

Mind the Gap: A Mixed Methods Study of Student Satisfaction
With Faculty Performance and Course Instruction in Higher Education

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Dedication

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Abstract

Students in higher education are increasingly perceived as customers by both administrators and themselves. Perceived as paying customers, student satisfaction with their experience in higher education has become a topic of greater interest to stakeholders, first and foremost to administrators interested in improving it. While many factors can influence student satisfaction, previous research highlights the specific importance of quality course instruction. Ironically, a leading complaint made by students is poor quality course instruction. The gap that exists between what students need, desire, and expect and what they get often results in feelings of dissatisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction and with higher education overall. The degree to which customers' needs, desires, and expectations are met plays an important role toward influencing their overall satisfaction level. Although increased interest has resulted in considerable efforts to study this topic from different vantage points, it has not been adequately studied as a human phenomenon. Consequently, not enough is yet known about what it means to be a customer satisfied with course instruction in higher education. Recognizing the needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty is an important step toward developing course instruction students evaluate as satisfying. This study used a quantitative approach to identify a class of nearly 100 students who were highly satisfied with a class they took as well as a qualitative approach to study their lived experiences. This study was designed to develop a deeper understanding of what happens to students during a course they evaluated as highly satisfying and from which they "learned a lot." Data were analyzed using grounded theory method to uncover the

needs, desires, and expectations they had and were met by their instructor. Findings were used to create a theoretical model explaining how a highly satisfying learning experience unfolded for these students.

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Chapter 1. Introduction to the Research

Teaching is a mysterious process...we are not sure how it works. We explain things, but even our best explanations may not help. Then, out of the blue and for no apparent reason, learning just happens. Good teaching is fragile. It might not be a good idea to immobilize it on a piece of magnetic videotape, trapped like a firefly in a bottle. The light might fade for lack of air.

[But...], part of our nature wants to understand, wants to put the mysterious on a firmer, factual footing...and far from destroying the light, facts give us light. That is why we crave them, why their edge is sweet. (Zull, 2002, p. 5)

Introduction to the Problem

Young people and older people alike often come to a point in their lives when the pursuit of higher education seems to be the next step. What motivates people to pursue such a path varies, and research suggests that students pursue higher education for both intrinsic and extrinsic reasons (Pisarik, 2009). For some, going to college is the obvious next step since a degree must be earned to realize one's professional or financial aspirations. For other students, it is based on the need to satisfy parental or societal expectations. And yet for others, the decision to pursue postsecondary education is in response to a calling. Students are motivated to pursue higher education for many different reasons (Letcher & Neves, 2010).

Regardless of the reason, learning is an expected outcome, and options for doing so through postsecondary institutions have increased dramatically (Fink, 2003). With more providers of postsecondary education, competition for students has increased significantly. To meet the challenges of the new marketplace of higher education,

institutions are being encouraged to adopt a mindset of satisfying their customers (Fink, 2003), consumers of a product historically referred to as students. The satisfaction of students has become more important in higher education because of its possible impact on student recruitment and retention efforts, student motivation, and fundraising (Schreiner, 2009). Student satisfaction is comprised of different dimensions, and one area that research suggests is very important to the overall satisfaction of students in higher education is course instruction (Elliott & Healy, 2001). Therefore, interest in the quality of teaching in higher education is growing.

In the new, highly competitive marketplace of higher education, improving faculty performance and course instruction is increasingly recognized as essential to develop higher levels of student satisfaction. However, there appears to be a gap in the literature regarding students' expectations of faculty who instruct courses, as identified by students using qualitative research methods. Typically, feedback about student satisfaction with course instruction in higher education is gathered from students responding to closed-ended questions presented on end-of-course evaluations. This routine practice of collecting data to measure student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance has been routinely criticized for being ineffective and inadequate. Therefore, new insights about students' needs and expectations of faculty who instruct their courses are needed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction. The marketplace of contemporary higher education demands it, and a qualitative approach to the research could provide it.

Background and Significance of the Study

It's time for educational institutions to face two facts: they are in a competitive battle for students, and students are customers...students are increasingly seeking out those institutions offering them the treatment they believe they deserve as paying customers. (Sines & Duckworth, 1994, p. 2)

Nearly 20 years ago, Dolence and Norris (1995) predicted that society would be transformed by a significant transition from the Industrial Age to the Information Age. They believed most social institutions, including higher education, would be transformed by this significant societal change (Dolence & Norris, 1995). Their prediction has proven true. Postsecondary education has changed in many ways, and more changes are still unfolding, creating a new market place for higher education (Elliott & Healy, 2001).

Students' Expectations and Needs of Higher Education

One aspect of higher education that has changed over the last several decades has been the emergence of new providers of postsecondary education. According to Fink (2003), "New providers have already appeared and are competing effectively for students: corporate universities, the University of Phoenix, and Virtual University" are a few examples (p. 11). A new competitive marketplace has developed in higher education along with an emerging perception of students as consumers (Fink, 2003). Meeting the needs of these customers has translated into increased emphasis by administrators to ensure faculty and staff provide high quality learning experiences that satisfy students (DeShields, Kara, & Kaynak, 2005).

Regardless of whether they are students or customers, most people pursue postsecondary education with a variety of expectations. Often they have expectations of what the overall experience in higher education will be like. Whether students are aware

of their expectations or not, they will develop perceptions and opinions about the institution they are attending which will be influenced by the experiences they have (Letcher & Neves, 2010). These perceptions will influence students' overall learning experience and consequently their level of satisfaction with the institution. Students whose expectations are met or exceeded are more likely to form positive perceptions about their learning experiences overall.

The expectations and perceptions of students about their experiences in higher education are topics of growing interest to college administrators, who recognize that both play a significant role toward influencing their customers' overall satisfaction (DeShields et al., 2005; Letcher & Neves, 2010). Building on the work of Parasuraman, Zeithaml, and Berry (1986), DeShields et al. (2005) state, "It is known that satisfaction level is determined by the difference between service performance as perceived by the customer and what the customer expects" (p. 133). They argue students' intentions to stay or leave a college are influenced by their satisfaction level. Their argument is supported in Schreiner's (2009) findings, which suggest student persistence at an institution is indeed connected to student satisfaction.

The Relationship Between Student Satisfaction, Retention, and Recruitment

Administrators recognize that to address concerns about the retention of students, it is necessary to develop environments in which students can learn effectively. Consequently, administrators are becoming more committed to providing quality experiences to students. To do so, the needs and desires of students must be better understood (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Seymour, 1993).

In addition to the benefits of successful retention of students, satisfaction of students also plays an important role in recruiting new students. High levels of student satisfaction are important because, according to Elliott and Healy (2001), “The most effective and efficient means of recruiting students is through word-of-mouth promotion which comes from current satisfied students” (p. 10). Therefore, universities must successfully recruit new students as well as retain the students they have to graduation to compete effectively in the new marketplace of higher education. To accomplish both, student expectations must be met (Elliott & Healy, 2001).

New Business Model for Higher Education

Given the changing nature of the marketplace in higher education, college administrators are encouraged to adopt a market orientation strategy and develop similar customer-oriented practices used by many profit-making institutions (DeShields et al., 2005). Administrators view this as an investment that will return favorable financial rewards to the institution through successful recruitment and retention of students (Letcher & Neves, 2010). As a result, it is increasingly important for established institutions to find ways to increase student satisfaction in order to compete effectively with other postsecondary institutions (DeShields et al., 2005). Increased attention to the topic of student satisfaction from administrators in higher education mirrors the increased interest from researchers. Efforts have been made to operationalize a definition of the phenomenon of student satisfaction in higher education.

The Phenomenon of Student Satisfaction in Higher Education

Based on the earlier work of Oliver and DeSarbo (1989), who studied the topic of student satisfaction, Letcher and Neves (2010) summarized it as the “favorability of a student’s subjective evaluations of the various outcomes and experiences associated with education” (p. 3). More recently, Elliott and Healy (2001) define student satisfaction as a “short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of the student’s educational experience” (p. 2).

For students to be satisfied, the learning experiences students have must meet or exceed the students’ expectations (Elliott & Healy, 2001). Herein lie the questions: What exactly are the expectations students have of their experiences in higher education? Are there different aspects or dimensions of higher education that influence student satisfaction? If so, are some of these aspects more important than others when it comes to determining levels of student satisfaction? And finally, is the role of faculty and course instruction an important aspect in determining student satisfaction? If so, how important is it and why is it important to students?

Efforts to find answers to these and other questions related to the phenomenon of student satisfaction in higher education have increased over the past 20 years. Researchers have discovered evidence suggesting different dimensions and factors in higher education do indeed exist (Elliott & Healy, 2001; Hartman & Schmidt, 1995; Sevier, 1996). There appears to be agreement amongst researchers that student life experiences are created by multiple dimensions which overlap, are often interconnected, and influence student satisfaction (Elliott & Healy, 2001). Additional studies provide

evidence for the level of influence different dimensions have toward influencing student satisfaction (Delaney, Johnson, Johnson, & Treslan, 2010; DeShields et al., 2005; Elliott & Healy, 2001).

Important Dimension of Satisfaction With Faculty and Course Instruction

One dimension that appears to be of significant importance to students is faculty and the quality of course instruction they provide to students who pursue higher education (Delaney et al., 2010; DeShields et al., 2005; Elliot & Healy, 2001).

Consequently, according to Delaney et al. (2010), the topic of course instruction in higher education is gaining importance. Evidence of increased importance to improve course instruction is suggested by the incorporation of it as a goal in strategic plans for many colleges and universities in this country (Delaney et al., 2010).

Effective efforts to improve course instruction are recognized as essential given the new marketplace for higher education and the current emphasis on developing high levels of student satisfaction to recruit and retain students. The emphasis on improving course instruction in higher education to satisfy students creates the perfect time to ask for and listen to feedback from students who report high levels of student satisfaction with course instruction. After all, according to Douglas, McClelland, and Davies (2008), “Ultimately it is they [the consumers] who are the most appropriate arbiters of service quality” (p. 22). It comes back to the expectations and needs students have of faculty and course instruction in higher education. Currently, the expectations students have of faculty who instruct the classes they take in college are unclear. Also unclear is what students need from faculty to best support their learning.

Research-based Limitations of Understanding Student Satisfaction

Efforts to evaluate student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction have been made primarily through the use of traditional course evaluations. These methods were first introduced to universities in North America in the mid-1920s (Delaney et al., 2010) and are still the most common method used in higher education today. However, such methods have limited the depth and breadth of data collected and has all but eluded developing an understanding of what it means to be a student who is satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction. This may explain the gap in higher education between course instruction provided by faculty and what students want, need, and find satisfying when it comes to learning.

Expectations, needs, and desires that students have of faculty who instruct their courses may not be completely apparent to students, let alone faculty or administrators. Accessing this type of information requires more effort and expense than using traditional course evaluations. But uncovering students' needs, desires, and expectations can reveal important insights about how faculty and administrators can create learning experiences that students are more likely to find satisfying. Therefore, a deeper, richer level of information from students is needed. It can be accessed by using new research methods.

Using new methods to collect feedback from students can be used to develop a deeper understanding of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. Listening to the voices of students who report being highly satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction can provide valuable information and important insights about their experiences that led them to feel so

satisfied. Such insights can be used to improve course instruction and in turn increase student satisfaction. The economic viability of many institutions of higher education increasingly depends on student satisfaction as their identity is transformed from student to customer.

If students are customers, they will be more likely to report satisfaction when their needs, desires, and expectations have been met by the services and products purchased. Therefore, understanding what it means to be a satisfied student may be key to developing a deeper understanding of student satisfaction overall. Identifying the myriad of expectations students have of faculty who teach in higher education is essential to better inform the academy of what students desire and need from them.

Statement of the Problem

The focus of this study was on developing a better understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in public higher education. According to Fink (2003), faculty, the public, and students are all stakeholders who have expressed concerns about course instruction in higher education. Of particular interest are concerns expressed by students. In *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, Fink (2003) states, students “often complain about courses not being very interesting, that they just sit and take notes and then cram for exam after exam” (p. 4). He continues, “They have difficulty seeing the value or significance of what they are learning” (Fink, 2003, p. 4).

In addition to concerns expressed by students, Fink (2003) provides evidence of students’ concerns by referring to the work of other researchers. Courts and McInerney

(1993) summarized the findings of an extensive study about student reaction to course instruction they were receiving. According to their summary, the most commonly criticized areas focused on the quality of education students were receiving, the level of performance expected of students, and the way teachers teach. More specifically, their summary concluded that a common concern students expressed was about teachers relying primarily on lectures and workbook exercises to relay information and on the lack of active learning opportunities (Courts & McInerney, 1993).

In addition to these, there were other troubling findings suggested by their work. Students expressed feeling that they were not learning as much as they should be learning. Sadly, students felt their teachers did not care much about them, about interacting with them, or about promoting their learning (Fink, 2003). According to Courts and McInerney (1993), these concerns result in compromising the motivation of students to engage fully or energetically in learning something they do not want to learn or see no reason for learning.

Students pursue higher education for a variety of reasons, but there seems to be a gap between what students expect from their college experience and what they get from it. The existence of this gap and the reasons for it may not yet be well understood by administrators or faculty. The high transfer rate and dropout rate of students who pursue higher education may be evidence of this misunderstanding of the needs and expectations of students who pursue higher education. Given the evidence that suggests the important role of course instruction toward influencing student satisfaction, improving course

instruction as perceived by students has become a goal for most institutions of higher learning (Delaney et al., 2010).

Statistics about college graduation rates often come as a surprise to many people. According to Kevin Carey (2010), Director of the Education Policy Program at the New America Foundation, “The bachelor’s degree graduation rate for students who start at public four-year institutions is 59.5 percent” (n.p.).

With increased attention on teaching in higher education, the body of literature focused on students’ assessment of teaching is growing. The current common practice of soliciting student feedback about faculty and the effectiveness of their teaching is routinely limited to student questionnaires and course evaluation forms. According to Delaney et al. (2010), these tools have many limitations. Course evaluations designed to get feedback from students about the instructor’s teaching are typically comprised of questions pertaining to specific areas of teaching. These areas are assumed by the designer to be the most important areas to evaluate to determine the effectiveness of course instruction delivered (Delaney et al., 2010). Devlin (2002, as cited in Delaney et al., 2010) describes this as a “student as listener-follower” approach and disagrees with it (p. 2). Devlin (2002, as cited in Delaney et al., 2010) argues for the development of new tools to replace course evaluations because they are “designed with an underlying assumption that the designer and the respondents agree on the characteristics of effective teaching” (p. 4). Devlin (2002, as cited in Delaney et al., 2010) advocates for the development and use of new tools designed to access students’ perceptions about their learning experiences at a much deeper level.

Delany et al. (2010) have other concerns about the use course evaluations. Not only do traditional questionnaires offer students the designer's ideas of relevant characteristics of effective teaching, but in addition, they typically do so in the form of a Likert scale (Delaney et al., 2010). This also limits the depth of information that can be collected from students. The questionnaires provide students with a limited number of optional responses that are predetermined and range from strong dissatisfaction to strong satisfaction (Delaney et al., 2010). None or all of these assumptions may be true; it is not clear. It is also not clear whether students believe traditional course evaluations forms adequately capture their feelings and attitudes about the course instruction they have received in a particular class. Finally, students' perceptions about the utility and importance of course evaluations are unclear and are likely due to the fact that how the results are used by administration and faculty is not clearly explained or demonstrated to students.

Closed-ended questions with a predetermined range of responses significantly limit the meaningful information that can be provided to administrators, researchers, or faculty about the changing needs or desires of students who pursue higher education in the 21st century. While course evaluations may provide a place to start with assessing course instruction in higher education, it is clear that new means of measuring and evaluating the effectiveness of faculty and course instruction are direly needed (Delaney et al., 2010).

Student expectations and the needs of faculty in higher education are not yet well understood. However, they could be and must be if student satisfaction with course

instruction is to be improved. Since students are the customers that administrators aim to please, they are the best ones to identify the attributes of faculty performance and course instruction that satisfies them. These insights can be used to uncover the existence of students' expectations of faculty as well as identify what students need and desire from faculty to best support their learning.

A deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction with instruction in higher education can be developed by studying the lived experiences of students who report high satisfaction with course instruction at the end of the semester. Analyzing the experiences of satisfied students in higher education can be accomplished by listening to their voices as they describe what happened during learning experiences that appeared to meet their expectations and needs. Indeed, by doing so, the instructional practices of faculty that currently appear to limit and undermine student learning can be made known and can be replaced with more student-centered techniques that will likely increase student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance in higher education.

Purpose of the Study

Students have a unique and important vantage point for evaluating and assessing course instruction in higher education. They are the only ones who can provide information for improving instructional delivery in higher education from a customer's point of view. Students must be given the opportunity to play a key role in improving instruction in higher education and can do so by sharing their experiences in classes in which they "learned a lot" and strongly recommended the instructor to others. Students

know when they have experienced effective teaching and satisfying learning. Collecting students' descriptions of what happened in such a class and analyzing their explanations for how it happened reveal new and meaningful themes from students to assist in developing a deeper understanding of student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance.

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to develop a deeper understanding of what students desire and need from their instructors to support their learning; this knowledge could, in turn, improve student satisfaction with higher education. This study explored the lived experiences of approximately 100 undergraduate students in a large lecture class at a public university in the Midwestern region of the United States. By listening to the voices of students who were highly satisfied with a learning experience, this study uncovered some of the common needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty who instruct their courses. Accessing this level of information from students and analyzing it to see if themes emerge amongst students helped develop a deeper understanding of what it means to feel satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. Ultimately, the purpose of this study was to develop a theory to explain how students came to feel highly satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction in a particular class.

Therefore, this study served an important purpose by adding to the literature and knowledge base about what students in higher education desire and need from faculty who instruct their courses. This study explored what students find satisfying and helpful in a class in which they reported having "learned a lot" and highly recommend other

students take. By listening to the voices of students, insights were gained about what students find desirable and satisfying with regard to faculty performance and instructional delivery.

Research Questions

1. What happened during a particular learning experience in which students reported high levels of student satisfaction? (Students reported, “I learned a lot” and strongly “recommend this instructor to a fellow student”).
2. What needs, desires, and expectations did students report were met during the learning experience?
3. What specifically did students learn during the learning experience? (Students reported, “I learned a lot”).
4. What did students report were aspects of the course instruction and faculty performance that best supported their learning?

Benefits of This Study

A variety of stakeholders in higher education will benefit from this study. First to benefit will be the primary customers of higher education, the students. They will benefit from this study through the improved teaching practices used by faculty who develop a deeper understanding of what students actually need and want from them to best support their learning. Second to benefit will be faculty. When faculty better understand the needs and expectations students have of them, they can respond in more mindful ways to meet students’ needs and desires. In turn, students will likely feel more understood and supported. Ultimately, students will likely feel more satisfied with the performance of

faculty who advise them and instruct their courses. Finally, insights gained from this study can be used by administrators to redress institutional policies and procedures to better meet the needs of students who desire and deserve a satisfying college experience.

Administrators and instructors who understand how to meet the needs, desires, and expectations of students would be better informed about how to do so. In choosing to do so, more students would likely feel validated about their expectations of higher education, resulting in higher student satisfaction levels. Faculty who teach in responsive ways to meet students' needs would likely see increased student attendance and a higher energy level in class throughout the duration of the semester. Finally, along with their energy level, student motivation to learn would likely increase. These positive changes and more have the potential to reignite the joy of teaching which many faculty report having lost after an extended period of time dealing with ongoing student dissatisfaction with their performance (Fink, 2003). Faculty who are passionate and excited about helping students learn are better *guides by the side* and typically receive more favorable course evaluations from satisfied students at the end of each semester.

In addition to students and faculty, administrators might also benefit from this study. If important insights are gained from this study, administrators can use the findings to lead the institution in the development of course instruction and faculty performance that students find more satisfying. Satisfied students are not as likely to transfer to another institution or drop out of college, but instead are more likely to remain at the institution. Improved student retention would most certainly benefit an administrator in higher education today. Moreover, satisfied students are more likely to result in satisfied

alumni who can benefit the institution in a variety of ways. Satisfied alumni are more likely to become highly effective at helping the university recruit new students through positive word of mouth recommendations for the institution. Satisfied alumni can help an institution in many different ways.

Other stakeholders who could benefit from this study include the public who pay a great deal of money for their son's or daughter's postsecondary education. As the cost of tuition increases, the public is increasingly concerned about what they perceive is poor quality higher education (Fink, 2003). Public satisfaction of higher education overall is more likely to increase if institutions of higher learning can improve their ability and commitment to fulfill their purpose in society. More institutions will fulfill their mission to provide meaningful services to the community and the world by awarding degrees to students who are aware of their civic responsibilities and have knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to create a more sustainable world.

Theoretical or Conceptual Framework

As an instructor who taught primarily undergraduate students for over nine years, I started to wonder why students appeared to be so satisfied with the instruction I provided to them. Unchanging, aggregate class grades reflected average learning from one semester to the next. This persisted in spite of pedagogical changes I made to the curriculum. I started to wonder what the *secret ingredient* was to positive course evaluations I routinely received from students. More importantly, I started to wonder, "What are students actually learning in the classes I teach?" and, "Did the experience of teaching and learning together change them, and if so, how were they changed?" Months

and even years later during chance meetings as well as more intentional email correspondence initiated by some students might suggest something deeper, something more meaningful happened during our time together. The questions are endless and beg exploration.

Words, no matter whether they are vocalized and made into sounds or remain unspoken as thoughts, can cast an almost hypnotic spell upon you. You easily lose yourself in them, become hypnotized into implicitly believing that when you have attached a word to something you know what it is. (Tolle, 2008, n.p.)

If we can easily lose ourselves in words, believing we know the essence of an object by merely attaching a label to it, what happens when we overlay a well-developed and researched theoretical framework onto the mysterious phenomena of student satisfaction? In the process of conducting research aimed at improving teaching and learning, it is appealing at best and perhaps altogether unavoidable to resist this temptation. After all, in academia it is precisely through words and numbers that findings are conveyed and knowledge is built in the intellectual pursuit of truth. Theories are essential in higher education and are developed just this way. Theories have value and purpose. But when attempting to advance knowledge when studying a human phenomenon through the lived experiences of participants, resisting the temptation to use of a pre-existing theory to analyze data provides the greatest freedom to hear what is being said by those being studied.

According to 21st century philosopher Eckhart Tolle (2008), words do not capture *what is*, but instead cover up the mystery with a label.

Everything, the birds, a tree, even a simple stone and certainly a human being, is ultimately unknowable. This is because it has unfathomable depths. All we can

perceive, experience, think about is the surface layer of reality, less than the tip of an iceberg. (Tolle, 2008, n.p.)

Tolle (2008) continues, “When we look...and let it be without imposing a word or mental label on it, a sense of awe, of wonder, arises within you. Its essence silently communicates itself to you and reflects your own essence back to you” (n.p.).

Tolle’s (2008) work resonates deeply with me. In response, I have accepted his invitation to refrain from using a theory to label the magic and mysteries of teaching and learning which I have been drawn to understand more deeply. Consequently, I have chosen to use grounded theory methodology to explore the topic of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education.

Grounded theory is an example of qualitative research that can add a valuable perspective to student satisfaction with course instruction in higher education. According to Bitsch (2005), grounded theory “is the master metaphor of qualitative research” (p. 77). This method of research was developed in the 1960s by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, two American sociologists. They presented it as a new way to develop theory in their discipline. Grounded theory is used to move beyond describing a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007) to develop a new theory of a research topic based on the systematic collection of data (Bitsch, 2005). A key element of this methodology is that theory development comes from the data provided by participants who have experienced the process. It is theory that is generated from the data collected systematically, from the ground up. It is not an *off the shelf* process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in Creswell, 2007). A grounded theory research study does not begin with a theory and hypotheses but rather with “a field of study or a research question, and what is relevant to this question is

allowed to emerge during the research process” (Bitsch, 2005, p. 77). Given this understanding of grounded theory, I concluded it would provide the best fit to explore the research area I am interested in most: student satisfaction with course instruction in higher education.

Summary

Course instruction and faculty performance must be improved to increase student satisfaction with their experience in higher education. To accomplish this, the needs and expectations students have of faculty who instruct them must be better understood. Once they are, administrators must better support faculty to meet students’ needs and desires since faculty work directly with students more often than anyone else at the university. Administrators and faculty must work together to support students during their experience in higher education by making mindful attempts to improve course instruction and faculty performance. Mindful attempts to do so will best reflect a sincere institutional desire to increase student satisfaction with their experience in higher education. Institutions that adopt a customer-oriented philosophy and implement student-centered practices are more likely to meet the expectations and needs of students and are therefore more likely to be successful in recruiting and retaining students at their institution. Ultimately, postsecondary institutions that achieve the goal of improving student satisfaction will be better equipped to compete effectively in the new marketplace of higher education.

It is increasingly clear that in order for institutions of higher learning to compete successfully in the new marketplace of higher education, student satisfaction must be

improved. While there are different dimensions that influence student satisfaction with an institution, increasing evidence suggests student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance is an important factor that influences their overall satisfaction level. Therefore, improving course instruction and faculty performance is needed to enhance the institution's ability to recruit and retain students.

Consequently, this study is aimed at discovering and uncovering students' needs, desires, and expectations of faculty who teach courses at institutions of higher learning. Findings from this study can be used by faculty and administrators to help close the current gap between what students report they need and want from higher education and what they often receive. Data will be collected directly from students in an effort to discover and uncover their expectations and needs of faculty who teach courses in higher education. Grounded theory methodology will be used to listen to the voices of students who report high satisfaction with faculty and their respective course instruction to hear what students say is satisfying.

This study will focus on the dimension of faculty performance and course instruction because of its importance toward influencing student satisfaction with higher education overall. Course instruction evaluations completed by students are the traditional methods used to evaluate and assess course instruction in higher education. However, the utility of such methods is increasingly being questioned and, according to Ralph (2003, as cited in Delaney et al., 2010), the "renewed emphasis on teaching necessitates credible means of measuring effective teaching in the university setting" (p. 2).

The remainder of this study is divided into chapters. Chapter 2 presents a review of the current literature on student satisfaction with regard to recruitment and retention of students as well as information regarding the different dimensions of student satisfaction. Also included in Chapter 2 is a review of the current literature regarding the merits and limitations of using traditional course evaluations to measure student satisfaction in higher education, student preferences regarding the aims of higher education today, the deteriorating quality of higher education in America, and the desire for self-knowledge amongst students today. The next chapter includes a description of the research methodology used for this study. Also in Chapter 3 is the rationale for using grounded theory methodology to conduct this study. Chapter 4 includes the context, analysis, and findings of the study. In the last chapter, a summary of the findings is presented as well as the implications and possible areas of future research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

Introduction

The marketplace of higher education has been changing dramatically over the last 20 years. These changes include the decreased allocation of public funds to support higher education, expectations to serve more students, and increased accountability for better student outcomes (Alexander, 2000). Another change includes the establishment of many new institutions of higher learning, resulting in increased competition for students amongst new and old providers (Fink, 2003). With decreased public funding, increased accountability, new postsecondary providers, and increased competition for students, institutions of higher learning are being forced to change from the top down. Consequently, administrators are changing their perceptions of the industry of higher education as well as the requirements for institutional viability.

To best ensure survival in this new, highly competitive marketplace, perceptions about the importance of student satisfaction must also change. According to Letcher and Neves (2010), “Institutions of higher education are increasingly realizing that they are part of the service industry and are putting greater emphasis on student satisfaction as they face many competitive pressures” (p. 2). These and other trends, both domestic and global, continue to impact the marketplace of higher education, changing the way postsecondary institutions have operated for many years.

In an effort to compete effectively with other institutions to best ensure survival, colleges and universities in the 21st century are adopting a business paradigm typically

used by profit-making organizations. According to DeShields et al. (2005), "...intense competition in today's competitive educational market forces universities to adopt a market orientation strategy to differentiate their offerings from those of their competitors" (p. 129). As stated previously, administrators are recognizing that the service and product they offer is education. When using a profit-oriented business paradigm, emphasis is placed on ensuring customer satisfaction with the purchased product. According to Seymour (1993), a primary goal of higher education should be developing many satisfied customers. Such customers include students, parents of students, alumni, policymakers, and private and public sector employers. While all are customers and therefore stakeholders in higher education, students are typically considered the primary customer. They are the consumers who purchase the product of education when they enroll in a specific institution and remain there until they graduate, drop out, or transfer to another university. Consequently, student recruitment and retention have become increasingly important to administrators in higher education.

In Chapter 2 an overview of the literature most relevant to this topic will be presented. Topics will include student satisfaction and how it relates to both student retention and recruitment, the phenomenon of student satisfaction in higher education, the dimension of course instruction toward influencing overall student satisfaction, as well as the importance of students' perceptions about course instruction. In addition, an overview of the literature regarding what is already known about student satisfaction with course instruction in higher education will also be presented. Chapter 2 will also explore an important question facing higher education today, "Is there something else students want

from higher education that is currently missing?” Finally, Chapter 2 will conclude by exploring the idea that the mission of vocationalism emphasized in higher education today is in fact missing the mark by not meeting students’ needs or desires for their experience in higher education. Evidence will be presented to support the idea that students want and need something more than just preparation for a life of work. Instead, students want preparation for life from their pursuit of higher learning.

Student Satisfaction and Retention

Although higher education institutions exist to improve students’ education and produce students with degrees (DeShields et al., 2005), statistics suggest that many students do not successfully complete college. Poor student retention in higher education results in fewer students graduating with a degree. While student retention is currently a topic of great concern, it is not a new problem in higher education. Tinto (1975, 1993) was studying this topic nearly 40 years ago and cited statistics indicating that more than 40% of all students who entered college left before completing a degree. Interestingly, 75% of these students dropped out in the first two years of college (Tinto, 1975, 1993). Tinto (1975, 1993) also cited statistics that suggested colleges and universities could expect that 56% of students in a typical entering class cohort would not graduate from that institution. More recent statistics indicate that 26.4% of freshmen do not return the following semester, and of these same students, 46.2% do not graduate from college (Reisberg, 1999). Clearly, poor student retention is not a new problem but instead is a problem that has been plaguing higher education for many years. However, given the many changes in the 21st century marketplace of higher education, the financial

implications for not successfully addressing this problem are much greater. In order to successfully retain students, universities must identify and meet the expectations students have of their institution and of higher learning in general.

Many assumptions, including the one that links student satisfaction with student retention, are made in higher education. It is often assumed that dissatisfied students will not remain at an institution but instead will either transfer to another institution or drop out of college altogether. While there appears to be an overall lack of empirical research linking student satisfaction to retention (Schreiner, 2009), the relationship between the two is of growing interest to administrators and researchers alike. Intrigued about the validity of this assumption, Schreiner (2009) conducted a study of nearly 28,000 students at 65 four-year institutions. The researcher's intent was to determine whether student satisfaction is predictive of retention the following year or not (Schreiner, 2009). Not surprising to many, findings from this study did provide evidence linking student satisfaction to retention. More specifically, student satisfaction with aspects of education including GPA, campus climate, institutional features, advising, and instructional effectiveness were all found to be linked to student retention. Findings from Schreiner's (2009) study also suggest that the predictive value for each of these factors differs across each class level.

While student retention is an important factor today in determining the financial viability of an institution, administrators recognize that students must first be recruited before they can then be retained. Consequently, student recruitment is another topic of increasing importance in higher education today.

Student Satisfaction and Recruitment

Due to the increased competition that characterizes the 21st century marketplace of higher education, administrators are increasingly making efforts to retain students and also to recruit students to their institution (Letcher & Neves, 2010). Many have learned that it is more cost-effective and easier to invest early through improving student retention than to invest later through student recruitment efforts (Elliott & Healy, 2001). However, institutions must improve both to successfully compete for students today as recruitment and retention appear to work together in some ways. According to Kara and DeShields (2004), "...increased student retention not only would increase the lifetime tuition revenues from the students but also would provide some synergy for recruitment through low-cost word of mouth recommendation promotion activities" (p. 3). Therefore, the topic of student recruitment is of growing interest to administrators and researchers alike.

An important aspect of student recruitment involves the reputation of an institution. Administrators increasingly recognize the value and financial merits of institution reputation for recruiting new students. Positive word-of-mouth recommendations from current students and alumni can provide inexpensive and helpful advertising for recruiting new students. In fact, according to Elliot and Healy (2001), "The most effective and efficient means of recruiting students is through word-of-mouth promotion which comes from current satisfied students" (p. 10). As referenced earlier, the study completed by Schreiner (2009) provides evidence linking student satisfaction to student persistence. In addition, Schreiner's (2009) study provides evidence suggesting

student satisfaction is also linked to word-of-mouth reputation of an institution, therefore supporting the idea that satisfied students can either help or hinder student recruitment efforts. Consequently, students' opinions about the institution they attend are also a topic of increasing interest.

Navigating an institution's path through the new marketplace of higher education today is indeed a daunting task and a new test of leadership for administrators today. Successful navigation is necessary to ensure financial viability and therefore institutional survival in the 21st century. Consequently, it is no surprise that the topic of student satisfaction is increasingly important in higher education today. Indeed, the emphasis on ensuring student satisfaction to recruit and retain students in higher education has never been greater. "It's time for educational institutions to face two facts: they are in a competitive battle for students, and students are customers...students are increasingly seeking out those institutions offering them the treatment they believe they deserve as paying customers" (Sines & Duckworth, 1994, p. 2).

In response to recognizing the new marketplace of higher education, some administrators are replacing older paradigms with a new, customer-centered business paradigm that is characteristic of profit-making businesses. Increasingly, these administrators recognize that students must be satisfied overall with their educational experience for the institution to successfully compete. Consequently, administrators are redirecting institutional efforts to focus more on meeting the needs and expectations of students served by their institution (DeShields et al., 2005). Consistent with a customer-centered business model, emphasis is placed on receiving feedback from consumers who

are asked to assess and evaluate the quality of the services and products they purchase. Therefore, seeking feedback directly from students about their educational experiences in higher education is in alignment with a customer-centered business paradigm and is increasingly perceived as a necessity for doing business.

Becoming customer oriented results from higher education's new identity as a customer-centered service provider. This new identity is often perceived by administrators as necessary to compete effectively in the 21st century marketplace of higher education. Becoming more customer oriented is increasingly recognized as necessary to increase student satisfaction with the institution from which students chose to purchase an education. But to successfully increase student satisfaction in higher education, a deeper understanding of the phenomenon is needed.

The Phenomena of Student Satisfaction

Researchers have been exploring the phenomena of student satisfaction in higher education for many years. Traditionally, the focus of researchers interested in this topic has been on student satisfaction with course instruction and with the performance of faculty. The vast array of services provided by higher education like advising, housing, and counseling services, or other aspects like campus climate, GPA, financial aid, vocational placement rates, etc., has not historically been the focus of student satisfaction. However, this has been changing. As more administrators recognize the fiscal importance of student satisfaction, more interest in this phenomenon has developed. Research into this topic continues to reveal its complex, multi-faceted, and somewhat illusive nature,

suggesting additional research is needed to better understand the phenomena of student satisfaction in higher education.

Findings from researchers already studying this important phenomenon suggest it is a complicated phenomenon. The definition of student satisfaction, as well as what constitutes and influences it, varies amongst researchers. Although not specific to education, Hunt (1977) provides a definition of satisfaction that is one of the most often quoted. According to Hunt (1977), “Consumer satisfaction with a product refers to the favorableness of the individual’s subjective evaluations of the various outcomes and experiences associated with buying it or using it” (p. 49). More relevant to the context of education is a definition of student satisfaction proposed by Oliver and DeSarbo (1989). They define student satisfaction as the favorability of a student’s subjective evaluations of the various outcomes and experiences associated with education. According to Elliot and Healy (2001), student satisfaction is typically defined as a “...short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of a student’s educational experience” (p. 2). They argue when the actual performance meets or exceeds the students’ expectations, student satisfaction is the result.

While definitions of student satisfaction vary, researchers appear to agree that different dimensions of student life create the end product of a student’s overall experience in higher education which in turn influences their overall level of satisfaction. Sevier (1996) argues there are four dimensions that comprise a university’s product; these dimensions include the student’s academic, social, physical, and spiritual experiences. Other researchers identify other dimensions. In an effort to better understand the complex

phenomenon of student satisfaction in higher education, researchers have studied different dimensions and factors that can influence overall student satisfaction (Elliott & Healy, 2001; Hartman & Schmidt, 1995; Sevier, 1996).

Other studies suggest that recruitment, retention, and academic success are also related to student satisfaction (Athiyaman, 1997; DeShields et al., 2005; Elliott & Healy, 2001; Helgesen & Nettet, 2007; Letcher & Neves, 2010). In addition to these factors, it appears as though student satisfaction may also be influenced by other factors not related to the experiences of campus life.

Student expectations and the clarity of their goals for higher education appear to be another factor that can contribute to overall student satisfaction. Included in this are the expectations students bring, consciously or unconsciously, to campus their first year. Precollege expectations appear to influence student satisfaction, as does the students' clarity for what they want to accomplish in higher education. For example, Hartman and Schmidt (1995, as cited in Elliot & Healy, 2001) found student satisfaction depended on the clarity of student goals and is multi-dimensionality.

There is not agreement amongst researchers about the specific dimensions that contribute to overall student satisfaction. However, they do appear to agree that student life experiences are created by multiple dimensions which overlap, are often interconnected, and can influence student satisfaction (Elliot & Healy, 2001). This general agreement amongst researchers begs the question of dimensional importance. More specifically, if there are different dimensions of the postsecondary education experience that can influence student satisfaction, are some dimensions more influential

than others? Which ones are they, and how can they be modified to best ensure favorable student satisfaction? These questions too have been of interest to researchers and administrators in higher education.

The Dimension of Course Instruction

Researchers have been working to identify and isolate different dimensions of overall student satisfaction in an effort to better understand this phenomenon. Recent studies provide evidence for the existence of varying levels of influence of these different dimensions (Delaney et al., 2010; DeShields et al., 2005; Elliott & Healy, 2001). An example of such a study was conducted by Elliot and Healy (2001). The researchers explored aspects of students' educational experience to determine if some dimensions were more influential on student satisfaction than others. They used the Student Satisfaction Inventory to assess students' perceived levels of importance and satisfaction along 11 different dimensions. The dimensions assessed with this tool included (a) academic advising effectiveness, (b) campus climate, (c) campus life, (d) campus support services, (e) concern for the individual, (f) instructional effectiveness, (g) recruitment and financial aid effectiveness, (h) registration effectiveness, (i) campus safety and security, (j) service excellence, and (k) student centeredness. Findings from their study suggest there are three dimensions that best predict student satisfaction: (a) student centeredness, (b) campus climate, and (c) instructional effectiveness. Of particular interest is the dimension of student satisfaction with instructional effectiveness since it appears as though this dimension can significantly influence the overall level of student satisfaction with their experience in higher education.

Instructional effectiveness was one of the 11 dimensions explored in Elliot and Healy's (2001) study. The dimension of instructional effectiveness consisted of 14 items which included curriculum, academic excellence, and the effectiveness of faculty to assess a student's academic experience. Findings from this study have been supported by other studies as well all suggesting instructional effectiveness was a significant predictor of overall student satisfaction (DeShields et al., 2005; Elliot & Healy, 2001).

A study with similar findings was completed by DeShields et al. (2005). Like Elliot and Healy (2001), these researchers also acknowledge the existence of many variables that can influence students' perceptions about performance and therefore their level of satisfaction. The study completed by DeShields et al. (2005), however, focused on investigating the link among three specific factors: (a) faculty, (b) advising staff, and (c) classes, factors felt by the researchers to be "three of the most important variables that influence students' college experience and overall satisfaction" because they are the core services provided by institutions of higher learning (p. 133). Findings from this study suggest that faculty performance and classes are more directly related to students' college experience and satisfaction level. However, evidence to support the link between the performance of advising staff and student satisfaction were not confirmed.

The new marketplace in higher education and the findings of studies that provide evidence for the significance of course instruction toward influencing student satisfaction overall have renewed interest in teaching and learning in higher education. Current information about the quality of postsecondary teaching and learning suggests the renewed interest in this topic is indeed warranted.

The Relevance of Students' Perceptions

Seeking student feedback about course instruction is not new in higher education. It was first introduced in the mid-1920s (Delaney et al., 2010). But given the new level of competition for students amongst institutions, the focus on overall student satisfaction, and particularly the dimension of student satisfaction with course instruction, is now much greater than any time before. Administrators are motivated to ensure students at their institutions are satisfied because student satisfaction appears to be linked to successful recruitment and retention of students. According to Schreiner (2009), administrators recognize the imperative to provide high quality educational experiences to students. Evidence of renewed interest to improve teaching and learning in higher education includes the incorporation of this goal in strategic plans for many colleges and universities (Delaney et al., 2010). Additional evidence of renewed interest includes a movement in higher education to emphasize teaching more in relation to the research goals of postsecondary education (Delaney et al., 2010). As student satisfaction with course instruction has become recognized as an important dimension toward influencing students' overall satisfaction, administrators and researchers alike have become more interested in the effectiveness and quality of course instruction as perceived by the students, increasingly referred to as customers or consumers.

The revitalized interest and commitment from administrators to improve teaching and learning in higher education appears to be motivated by a desire to ensure student satisfaction. To accomplish this goal, a deeper understanding of the qualities that make course instruction in higher education satisfying for students is needed (Delaney et al.,

2010). More feedback from students about what constitutes satisfying course instruction is needed to develop new insights. It is likely that the needs and expectations of students can be met or exceeded when they, the consumers, are asked directly to describe satisfying course instruction and faculty performance. In-depth student feedback can be used to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance. Ultimately, a deeper understanding of student satisfaction can be used to improve teaching and learning in higher education. Improved student satisfaction with course instruction, after all, is linked to overall student satisfaction in higher education.

Collecting Student Feedback About Course Instruction and Faculty Performance

Much is already known about student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance in higher education. When students are satisfied with the grade they earn in a college class, they tend to report a high level of satisfaction with faculty and course instruction. While research has established the existence of a correlation between grades and student ratings, the literature on these relationships is long and complex. For years, Bain (2004) has been studying what the best college teachers do. Bain (2004) has learned that when students expect to receive higher grades, their ratings tend to be slightly higher. This, however, does not automatically mean that grade leniency is the reason for the differences (Bain, 2004).

Research has found that students, in general, tend to give higher ratings to courses they regard as intellectually challenging and helpful in meeting those challenges, and lower ratings to courses that are easy and in which they do not learn much. (Bain, 2004, p. 172)

Finally, students typically give higher ratings when they are highly motivated and learning more because, according to Howard and Maxwell (1982), they can expect higher grades. These findings and more have been uncovered by collecting student feedback about course instruction and faculty performance.

Student feedback is most often gathered anonymously through the use of traditional course evaluations collected by faculty or an assistant at the conclusion of a semester (Eliophotou Menon, 2002). For many reasons, course evaluations have been and continue to be used most frequently to measure student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance. Traditional course evaluations are far more economical and efficient to use when compared to other methods of assessment and evaluation. In addition, evidence suggests traditional course evaluations are valid measures of instructional effectiveness (d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997; Greenwald & Gillmore, 1997; Marsh & Roche, 1997; Watkins, 1994). However, findings appear to be mixed regarding the validity and utility of such measures, suggesting this common practice comes with significant limitations.

Along with other researchers, Stumpf and Freedman (1979) characterize this practice as ineffective and unreliable. In addition, they further suggest such measures only indexed the popularity of faculty instead of providing objective information about teacher effectiveness. Another limitation of course evaluations includes a growing concern about the usefulness of the information provided by traditional course evaluations (Armstrong, 1998; Buck, 1998). This common practice used in higher education to evaluate and assess faculty performance and course instruction has been

scrutinized by many researchers who have identified problems of validity with traditional course evaluations (Greenwald, 1997; Snyder & Clair, 1976; Worthington & Wong, 1979). In combination with other unfavorable findings regarding the use of traditional course evaluations to measure student satisfaction, confidence in this mainstay practice has been compromised.

Many concerns about the common use of course evaluations used to measure student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance have been made about higher education in the United States, dating back many years. These criticisms are not new, and questioning the validity and utility of course evaluations is not specific to higher education in the United States. Faculty in Australia have also criticized the practice of using course evaluations to measure this dimension of student satisfaction. Faculty characterize them as a less than ideal method for gathering information that is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of what students evaluate and assess as satisfying course instruction (Devlin, 2002).

One example is the study completed by Devlin in 2002. Devlin (2002) studied the weaknesses and strengths of a questionnaire, the Perceptions of Learning Environment (PLEQ), used at the University of Melbourne to identify students' perceptions of their learning environment, and determined that it fails to sufficiently identify student perceptions in-depth. Student perceptions must be explored in-depth to better understand what students describe as satisfying faculty performance and course instruction. Ultimately, this depth is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of student satisfaction with their experience in higher education.

Other researchers have also recognized the limitations of traditional course evaluations and criticize this practice used to collect information from students about their perceptions regarding course instruction and faculty performance. According to some researchers (Delaney et al., 2010; Devlin, 2002), this practice must change and other measures must be used instead before a deeper and better understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance in higher education can be developed. According to Delaney et al. (2010), traditional course evaluations contain a list of questions and represent a controlled set of stimuli. They argue these tools “are designed with the underlying assumption that the designer and the respondent agree on the characteristics of effective teaching” (Delaney et al., 2010, p. 4). However, such an agreement has not been reached, and instead the stimuli have already been determined by the designer to be the most relevant information needed to evaluate student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance (Delaney et al., 2010). They argue that a deeper understanding of student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance can be developed when students are given an opportunity to express their own ideas about effective course instruction. Furthermore, they advocate this must be done without having researchers influence the belief system of students, which is what can happen when students are presented with a list of controlled stimuli on traditional course evaluations. “Since the origins of perceptions are found in the belief systems of students, the rich narratives provided by the student could identify, with greater certainty, the beliefs of the participants” (Delaney et al., 2010, p. 4).

Delaney et al. (2010) completed a study at Memorial University that utilized this approach with the explicit purpose of leaving open-ended the qualities of effective teaching. They argue that students must be free to identify the characteristics of instruction that are effective and they must be allowed to describe how they are demonstrated. The method Delaney et al. (2010) used to gather data from students regarding their perceptions of effective teaching challenges many assumptions about the validity and usefulness of traditional course evaluations.

For example, on a traditional course evaluation students are often asked to fill in the oval that best reflects their opinion about how much they learned in the class. If students indicate having “learned a lot,” even though their academic grade may not suggest it, instructors are left wondering what exactly students *learned* and what constitutes *a lot*. Instructors may wonder what it is students learn that is not being assessed or evaluated and therefore not captured with a traditional course evaluation.

Also not provided by traditional course evaluations is detailed information about what students perceive to be aspects of the course that best supported their learning and resulted in high satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. Therefore, it is not yet clear what happens to and for students who report experiencing satisfying course instruction, from which they report as having “learned a lot” and highly “recommend this instructor to fellow students.”

In addition to other limitations, traditional course evaluations do not provide students with an opportunity to use their own words to articulate what it is that they want and need from faculty to best support their learning. Typically the only question which

students are asked to respond to by using their own words is an open-ended question that relates to what the instructor did well and did not do well.

It is clear that more detailed feedback regarding satisfying course instruction is needed to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance in higher education. Gathering feedback by asking students to respond to open-ended questions and using their own words to describe satisfying course instruction may reveal important insights about what students need and expect from faculty and course instruction to feel satisfied. This information can be used to better meet the needs and expectations of students and ultimately to improve student satisfaction in higher education.

Delaney et al. (2010) at the University of Wisconsin and others at Canadian universities advocate for change in the practice of gathering student feedback. These and other researchers argue that new, innovative, and more credible means of measuring and evaluating course instruction and faculty performance are essential in 21st century higher education. According to Ralph (2003), "Teaching in Canadian universities is being seen as increasingly more important relative to the research mission of higher education. This renewed emphasis on teaching necessitates credible means of measuring effective teaching in the university setting" (p. 2).

Traditional course evaluations are not sufficient to gather important information from students about their learning experience, about the faculty member who instructed their course, or about what they need and want from faculty to make their experience in higher education more satisfying. However, a deeper level of information must be

accessed from students regarding their perceptions about faculty performance and course instruction received to develop a better understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction. Indeed, many argue it is needed more so now than ever before.

As already stated, interest in the topic of effective teaching in higher education is not new. Rather, it has been renewed with the development of a new marketplace of higher education. It is not surprising that interest in effective teaching is growing. The emphasis on teaching comes from the desire to improve student satisfaction with course instruction by focusing on the performance of faculty. After all, faculty interact most with the customers of higher education through the daily delivery of course instruction to students.

Therefore, it is an ideal time to ask for and listen to feedback from students, who in their own words describe what they think constitutes satisfying course instruction in higher education. Customers know when they are satisfied as well as when they are not. It goes without saying that students know satisfying course instruction when they receive it as well as when they do not. Seeking and listening to the feedback from students, the primary consumers of higher education, is in direct alignment with the 21st century business philosophy now characteristic of higher education. By doing so, additional findings from the perspective of customers can complement those of previous studies that have focused on student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance in higher education. Together, a deeper understanding of this important phenomenon can be developed.

What Students Want From Higher Education

The 21st century marketplace of higher education is distinguished from other eras in many ways. One of the most notable distinctions of contemporary higher learning is the adoption of a marketing perspective that includes viewing students as consumers (Eliophotou Menon, 2002). Meeting the needs and wants of students to best ensure the outcome of satisfied customers is increasingly important to the survival of institutions. According to Eliophotou Menon (2002), “The inability to meet such needs signifies that the organization is unable to effectively serve its ‘customers,’ thus failing to compete in the marketplace” (p. 515).

Administrators have been ardently working to create high quality learning experiences for students in response to the new marketplace demands. Stakeholders like policymakers, business owners, and parents increasingly demand improved performance and better outcomes from higher learning. Other characteristics of the 21st century marketplace for higher education include increased focus on student satisfaction and decreased public funding for postsecondary institutions. According to Eliophotou Menon (2002), “Universities have become more customer-driven by planning their educational ‘product’ along the lines envisaged by students and their parents” (p. 516). These factors and others have significantly influenced how administrators perceive the purpose and role of higher education in the 21st century. Intending to compete successfully for students by meeting market needs and the perceived desires of students, a movement in higher education away from humanism and towards vocationalism has been created.

This trend toward vocationalism in higher education appears to have developed in response to the 21st century desires and needs of stakeholders, including students.

According to Gumpert, Iannozzi, Shaman, and Zemsky (1997), to best ensure employment after graduation, contemporary students focus more on pursuing a degree that best ensures the acquisition of knowledge and skills most valued by potential employers. This trend is indicated by the dramatic decrease in the percentage of degrees awarded in fields like history, education, and social science, and a significant increase in business administration (Gumpert et al., 1997). Therefore, in an effort to effectively compete in the new marketplace, institutions of higher learning have shifted their focus to best meet the demands of students and other stakeholders. Increasingly, administrators perceive the purpose of higher education is to prepare students for a life of work more so than to fulfill its other purpose which is to prepare students for life. Institutions of higher learning are focusing more on vocationalism which involves providing educational experiences designed to develop students' vocational and professional skill set. However, the trend away from humanism and toward vocationalism may actually be compromising student satisfaction with their overall experience in higher education.

Over the last 20 years, the marketplace of higher education has continued to change and develop. During this same period of time, national reports have indicated the quality of undergraduate education in America has been slipping (Kuh, 1999). Interested in the validity of ongoing criticisms about the quality of higher education in America, Kuh (1999) decided to explore this topic more in-depth. He used data collected from

students between the 1960s and 1990s to assess the current situation of the undergraduate experience to determine if these complaints were valid.

Kuh (1999) addressed two questions the study. First, he wondered if students gained more from the undergraduate experience between the 1960s and 1970s than subsequent cohorts. Second, he wanted to know if the reforms that were designed and implemented in the 1980s to improve the quality of the undergraduate experience had been working. Answering these questions would help Kuh decide if the common complaints made about the decreasing quality in American higher education were fair or not.

Kuh (1999) used survey research that consisted of two sets of data from multiple sources. Data were collected from students at four different time periods between the late 1960s through 1997. Data sources included a questionnaire developed for a comparative study of students at different institutions and the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) collected at various points in time. The researcher analyzed students' responses to items on these multiple sources that had similar wording.

Findings from Kuh's (1999) study suggest mixed results regarding the quality of the higher education experience for students in the 1990s. When compared to their peers in the 1960s and 1970s, students in the 1990s reported increased learning in some areas but decreased learning in other important areas. For example, nearly four fifths of students in the 1990s reported making "substantial progress in many areas considered vital to living a self-sufficient, civically responsible, and economically productive life after college" (Kuh, 1999, p. 5). Included in these areas are understanding and getting

along with others, critical thinking, preparation for advanced study, and general knowledge of a variety of fields. Improved quality in these areas is indeed noteworthy. However, a troubling trend also emerged from the study.

In the 1990s students reported increased quality in the areas previously mentioned but did not report increased quality in other areas. Students reported devoting less effort to activities related to personal development and to overall learning when Kuh compared them to students in the 1960s. Kuh (1999) refers to this as the “diminished-effort phenomenon” and stated, “Contemporary undergraduates are shortchanging themselves by not devoting as much effort to the activities that matter to their education as did their counterparts a decade ago” (p. 6).

In addition to diminished student effort toward learning overall, Kuh (1999) also discovered that students simultaneously reported receiving higher grades at universities. Kuh (1999) criticizes students for their lack of effort but also recognizes they are not alone in that students are also being shortchanged by their teachers. According to Kuh (1999), faculty have been contributing to the problem of diminished effort to learn “by asking less from students in return for higher grades” (p. 6). According to Kuh (1999), “The disengagement trend mirrored in downward trends in personal development and values gains, suggesting a diminishing influence of higher education on personal development” (p. 7). Overall, it appears as though both students and faculty demonstrated decreased effort toward learning in higher education between 1989 and 1995. During this time, students’ personal development was not best supported by faculty who overall appeared to become less interested in helping students develop their values (Kuh, 1999;

Sax, Astin, Arrendondo, & Korn, 1996). Without realizing it, the decline of faculty effort toward helping students develop their values during this period of time may have contributed to a decline in the personal development of students overall.

The decreased commitment from faculty to support students' personal development reflects the movement in higher education away from humanism and toward vocationalism. This movement has developed in response to the 21st century marketplace of higher education. Increasingly motivated to survive by ensuring student and alumni satisfaction, institutions of higher learning may ultimately be compromising their ability to fulfill the purpose of benefitting society at large.

The trend in higher education away from supporting students' personal development is troubling for many reasons. One reason it is troubling is because understanding oneself and others is essential to functioning well in the workplace and elsewhere. Personal awareness and acceptance are especially important in a country and world that is increasingly diverse (Kuh, 1999). Another reason it is troubling is because it does not appear to be what students need and desire from their experience in higher education.

According to the findings of Eliophotou Menon (2002) at the University of Cyprus, students want higher education to do more. They want assistance from higher education to improve as individuals, not just to prepare them to become successful professionals. Students prefer an education that will prepare them for life overall, rather than focus on vocationalism. This contradicts the current perception of students held by many in higher education. Findings from the study by Eliophotou Menon (2002) suggest

more research is needed to better understand what students really want and need from higher education in order to feel satisfied. By embracing the movement toward vocationalism, administrators may unknowingly be compromising student satisfaction by not recognizing what students really need and want.

Eliophotou Menon (2002) was curious about the trend toward vocationalism in higher education and decided to explore the topic more in-depth. She designed a study to gather students' perceptions about vocationalism and humanism in higher education. Eliophotou Menon (2002) surveyed 135 students in the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus by asking both open-ended and fixed-alternative questions about their experience in higher education. The survey also included questions about the aim or mission of the University of Cyprus. To address validity of the study, definitions for both a vocational and a humanistic mission in higher education were provided to students. Students were asked to reflect on and assess the experience they were having at their institution. Students were also asked to provide feedback about their preference for a university mission in general. The definition for each mission is as follows.

Aim of University A – Humanistic Mission

The University aims at offering its students the knowledge and the experience that will help them improve as individuals. The study programme emphasizes the development of individual characteristics like the following: Broad horizons, faith in the value of knowledge for its own sake, democratic values, sensitivity with respect to social issues, willingness to contribute to the betterment of society.

Aim of University B – Vocational Mission

The university aims at offering its students the knowledge and skills that will secure them future professional success. The study programme emphasizes the development of individual characteristics like the following: Effectiveness in the

workplace, productivity, desire for professional improvement and in-service training, career orientation. (Eliophotou Menon, 2002, p. 520)

Almost half of the students who participated in the study (49.3%) perceived the University of Cyprus as having embraced a vocational mission to a much greater extent when compared to a humanistic mission. Of the remaining students, 37.3% believed there was a balance between the two missions, and only 13.4% believed the university's provision of services to its students reflected a humanistic perspective. In addition to assessing the mission of the university they were attending, students were also asked about their preferred mission for higher education.

The findings from Eliophotou Menon's (2002) study regarding student preference for university mission may indicate something is askew between what contemporary students want and what they receive from higher education. Approximately 51.1% of students in the sample indicated no preference for a university mission, stating they considered them equally important. Interestingly, only 6.7% preferred a vocational mission for institutions of higher learning while 42.2% of students preferred a humanistic mission. Furthermore, of these students, 22.2% viewed a humanistic mission in higher education as much more important than the vocational mission. Finally, many students commented about the need for higher education to combine the two aims (Eliophotou Menon, 2002).

The findings from this study, in particular those regarding the university mission preferred by students, are noteworthy and may reveal a topic worthy of additional research. As already indicated, half of the students surveyed at the University of Cyprus did not prefer one higher education mission over the other, and only a small percentage

preferred a vocational mission. However, over 40% of students indicated the preference for a humanistic mission in higher education (Eliophotou Menon, 2002). These findings do not support the current perceptions about contemporary students with regard to what they want and need from higher education. Even though the trend in higher education has increasingly been toward vocationalism, findings from this study suggest only a small percentage (6.7%) of students surveyed actually prefer a vocational mission for higher education. Interestingly, findings from this study instead suggest that students do not want the mission of the university to be heavily focused on vocationalism. Therefore, universities might be more successful in meeting the needs and desires of contemporary students by developing either a more balanced approach between a vocational and humanistic focus or by embracing primarily a humanistic mission for the institution.

Clearly, students at the University of Cyprus are aware that the university can assist them with improving themselves as individuals and help them learn how to contribute to society (Eliophotou Menon, 2002). Given the emphasis on student satisfaction in higher education today, one might wonder if students could demand it. Additional research focused on understanding the mission students prefer for higher education is clearly needed to develop a deeper understanding of what contemporary students find satisfying in higher education.

The shift of focus in higher education toward vocationalism has not gone unnoticed. Instead, it has been openly criticized by many. According to Wielemans (1988), vocationalism encourages universities to neglect their historical role as social critics in favor of the production of knowledge and training that is perceived as more

useful in the pursuit of employment. Niblett (1990) is also critical of higher education's shift toward vocationalism. According to Niblett (1990), the dominant focus on practical training and professional development encourages students to embrace materialism which subsequently compromises the ability of students to appreciate the intrinsic value of higher education. Barnett (1997) criticizes new programs in higher education for being overly pragmatic and practical which leads students away from informed action to mere operationalism. These critics and many more believe higher education now prepares students for success in the marketplace instead of fulfilling its mission to prepare students for life (Swenson, 1998).

Students Desire Self-Knowledge

Without self-knowledge, without understanding the working and functions of his being, man cannot be free, he cannot govern himself and he will always remain a slave, and the plaything of the forces acting upon him. This is why in all ancient teachings the first demand at the beginning of the way to liberation was: "Know Thyself." (Gurdjieff, 1973, p. 88)

According to the findings of Eliophotou Menon (2002), contemporary students at the University of Cyprus "appear to reject a purely instrumental or vocational approach to the formulation of higher education aims" (p. 515). Therefore, "Universities should not neglect their humanistic mission in favor of a narrow specialization of job-related skills and information" (Eliophotou Menon, 2002, p. 526). Instead, they must create a mission that reflects both vocationalism and humanism to adequately support and satisfy contemporary students. Students at the University of Cyprus who participated in Eliophotou Menon's (2002) study preferred the humanistic aim over a vocational aim for higher education or a combination of the two. Surprisingly, even though the current trend

in higher education is toward vocationalism, less than 7% of students in the study actually preferred a mission predominantly focused on preparation for a life of work (Eliophotou Menon, 2002).

Whether or not the preferences expressed by students at the University Cyprus mirror the preferences of students at other colleges and universities worldwide is yet to be determined. Therefore, the findings of Eliophotou Menon (2002) warrant the attention of administrators and the action of researchers. Indeed, future research focused on this topic might prove to be quite worthwhile as it appears student satisfaction is increasingly important to the survival of many postsecondary institutions.

In addition to the satisfaction of students, alumni satisfaction is also increasingly important to a university's survival. Satisfied graduates support their institution in numerous ways, ranging from hiring new graduates to engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication (Eliophotou Menon, 2002; Hartman & Schmidt, 1995; Morgan & Shim, 1990). Of growing importance to administrators in higher education is both student and alumni satisfaction.

Future research that adds to the knowledge base of students' preferences for the mission of higher education, and more specifically their needs and desires of course instruction and faculty performance, could benefit postsecondary education overall. A deeper, more informed understanding of what students need and desire from faculty who instruct their courses is necessary given the important role this dimension plays toward influencing students' overall satisfaction level with higher education. If additional research also reveals students' preference for a humanistic aim in higher education, the

role and function of faculty at the university may indeed need to change. Consider for a moment if students in other parts of the world also want their experience in higher education to better prepare them for life overall and not just for a life of work. If patterns and themes emerge from additional data collected from students elsewhere, administrators might use this information to redirect the focus of higher education. To improve student satisfaction, administrators must have an accurate understanding of what students and alumni want and need from faculty who provide course instruction to be satisfied overall with their experience in higher education.

Conclusion

Student satisfaction with their experience in higher education is compromised because their needs and desires are not being adequately met by the institutions they pay to attend. This is indicated by such things as the high number of students who do not persist in their pursuit of higher education (Reisberg, 1999; Tinto, 1975, 1993) and by research findings indicating lower than expected levels of student satisfaction. Additional research is needed to explore and better understand what it is that contemporary students need and desire from faculty who provide course instruction in order to be more satisfied with their experience in higher education overall.

By studying the phenomenon of student satisfaction, important insights can be revealed and then used to address troubling concerns in higher education. If student dissatisfaction is due, in part, to the current trend to vocationalize education, the mission of higher education must be changed. The adoption of a more humanistic mission may reverse the process of dehumanizing higher education that is currently underway. Perhaps

then, institutions of higher learning may be better able to meet the needs and wants of students and therefore increase their satisfaction level overall with their experience in higher education. In the new marketplace of higher education, postsecondary institutions that recognize and honor the preferences of students served by their institution are more likely to compete effectively for business and therefore survive.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Introduction

Much remains unknown about the dimension of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education even though it has been studied for many years. To improve student satisfaction, more must be made known about the needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty who instruct courses. Douglas et al. (2008) believe students are the best ones to make such information known since “ultimately it is they who are the most appropriate arbiters of service quality” (p. 22). Gathering this type of information from students is necessary to develop a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction.

Studying student satisfaction was accomplished by studying the lived experiences of students who shared a satisfying learning experience. Data were analyzed and meaning made from what students identified as elements of satisfying faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. Through this process, some of the common needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty were unearthed. A mixed methods approach was used to accomplish this task.

This chapter begins with an overview of a problem that currently exists in higher education and the research questions that have prompted this study. Next is a description of the type of research methodology used to conduct the study and an explanation for why the methodology was chosen. Information regarding the research design is followed by a description of the population studied and the sampling procedures used.

Instrumentation and the sources of data used to collect information from the participants are identified. Issues of validity and reliability are addressed in the study and are followed by a description of the procedures used for data collection and analysis. The last part of the chapter includes a description of ethical considerations in the study, limitations of the study, and concludes with a summary of Chapter 3.

Statement of the Problem

According to Fink (2003), stakeholders including faculty, parents, and students have expressed concerns about the poor quality of course instruction in higher education. In *Creating Significant Learning Experiences*, Fink (2003) argues that students often complain about courses not being very interesting and irrelevant to life.

The common practice to assess student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction continues to be through the use of traditional course evaluations (Eliophotou Menon, 2002). However, these instruments have many limitations (Delaney et al., 2010; Devlin, 2002; Eliophotou Menon, 2002). First, they are “designed with an underlying assumption that the designer and the respondents agree on the characteristics of effective teaching” because they present only the designer’s ideas of relevant characteristics of effective teaching (Delaney et al., 2010, p. 4). Devlin (2002, as cited in Delaney et al., 2010) argues against the use of traditional course evaluations because a “student as listener-follower” perspective is transmitted to students when traditional course evaluation questionnaires are used (p. 2).

Traditional questionnaires typically attempt to assess student satisfaction by presenting a series of closed-ended questions to which students must respond. Response

options are provided and assigned a number on a Likert scale ranging from strong dissatisfaction to strong satisfaction (Delaney et al., 2010). Using this format limits students to a number of optional responses which may or may not capture their feelings and attitudes about the course instruction they have received. Furthermore, closed-ended questions with a predetermined range of responses significantly limit students' ability to provide meaningful information that can be mined to identify the needs, expectations, or desires of faculty (Delaney et al., 2010).

Research Questions

1. What happened during a particular learning experience in which students reported high levels of student satisfaction? (Students reported, "I learned a lot" and strongly "recommend this instructor to fellow students").
2. What needs, desires, and expectations did students report were met during the learning experience?
3. What specifically did students learn during the learning experience? (Students reported, "I learned a lot").
4. What did students report were aspects of the course instruction and faculty performance that best supported their learning?

Research Methodology

Like others, Creswell (2009) recognizes that all methods of research have limitations that can be addressed by combining different types of methods in one study. Creswell's position is supported by others like Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007), who argue that qualitative and quantitative research methods can be complementary. This type of

research is referred to as mixed methods, defined by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004, as cited in Gall et al., 2007) as “the class of research where the researcher mixes or combines quantitative and qualitative research techniques, methods, approaches, concepts or language into a single study” (p. 17). According to Creswell (2009), mixed methods research has become more popular because “researchers felt that the biases inherent in any single method could neutralize or cancel the biases of other methods” (p. 14).

This study used a mixed methodological design to learn more about the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. Initially, data were collected using a quantitative method. Emphasis was placed on using a qualitative approach because it provided the best methodological *fit* to explore the phenomenon of student satisfaction. Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as an approach to inquiry and “the study of research problems exploring the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. Researchers collect data in natural settings...and analyze their data inductively to establish patterns or themes” (p. 51). There are many different types of qualitative methods that can be used, and it is the responsibility of the researcher to develop a research design best able to fulfill the purpose of the study. The researcher completed qualitative analysis of the data from a large sample size by using grounded theory methodology.

Some grounded theorists argue the amount of data collected in a grounded theory study is not of concern (Glaser, 1978; Stern, 1994, as cited in Creswell, 2007) and rely on this position to justify the use of a small sample size (Creswell, 2007). Charmaz (2006) does not agree with this position when using grounded theory method stating, “The

quality—and credibility—of your study starts with the data” (p. 18). Charmaz (2006) argues data with depth and breadth “that are based upon rich, substantial, and relevant data stands out” and will provide the researcher with “a strong foundation from which to speak” (p. 18). Creswell (2007) also argues it is essential to gather enough data to fully saturate categories that emerge and are then used to develop a model. Creswell (2007) reminds researchers that “the primary outcome of this study is a theory with specific components; a central phenomenon, causal conditions, strategies, conditions and context, and consequences” (p. 68). Based on the advice of expert grounded theorists like Charmaz and Creswell, the researcher for this study used a quantitative method to identify a large sample size to ensure the breadth of data and then used grounded theory method to explore the phenomenon in-depth by collecting and analyzing qualitative data. Combined, this mixed method approach provided the best methodological fit for the study.

Although traditional course evaluations continue to be the primary measure used to assess student satisfaction with course instruction, this practice has been routinely criticized. Researchers and instructors argue they are not valid measures for evaluating teacher effectiveness (Stumpf & Freedman, 1979) because they do not objectively measure student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction (Greenwald, 1997; Snyder & Clair, 1976; Worthington & Wong, 1979). Others argue the information provided by using traditional course evaluations is not useful (Armstrong, 1998; Buck, 1998), in part because the evaluations do not gather the type of information required to accurately evaluate faculty performance and course instruction (Devlin, 2002). However,

it remains unclear whether or not students agree with the designer's definition of effective teaching. When traditional course evaluations are used to assess student satisfaction, a valuable opportunity to learn more about the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction is missed.

Currently there is a lack of in-depth information from students regarding their needs, desires, and expectations of faculty who instruct their courses (Gerdes & Mallinckrodt, 1994; Seymour, 1993). This is due in part to the limitations inherent with the common practice of using traditional course evaluations to assess student satisfaction in higher education. Developing a deeper understanding of student satisfaction is necessary to improve their satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance in higher education. Many suggest exploring students' perceptions more in-depth and advocate doing so by asking students open-ended questions that will allow them to express their own ideas about effective course instruction (Delaney et al., 2010). While traditional course evaluations can provide general quantitative data about student satisfaction with course instruction and faculty performance, they cannot deliver in-depth information about what students mean when they report feeling satisfied or dissatisfied. However, it is this type of detailed information that is needed from students to understand what they need, expect, and desire of faculty in order to be satisfied with the course instruction faculty provide.

Delaney et al. (2010) at the University of Wisconsin and others advocate for change in the practice of gathering student feedback in light of the new emphasis on teaching in higher education (Ralph, 2003). They argue that new, innovative, and more

credible means of measuring and evaluating course instruction and faculty performance are essential in 21st century higher education to improve student satisfaction overall.

Additional research that uses innovative design methods is needed to more deeply explore what happens to and for students who report experiencing satisfying course instruction from which they report having “learned a lot” and highly “recommend this instructor to a fellow student.” Indeed, many argue this type of in-depth feedback and information from students is needed more so now than ever before (Ralph, 2003). Once collected, grounded theory method can be used to systematically analyze data.

According to Bitsch (2005), grounded theory “is the master metaphor of qualitative research” (p. 77). This method of research was developed in the 1960s by sociologists Glaser and Strauss (1967), who presented it as a new way to develop theory in their discipline. A grounded theory study does not begin with a theory and hypotheses but rather with “a field of study or a research question, and what is relevant to this question is allowed to emerge during the research process” (Bitsch, 2005, p. 77). Therefore, a pre-existing theory is not used to analyze data collected from participants (Charmaz, 2006). It is a method used to move beyond describing a phenomenon to generate theory from the ground up (Creswell, 2007). Data are collected systematically, then analyzed, and ultimately used to develop a theory to explain a process, action, or interaction shaped by the views of a large number of participants. It is not an *off the shelf* process (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, as cited in Creswell, 2007). Charmaz (2006) describes it as a method used to study how participants explain their actions and statements and invites the researcher to make analytic sense of these data.

A key element of this methodology is that theory development comes from data provided by participants who have experienced the process. Therefore, grounded theory method provided the best methodological fit for conducting this study of a large number of students who shared a common learning experience they evaluated as satisfying during fall semester in 2011. It provided a theoretical framework for the researcher to explore and then develop an analytical model to explain what happened during an experience that resulted in students reporting high levels of satisfaction with the instructor and how much they learned.

According to Creswell (2009), "Survey research provides a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population" (p. 12). A quantitative approach was used to easily and accurately identify a large group of students who reported high satisfaction with the performance of an instructor who taught their course and from whom they believed they had "learned a lot." Therefore, both research approaches were needed to complete this study. By using a mixed methods approach, the researcher responded to a call made by Delaney et al. (2010) for new, innovative, and more credible means of measuring and evaluating course instruction and faculty performance.

There are different types of mixed methods designs used to conduct research. Gall et al. (2007) describe one mixed methods approach which involves using quantitative methods to answer research questions when the constructs and their measures can be articulated before data are collected. With this type of mixed methods design, qualitative methods follow the use of quantitative methods and are used to discover additional

constructs also relevant to the study's goals. Blaikie (2010) describes this research as a straightforward mixed methods design and refers to it as the explanatory procedure. It comes in two forms.

The explanatory procedure often starts with a quantitative phase that is used to produce results that are then explained further by using a follow-up qualitative phase. A second type of explanatory procedure starts with a preliminary quantitative phase that is used to identify participants for the major qualitative phase of the study (Blaikie, 2010). The explanatory procedure is the type of mixed method study the researcher will use for this study because it provides the best fit to answer the research questions and it addresses the overall purpose of this study.

Research Design

Research designs include the plans and procedures used to complete a study (Creswell, 2009). The researcher is responsible for making the decision regarding which design should be used to study a topic. According to Creswell (2009), "Informing this decision should be the worldview assumptions the researcher brings to the study; procedure for inquiry (called strategies); and specific methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation" (p. 3). In addition, researchers must also consider the nature of the issue being addressed and the personal experiences of the researcher (Creswell, 2009).

A quantitative method was used to identify a social unit to study. According to Gall et al. (2007), a case study is "the in-depth study of one or more instances of a phenomenon in its real-life context that reflects the perspective of the participants

involved in the phenomenon” (p. 447). Given this definition, the research design for this study resembles a case study. Data were collected from participants at the end of the semester using a survey research strategy of inquiry. The process involved the administration of two questionnaires, one quantitative and one qualitative in nature. Analysis of quantitative data was completed and used to identify a sample of students who shared a common learning experience and for whom the majority reported feeling highly satisfied with the faculty member’s performance and course instruction. In addition to being highly satisfied, the group of students chosen for the study also reported having “learned a lot” on the same course questionnaire. After the social unit was identified, the researcher used grounded theory method to analyze qualitative data collected from the students to understand their lived experience more deeply. Qualitative data analysis from students constituted the major research phase of this study.

The qualitative data collected from students are particularly important because according to qualitative researchers like Charmaz (2006), “Research participants’ actions and statements teach you about their worlds, albeit sometimes in ways they may not anticipate” (p. 51). Participants’ language was studied systematically through a detailed coding process to understand the meaning participants attributed to their lived experience.

According to Creswell (2007), there are two approaches to grounded theory that are popular: Strauss and Corbin’s (1998, as cited in Creswell, 2007) approach and the constructivist approach presented by Charmaz (2006). The researcher most closely followed the grounded theory approach outlined by Charmaz (2006).

According to Charmaz (2006), although grounded theory method has been almost exclusively used in qualitative research, it can be used with quantitative data as well which makes it a unique research method. It is also a unique method because “grounded theory methods foster creating an analytic edge” to research (Charmaz, 2006, p. xii). Grounded theory methods consist of “systematic, yet flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories ‘grounded’ in the data themselves” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). Traditional formulaic rules for using grounded theory method are replaced with “a set of principles and heuristic devices” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 2). In general, grounded theory researchers try to join the research participants’ lives to study how they explain their statements and actions to facilitate learning what occurs in the research setting. The researcher attempted to do this by asking the participants a series of open-ended questions about their learning experience but did not specifically articulate the purposes for gathering data was to better understand student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction.

According to Charmaz (2006), data are collected from participants and analysis of the data generates concepts that are used to construct a theory. The researcher began data analysis almost immediately after receiving data from students to develop a better understanding of what happened in the research setting. Also in alignment with the research process suggested by Charmaz (2006), the researcher began constructing data in different ways. The researcher made retrospective observations of student attendance throughout the semester, initiated informal conversations with students about their

experience in the course, and gathered additional materials about the topic and the setting to pursue hunches and potential analytic ideas about them.

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population consisted of undergraduate students who completed a developmental psychology course at a public university in the Midwest during fall semester 2011. Both male and female students participated in the survey and the majority of students were between the ages of 18 and 22. A total of 96 students (85%) participated in the survey. The researcher for this study was also the instructor of the course.

A single-stage nonprobability sampling technique was used to collect quantitative data for this study. More specifically, the sampling technique used to collect quantitative data is referred to by Blaikie (2010) as convenience sampling. In qualitative research the sampling technique used is referred to as purposeful sampling. According to Creswell (2007), purposeful sampling means that “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). Purposeful sampling was used to identify participants who could purposefully inform an understanding of the student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education.

According to Creswell (2007), “Researchers can sample at the site level, at the event or process level, and at the participant level” (p. 126). For this study the researcher sampled at all three levels. Sampling at the site level occurred by asking students to participate in the survey during class on two separate days. As stated earlier, this is referred to as convenience sampling and it saves the researcher time, money, and effort

(Creswell, 2007). Sampling at the participant level was done by asking students to individually complete the traditional Student Course Evaluation form and the Developmental Psychology End of Semester Anonymous Student Feedback Questionnaire. Creswell (2007) refers to this type of sampling as maximum variation sampling which is designed to document diverse variations and to identify important common patterns. Finally, sampling at the process or event level was completed by inviting all students who completed the course to participate in the survey. This type of sampling is referred to by Creswell (2007) as typical case sampling which is used to highlight what is average.

Quantitative Instrumentation and Data Collection Procedure

Students who volunteered to participate in the survey were asked to complete the Student Course Evaluation required by the institution (see Appendix A). The survey was not announced to students in advance; however, returning students likely anticipated the survey as it is typical protocol at the end of courses in higher education. On the questionnaire students were asked to respond to a list of 14 closed-ended questions by using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*very strongly disagree*) to 6 (*very strongly agree*). Students were asked to evaluate four areas of the instructor's performance: (a) delivery of instruction, (b) articulating expectations and assessing learning, (c) creating an environment that supports learning, and (d) administrative issues and other. Students were also asked two open-ended questions on the course evaluation.

Per institutional policy, the instructor described the survey procedures to students and then left the lecture hall before the instructor's teaching assistant began data

collection. Students completed the course evaluation anonymously and submitted their completed questionnaire to the teaching assistant who placed it in a manila envelope. After collecting all the questionnaires from participants, the teaching assistant sealed the envelope and hand delivered the data to the department secretary. Data were then sent to be processed on campus in the testing center. Results from the survey were delivered to the faculty member six weeks later.

Aggregate numeric results for two of the closed-ended questions were used to identify a group of students for which the majority reported high satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. The first question was, "I would recommend this instructor to a fellow student." The second question was, "Overall, I learned a lot in this course."

Qualitative Source of Data and Data Collection Procedure

After students completed the traditional course evaluation, the instructor informed them of an opportunity to earn five points of extra credit by participating in the second phase of the survey on the last day of class. Students who chose to participate completed a questionnaire designed by the instructor to explore their perceptions about their learning experience, the Developmental Psychology End of Semester Anonymous Student Feedback Questionnaire (see Appendix B). The questionnaire posed a series of open-ended questions inviting students to share their thoughts, feelings, and ideas about the learning experience. Students responded to the questions anonymously and in writing.

After the lecture on the last day of class, the instructor informed students of the procedure for the second phase of the survey should they decide to participate. Students

who chose not to participate in the survey were dismissed from class. To ensure the survey was confidential, students were instructed to document their student identification number on a blank Scantron sheet so they would receive five points of extra effort points. The instructor collected the Scantrons from students and then left the lecture hall. Each student who participated in the survey received five points of extra effort.

After the instructor left the lecture hall, the teaching assistant distributed the questionnaires and told students they had 45 minutes to complete it. To ensure confidentiality, students were instructed not to identify themselves on the questionnaire. When students were finished recording their written responses on the questionnaire they were instructed to place them on the table in the front of the lecture hall. Students were dismissed from class after completing the questionnaire.

The teaching assistant delivered the completed questionnaires to the instructor's office and reported that it took students a much longer period of time to complete the questionnaire than anticipated. Some students ran out of time and had to submit their questionnaire before finishing due to the arrival of the next class in the lecture hall.

Ninety-seven students (86%) participated in phase two of the survey. One question asked students about what they had learned in class during the semester. Another question asked students to provide candid feedback about the effectiveness of specific learning activities and assignments they had been asked to complete to master the material. The question of greatest importance to the researcher was the last question to which students were invited to respond:

Separate the actual activities and assignments you have completed in class this semester from the instructor. How important has the instructor been

with regard to influencing what you have learned and how you have learned it? Do you trust the instructor, respect, and/or like the instructor? How have your feelings about the instructor influenced your learning and development this semester, if at all?

Students' responses to this question provided descriptions of what students perceived had happened during a shared learning experience in which students reported high levels of student satisfaction. Analyzing students' responses to this question revealed answers to research questions 1 and 4. In addition, systematically analyzing students' responses to this same question answered research question 2 through the emergence of themes that indicate needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty that were met by the instructor. It is unclear whether students' responses to this question will provide adequate information to answer research question 3 or not. Using grounded theory method to code and make meaning of data gathered from highly satisfied students revealed important insights about the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction.

Data Analysis Procedures

Coding is a process used in grounded theory method to discern what is happening in the data and to help the researcher begin to understand what it means (Charmaz, 2006). It includes the use of techniques referred to as initial or open coding, selective coding, and axial coding (Charmaz, 2006). Coding means that labels are attached to segments of data to characterize what each segment is about to emphasize what is happening in the data (Charmaz, 2006). This process "distills data, sorts them, and gives us a handle for making comparisons with other segments of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 3).

Three types of coding were used to systematically analyze the students' handwritten responses.

The second type of coding used in this study is referred to as focused coding. According to Charmaz (2006), this type of coding is “a focused, selective phase that uses the most significant or frequent initial codes to sort, synthesize, integrate, and organize large amounts of data” (p. 46). During focused coding, decisions were made about which initial codes to use that made the most analytic sense to categorize data.

Axial coding was used last to relate categories to subcategories, to describe the properties of each category, and to reassemble the data that were broken down earlier into smaller categories so that data can be brought back together into a new, coherent whole (Charmaz, 2006).

According to Charmaz (2006), “Theoretical integration begins with focused coding and proceeds through all your subsequent analytic steps” (p. 46). These two types of coding will be used to analyze the language used by participants to reveal the meaning of their lived experience in a highly satisfying learning experience in which they learned a lot.

Another practice integral to the use of grounded theory method is constant comparative methods and, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), they must be used throughout a grounded theory study. Constant comparative methods consist of four stages: “(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 105).

Like the essential practice of using constant comparative methods throughout a grounded theory study, Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate researchers stop coding to record a memo when they have a new idea, insight, or question about the data or when they make connections and comparisons between categories. This is an essential practice because memos record, chart, and detail the major analytic phase of the study. According to Charmaz (2006), “Memo-writing is the pivotal intermediate step between data collection and writing drafts of papers” (p. 73). Therefore, the researcher diligently wrote memos all throughout data analysis and used the memos to facilitate analytic thinking about the phenomenon being studied.

Findings grounded in the data were used to develop a conceptual model to explain the relationships between the fulfillment of students’ needs, desires, and expectations and their level of satisfaction with the faculty member who instructed their course. Using a mixed methods design was the best approach to uncover answers to the four research questions posed initially. Insights gained from this study can support the development of a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education.

Validity

A common concern regarding the validity of traditional course evaluations has been articulated by Stumpf and Freedman (1979), who suggested such measures only index the popularity of faculty instead of providing objective information about teacher effectiveness. However, more recent research does not support their position.

Research has found that students, in general, tend to give higher ratings to courses they regard as intellectually challenging and helpful in meeting those challenges, and lower ratings to courses that are easy and in which they do not learn much. (Bain, 2004, p. 172)

According to Bain (2004), students who rate an instructor's performance high would rate the helpfulness of the instructor in meeting course challenges and the amount students believed they learned high as well. These scores would correlate if the instrument had predictive or concurrent validity (Creswell, 2009). The researcher cross-referenced students' overall rating of the instructor's popularity as indicated by their aggregate level of agreement with the statement, "I would recommend this instructor to a fellow student" with their aggregate level of agreement with the statement, "Overall, I learned a lot in this course." Because the course evaluation did not ask students to specifically rate the instructor's level of helpfulness in meeting course challenges, only two scores were compared instead of three. Evidence of concurrent validity of the traditional course evaluation is demonstrated by high ratings from students on both items.

Richardson (2005) presents another validity concern about evaluation instruments because they often "have been constructed and developed in-house and may never have been subjected to any kind of external scrutiny" (p. 388). Although the course evaluation used for this study was developed in-house, a rigorous process was used. In their extensive report prepared for the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, Gravestock and Gregor-Greenleaf (2008) described it as "an interesting (and exemplary) case study of the process of reviewing teaching evaluations" (p. 23). The instrument was revised because it "was not based on research about teaching and learning and had a number of items that were not helpful to instructors, administrators, or students"

(Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008, p. 2). The redesign process was completed by a university committee which utilized extensive research on teaching in postsecondary education including the review of other existing instruments. Issues of validity and utility played a key role in how the instrument was revised. The new course evaluation was piloted in 50 courses before it was adopted university-wide (Gravestock & Gregor-Greenleaf, 2008).

While the concepts of validity and reliability are important in quantitative research, issues of accuracy and credibility of the findings are most appropriate in qualitative research (Creswell, 2009). To best ensure accuracy of the findings from the qualitative data, the researcher used strategies like triangulating the data throughout analysis as well as rich, thick descriptions to convey the findings (Creswell, 2009).

Reliability

According to Gall et al. (2007), “In practice, researchers tend to apply looser validity and reliability standards to questionnaires” (p. 229). One reason for this is because researchers are usually interested in the group’s average response and not individual responses (Gall et al., 2007). To enhance the reliability of findings from this study, the researcher chose to study a large sample size.

Qualitative reliability refers to the level of the researcher’s consistency in executing research procedures across projects (Gibbs, as cited in Creswell, 2009). To increase reliability, the researcher documented each step of the procedure used throughout the research process and consistently wrote memos to document reactions throughout. Memos included the researcher’s thoughts, insights, possible relationships,

and questions that emerged during the process. Additional procedures including cross-checking, reviewing transcripts for any mistakes, and checking for code drift throughout the process of data analysis were also used throughout the data analysis to ensure reliability (Creswell, 2009).

Ethical Considerations

The researcher took steps to protect participants involved in this study. First, participants were asked to complete both questionnaires anonymously to protect their confidentiality. Therefore, the identity of students who did or did not participate in the study is completely confidential. Informed consent was not pursued from participants in the study due to the minimal risk present. Finally, an application was submitted and approval received to conduct this study from the Institutional Review Board at the respective university.

To gain voluntary cooperation of students, the researcher invited all students to participate in the surveys during the last week of class. Students were informed that their participation was completely optional, confidential, and therefore their decision would not influence their grade in the class whatsoever. As described earlier, students were informed of the process in place to protect their confidentiality.

An important benefit to the participants in this study as well as faculty, staff, and administration in higher education is the potential to improve student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. This will be accomplished by advocating students' needs, expectations, and desires be recognized and addressed. The researcher will meet this ethical obligation by pursuing traditional

approaches to share the finding of the study at conference presentations and in journal publications.

Limitations

In phenomena, the researcher works to transcend or suspend past knowledge to understand the phenomenon at a deeper, more genuine level. This is referred to as bracketing, and it is used to set aside one's beliefs, values, and attitudes (Creswell, 2007). Bracketing was especially relevant in this study since the researcher had taught at the university for eight years prior to conducting the study and was also the participant's instructor.

Bracketing was facilitated by circumstances that required the researcher to wait almost a year before beginning to analyze data collected from students. During that time, the researcher left the university and relocated to a different state. The time that passed and life events that occurred between when the researcher collected data from students and when analysis began provided the researcher with the amenity of psychological distance from the immediate experience of instructor.

Time and distance facilitated the researcher's process of bracketing. However, it did not mean she completely set aside the preconceived ideas about what happened to students and why. This researcher used the constructivist approach to grounded theory described by Charmaz (2006) which recognizes the limitations of bracketing. The constructivist approach to grounded theory method comes from the interpretive tradition and places priority on the phenomena of study. When using it, the researcher views data and analysis as being created from shared experiences and relationships with participants

(Charmaz, 2006). Therefore, the researcher understands that they do not exist in a social vacuum but instead interact with data and create theories about it. This means the resulting theory is an interpretation of the data which depends on the researcher's view – it does not and cannot stand outside of it (Charmaz, 2006).

The researcher was a psychology instructor at the university for eight years prior to completing this study. Over time she spoke with many students about their satisfying and dissatisfying experiences in higher education and developed beliefs about the important role of relationship between instructor and student. Indeed, her curiosity about the role of relationships between teachers and students motivated her to develop this study. Undeniably, the information she gathered prior to completing this study unavoidably influenced her to look for and value some aspects of student satisfaction more than others.

The researcher studied a class of students for whom she was the instructor and made concerted efforts to bracket her personal experiences as the instructor. However, the constructivist approach to grounded theory method recognizes that the researcher's pre-existing ideas influenced how she interpreted data collected from students which ultimately influenced the theory she developed. As such, a limitation of this study is that it does not contribute verified knowledge to the existing literature on student satisfaction but instead offers a plausible account for it.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to explore the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. While a mixed

methods approach was used to explore this topic, emphasis was placed on a qualitative approach because it provided the best methodological fit. More specifically, grounded theory method was used to explore the lives of students who shared a common learning experience they found to be satisfying and one in which they “learned a lot.” Findings from this study provide clarity regarding the needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty in higher education. This information can be used to improve the dimension of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction and therefore increase students’ overall satisfaction with higher education.

Chapter 4. Results

Feedback from students regarding their satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction has been collected and studied for many years. But significant limitations with methods used to study this topic, including the overreliance on traditional course evaluations to gather feedback from students, have limited researchers' findings. These measures have long been criticized as ineffective at best and invalid at worst. The questionnaires use quantitative methods to gather data, but researchers increasingly recognize such methods are not effective for in-depth study of phenomena, including student satisfaction. Instead, using qualitative methods designed to hear the voices of participants who describe their lived experience provides a much better methodological fit for studying a phenomenon-like student satisfaction in higher education.

Changes in higher education over the last 25 years have led to increased research, enhanced understanding, and development of system initiatives designed to improve student satisfaction. Although research has revealed the important dimension of course instruction toward influencing student satisfaction, too little is known about what students actually need, expect, and desire to feel satisfied with course instruction delivered by faculty. Therefore, a deeper understanding of what students mean when they report feeling satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction is necessary to ultimately accomplish the desired goal of improving it.

Oliver and DeSarbo (1989) define student satisfaction as the favorability of a student's subjective evaluation of the various outcomes and experiences associated with

education. According to Elliot and Healy (2001), student satisfaction is typically defined as a "...short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of a student's educational experience" (p. 2). They argue when the actual performance meets or exceeds the students' expectations, student satisfaction is the result.

To best ensure the result of customer satisfaction, students' expectations of faculty who instruct their courses must be met. However, before this can happen they must be made known. This can happen by retrospectively uncovering the needs and desires students report were met by their instructor which resulted in a satisfying learning experience for them.

The purpose of this study was to hear and understand the voices of students who shared a learning experience they evaluated as highly satisfying. A mixed methods approach was used to uncover the meaning students made of their lived experience. A quantitative method was used to identify a group of students who were highly satisfied with the performance of a faculty member. Once identified, a qualitative method was used to explore in-depth the lived experience of these satisfied students. Grounded theory method was used to make meaning of what students said when they reported feeling highly satisfied with the faculty performance and course instruction they received.

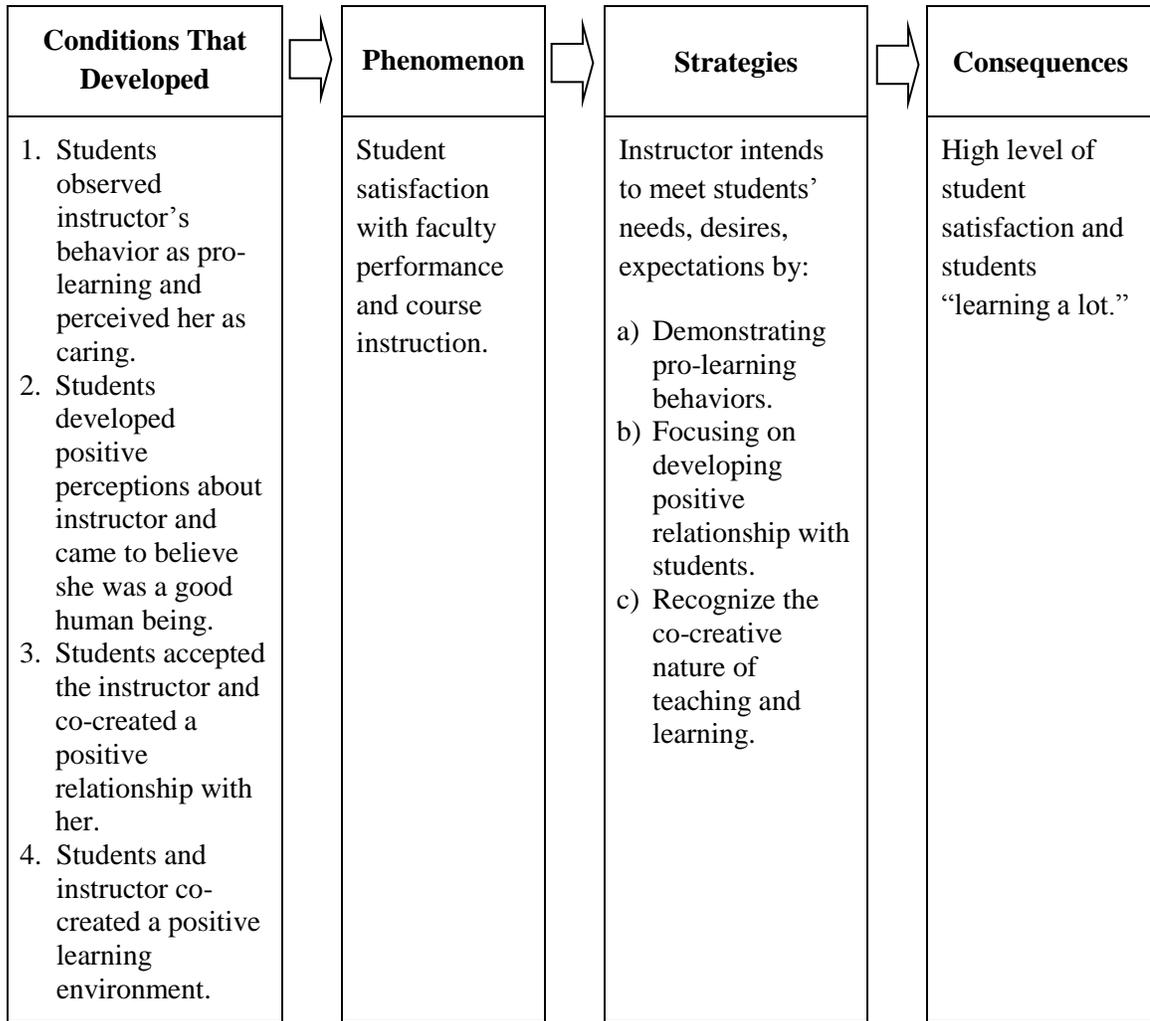
Students were asked multiple open-ended questions designed to encourage reflection about the course instruction they had received. They were asked to describe what happened during the learning experience. Qualitative data analysis was used to code students' responses to questions that focused specifically on the role of the instructor in their learning experience. This was done to uncover students' needs, desires, and

expectations that were met by the instructor. Themes emerged from data analysis revealing common meanings made by students. Interrelationships between themes were identified and used to create a theoretical model to attribute meaning to what happened and to explain why what happened ultimately led to high student satisfaction.

Analysis of the data from students is presented in Chapter 4. First, general findings from data analysis are presented. Next are descriptions of four specific conditions that developed as shared experiences amongst students in the class. Following that is information about the context, strategies, and consequences of strategies used for creating student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. The last part of Chapter 4 presents important insights about the needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty who instruct their courses. All of these findings were uncovered by listening closely to the voices of students.

Theoretical Model

From the data emerged a theoretical model of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. This model is presented in Figure 1 and includes the four conditions that developed in the class, the phenomenon experienced by students, strategies used, consequences experienced by students, and the intervening conditions. Presenting aspects of the theory in Chapter 4 reflects the unique protocol for conducting research and reporting results characteristic of grounded theory method.



Intervening Conditions
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Relevancy of topic studied for students. b) Instructor's desire to understand teaching and learning. c) Instructor's curiosity about the role of the relationship between teacher and student in learning.

Figure 1. Theoretical model of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction.

Theory development is an iterative process that unfolds while analyzing data when using grounded theory method. Components of the theory that emerge simultaneously reflect results of data analysis as well as integral components of the theory that emerge to reflect what happened. Therefore, unlike traditional studies, presentation of the theory in this study begins in Chapter 4 followed by a more in-depth description in Chapter 5.

Data Analysis and Results

This study was designed to explore what happened to students during a particular learning experience with which they were satisfied. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected from students. Analysis of the data revealed two core categories:

(a) student satisfaction with faculty performance, and (b) student satisfaction with course instruction. Students reported a high level of satisfaction for both as indicated by having “learned a lot” and their willingness to “recommend this instructor to a fellow student.”

The focus of this study was to explore what happened between students and the instructor. To do this, students were asked to, “Separate the actual activities and assignments you have completed in class...” and to focus on, “How important has the instructor been with regard to influencing what you have learned and how you have learned it?” Students’ feelings about the instructor were revealed by asking, “Do you trust the instructor, respect, and/or like the instructor?” In addition, students were asked, “How have your feelings about the instructor influenced your learning and development this semester, if at all?”

Students responded to the open-ended questions with written statements that filled at least half a sheet of paper. Their responses were in-depth and provided rich, narrative descriptions about what happened during the learning experience and what it meant to them. Students described the feelings they had about and toward the instructor and explained how their feelings about the instructor influenced their overall learning experience.

Themes emerged from students' responses indicating a similar process occurred between the instructor and students. Students made similar observations about the instructor and reported almost unanimously positive feelings and perceptions about her. In addition, students consistently and clearly described a positive relationship that developed between them and the instructor and explained similar ways in which the relationship influenced their learning. In addition, students consistently described a learning environment that developed which supported their learning.

Themes that emerged from data analysis reveal insights about the phenomenological experiences students had, resulting in high student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. These insights were gained by uncovering the needs, desires, and expectations students had of the instructor that were met and resulted in high satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction.

Conditions Present

Data analysis revealed a series of conditions that developed over time which characterize how the students and instructor came to relate to each other. More specifically, four themes emerged, indicating conditions that developed and contributed

to students experiencing significant learning. The four conditions were the phenomenological experiences shared by students that related to student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction.

Condition 1. The first condition that developed in the class was a perception amongst students that the instructor cared about them not only as students but as human beings as well. Students consistently identified specific behaviors demonstrated by the instructor which they believed communicated her feelings of acceptance and support of them. The researcher labeled these behaviors as *pro-learning instructor behaviors* because students perceived them as evidence that the instructor cared about them as individuals and wanted to help them learn.

Some students felt cared for by the instructor because, "...she always had time to talk to all of the students." It was customary for the instructor to arrive in the lecture hall a few minutes early specifically to allow for interaction time with students on a more informal basis. She often had conversations before and after class with students either from the stage or in the area where the students were sitting. If the students raised their hand from where they were sitting, she would go to the student to talk with them. Topics of conversations ranged from course content to personal information disclosed by the instructor or the student. Conversations were typically short and upbeat. They consisted of answering questions, brief discussions, telling jokes, or talking about the weather. Taking time to talk with students prior to and after class was perceived by students as an expression of caring for them as individuals and therefore a pro-learning instructor behavior.

Another behavior students perceived as pro-learning includes the instructor's attempt to learn their first names. Many students described the instructor as someone who "...seems to care about the students and enjoys knowing the students on a one-on-one basis." Students came to believe that the instructor saw them as individuals because it "seems like she knows everyone in class which shows she cares and is committed to teaching." The same student wrote, "I moved up a few rows from where I usually sit one day and she noticed." It's likely that students were surprised when the instructor knew students on a first-name basis because there were over 100 students in the lecture class.

To learn their names at the beginning of every semester, the instructor drew a quick picture of the lecture hall with rows of seats in it. While she did not require students to sit in assigned seats in the lecture hall, she had learned that students routinely sat in the same area every day they came to class. Her goal was to learn the names of at least 15 students in each lecture class every semester. To do this, she would focus on learning the first names of specific students by writing their name on the map in the area where they routinely sat. Over time, the instructor learned the names of students and addressed them publicly, in class and out of class, on a first-name basis. This behavior was perceived by students in as another demonstration that the instructor cared about them as individuals.

Data analysis also revealed instructor behaviors that students commonly interpreted as the instructor's desire for them to learn the material. Students interpreted these behaviors to mean that the instructor was invested in them and their academic success. Evidence of this to students included the instructor clearly communicating class

information and expectations. One student wrote, "...she told students what they needed to do to perform well in class." Another example of the instructor's investment in students' learning was her procedure for ending class.

The instructor made it a practice to wrap up class by taking the last few minutes to ask students to identify the "big ideas you are taking away from class today." She told students that she could support their learning by taking time at the end of class to help them consolidate the information to which they had been exposed. The instructor designated the last part of class as a time to facilitate a discussion with students about what they had learned in class that day. On occasion she would request students to take out a piece of paper on which they would respond anonymously. Often she asked students to write down a big idea they had learned in class that day or respond to a specific question about material covered in class. Sometimes she asked students to apply information about the topic discussed in class to their personal life, while at other times she asked students to tell her if there was something discussed in class they did not understand. The instructor told students she did this to assess their learning because she wanted to find out how effective her teaching was for students. Feedback from students regarding what was interesting, relevant, or confusing helped her evaluate her teaching. By doing this, a student wrote, "She seemed to actually care that we are taking something out from the class and cares about education...which made me feel comfortable with her."

In addition to these and other pro-learning behaviors, the instructor consistently observed students' behavior in class to assess their reaction to the content and delivery of

what she presented. She also wanted to assess their overall readiness to learn throughout the semester. When the instructor observed multiple students behaving in ways she interpreted as disinterested (sleeping, lack of eye contact, lethargy), she would stop and ask students, “Do you want to go on and cover more today or are you full?” Based on the majority response from students, she would either proceed or end class at that point. One student articulated this by saying, “I think she does a great job teaching and knows when we’re full.”

A student wrote, “She genuinely cares about all her students and wants them all to do extremely well.” Another wrote, “...(she) was always concerned with how well we were all learning the information and took in our thoughts because she really cared about whether or not we were learning.” A student wrote that she believed the instructor was “really dedicated to the learning of the students...(because) the way the class was structured was to work for our learning, not just her preference.” A student wrote, “She was *laid back* about the material and not so focused on ‘know this’ but the overall big picture of ‘What did you learn?’” They perceived the instructor as “...willing to help and teach” and believed she was “...very motivated to teach us and help us learn the course content.” Students felt the instructor cared about them and was invested in their learning, which ultimately meant their success.

By observing student behavior and checking in with them throughout class, students developed a perception that the instructor cared for them and that she understood them. A student wrote, “She is so socially in tune with our stages in life and tries to make

it as easy as possible to learn from our view.” Another expressed that they “loved how understanding she was in our learning styles and our attention spans.”

Students consistently identified behaviors of the instructor that supported their learning. They also identified personality attributes which they felt supported their learning. Repeatedly, students expressed how much they “loved” the instructor’s enthusiasm in class and described how it “was infectious...and rubbed off on” them. Another proclaimed that “every prof needs to be this excited to teach when they come to class!” Many students explained how the instructor’s enthusiasm affected them and improved their desire to learn. One student wrote, “Her enthusiasm really made me enjoy the class and want to learn the information,” while another said it impacted her by “causing me to pay more attention in class.” A student described how the instructor’s “excitement made it possible for me to be excited to come to class every day,” and another said, “It (her enthusiasm) makes coming to a two hour class fun!” Finally, a student shared, “Her enthusiasm for the topics motivated me to learn.”

In addition to being enthusiastic in class, students also “loved her honesty and openness.” According to several students, the instructor was “very open and students definitely benefit from that...it creates a great learning environment.” The instructor routinely shared information about her personal and professional life with students with the stated purpose of helping students “connect the dots to the real world.” She often included pictures of her children and friends in lecture slides when presenting course content.

In addition, she shared real stories from her life experience to illustrate concepts she was presenting in class to show students the relevancy of psychology to life. The instructor had worked as a social worker for 15 years prior to teaching in higher education and had many stories from her professional experience to draw upon when explaining course content. Students liked it when the instructor shared information and stories about her life and they perceived it as pro-learning behavior.

Students appreciated that the instructor was “always telling interesting stories...,” which another student said, “Were fabulous...,” and according to another student, “Made the concepts easier to understand.” Students liked it when she related “the material to life and provided real stories.” Students wrote, “When you gave specific examples from your own experience as a parent it made it a lot easier to understand the material.” Another wrote, “I really liked when she shared personal stories that made the content she was teaching much more real.” Students “really enjoyed the instructor’s real life examples” and personal stories because it “made it easier for me to connect dots and visualize real life experiences.”

Another significant theme that emerged revealed common perceptions and beliefs students developed about the instructor’s teaching style. For some students, her teaching style was different than what they were accustomed to in higher education. One student wrote, she is “one of the most unique teachers I have met (and I have 100 + credits so...),” while others wrote, she is “somewhat strange,” and “she does teach differently than I am used.”

Themes emerged from students' responses that described the instructor's teaching style and explained how it facilitated student learning. Students recognized that the instructor did not lecture exclusively in class but instead used many different teaching techniques and strategies to deliver course content. This theme was best captured by a student who wrote, "There were so many different techniques used to enhance the learning process," and by another who provided more specific information by sharing, "She provided helpful examples, thought-provoking questions, and visuals in the form of video. All of these helped me better understand the material." Another student commented that she "...had many activities to help us learn."

Students especially liked learning in an active manner. A student wrote that they "liked that it was hands-on and interactive," and that "she got us involved which helped facilitate learning." Another student commented, "I thought the way she taught was enough to engage and challenge me in the course." One way the instructor got students involved in class was by facilitating large class discussions with them.

Students consistently approved of the instructor's use of large class discussions and found the discussions really supported their learning. "She was very good at engaging students during lecture and encouraging people to join discussions and facilitate the learning." According to another student, "She made this class open and easy to share stories," and engaged "the class in discussions which helps me realize real life experiences."

According to the students, the instructor "applied things to real life situations, in ways the text cannot do..." Another student wrote, "'Connecting the dots' was the theme

of the course which is what made me want to learn the information,” and “...[she] encouraged us to explore our interests and understanding of the world around us.” Encouraging students to connect the dots between what they were learning in class to the world in which they lived “made the course work seem to matter in ‘real life’ and not just in the classroom.” Students perceived the instructor’s teaching strategy as effective by the way she made the course content relevant to their lives. One student wrote, “Every lecture I think to myself and relate to everything that is talked about in class. I really enjoyed connecting the dots...,” was echoed by another student, who wrote, “She is always encouraging us to look at the big picture to understand.” Students found that when the instructor focused on helping them understand the course content by making it relevant to everyday life and focusing on the big picture, it helped them see the relationships and connections between topics and issues throughout the course.

The instructor behaved in ways that students perceived as expressions of her care for them as individuals and her understanding of them as human beings. In addition, her behaviors demonstrated to students her commitment to help them learn and be successful academically. These behaviors are labeled pro-learning instructor behaviors because students described them as behaviors that facilitated their learning and explained how they opened the students up to learning. This was the first condition that developed in the class and was shared amongst students.

Condition 2. A second condition developed in the class. It was the shared experience of students forming positive perceptions about the instructor that led them to believe she was a good human being. Students consistently described the instructor as “a

wonderful lady,” “awesome,” and to others, she was “way down to earth. Great woman!” As already noted, students also consistently described the instructor as someone who cared about them and wanted to help them learn. Positive perceptions about the instructor were shared by 99% of the students who participated in the survey.

Students developed many positive perceptions about the instructor’s personality and came to believe these personality attributes facilitated their learning. Students described the instructor as kind and cited how “she is nice to each student,” and “...she would include the class and acknowledge everyone’s thoughts.” Another student wrote, “Although we didn’t always agree, she never discriminated on that factor.”

Although the open-ended question did not ask students to evaluate the instructor’s teaching performance, many students did. There were 25 students who made evaluative comments about the instructor as a teacher/professor. All who commented on this topic wrote very positive things. The student who wrote, “The instructor is okay. She’s nice...,” was the least positive evaluation of the instructor’s teaching performance. The majority of evaluative comments from students containing the word “great” is best reflected by the student who wrote, “I think she was a great professor. I would recommend her to anyone.” Other comments that best capture the students’ sentiments about the quality of the instructor’s teaching include, “She is an awesome teacher,” and “I think she was a great professor. I would recommend her to anyone.” There were no negative comments made by any student criticizing the instructor’s teaching ability.

Although students were not asked to evaluate the instructor's teaching performance or make comments about the instructor's commitment to teaching or her commitment to teaching psychology, many students did both. Consistently, students perceived the instructor as "very enthusiastic about her work," and from this observation many came to believe the instructor was "committed to teaching." A student wrote, "You were so enthusiastic and I can tell you love what you're doing." Another student assumed the "instructor seems like she knows everyone in class which shows she cares and is committed to teaching." Other students came to believe that "it was obvious that she was very passionate about this subject."

The enthusiasm and passion that students perceived from the instructor's behavior positively influenced students' desire to learn. A student wrote, "I feel like the instructor thought that what was being taught was very important. This motivated my learning." Another wrote, "She seemed excited to teach the material which made me more excited to learn," which was similar to another student who wrote, "She was very enthusiastic about what she was teaching which made me want to learn." Students enjoyed the class with this instructor for a variety of reasons yet consistently they developed an overall positive perception about the instructor.

In addition to being enthusiastic and passionate, the instructor came to be someone the students consistently perceived as "very smart" and, according to other students, she "knew what she was talking about." Students perceived the instructor as

knowledgeable, which resulted in her developing credibility with the students. “This topic was really interesting and [her] background with psychology and her role as a mom and wife made me feel like I could trust her thoughts on the topic and what she had to say.”

Students explained ways that the instructor’s personality influenced their learning. A student shared, “She was very respectful and aware of the different backgrounds and perspectives of others...which made it very easy and comfortable for discussions.” A student who described the instructor as knowledgeable explained how this attribute facilitated learning by stating, “...because she knows what she is talking about and I know she wasn’t BS-ing what she was talking about.” This statement captures the essence of many students’ sentiments who described a positive relationship that developed between students and the instructor. Students developed many positive perceptions about the instructor which led to their assessment of her as a good human being. In addition, students explained how being a good person influenced their learning.

Students came to believe the instructor was a good person who cared about them. Students described how this belief motivated them to learn. A student wrote, “...and the fact that you can genuinely tell that she cares about her students really motivated me to do well.” Another wrote, “Knowing that she truly wants to teach and cares about her students makes me want to come to class. I feel like if I didn’t come to class I would let her down (not in a bad way).” Another wrote, “It made me want to do well... because she really cared about her students and wants nothing more than to see every one of them succeed!” Finally, a student articulated, “My learning was improved with the knowledge

that [the instructor] truly wanted us to learn and succeed. She showed her faith in us.”

Students developed positive perceptions about the instructor and these perceptions facilitated student learning.

By coding and analyzing students’ descriptions of their lived experience, it became clear that they used the instructor’s behaviors to form perceptions and ultimately their beliefs about who she was as a human being. Over time, the instructor came to be someone students enjoyed, liked, respected, and trusted. She also came to be someone with whom they could form a relationship, indicating a third condition that developed.

Students expressed their free will by accepting the instructor as a good human being. They came to believe she was a person who cared about them as individuals and developed a positive relationship with her. Like the first two conditions experienced by students, the third condition contributed to the phenomenological experiences related to student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. It was followed by the development of a fourth condition, the co-creation of a learning environment that facilitated learning. Evidence of these last two conditions that developed emerged during data analysis and reveal important insights about what it means to students to be satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction. Following is data to support the existence of these two last conditions that developed amongst students in the class.

Condition 3. Students were asked to “separate the actual activities and assignments you have completed in class this semester from the instructor,” in an attempt to isolate “how important has the instructor been with regard to influencing what you have learned and how you have learned it?”

Students' responses to these questions clearly distinguished a difference between how the instructor taught the class and who students perceived her to be as a human being. Twenty-seven students wrote about the instructor's influence on what they learned, indicating a positive relationship had developed between them and the instructor. Only one student in the class who responded to this part of the question indicated no influence and wrote, "She has not really influenced my development." This response suggests a positive relationship did not develop between the instructor and the student. Responses from all other students were remarkably similar, indicating the instructor was "extremely important," also indicating the development of a positive relationship.

Students consistently described the instructor's degree of importance and level of influence on their learning as "great," "strong," "significant," and for some, "the instructor was KEY." One student wrote, "I think without (her) it would not have been the same learning experience at all." Students wrote, "The instructor has been FAR more important than that of the text or the material," and "I really enjoyed the instructor more than I did the class." These were sentiments echoed by other students as well.

All students were asked, "Do you trust the instructor, respect and/or like the instructor?" and, "How have your feelings about the instructor influenced your learning and development this semester, if at all?"

Students answered the same question in different ways. Some students answered more parts of the question than others. But, more so than any other, the part of the question answered most often by students was the question, "Do you trust the instructor, respect and/or like the instructor?" Sixty students ($n = 60$ or $60/97 = 62\%$) responded

directly to this question. Response consistency to this question created the most significant theme that emerged from the data. Without question, data analysis revealed the development of a positive relationship between students and the instructor for all but one student in the class. Students ranged from “liking” the instructor to “loving” the instructor, suggesting a continuum of emotions toward the instructor, all of which were positive in nature.

As indicated earlier, data collected from students suggest they felt comfortable around the instructor and they enjoyed the learning experience with her. Data also suggest many of the students liked the instructor. Some liked her a great deal. Twenty-six students wrote about how much they liked the instructor. Overall, they appeared to “really like the instructor.” Some students described her as “way down to earth,” while others described her as a “a great woman!,” and “a wonderful lady.”

The relationship between liking an instructor and learning from them was articulated by the student who wrote, “I do like my instructor...it allows me to want to listen to hear and learn what she has to teach. ‘Liking’ an instructor very much affects whether or not you enjoy and want to learn in a course.” A similar sentiment was expressed and explained another way by a student who wrote, “I do like the instructor, this makes learning much easier. Having a teacher that you feel you can’t approach or talk to raises anxiety and makes class terrible.” Students reported liking the instructor which correlates with the theme of enjoying the class.

Students described how liking an instructor facilitated their learning. A student wrote, “Liking her has helped me want to learn....” Another student explained that liking

an instructor "...really motivates me to learn and understand the material," while another wrote, "I feel because of her openness and honesty it was easier to want to learn instead of have to learn...." Finally, a sentiment echoed by other students was "liking her has helped me...even show up to classes."

In addition to liking the instructor, students respected the instructor and others reported they trusted the instructor. Eighteen students wrote they respected and trusted the instructor. One student wrote, "I like the instructor. I respect the instructor. I would take any of her other classes...." Another student wrote, "I have a lot of respect and a very high opinion of [her]." Some students explained why they respected the instructor. One student wrote, "She has taught me more than just psychology, taught me a lot about myself and I really respect that about her."

Feeling comfortable, liking, and respecting the instructor culminated in the development of a trusting relationship for many of the students. Overall, there were 32 students who wrote they trusted the instructor. Comments that best characterize the students' sentiments who wrote about the trust they developed in the instructor ranged from "I trust her," to "absolutely trust," and "great amount of trust" in the instructor.

Data analysis revealed that students developed different types of trust in the instructor. For some, the trust they developed in the instructor was academic in nature. One student wrote, "I do believe a lot in the instructor. She has a good head on her shoulders...." Other students wrote, "I completely trust the instructor with providing good information to help me learn the material," and "This teaching style helped me feel more comfortable around a professor allowing me to trust them." These comments all

described a type of trust that facilitates academic learning. Other students described a different type of trust they developed in the instructor.

For some students the type of trust they developed in the instructor was more personal in nature. It was a type of trust that extended past the walls of academia. One student wrote, "You are by far my favorite instructor. I feel like I could talk to you about anything." These comments were mirrored by another student who wrote, "I do trust her and could probably come to her with an issue."

The instructor believed earning the trust of her students was essential for her to facilitate their learning and she demonstrated her trustworthiness to students in different ways. First, she was mindful to follow through on statements made to students about things she would or would not do as an instructor. For example, on the first day of class the instructor presented information to students about her teaching style and clarified the expectations they could have of her as their instructor. For example, she told students she would always start and end class on time. Throughout the semester, regardless of the situation, the instructor honored this commitment to students.

She encouraged students to hold her to the expectations throughout the semester. If she forgot about a decision that students had negotiated with her earlier in the semester, often a decision related to earning extra credit points, the instructor apologized for her mistake and negotiated a solution with students.

Sometimes, honoring the commitments she made to students was difficult. For example, the instructor told students that although she knew it was important for her to start and end class on time, ending class on time was often difficult for her if the class

was in the middle of discussing something perceived as very important. The instructor developed a method to help her honor the commitment she had made to students. She routinely asked students who sat in the front of the lecture hall to volunteer to serve as her timekeeper. The student who volunteered was tasked with the job of giving the instructor a visual sign when she had five to seven minutes left of class. The instructor used the last part of class to wrap up and ensure class ended on time. Simple behaviors like this and others routinely demonstrated to students her trustworthiness.

An interesting subtheme emerged from the data. When students wrote about their trust in the instructor they often also commented on how much they respected the instructor and liked the instructor as well. Students seemed to recognize the difference in these three verbs and often commented, “I do trust, respect and like the instructor.” These three verbs co-existed in students’ comments quite often.

Students most often used the verbs *trust* and *respect* together in the same sentence, but only occasionally also used the word *like* in that sentence. Of the three terms, students wrote most frequently about their *like* for the instructor and her teaching style. Students commented most often about how much they *liked* or *enjoyed* the instructor and approved of her teaching style, more so than about *trusting* or *respecting* the instructor.

Closer analysis of the data revealed the words *trust* and *respect* were paired most often when students used any of these verbs to describe how they felt about the instructor. Also, when students used both words, in nearly every instance they used the word *trust* first, then *respect*.

Of the students who responded to this question specifically, only one indicated not trusting the instructor by writing, “The instructor is okay. She’s nice...but...I do not trust her.”

Who the instructor came to be in the minds of students influenced their behavior. Comments from students provide evidence of a positive relationship that developed between the instructor and students in the class in response to how she treated them. A student wrote, “Knowing that she truly wants to teach and cares about her students makes me want to come to class. I feel like if I didn’t come to class I would let her down (not in a bad way).” The instructor cared about the students as human beings and in response students came to care about what the instructor thought of them.

This student’s quote captures the essence of meaning conveyed through responses from many students when asked about their learning experience. Students clearly asserted that the relationship between the teacher and the student was important to them. The significance of this relationship was revealed by comments made by students, such as, “A teacher’s motivation level can reflect the level of motivation from the students. Her energy has kept me going the entire semester....How I feel about the instructor definitely makes me more motivated to learn and listen.” Another student wrote, “Liking her has helped me want to learn.”

Condition 4. The fourth condition that developed amongst students in the class was the co-creation of a positive learning environment. Analysis of qualitative data revealed students’ feelings about the overall learning experience ranged from positive to extremely positive. Students “liked,” “loved,” and “really enjoyed coming to class every

day....” A student wrote, “I find myself excited to go to her class,” and another student wrote, “This is not a class that I will just forget after it’s over.” Students cited different reasons for feeling positive about class. One student described the class as “...not just another stupid boring lecture class!,” while another attributed their feelings about the class to the instructor by saying, “If I were to take this class again, I would choose the same teacher.”

Similar sentiments were echoed by other students in different ways, but most consistently students described feeling comfortable around the instructor and explained how that facilitated their learning. A student shared, “Being a freshman I thought I would be quiet in class. But she made me feel comfortable so I could speak out.” Feeling comfortable around the instructor facilitated learning in other ways too, such as influencing students “to ask questions, go to office hours and be helped in enjoying class.” For some students, feeling comfortable with this instructor influenced their behavior in other classes as well. A student wrote, “...you have really helped me feel comfortable talking in class, and not just this class, but others.”

Students described positive feelings they had about relating with the instructor and described why they “enjoyed taking this class with this professor....” Students referred to how they “really enjoyed your teaching style and structure” because “she made everything very interesting.” Others enjoyed the class because they “really enjoyed” the instructor as a human being. One student who wrote, “I really enjoyed the instructor more than I did the class,” and another declared, “I enjoy [her] as a teacher more than any teachers I have had K-12.” Every comment made by students about the

learning environment described it in a positive manner and identified ways that it facilitated their learning.

Data analysis suggests the positive learning environment developed as a result of the three earlier conditions. In addition, data analysis suggests it was co-created by the instructor and students. This was best articulated by one of students who wrote, “Positive views of an instructor toward her/his/their students and positive views by the students toward their instructor surely produce the greatest learning and thought development. Thank You!!!”

This student’s quote captures the essence conveyed through responses from many students when asked about their learning experience. More importantly, it articulates the interrelatedness of the instructor’s behavior toward students, the perceptions they developed about her, and the relationship students developed with her. By accepting the students and caring about them as human beings, the instructor initiated the development of three more conditions that were shared experiences amongst students in class.

All four conditions supported students’ learning and were phenomenological experiences related to student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. By using pro-learning behaviors, the instructor communicated to students that she cared about them as students and as human beings. Students felt accepted by the instructor, developed positive perceptions and beliefs about her as a teacher and as a human being, and ultimately accepted her as a human being, too. A positive relationship developed between students and the instructor, and together they co-created a classroom environment that supported student learning.

Based on results of data analysis, it was the instructor from whom students took the lead and to whom they responded. This is a finding of great importance. Students developed a positive relationship with the instructor and co-created a positive learning environment. But it was the instructor who led the process by communicating a concern for and acceptance of students starting the first day of class. Therefore, it was the instructor who set the tone for the class and to whom students responded. It was the instructor's behaviors that students observed and assessed and from which they developed perceptions about her. The perceptions students developed became beliefs about who she was as a human being. These positive beliefs invited students to develop a positive relationship with her that ultimately led to the co-creation of a learning environment that supported learning.

Intervening Conditions

The group of students who participated in this study completed an undergraduate course in developmental psychology. Therefore, students could easily relate to the topic. In addition, the instructor was highly motivated and very interested in learning more about how students learn. She was in the third year of a graduate program to pursue a doctorate degree in education, specializing in the area of teaching and learning. The instructor shared this personal information with students and often shared what she was learning in her own coursework. On occasion, the instructor would incorporate a new idea or information from her coursework into her teaching strategy and explain to students she was doing it in an effort to improve her teaching and therefore their learning.

Finally, another intervening condition influencing student satisfaction was the instructor's curiosity about the role of relationships between teachers and their students. While she had no concrete evidence to support it, intuitively she believed that if students liked her they would be open to change and would ultimately learn more. Her hunch was based on five years of prior experience working with undergraduate students as well as her social work experience providing services to oppositional clients and her experience as a parent.

Strategies for Creating Student Satisfaction With Faculty Performance and Course Instruction

The instructor's intention was to meet her students' needs, desires, and expectations. Although the instructor did not know precisely what they were, she had developed some ideas about what students wanted from faculty. On the first day of class, she shared the expectations she had of them as well as what they could expect from her. The lists were very similar, and specified expectations including be on time, do your best work, do your own work, have fun, be kind and respectful, start on time, and end on time. In addition to spelling out the expectations they could have of each other, the instructor also used other strategies to meet students' needs, desires, and expectations. The instructor demonstrated many pro-learning behaviors to students throughout the semester. She was specifically mindful of how she would use the first day of class make a positive impression on students.

The instructor started the semester with a set of beliefs about how to teach effectively. First, she believed that developing a positive relationship with students was

necessary to provide effective teaching. Toward this goal, she told students they would be expected to work hard in the class, be actively involved, and have fun. She shared with students that she expected to learn from them as well, since teaching and learning are relational activities.

In addition, the instructor shared with students that she believed the class would be a unique experience because it was made up of unique individuals who had never before learned together. Although she had taught the same course many times throughout her career, she told students that no two classes had ever been the same. She also told students she was eager to find out “who they were” and “what they were made of,” because together they would create a “learning community” that could help or hinder their learning. Students were expected to “do their own work and their very best work.” She also expected them to be kind and respectful to her and each other.

On the first day of class, the instructor set the tone for collaboration by engaging students in a large class discussion. She invited them to share where they were from and what they were studying, in addition to other personal information that she used to develop a collegial milieu in the classroom. The instructor used these strategies to help students feel comfortable about her and about the class experience they were about to co-create.

Consequences of Strategies for Creating Student Satisfaction With Faculty

Performance and Course Instruction

There were significant consequences that resulted from the strategies used by the instructor who taught this class. First, students reported “learning a lot” in the class.

Using a Likert scale, students were asked to choose a number from 1 to 6 (1= *very strongly disagree* to 6 = *very strongly agree*) that best identified their level of agreement with the statement, “Overall, I learned a lot in this course.” The rate of participation in the quantitative survey was 85% (n = 96).

Students’ level of agreement/disagreement with the statement on the Student Course Evaluation was analyzed using quantitative statistical methods. Findings indicate the majority of students in the class agreed somewhere between *strongly agree* and *very strongly agree* with having “learned a lot” (mean = 5.35, sd = 0.83).

In addition to “learning a lot,” students also reported a high level of satisfaction with the instructor’s performance. On the same Student Course Evaluation, students were also asked about their level of agreement with the statement, “I would recommend this instructor to a fellow student.” Quantitative statistical methods were used to analyze students’ responses to this statement as well. Findings revealed the majority of students in the class more than strongly agreed with the statement (mean = 5.53, sd = 0.81).

Consequences that resulted from the strategies used by the instructor include a high level of satisfaction from the majority of students who reported to have “learned a lot” and “would recommend this instructor to a fellow student.” Quantitative results from this study are supported by findings from other studies.

The literature on the correlation between students’ grades and the ratings they give their instructors is complex. Some think students give higher ratings to instructors when they expect to receive a higher grade in the class. Bain (2004) has learned that when students expect to receive higher grades, their ratings tend to be slightly higher.

From this, some assume students give instructors who are more lenient higher ratings. However, research findings suggest something else. In general, students tend to give higher instructor ratings to courses they regard as intellectually challenging and helpful in meeting those challenges and lower ratings to those that are easy and in which they do not learn much (Bain, 2004).

Research also suggests students who rate an instructor's performance high also tend to rate highly the amount they believe they learned. Finally, students tend to rate the helpfulness of the instructor in meeting course challenges high as well (Bain, 2004). Quantitative findings of this study reveal a correlation between scores. This correlation is supported by earlier research. In addition, the correlation indicates the traditional course evaluation used in this study had predictive or concurrent validity (Creswell, 2009).

Quantitative findings from this study were explored more deeply by analyzing qualitative data collected from students. Students "learned a lot" and were highly satisfied with the instructor's performance, but understanding the meaning behind both topics required in-depth analysis of students' written responses to multiple open-ended questions about what they learned and the instructor's role toward influencing their learning experience. Qualitative analysis of students' responses provide insights about the kinds of learning students experienced in this class and shed light on the instructor's role toward influencing what they learned.

As stated earlier, a dominant theme emerged from the data, indicating students felt strongly that the instructor had influenced their learning in significant ways. Different types of learning and behavior changes were described by students. To begin, one type of

learning described by students was specific to course content. Some students described learning "...much about different topics from this class," and another shared the instructor had "...helped me understand a lot about developmental psychology." For another student, it was more than learning course content. The student wrote, "She has influenced my development by gaining me knowledge."

In addition to learning course content and developing knowledge, students learned in other ways as well. For example, some students learned "...how to study for the class," and others "learned that with the class you could apply knowledge to your life to help understand the material." Another student described a similar experience and wrote, "The things she has said will stay with me in the future and I will always keep connecting the dots, as she has always said." Students reported that the instructor taught them how to learn and explained that this happened by applying what they learned.

A student wrote, "I apply a lot of what I learn into everyday life...." This was a sentiment echoed by many students who described how they transferred their learning beyond the walls of the lecture hall. An example of applied learning was provided by the student who wrote they learned "...about a better way for me to have relationships with others and how to raise my kids." Students shared they felt the instructor presented information in class that was "...a lot more applicable to daily life than other instructors." Students appreciated the instructor's focus on teaching material that was relevant or would be relevant to their lives in the future. The instructor often explained to students why she had chosen to focus on specific course content. Routinely, she told students her intention was to teach in a way that helped students understand the relevancy of the topic

and to help them learn about themselves, their parents, their families, and other people, because by doing so they would be more successful in life. The instructor was verbally explicit with her intention. She also stated it clearly in the course syllabus that she often referred to throughout the semester.

Developmental Psychology Course Syllabus – Fall 2011 – Course Objectives

Throughout the semester students will learn about various areas of human development throughout the life span, with emphasis on early life development. Students will learn to critically examine the impact of socio-cultural factors (specifically race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status) on some of the major developmental processes early in life. By doing so, students will recognize and understand influences of both nurture and nature. Students will learn how important developmental psychology is in everyday life and ideally apply course content to facilitate their own development as well as the development of children in the Duluth Community.

Finally, through various course assignments, students will enhance understanding of themselves. The better we understand ourselves, the better we can understand the behavior of others. A better understanding of self and others can enhance the success of life pursuits, whether those pursuits are focused on research, practice/service, or personal development. This course meets the requirements for cultural diversity designation.

Students experienced another type of learning that was more personal by describing how the learning experienced had changed who they were as individuals. A student described how the instructor had "...opened my eyes to critical thinking and making a difference." When compared to the other types, students more commonly described learning that was relevant to oneself and to life in general and was articulated well by the student wrote about the "...whole new outlook on life" they had developed as a result of the learning experience. Another student wrote, "She has taught me more than just psychology, taught me a lot about myself and I really respect that about her."

Another student described how the class had contributed to their overall learning at university. The student wrote,

College in general has shaped who I am an incredible amount! I am so different today that I was as a freshman (I'm a junior). I have a whole new level of satisfaction for life and who I am now. I am more accepting of others, more open minded, less uptight. I feel an overall hope to help others to feel the same. One of my main life goals is to never make anyone feel like less of a person. This class contributed.

Students described different types of learning and explained how they were changed by the learning experience in unique ways. In addition to perceptions about self and others that were changed, students also described how their feelings changed during the learning experience. Some students shared that their feelings about being in an educational setting had changed and described feeling more comfortable. One student wrote, "This teaching style helped me feel more comfortable around a professor allowing me to trust them," and another wrote about how the instructor "... really helped me feel comfortable talking in class, and not just this class, but others." Feeling more comfortable resulted in behavior changes for some students. A student wrote, "The instructor was greatly available, supportive, and kind which made me feel comfortable to ask questions, go to office hours and be helped in enjoying the class." Something similar was shared by another student who wrote, "Being a freshman I thought I would be quiet in class. But she made me feel comfortable so I could speak out."

Other students explained how their positive feelings about the instructor resulted in other behavioral changes as well. One student wrote that liking the instructor "promotes learning for me" and other wrote, "Liking her has helped me...even show up

to classes.” Something similar was articulated by a student who wrote, “I believe that because of her, I have shown up to class every day to listen to her lecture.”

All but one student liked the instructor. Some related how liking the instructor facilitated their learning and explained, “Liking her has helped me want to learn...,” and elicited pro-learning behaviors from students. Students shared how the instructor helped motivate them to learn, as described by the student who shared the instructor “motivates me to think outside the box and work hard.” Another student wrote, the instructor “...has motivated me to do my best at understand what is going on in the world.” Students shared how liking the instructor made them want “...to pay more attention in class,” and another wrote, “...motivates me to learn and understand the material.” A student shared, “I have tried to do my very best,” because they liked the instructor and another wrote, “I feel because of her openness and honesty it was easier to want to learn instead of have to learn...” The correlation between students’ positive feelings about the instructor and the display of pro-learning behaviors was a dominant theme that emerged from the data. This theme was captured well by the student who wrote the following comments:

My feelings toward the instructor have motivated me to learn more about this subject and over the course I have found everything more and more interesting. It made me really want to do well because she really cares about her students and wants nothing more than to see every one of them succeed!

The consequences of strategies for creating student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction include different types of learning experienced by students in this study. Students learned course content, developed knowledge, experienced meta-learning, and applied their learning. Others developed positive feelings

about the instructor and about education in general. These are all favorable consequences that students described as a result of this learning experience.

Chapter 5. Results, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

Student satisfaction is comprised of different dimensions, and one that is very important to the overall satisfaction of students in higher education is course instruction (Elliott & Healy, 2001). Students, like all customers, have needs, desires, and expectations of services and products they purchase. However, too little is known about what it means from a student's perspective to be satisfied with an instructor and the course instruction they provide.

The literature about effective teaching in higher education is extensive and diverse. But unlike previous research, this study focused on hearing the voices of students who described what it means to be satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop a deeper understanding of what it means to students to be satisfied with a learning experience because too little is known from the students' perspective about what constitutes satisfying teaching in higher education. The retrospective approach used in this study to gather in-depth information directly from satisfied students is uncommon.

In this study, satisfied customers of higher education were identified and asked to describe their lived experience in an effort to understand the meaning students attribute to satisfaction with course instruction. A theoretical model of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction was constructed after collected data were analyzed using a mixed methods approach. The model is presented in Figure 1. It reflects

the findings which emerged during data analysis and visually represents what happened to students during the learning experience they evaluated as highly satisfying.

Summary of the Study

By listening to the voices of customers, important insights have been gained regarding what it means to students to be satisfied with a learning experience in higher education. These insights include the recognition of common needs, desires, and expectations many students have of faculty who instruct their courses.

Studying this dimension of student satisfaction with course instruction was accomplished by focusing on the lived experiences of students who shared a learning experience they evaluated as highly satisfying. Data were analyzed and meaning was made from information collected from students' descriptions of satisfying faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. More specifically, this study focused on analyzing feedback from students about the instructor's role in their learning experience. Through this process, some of the common needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty were uncovered retrospectively. A mixed methods approach was used to accomplish this task.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

Themes emerged from students' responses, indicating a process of relationship building occurred between the instructor and students. A grounded theory model for student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education has been developed from students' descriptions about what happened in a class and why it was such a satisfying learning experience for them. This model is presented in Figure 1.

Data analysis revealed a series of conditions developed characterizing how the students and instructor came to relate to each other. The conditions developed over time, sequentially, and contributed to students' experience of significant learning.

The four conditions that developed were phenomenological experiences that related to student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. They are:

1. Students observed the instructor's behaviors as pro-learning and perceived her as caring,
2. Students developed positive perceptions about the instructor and perceived her as a good human being,
3. Students accepted the instructor and together they developed a positive relationship, and
4. Students and the instructor co-created an environment in class that supported learning.

Identifying these four conditions resulted in uncovering many of the needs, desires, and expectations students had of the instructor that were met.

According to Delaney et al. (2010), although characteristics of effective teaching have been well researched using a number of instruments, they could find no research that "provided students with as clear a voice as the methodology applied in [their] study" (p. 15). As in this study, Delaney et al. (2010) used a qualitative method to uncover students' expectations by asking them open-ended questions about their perceptions of effective teaching in higher education. Findings of their study mirror the characteristics students identified as pro-learning behaviors demonstrated by the instructor of this class.

Data analysis of students' perceptions of effective teaching in higher education revealed a list of nine behaviors (Delaney et al., 2010). The behaviors are listed in order of the number of times they were mentioned in the survey results of the study:

1. Respectful
2. Knowledgeable
3. Approachable
4. Engaging
5. Communicative
6. Organized
7. Responsive
8. Professional
9. Humorous

The study completed by Delaney et al. (2010) focused on both on-campus and distance modes of teaching. Findings were consistent across modes of delivery (Delaney et al., 2010). Their findings were supported by the work of Norman (2005, as cited in Delaney et al., 2010), who identified significant linkages between positive emotions and enhanced learning and creative thought. Others, like Axelrod (2008), have also studied students' perceptions of effective teaching. Axelrod (2008) isolated seven "common elements of good teaching" (p. 24). The seven qualities are:

1. Accessibility and approachability
2. Fairness
3. Open-mindedness
4. Mastery and delivery
5. Enthusiasm
6. Humor
7. Knowledge and inspiration imparted

Like Delaney et al. (2010), Axelrod (2008) also found that students' perceptions of what constitutes effective instruction transcend mode of delivery and time. This earlier research supports findings of this study. With the exception of *fairness*, students in this study commonly described the instructor using the characteristics listed above.

By listening to the voices of students in this study and in earlier studies, the next step can be taken toward gaining a deeper understanding of what it means for customers of higher education to be satisfied. If students find that behaviors demonstrated by their instructor influence their satisfaction with a course, it suggests they need, desire, and expect to be treated by the instructor in specific ways. In addition, it means the type of relationship that develops between the instructor and the students influences their level of satisfaction with the course.

These are not new insights. To the contrary, they are insights that have been explored in-depth by earlier researchers and theorists (including humanistic educator Carl Rogers dating back to the 1950s) and reflect the humanistic needs, desires, and expectations students still have of faculty who instruct their courses. The overemphasis on vocationalism in higher education has come at the expense of meeting the humanistic needs students have yet today.

Rogers' (1957, 1959) earlier work focused on identifying effective characteristics of psychotherapy. He was particularly interested in the characteristics of the relationship that developed between the therapist and the client which could best facilitate client change and healing. According to Rogers (1959), personality change was the purpose of psychotherapy and described personality change that endured as significant learning:

By significant learning I mean learning which is more than an accumulation of facts. It is learning which makes a difference in the individual's behavior, in the course of action he chooses in the future, in his attitudes and in his personality. It is a pervasive learning which is not just an accretion of knowledge, but which interpenetrates with every portion of his existence. (pp. 232-233)

As Rogers' work progressed as both a clinician and a teacher, he saw similarities in the relationships he developed with his clients and those he developed with students.

Rogers (1957) observed significant learning in both and asserted, “It is not stated that psychotherapy is a special kind of relationship, different in kind from all others which occur in everyday life” (p. 101). Later in his career, Rogers (1970) wrote:

There seems every reason to support that the therapeutic relationship is only one instance of interpersonal relations, and that the same lawfulness governs all such relationships.... To the extent that the teacher creates such a relationship with his class, the student will become a self-initiated learner, more original, more self-disciplined, less anxious and other-directed. It appears possible to me that we are seeing the emergence of a new field of human relationships, in which we may specify that if certain attitudinal conditions exist, then certain definable changes will occur. (p. 37)

Findings of this study are reminiscent of and supported by Rogers’ findings from over 40 years ago. Students in this study consistently reported learning that was relevant to their lives and made a difference in their individual behavior. In addition, students described how their feelings, attitudes, and behaviors changed in ways that facilitated learning. Some students shared that the learning experience was significant in that it had done nothing short of changing the way they saw the world.

According to Rogers’ (1959) definition, students in the class experienced significant learning. Students reported a high level of satisfaction with the course instruction and described how they had “learned a lot” in the class. This suggests students share a common desire and expectation to experience significant learning in higher education that will change who they are as individuals.

The voices of students in this study echo students at the University of Cypress as heard in the study by Eliophotou Menon (2002). Students in this study were highly satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction received because they experienced “more than an accumulation of facts...and not just an accretion of

knowledge” (Rogers, 1959, p. 232). Students were satisfied with faculty performance and course instruction because their needs, expectations, and desires to experience significant learning were met.

According to the findings of Eliophotou Menon (2002) at the University of Cyprus, students want higher education to do more. Students want assistance from higher education to improve as individuals, not just to prepare them to become successful professionals. They prefer an education that will prepare them for life overall, rather than just focus on vocationalism (Eliophotou Menon, 2002). They need, desire, and expect to experience significant learning which contradicts the current perception of students held by many in higher education. It also contradicts the current movement in higher education to focus increasingly on vocationalism. Increasingly motivated to survive by ensuring student and alumni satisfaction, institutions of higher learning may ultimately be compromising their ability to fulfill the purpose of benefitting society at large.

The four conditions that developed in the class facilitated the experience of significant learning for students. Students in this study developed positive perceptions of the instructor in response to her demonstration of pro-learning behaviors toward them. An accumulation of positive perceptions led students to develop beliefs about the instructor being a good human being. Students described the instructor as someone who cared about them as an individual and wanted to support them so they could be successful in their learning. They accepted the instructor and a positive relationship developed between them. Students reported increased levels of motivation to do well in class. Some

changed their behaviors and attended class more often, asked questions, participated in large class discussions, and studied more in an effort to learn more.

Students reported a high level of satisfaction with the instructor's performance and consistently described how much they liked her, appreciated her teaching style, respected her, and even trusted her. These findings uncover students' desire to develop a positive relationship with the instructor. Students expected to be treated as individuals and needed to be treated with respect and kindness by the instructor in order to develop a positive relationship with her that would facilitate their learning.

Finally, according to the findings of this study, a classroom climate that facilitated learning was created which satisfied students. These findings suggest that students want, need, and desire a learning environment that facilitates significant learning.

Figure 1 presents the theory describing what happened to students in the class who experienced the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. Four conditions emerged from data analysis, indicating that when these conditions develop, students feel significant learning occurs.

The development of a positive relationship between the instructor and students was pivotal to their experience of significant learning. Students in this study described the relationship as very important and explained how it facilitated their learning. The positive relationship that developed between students and the instructor led to their high level of satisfaction with the faculty member and the course instruction she provided. Ultimately, overall customer satisfaction resulted from the accumulated learning.

The students in this study are likely not unique. Rogers (1957, 1959, 1970) and others (Maslow, 1971) wrote extensively about the importance of humanism in education. When a positive relationship develops between students and their teacher, students are more likely to experience significant learning. Consequently, an important humanistic need, desire, and expectation students have of higher education is met and they experience the phenomenon of student satisfaction.

According to Rogers (1957, 1959, 1970), the development of a positive relationship is essential for students to experience significant learning, which is necessary for students to feel satisfied. Rogers (1959) advocated educators teach in a different way and wrote, “The overall implication for education would be that the task of the teacher is to create a facilitating classroom climate in which significant learning can take place” (p. 237).

Recommendations for Future Research

The perception of students as paying customers is becoming increasingly common, as is the adoption of a business model by institutions of higher education to compete for these customers. Students increasingly see themselves as shoppers who are seeking satisfaction from their experience in higher education. Given this paradigm shift creating a new marketplace for higher education today, it is clear more research is needed to better understand the phenomenon of student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction in higher education. In addition, new research methods must be used to uncover what must be made known about this dimension to improve student satisfaction with their experience in higher education.

Findings from Rogers (1957, 1959, 1970), Eliophotou Menon (2002), and others suggest more research is needed to better understand what students really want, need, and expect in order to feel satisfied with their experience in higher education. More studies are needed that focus on what it is that students want from higher education—an institution with a vocational focus, an institution with a humanistic focus, or an institution with a balance approach to learning. Such findings could better inform the direction of higher education as well as the practices of faculty who work directly with students. These findings could also help students recognize their individual expectations and enable them to choose an institution of higher learning that would provide the best fit for them.

More studies are also needed that focus on uncovering common needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty. Such findings could help inform faculty regarding what they could do to better meet students' needs, desires, and expectations, improving student satisfaction with their performance.

Historically, there has been an almost exclusive reliance on quantitative methods used to study student satisfaction in higher education. However, these methods do not provide the best methodological fit to study phenomena. Using quantitative methods to study student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction has resulted in limiting the depth to which this important phenomenon has been understood. A deep understanding, however, is needed to develop effective interventions to improve it. Therefore, a strong recommendation is made for continued in-depth study of student

satisfaction from the customer's vantage point, using either a qualitative or mixed methods approach.

Educational Implications

Important insights from this and earlier studies identify changes that must be made in higher education to improve student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction. By embracing the current movement toward vocationalism, administrators may unknowingly be compromising student satisfaction by not recognizing what students really need and want from higher education. In addition, when faculty limit their role to one of disseminating information, students are left feeling disappointed because their desire to develop a relationship with their teacher and experience significant learning was not met.

Therefore, specific recommendations are made for ways that faculty can change their behavior to improve student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction specifically and higher education overall. Recommendations are based on a combination of quantitative and qualitative findings from this study of nearly 100 students. The four recommendations that follow are suggestions for recreating the specific conditions that developed amongst students in this study who reported the final outcome of high student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction.

1. Place more emphasis on meeting the humanistic needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty by demonstrating pro-learning behaviors throughout the semester. Students in this study identified specific instructors' behaviors they perceived were pro-learning. These behaviors were very similar

to those reported by students in earlier studies asked to describe effective teaching. A more general guideline for faculty would be to follow the advice of Rogers (1957, 1959, 1970), who suggested accepting others with “unconditional regard” to facilitate the development of a helping relationship.

2. Assess for the development of positive perceptions by students of the instructor. Simultaneously assess for signs of the instructor’s acceptance of students. Doing this over time will ensure the development and maintenance of a positive relationship and can be demonstrated by students’ behaviors as well as through anonymous feedback regarding their experience in class. Students who form positive perceptions about their instructor are more likely to accept the instructor as their teacher. In addition, they are more likely to exhibit behaviors described by students in this study. In general, students will become actively involved in the learning experience. They will participate more in class activities. For example, they will attend class more often and ask the instructor questions or respond to questions asked by the instructor.
3. Work to develop and maintain a positive relationship with students. Tell students what is expected of them to support their learning as well as what they can expect of the instructor to support their learning. Then, work to fulfill these stated expectations by behaving in a consistent way when interacting with them. The development of a positive relationship can be assessed in different ways. In general, students will seek out the instructor and want to engage with her. This may happen through informal conversations before class, after class,

or during office hours. Students who feel positively toward a faculty member may approach her for advice or guidance on academic or personal matters. In general, students will be more open to interacting with the instructor in and out of class. Sometimes, knowing the instructor's name is enough to demonstrate a feeling of connection with them. Finally, students who are developing a positive relationship with the instructor will pay attention in class, follow guidelines for classroom behavior outlined by the instructor, and provide overall positive feedback about the learning experience when invited to do so anonymously by the instructor.

4. Allow for the co-creation of a supportive learning environment to facilitate significant learning. Instructors can do this in specific ways. First, tell the students you are there to help them learn and to succeed. Explain to them that the learning environment will be created over time by everyone in the class and that it will influence the experience they have in a significant way. Talk about the community they are a part of in class and explain to them specific ways their behavior can influence the learning environment that develops over time. Outline and review expectations you have developed over time for students' behavior that will support the development of a supportive learning environment.

Conclusion

If one took a course or picked up a book on the psychology of learning, most of it, in my opinion, would be beside the point – that is, beside the “humanistic point.” Most of it would be present learning as the acquisition of associations, of skills

and capacities that are external and not intrinsic to the human character, to the human personality, to the person himself. (Maslow, 1971, p. 168)

Following the recommendations outlined above will likely develop the four conditions that emerged in this study. As a result, similar outcomes will be experienced by students. They will be more likely to recommend the course to others, report “learning a lot,” and ultimately, be more likely to evaluate faculty performance and course instruction as highly satisfying. The needs, desires, and expectations students have of faculty are more likely to be met when these four conditions develop because they result in significant learning experiences for students. Providing education that helps prepare students for life overall is key to improving student satisfaction with faculty performance and course instruction specifically, and more generally, student satisfaction with higher education overall. The findings of this study reiterate the importance for administrators and faculty to mind the gap between what students need, desire, and expect in higher education and what they all too often get.

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Appendix A

Student Course Evaluation

UMD Student Evaluation Form

Course Call #	SEM	YR
① ① ① ① ① ①	①	① ①
② ② ② ② ② ②	②	① ①
③ ③ ③ ③ ③ ③	③	② ②
④ ④ ④ ④ ④ ④	④	③
⑤ ⑤ ⑤ ⑤ ⑤ ⑤	⑤	④
⑥ ⑥ ⑥ ⑥ ⑥ ⑥		⑤
⑦ ⑦ ⑦ ⑦ ⑦ ⑦		⑥
⑧ ⑧ ⑧ ⑧ ⑧ ⑧		⑦
⑨ ⑨ ⑨ ⑨ ⑨ ⑨		⑧

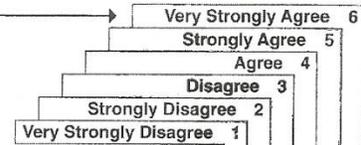
The University of Minnesota Duluth is committed to providing a positive and productive learning environment and takes student evaluations very seriously. We ask that you also take them very seriously. Your responses to this questionnaire are important; they are used to review and improve teaching. Student evaluations are also used in tenure, promotion, and salary decisions for your instructor. We especially request your respectful written comments. Constructive feedback related to teaching and learning will help your instructor improve future course offerings. The evaluations are anonymous, and will not be seen by the instructor until final grades for this course have been recorded.

MARKING DIRECTIONS

- Use No. 2 pencil only.
- Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt tip pens.
- Make solid marks that fill the oval completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks on this form.



When filling out this form, keep in mind the following scale:



A. Delivery of Instruction

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 1. The instructor used appropriate and effective instructional methods | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 2. The instructor's teaching style motivated me to learn | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 3. The instructor used class time well | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |

B. Articulating Expectations and Assessing Learning

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 4. The instructor clearly articulated expectations for this course | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 5. The instructor provided regular and helpful assessment of my progress in the class | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 6. The course assignments, exams, and projects were a good measure of my learning | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |

C. Creating an Environment that Supports Learning

- | | |
|--|-------------|
| 7. The instructor created an open, respectful environment that supported my learning | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 8. The instructor was available at designated times outside of class | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 9. I felt comfortable asking questions in class and/or for help outside of class | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |

D. Administrative Issues

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 10. The instructor was organized | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 11. The instructor graded my work in a timely way | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 12. The text(s) and/or other required materials were a necessary part of the course | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |

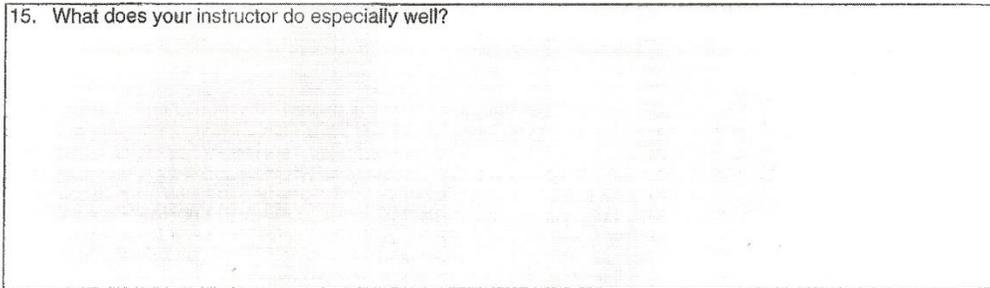
E. Other

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 13. I would recommend this instructor to a fellow student | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |
| 14. Overall, I learned a lot in this course | ① ② ③ ④ ⑤ ⑥ |

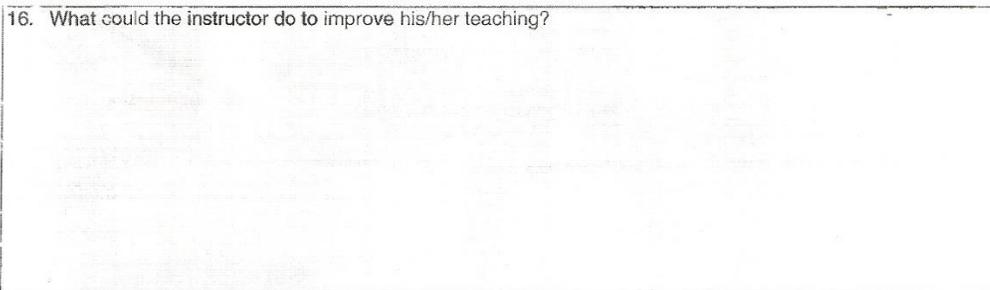
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F. Please provide a brief statement in response to the following two questions:

15. What does your instructor do especially well?



16. What could the instructor do to improve his/her teaching?



G. (Optional) Additional items added by Instructor:



Appendix B

Developmental Psychology End of Semester

Anonymous Student Feedback Questionnaire

Developmental Psychology
End of Semester Anonymous Student Feedback - F2011
Extra Effort Opportunity – Worth up to 5 points

1. Which Assignment did you Complete this Semester? ___ GVP ___ BBSLP
2. Male ___ Female ___ Intersex ___

2. What are the main things or the BIG IDEAS you have learned in class this semester? What course content or new insights do you think will stick with you and have made the biggest impression on you this semester? What has been the most interesting and useful information we have covered in class this semester and why?

3. Read each of the following learning objectives for this course and explain to what extent you believe you have achieved it.

A. Students will increase their understanding about different areas of human development throughout the life span with emphasis on early life development.

B. Students will learn to critically examine and improve their understanding of how the socio-cultural factors (specifically race/ethnicity and socioeconomic status) can impact major developmental processes early in life.

C. Students will learn how important developmental psychology is in everyday life and will apply course content to facilitate their own development as well as the development of children in the Duluth Community.

D. Students will experience personal development by learning more about themselves understanding of themselves (self awareness = values, beliefs, thoughts, behaviors)

4. Think about all the assignments and learning activities you completed and participated in this semester (lectures, class discussions, textbook readings, individual tests, group tests, small group discussions, individual and group worksheets, films, group video projects, site visits, service-learning work, site reps visit to class, etc.). Reflect on these activities and assignments to assess and then explain which of them have enhanced your learning the most and which ones were least effective to help you learn and develop. Please identify the three you found to be most effective to support your learning and the three least effective. Please provide constructive, specific feedback that will help the instructor understand what worked to support your learning and what did not and why.

5. Separate the actual activities and assignments you have completed in class this semester from the Instructor. How important has the instructor been with regard to influencing what you have learned and how you have learned it? Do you trust the instructor, respect and/or like the instructor? How have your feelings about the instructor influenced your leaning and development this semester, if at all.