relationship between these parenting practices and lesser well-being endorsements of autonomy, positive relationships with others, and self-acceptance. Further, there was an indirect effect of permissive parenting on student stress through academic entitlement. These partial mediations and indirect effects reflect the undoubtedly complex paths that lie between parenting practices and outcomes such as student adjustment. In the instance of the indirect effect of permissive parenting on student stress via academic entitlement, for example, there may be other, positive gains from permissive parenting, such as a sense of protection or acceptance, that counterbalance its effects, via entitlement, on stress.³⁴

Our findings indicate that permissive parenting shares a relationship with, and may influence, academic entitlement among college students. This relationship may develop because permissive parenting, wherein parents anticipate and avert obstacles or problems for their children,¹¹ inflates children's self-worth to artificial levels. Children, thus, develop with the anticipation that everyone should likewise remove obstacles from their paths, rather than challenging them to overcome obstacles on their own.

In turn, academic entitlement was related to poor adjustment and, indeed, served as a partial or full mediator of most relations between permissive parenting and poor psychological adjustment, including feeling less happy and more stressed. It is possible that students who feel academically entitled approach college with unrealistic expectations about a smoother path, perhaps modeled by their permissive parents, or the lack of a need to conform to the standards of others¹¹ and, thus, experience cognitive dissonance and frustration when challenged with an academic setting that requires self-sufficiency and good self-regulatory skills for success. Importantly, permissive parenting, via entitlement, appears to contribute to a number of characteristics that may impede academic success, including less sense of meaning and purpose in life, less autonomy and mastery of the world around them, and poorer relationships with others.

Although this study provides interesting evidence to increase our understanding about how permissive parenting might result in poorer college student adjustment/mental health, caution must certainly be exercised given the regional specificity of the sample, its limited cultural and racial diversity, and its cross-sectional and self-report nature. It is possible, for instance, that permissive parenting produces more positive than negative effects for students of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds, as has been suggested by research regarding

Spanish and South American adolescents.^{35,36} Further, bidirectionality may be a possibility and, as well, there may be other, unmeasured contributing factors that should be assessed in future research. Based on past theoretical models and studies, however, and given that parental practices are exerted long prior to college attendance, it is intuitive to presume that parenting likely precedes a sense of academic entitlement and mental health in emerging adulthood.

Despite these cautions, our study points to important individual differences that may develop among college students, in part as a consequence of parenting practices. Academic entitlement reflects an external locus of control,²² an attributional orientation that is strongly related to mental health concerns,³⁷ and is considered a risk factor for college retention.³⁸ Given that retention relies largely on students' academic and social integration,³⁹ we can intuit that failure to successfully engage interpersonally and academically, perhaps as a result of sense of entitlement, may intensify mental health outcomes such as depression, stress, and a lowered sense of well-being. However, future research specifically targeting the interrelationship of entitlement, academic engagement, academic performance, and mental health outcomes would provide more clarity in the understanding of the relationships among these factors.

Fortunately, the external locus of control evidenced through academic entitlement, that is, attributing poor academic performance to the instructor or course, is seen as malleable.¹⁸ Research suggests several steps that colleges and universities, guided by their counseling centers and offices of academic affairs, can take to move an attribution of responsibility away from external factors toward personal control.

Orientation activities that provide an overview of behaviors related to successful navigation of academic expectations can help students begin college with a clear understanding of their personal responsibility. For instance, orientation programs or seminars can focus on highly controllable student behaviors related to academic success, such as time management and study skills,²² the effectiveness of which may become evident when students are given opportunities to share their experiences and strategies with one another.³⁹ Similar opportunities for peer comparisons of the effects of effort and strategy on academic outcomes can occur within learning communities or freshman interest groups.³⁹ Chowning and Campbell²² further suggest that obtaining early indices of student academic entitlement may help to identify those students who have the most maladaptive expectations in need of correction. Counseling centers might also use such indices, or employ their own, in order to assess and, if indicated, address incorrect expectations

among their current clients who are struggling with depression, anxiety, or stress.

Programmatically, service-learning activities, which have been shown to lead to academic and cognitive gains for students, can also redirect locus of control.³⁹ Not only does participation in service learning help students regain a sense of altruism,⁴⁰ but it also provides evidence to students that they have the capacity, through their own actions, to create change.³⁹ In order for service learning to be an effective strategy, the focus of these activities should emphasize student reflection rather than the benefits of adding such activities to a resume.⁴⁰

At the course level, instructional practices can emphasize clear communication of expectations and underscore the direct impact that a student's effort has on course performance.²² Instructors should remain supportive by providing frequent feedback using effort-based attributional statements⁴¹ while insisting on work from students that extends beyond their own experiences and viewpoints.⁴⁰ Instructors can become mentors for struggling students, a successful practice for student retention,³⁹ taking opportunities to emphasize students' personal responsibility and empowerment.³⁸ At a less intensive level, instructors can work to increase students' sense of personal control with brief, regular check-in assignments that require students to compare their performance to course expectations, reflect on what has worked for them (or not), and describe adjustments they will make to enhance their course success.

Finally, college counseling centers may wish to work with local high schools' college preparatory programs to include the promotion of parenting practices that prepare future college students for self-regulation and responsibility. Such practices can include the scaffolding of skills such as goal-setting, organization, planning, and persistence in the face of challenge or failure.⁴²

Academic entitlement appears, in part, to be related to expectations of special treatment derived from permissive parents; however, such expectations are likely to be incompatible with those in most university classes and, thus, may contribute to poor psychological adjustment as awareness of the dissonance increases. Fortunately, universities have many approaches within their power to combat this sense of entitlement and external locus of control, such that students can come to understand how effective self-regulatory strategies can positively impact their academic success and, hence, their mental health and college adjustment.

Conflict of interest disclosure

The authors have no conflicts of interest to report. The authors confirm that the research presented in this article met the

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