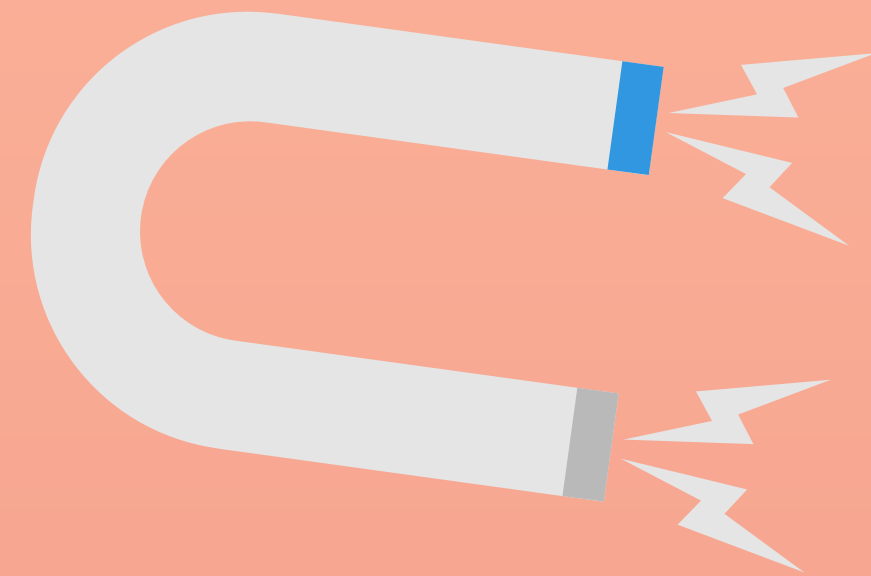


# How the Student-as-Consumer Mindset Effects Education

1



By Vincent P. Calabrese



Understand the Student-as-Consumer

- University
- Student

Privatization

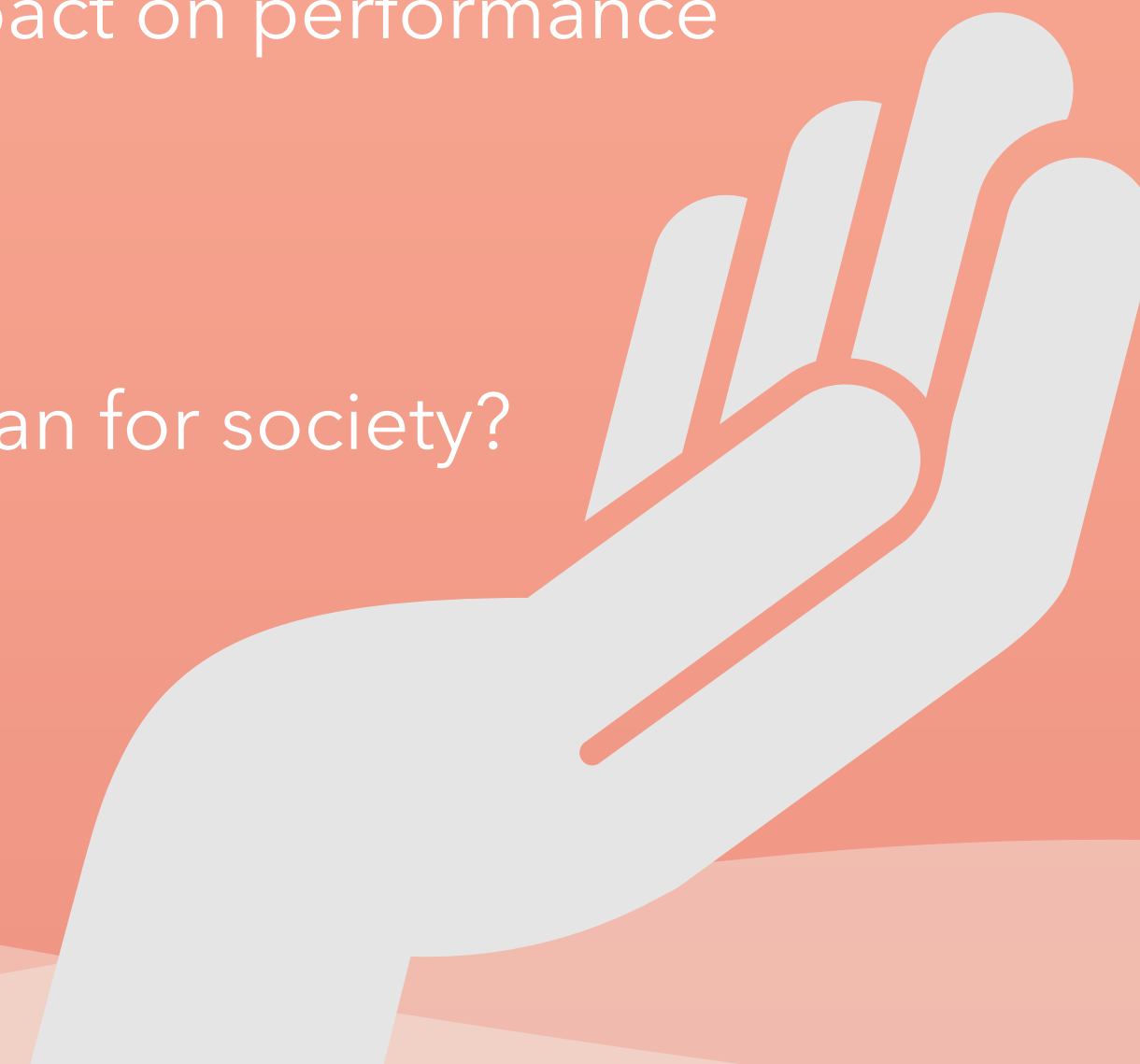
major choice, academic structure

Impact on motivation

Impact on performance

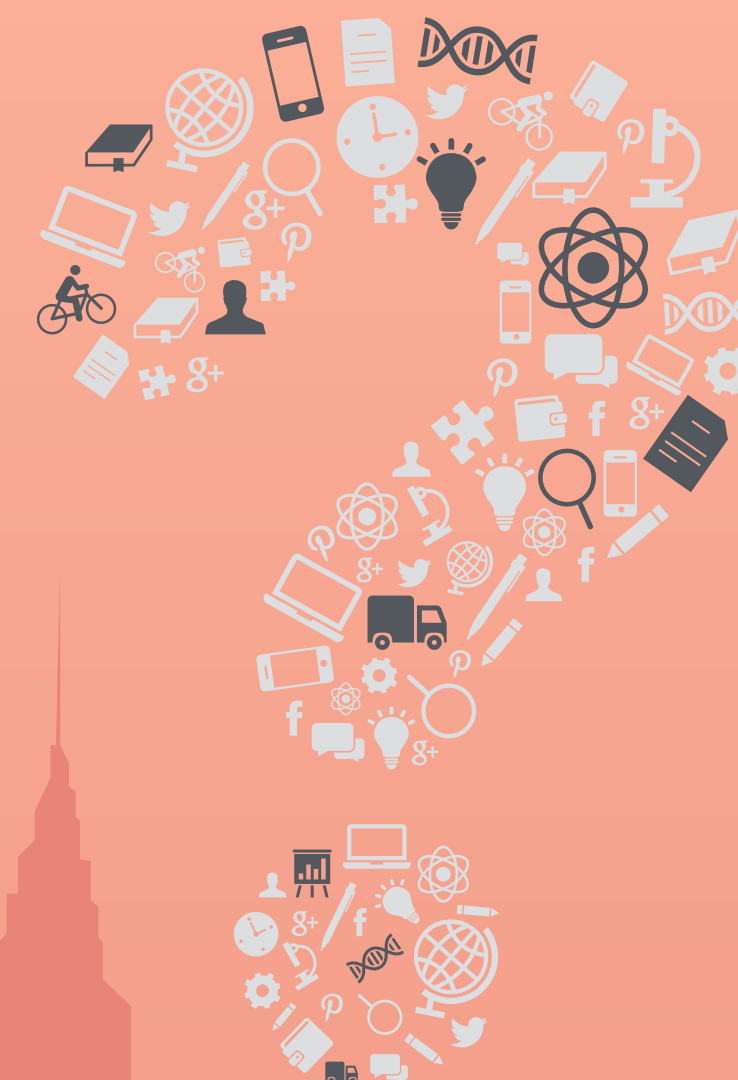
Impact on wellbeing

What does it mean for society?



# Research Question

Are the consumer ideals that intrude modern institutions restricting intrinsic motivation and therefore ruining the value of education?



# Theory

4

**Student-as-Consumer** - perception that students are consumers of their education (Molesworth et al. 277; Cheney et al. n. pag; Bunce et al. 1)

- Universities have and promote it
- Increasingly common in students

“To have” mode of existence versus “to be” mode of existence - *To Have or to Be?*  
by Erich Fromm

- To *have* focuses on possessions, provoked by consumerism = BAD
- To *be* focuses on realizing inherent potentiality = GOOD

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) - Richard M. Ryan and Edward L. Deci

- Intrinsic motivation
- Extrinsic motivation
- Performance and wellbeing; proper cognitive functioning



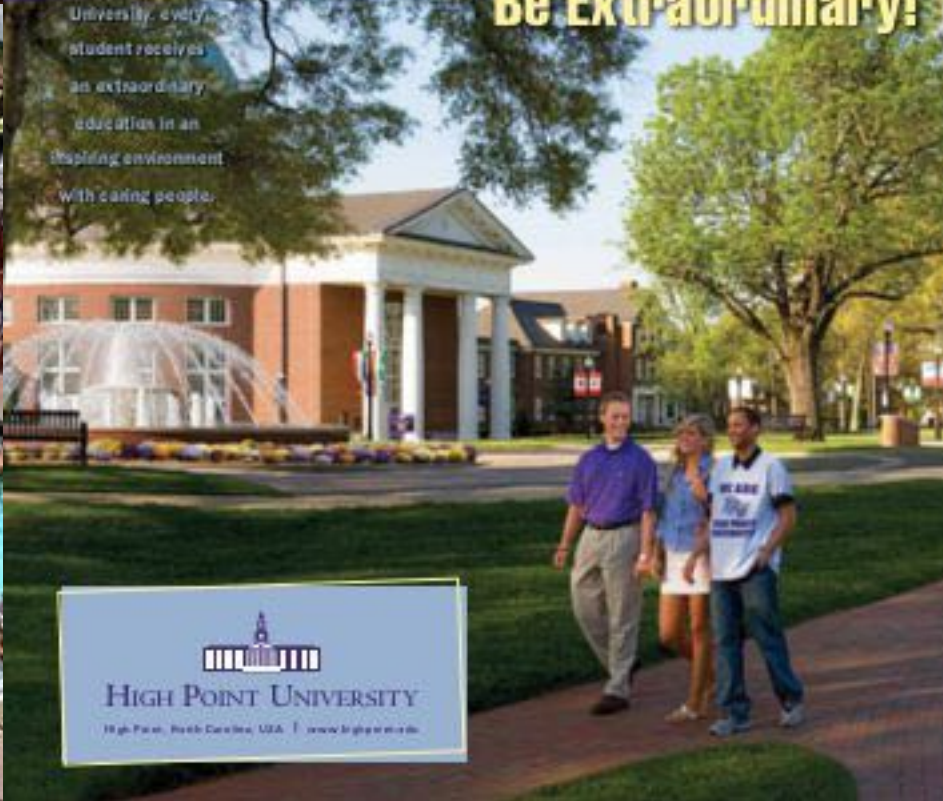




# HIGH POINT

Be Extraordinary!

At High Point University, every student receives an extraordinary education in an inspiring environment with caring people.



## \$160 Million

in New Construction & Expansion

Undergraduate Sciences Building, Arena & Conference Center, Residence Hall

HIGH POINT  
UNIVERSITY

# Case: High-Point University (Jeffrey Selingo)

**Marketization** - running a college like a growth business

The **Amenities** Race

- Too much spending
- Recreation/Academics
- "With all the amenities, the school can't be beat"

"I want my children to be exposed to the finer things... Most parents do." (Nido Qubein qtd. in Matlack)

- Paradigm shift

"a school with OK academics, packaged in a dazzling campus with pricey extras and clean-cut rich kids" - Matlack



# Argument

6

Education becomes **extrinsic**, like a tangible product.. It is an intrinsic **process**

*Less academic performance and wellbeing according to SDT & Molesworth et al.*

Negative effects on unconscious mind

- No long-term fulfillment
- I am = what I consume (Fromm)
- "seek to 'have a degree' rather than 'be learners'" (Molesworth et al. 278)

Choosing majors for money, do not align with interests

- More STEM majors, pay higher
- One-third of students choose a major that they are interested in (Jones & Jones 5)
- Those with majors that align with their personality and interests are more likely to earn higher grades, persist in their program, graduate on time, and be more satisfied and successful in their career



# Counter-Argument

7

Schools like High Point still maintain good test scores

- Response: limited in diversity and choose affluent students who barely need financial aid


Consumer-approach can be good because students' needs are tended to more: "The customer is always right"

- Distances students from academics, momentary customer satisfaction is confused with high-quality education/ongoing educational improvement

The  
*Customer*  
is always  
Right



## Conclusion: Get rid of the “student-as-consumer”



The “student-as-consumer” approach to education is related to Fromm’s *to have* mode and extrinsic motivation as described in SDT

Reductionistic in its concept of the educational *process* (not illusion that it is a product)

Detrimental to the intrinsic motivation and value needed within education for proper performance and wellbeing



# Works Cited

Bidwell, Allie. "More Students Earning STEM Degrees, Report Shows." U.S. News, 2015, <http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2015/01/27/more-students-earning-degrees-in-stem-fields-report-shows>

Matlack, Carol. "Bubble U.: High Point University." Bloomberg, 2012, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2012-04-19/bubble-u-dot-high-point-university>

Bunce, Louise, Amy Baird, and Siân E. Jones. "The student-as-consumer approach in higher education and its effects on academic performance." Studies in Higher Education (2016): 1-21.

Cheney, George, Jill McMillan, and Roy Schwartzman. "Should We Buy the 'Student-As-Consumer' Metaphor?" The Montana Professor, vol. 7, no. 3, 1997, pp. 8-11.

Fromm, Erich. To Have or To Be?. Harper & Row, 1976.

Jones, L. K., and J. W. Jones. "Personality-College Major Match and Student Success: A Guide for Professionals Helping Youth and Adults Who Are in College or Are College-Bound." The Career Key, 2012, pp. 3-34.

Molesworth, Mike, Nixon, Elizabeth & Richard Scullion. "Having, being and higher education: the marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer." Teaching in Higher Education, vol. 14, no. 3, pp. 277-287.

Rosenberg, Erika L. "Mindfulness and consumerism." Psychology and Consumer Culture: The Struggle for a Good Life in a Materialistic World, edited by Tim Kasser and Allen D. Kanner. Washington, Psychological Association, 2004, pp. 107-125.

Ryan, Richard M., and Edward L. Deci. "Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation, social development, and well-being." American psychologist 55.1 (2000): 68-78.

Selingo, Jeffrey. "College unbound." New Harvest 256 (2013).