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Author

HELLMANN, Jens H. (JUCKS, Regina)

Title

The crowd in mind and crowded minds : an experimental investigation of crowding effects on students' views regarding tuition fees in Germany / Jens H. Hellmann ; Regina Jucks

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Abstract

In higher education, just amounts of tuition fees are often a topic of heated debate among different groups such as students, university teachers, administrative staff, and policymakers. We investigated whether unpleasant situations that students often experience at university due to social crowding can affect students' views on the justified amount of tuition fees at universities. We report two experiments on whether conditions that lead to experienced crowding in higher education can affect how students cognitively deal with a given topic. Experiment 1 (N = 80) showed that the mere cognitive activation of crowdedness in text stories about situations related to student activities influenced prospective students' estimates of what are justified university tuition fees. In Experiment 2 (N = 72), student participants wrote an essay on tuition fees in a small versus large room in groups of three versus six persons. Here, results showed that students together with relatively many others in a small room estimated higher tuition fees to be justified than participants in all other experimental conditions. We discuss the implications of the present findings for the configuration of classes in

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higher education. (HRK / Abstract übernommen) Hellmann, Jens H., E-Mail:
jens.hellmann@uni-muenster.de