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Instructor efficacy and student consumerism

Bethany Burge

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Abstract

Students who endorse the culture of student consumerism do not presume higher education to involve effort, challenge or negative evaluation, but rather expect to be given high grades for being tuition-payers and class attendees. I hypothesize that the interplay between students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and their individual pupil performance is influenced by student consumerism and reinforced to promote or dissuade student achievement. Depending on the degree to which the student endorses student consumerism, this interplay can also impact the actual grades the students earn.

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Dr. Stephen Jefferson

Second Advisor

Dr. Alida Westman

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INSTRUCTOR EFFICACY AND STUDENT CONSUMERISM

by

Bethany Burge

Eastern Michigan University

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Supervising Instructor, Dr. Stephen Jefferson

Honors Advisor, Dr. Alida Westman

Department Head, Dr. John Knapp

Honors Director, Dr. Jim Knapp

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Abstract

Students who endorse the culture of student consumerism do not presume higher education to involve effort, challenge or negative evaluation, but rather expect to be given high grades for being tuition-payers and class attendees. I hypothesize that the interplay between students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and their individual pupil performance is influenced by student consumerism and reinforced to promote or dissuade student achievement. Depending on the degree to which the student endorses student consumerism, this interplay can also impact the actual grades the students earn.

Many people have attempted to answer the question of which factors influence the educational process. The question has often been asked, what characteristics make a teacher most effective? Textbook definitions generally describe effective teachers as knowledgeable, self-confident, and enthusiastic, with strong communication and management skills, clear instructional focus, and high expectations of self and students (Minor, Onwuegbuzie & Witcher, 2002). Greenwald and Gillmore (1997) put it plainly; “students who think they are getting As tend to think more highly of their professor than students who believe they are getting Cs...If professors give out lots of Cs and students think their teacher is great, the teacher is probably excellent. If [professors] give out all A and A minuses, and students think the [professor] is just ok, the perception is that [the teacher] probably sucks.” Students are often the best predictor of teacher effectiveness since they are in close proximity with the instructor generally for long periods. The attitude of the instructor toward the students, positively or negatively, affects the classroom dynamics, as well as how the students interact with their instructors. It is important to view the classroom situation as an instance of social influence to increase the understanding of teaching and teacher effectiveness, which may provide insight into student evaluations of professors. (Freeman, 1988). The manner in which the students are prepared and how they perceive the adults around them will influence how the student responds and adapts to their new situations and environment.

The role of student expectations has received little attention (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). The focus of my inquiry is to review literature pertaining to course expectations as indicators of teacher effectiveness, specifically student consumerist attitudes. This inquiry will examine the impact higher education disengagement has on

student perceptions of instructor efficacy, measured by student ratings. Reviewing literature pertaining to student course expectations specifically, I will examine the concept of student consumerism and the influence the endorsement of such attitudes have on both student ratings of teacher effectiveness and subsequently earned grades. I hypothesize that the interplay between students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and their individual performance is influenced by student consumerism and reinforced to promote or dissuade student achievement. Depending on the degree to which the student endorses student consumerism and their level of personal motivation, this interplay can also impact the actual grades the students earn. Further, *I* expect to find a negative moderation between student grade discrepancy (at the midterm or after finals) for student consumers. The higher the discrepancy acknowledged by student consumers (who were not given their "entitled" A just for attendance) the poorer student evaluations of their instructors are expected to be. In 2007, I am asking the same question researchers Delucchi and Smith asked in 1997, namely are students' evaluations of instructors influenced by the grades students receive in a course?

Literature Review

Student consumerism is a product of a new historical era, postmodernism. In a wealth driven society, it is not surprising that many college students have begun to apply commercial attitudes towards one of the biggest financial and time consuming choices they make. Student consumerism is an attitude that treats the university as a place to meet pre-established needs (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). Students who endorse the culture of student consumerism do not presume higher education to involve effort, challenge or negative evaluation, but rather expect to be given high grades for being tuition-payers and

class attendees. In other words, student consumers believe that good grades should be awarded merely as a result of paying their fees and perhaps occasionally attending class. Studying and performing well on exams is not seen as a necessary step towards earning high marks. Two components of postmodernism illustrate student consumerism.

“Implosion” refers to the collapse of boundaries between inside and outside (media) of higher education which demolishes the belief in professors as experts on the subjects they teach (Delucchi & Smith, 1997). Student consumers use the postmodern concept of “performativity” or effectiveness and efficiency as the exclusive criterion for judging knowledge and its worth within society and the university (Delucchi & Smith, 1997).

Perhaps the phenomenon of student consumerism grew out of response to the interaction between the institute of higher learning and the legal system. To illustrate how traditional students began to endorse student consumerist attitudes, there is no need to look further than the many contracts that every college student must sign and abide by. The judicial system has evolved in relation to rising student consumerism from a time when the university stood in *loco parentis* (in the place of the parent), to the current contractual perspective, in which the student represents a consumer and the university the provider. Melear (2003) notes that the interpretation of the student as consumer has led courts to rule on matters regarding higher education through a contractual lens in order to assess the mutually obligatory relationship between the college and the student. Further, as educational consumers, students contend that they are entitled to rely upon contractual relations with institutions from application to graduation. In fact, judges have recognized students as consumers of educational services; however there has been limited review of consumer protection law being applied to higher education. Contemporarily, Melear

indicates that contract theory has provided students with an avenue to seek redress from their college or university. Today as student consumers, students have certain and precise expectations of collegiate performance, and they can seek judicial assistance when they perceive deviations from their expectations.

Attending college can have many positive and negative implications in the life of any individual willing to dedicate the necessary resources. As a culture, Americans tend to demand the best, especially if their personal finances are on the line. Some students ponder; as many businesses adopt the unwritten rule of 'the customer is always right' into their commercial philosophies and practices, why shouldn't tuition-payers demand the same from their institutions of higher learning? Just as businesses have adopted the perspective, students are applying a similar ideology to the relationship they have with their college or university, propelling student consumerist culture. Student consumer culture also questions the assumption that liberal arts knowledge is relevant knowledge (Delucchi & Smith, 1997). Researchers content that students want technical knowledge, useful knowledge, and labor-related knowledge in convenient, digestible packages. The next question to consider concerns the increase in negative student evaluation of liberal arts education in relation to consumer attitudes. Has this evaluation been caused by a shift in culture or the result of the growing perception that theoretical knowledge learned in the classroom having little relevance to the real world? Educators are beginning to wonder, what happened to gaining knowledge for personal growth and not just economic gain?

More and more institutions of higher learning are reporting increases in disengaged students due to the belief that the main purpose of higher education is

economic (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). Several researchers have found that students do not expect a higher education to involve effort, challenge, or negative evaluation; rather, they expect to be entertained and amused; to feel comfortable and to put forth little effort, to be rewarded liberally for self-disclosure, whatever its quality or form, and to be given high grades in return for paying tuition and showing up (Delucchi & Pelowski, 2000). Is it possible that despite the fact that students perceive that they learned more in a rigorous course, they are unwilling to give high ratings to instructors who make them work harder than they expected. Emphasis on customer service within higher education inverts the professor-student relationship by granting authority in students as consumers (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). College students negatively evaluate professors who fail to provide customer service traits such as understanding and friendliness they expect from faculty (Delucchi & Smith, 1997). The relationship between students' communication expectation and their actual experience of teachers' communicative behavior has an impact on student evaluations. The students' personal or social view of the teacher can be argued to have an impact on the students' ratings of the teacher, regardless of the level of teaching effectiveness (Brown, 2004). Instructors have begun to worry more about their popularity status with their students than providing appropriate coursework, especially when promotion and tenure status are linked with student evaluations (Delucchi & Smith, 1997). Boretz (2004) found that adjunct faculty members generally receive lower student ratings and that non-tenured faculty give higher grades than tenured instructors. Professors may be reluctant to hold students to high standards of performance as student consumerism undermines merit efforts but perpetuates continual attempts by instructors to gain popularity with their students. It is reasonable to assume that tenured

faculty feel more secure in challenging students and are less afraid of being reprimanded for low ratings (Boretz, 2004). Equating good teaching with the feeling of satisfaction among students that the instructor has done what they wanted ignores the dynamics of teaching and prevents significant learning (Delucchi & Smith, 1997b).

Can grades be a motivator for students, potentially encouraging or discouraging engagement or are they expected to be granted as property exchanged during a financial transaction? When asked if contemporary college students view higher education as a commodity they purchase in exchange for tuition payments, Delucchi and Korgen (2002) found that 42.5% of students agreed and believed that their payment entitles them to a degree. In the same study, they found that most students reported a preference for courses that result in high grades rather than learning. Delucchi and Smith (1997) coined the term “grade grubbing” in which students seek high grades for minimum effort. “Grade grubbing” is often considered a symptom of student consumerism among college students (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). What happened to student accountability for academic performance? A majority (53%) of college students in one study believed that it is an instructor’s responsibility to keep them attentive in class because of the consumerist belief that students should be entertained and protected in the classroom rather than challenged (Delucchi & Korgen, 2002). Many students prefer teaching that enables them to listen passively; however research has shown that some teachers receive higher ratings for teaching in less ideal ways. While students may not like the teaching methods or while such methods are less popular by students, students retain more and are better motivated when they are active in the educational process through talking, writing, and doing (McKeachie, 1997).

Perhaps student consumerist attitudes and academic disengagement are developed during the final years of high school. Researchers have confirmed the phenomenon that most are familiar with. It is specifically related to seniors in high school; a perception that senior year should be more lax, because the students have completed what they need to do and have senioritis, making them more anxious for high school to be over, so they can move onto the next phase of their lives (Wildavsky, 2000). The director of the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute reported in 2000 that some teachers feel pressured not to give students esteem-damaging low grades despite students' boredom at school, increasing in class skipping, and decreasing hours spent on homework (Wildavsky, 2000). Many grading policies create a competitive climate that is counterproductive to the extent that it discourages a free exchange of ideas and a sense of community that's conducive to learning (Kohn, 2002). Is harder better or do higher grades mean lower standards? One grading assumption reported by Kohn is that the essence of grading is exclusiveness; students should have to compete with each other. There is also, the yet to be proven, related stance that students will work harder if higher grades are more difficult to obtain. Could such an assumption lead to academic disengagement of the student, driving the development of student consumerist attitudes as an attempt to maintain control of their future? Stressors of entering college students, such as part-time jobs and volunteering, may also play a role in student's academic disengagement (Wildavsky, 2000). If students feel that they are overworked in other areas of their lives, they may feel that as tuition-payers, they should be able to relax and slack if they are so inclined within the college classroom, as a mechanism to stay in control.

Over the past few years, there has been a growing concern to evaluate student learning and determine the efficacy of educators. Most studies of college students' efficacy have been related to career decision-making, student perception of classroom control, and expected and achieved grades. Few studies have been conducted using the construct as it relates to student learning in higher education settings (Ellett & et al, 1997). Student rating forms have become more popular and widely used to assess the quality of our education system and identify areas of improvement. d'Apollonia and Abrami concluded in their 1990 study that student rating forms used to measure instructional effectiveness were not consistent (not uniform) in their operational definitions of teacher efficacy across contexts. Some critics of student ratings have argued that such assessment tools are not valid for instructor-mediated learning in students because of biasing characteristics that are correlated with ratings (d'Apollonia and Abrami, 1997). For instance, if teaching can be conceptualized as a social influence process, and if the dimensions of attractiveness, expertness, and trustworthiness are useful for describing instructors, then students' judgments of teacher effectiveness would be assessed by the students' perception of these characteristics (Freeman, 1988). Other critics argue that using characteristics that generally have positive correlations with effectiveness penalizes the teacher who is effective despite less than top scores on one or more of the traditionally measured dimensions (McKeachie, 1997).

Another criticism is that the criteria used in the ratings of teacher efficacy are often irrelevant or too restrictive (Kennedy, 1975). While standardization of rating forms is needed to be ethical and judge all instructors based on the same criterion to show student learning, it does not seem possible that the same measures of teacher

effectiveness used on a universal rating form could be accurately applied to both science and art teachers for instance. d'Apollonia and Abrami (1997) further conclude that the important question is not whether or not one student rating form has a solid factor structure, but rather the construct of instructional effectiveness has a common meaning across different contexts. Global or overall ratings cannot adequately represent the multidimensionality of teaching (Marsh & Roche, 1997).

Method

The attitude of consumerism in many students is well established yet vaguely researched. Questions about efficacy of teaching and how or why the instructor is expected to teach are clearly raised. Looking at the research literature with specific questions in mind can lead to some suggested answers.

Do student consumers perceive instructors to be ineffective when the instructor does not accommodate the assumed entitlement affecting student achievement (actual grades earned)? Many publications discuss the potential biases in student ratings of instructor efficacy. Not surprisingly, student ratings are not perfectly correlated with student learning (McKeachie, 1997). Like merchandise consumer satisfaction, student satisfaction with their collegiate experience is the result of multiple factors. A factor that is likely to influence a student's satisfaction in a course is their expectations (Appleton-Knapp & Krentler, 2006). One potential bias is expected grades by students. There is widespread belief that there is a causal relationship between the grades that students expect to receive and student evaluations of their instructors when it is essentially a question of degree of influence (Howard & Maxwell, 1980). Researchers have argued that there is a relationship between the expected grade of a course by students and student

ratings (Marsh & Roche, 1997, Howard and Maxwell, 1980). An 'A' is looked upon as a birthright by students and overwhelming proof is needed before any lower grade can be given (Boretz, 2004). Students who received grades higher than expected gave significantly higher teacher evaluations than did students who received either a grade equal to, or lower than, their expected grade (Kennedy, 1975). Several researchers have found that discrepancies between expected grades and actual grades or the discrepancies between expected grades in a class with the students' grade point average influences student evaluations (Howard & Maxwell, 1980). Students' reactions to grades, regardless of whether they are positive or negative, bias their perceptions of their teacher's effectiveness (Kennedy, 1975). In 2004, Boretz's claim that females in particular overestimate their grades, causes one to hypothesize whether this implies that females also are more likely to endorse student consumerism than men.

The positive correlation between grades and evaluations does not settle the issue regarding the grading leniency bias but rather needs to be examined to determine the practical significance of the relationship (Howard & Maxwell, 1980). Critics argue that if student rating's were correlated with grades for instance, student ratings of their instructors will potentially be biased, because students may be rewarding their teachers for lenient grading practices (d'Apollonia and Abrami, 1997). Several researchers have found that such an interpretation is only correct if student learning is not causally affected by the biasing variable (grading leniency). They further contended that if grading leniency enhanced students' perceptions of efficacy, encouraged students to work harder and facilitated student learning, grading leniency would not be considered a biasing variable (d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997). In the grading leniency bias model, expected

grades is the important determinant when students evaluate the instructor prior to being informed of their actual grade (Howard & Maxwell, 1980). Only one study was found that performed a study examining both a teaching effectiveness model and a student characteristics model simultaneously in an attempt to eliminate any alternative explanations to the grading leniency bias interpretation of the co-variation between grades and instructor satisfaction ratings, yet no substantial relationship between the variables were found (Howard & Maxwell, 1980).

Disengagement of college students has been attributed to student consumerism, potentially resulting in grade inflation. Complaints about grade inflation have been around for a very long time (Kohn, 2002). The term grade inflation converts knowledge or learning into a commodity with the grade being the currency earned in exchange for one's labors. Many researchers have tried to argue that grade inflation is just a myth or metaphor. After reviewing earlier research, Boretz (2004) found that grades in the 1990s reflect faculty awareness of students' emotional fragility and self image and that the notion of inflated grades originates in primary and secondary education as a function to reinforce students self esteem. Boretz indicates that grade inflation refers to an increase in grade point average without a correlational increase in achievement. She also indicates that the idea of grade inflation has some merit in relation to student consumerism, because many students and instructors perceive grades and success to be tightly bonded and an indicator of future career potential. Boretz, (2004) claims that making knowledge into a purchasable commodity for the future has little use in the present. She further indicates that some researchers have suggested that grade inflation reflects "dumbing down" the curriculum to focus on self esteem goals; however, as Kohn (2002) indicates,

no one has demonstrated that students today get As for the same work that used to receive Bs and Cs. Researchers seem to overlook the fact that many institutions allow retests that improve student grades and extend deadlines for course withdrawals, allowing students to not take the risk of receiving a bad grade (Boretz, 2004). In fact, as Boretz (2004) indicates, little research has analyzed how grades relate to student learning, and she places part of the blame for grade inflation use on declining standards regulating the use of student evaluations in promotion decisions. As a result, instructors increasingly worry about their ratings, and **engage** in lenient grading in an attempt to ensure high student evaluations (Boretz, 2004).

Appleton-Knapp and Krentler (2006) examined the role that student expectations have in regards to satisfaction. They define satisfaction as the perception of pleasurable fulfillment of a service during an individual transaction. Their idea of overall satisfaction is achieved with a quality or service seems to reinforce the idea of higher education as a marketplace with students as consumers. It is also suggested that the expectancy/disconfirmation paradigm can be used to examine the relationship between student expectations of higher education and their level of satisfaction. In other words, with positive disconfirmation produces satisfaction, while negative disconfirmation produces dissatisfaction.

Attribution theories also have been considered alternative interpretations to explain the positive correlation between student grades and ratings as a function of teacher effectiveness. One would expect that high grades will be self-attributed to intelligence or diligence and that low grades will be attributed to poor instruction (Greenwald & Gillmore, 1997). If the expectancy/disconfirmation paradigm were to be

applied to the relationship between grades and teacher effectiveness, students whose grade expectations were exceeded would be more satisfied and provided higher teacher ratings than those whose grades were below their expectations. With attribution theory, student consumers whose expectations were not met would likely be dissatisfied and thus rate their instructor poorly.

After reviewing related research, Marsh and Roche (1997) identified three interpretations that had been developed to explain the relationship between expected grades and pupil evaluations, each having different implications yet all three reflecting the influence grades has on student learning, ratings, and expectations. First, the *validity hypothesis* proposed that higher expected grades reflect higher learning and a positive correlation between student learning and student ratings would support the validity of student evaluations. Second, the *students' characteristics hypothesis* proposes that preexisting student variables, such as prior subject interest, may affect student learning, students' grades, and teaching effectiveness, making the expected grade effect false (Marsh & Roche, 1997). Finally, the *grading leniency hypothesis* illustrates an interaction between students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and their individual course performance. It proposes that instructors who give higher than deserved grades will be rewarded by students with higher than deserved ratings (Marsh & Roche, 1997). With this theory, grades students expect to receive should not directly influence student ratings but rather, may reflect lenient grading practices of the part of the instructor. If the student understands "how to play the game" and believes their instructor to be an easy grader because of the expectation of receiving high ratings, the student may be more likely to decrease their performance in response to their assumed high grade. This expectation and

the actual classroom climate may support pupil endorsement of student consumerist attitudes by reinforcing the definition defined by Delucchi & Pelowski (2000). The grading bias seemed to be related to grading leniency and not teaching quality (Howard & Maxwell, 1980).

If student rating forms are used to determine instructors that are considered effective, it seems logical to ask the question of whether students who give high teacher efficacy ratings also learn more than those taught by instructors rated to be ineffective. d'Apollonia and Abrami (1997) reported that the association between student ratings and student learning was significantly higher when instructional evaluation was performed after the course final exam had occurred. Marsh and Roche (1997) developed a concept called the Dr. Fox Effect which can have a great influence on student evaluations of teacher effectiveness. The Dr. Fox Effect has been interpreted to mean that enthusiastic lecturers can "seduce" students into giving favorable evaluations, even though the lectures may be devoid of meaningful content (Marsh & Roche, 1997). The researchers suggest that students may be rewarding instructors who have given them high grades, or they may be using their performance on the final exam as one influencing indicator of teacher effectiveness (d'Apollonia & Abrami, 1997). As a result these researchers suggest that it may be more accurate for student ratings to be statistically controlled for grading leniency. It is unclear as to how this would be achieved.

Howard and Maxwell (1980) have examined the correlation between grades and students' ratings of teacher efficacy. Their findings support the grading-leniency bias model. Further, they speculated that another variable may be causally related to both student grades and student evaluations; specifically student motivation. Compared with

unmotivated students, highly motivated students should perform better, receive higher grades, and justly reward effective instructors with higher ratings (Greenwald & Gillmore, 1997). Student motivation also can vary from course to course. When student motivation is attributed to instructor quality, student course-specific motivation influences student grades and their ratings of teacher effectiveness.

Greenwald and Gillmore (1997) also point out the significance of identifying the most influential third variable when examining the positive correlation between grades and student ratings. Believing that instructional quality is the third variable, they asserted (and found a correlation) that teaching effectiveness influences grades and student ratings. The main principle of the teaching effectiveness theory is that strong instructors teach courses in which students both learn more, earning their higher grades and give appropriately higher ratings to the course and the instructor. Instructors who clearly explain difficult concepts, make interesting and informative presentations, and summarize to aid retention increase students' perceptions of learning and are evaluated as effective (Delucchi, 2000).

In response to the idea that Delucchi and Smith (1997) presented about the theory of student consumerism as a product of the postmodern era, Shepperd (1997) retorted that even with good intentions, faculty members engage in behaviors that promote and reinforce consumerism, such as relating the material to real life for the students rather than insisting that students do this for themselves. This seems difficult to do if the student is newly exposed to the material and have not mastered it well enough to relate it to real life on their own. Teaching styles that "meet the needs of students" are one way in which faculty promote student consumerism as such an orientation assumes that higher

education can be understood and practiced as a business (Delucchi & Smith, 1997b). Shepperd (1997) also argues that students are treated like consumers through the “shopping mall choices” made available to them in order to attract and gain enrollment. While this may be true, viewing education as a marketplace requires that faculty members maintain satisfied customers, an approach seen as an impediment to teaching and learning (Delucchi & Smith, 1997b). He also reported that faculty members, not just students, expect the classroom to be a place of entertainment when there is no enlightenment. Textbooks are an example; all textbooks relating to similar subjects tend to be clones with physical appearance variations but not always the best material discussion of the subject (Shepperd, 1997).

Conclusion

Student consumerism is symptomatic of higher education disengagement and it reflects a newer conceptualization in the US. This concept explains the shift in educational attitudes from learning for the sake of intellectual gain to the idea that a university education should train one for specific jobs. The research suggests that in efforts to appease their students in order to achieve higher student evaluations of their teaching and safeguard their job security, instructor behavior often reinforces student consumerism through grading leniency and grade inflation. Teachers who have more job security and those who are not willing to meet student consumerist expectations but would rather challenge the academic competence of their students are at a higher risk for being rated negatively. Unfortunately, when standard rating forms are used, some effective teachers are not accurately rated due to their use of techniques that usually are rated by students as unsuccessful. The validity of using standardized forms also has come

into question, because the measured variables of teacher effectiveness that are sufficient for one discipline may not be for another. Throughout the literature, research has shown that depending on the degree to which the student endorses student consumerism, the interplay between students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness and student performance, with the interaction of motivation, also can impact the actual grades the students earn. Research has shown that there are multiple factors and biases that influence the effect student consumerism has on grades, student satisfaction, and their perceptions of teacher efficacy as measured by student ratings. Boretz (2004) presented an interesting argument that the assumption that students wish for lenient grading underestimates the concept of student consumerism. The notion that students want their money's worth does not indicate that they wish to buy easy As, but rather they wish to earn As from faculty members. While this has not been studied quantitatively, it would be interesting to compare student consumers on a continuum and examine the influence their expectations have on their grades and ratings of their professors. Classroom expectations should be reciprocal. Students should be able to expect that their instructor will teach them useful and up-to-date information, respect their opinions, and guide them to their future in the same way in which instructors can expect effortful participation and a genuine interest for learning.

Consequences of student consumerism still remains to be seen as the extent to which students use evaluations to "reward" or "punish" teachers based on the grade they received remains unclear (Delucchi & Smith, (1997). While much of the research shows positive correlations between grades and student ratings, the multitude of factors of teaching effectiveness makes it hard to determine and test, one causational variable to

specifically explain the impact student expectations have on teacher evaluations. While some evidence indicates that student evaluations are higher when student grades are also higher, no control study has been performed to determine whether leniency and/or good teaching alone, were factors that led to positive student ratings (Boretz, 2004). In order to address grade inflation, more emphasis should be placed on student-centeredness and standards of learning with less solely on grades.

While research has shown that grades motivate students, such findings have uncovered an emerging divide between two groups. Kohn (2002) reported that students are beginning to choose between endorsing either a “grade orientation” or a “learning orientation” which tend to be inversely related. Students are no longer contemplating the meaning of questioning its relevance especially in relation to pending grades. Colleges and universities seem to have delayed inquiry into whether institutions of higher learning are becoming institutions of consumerists catering to students endorsing a grade orientation and what the significance of their grading practices has on actual learning. Kohn suggests that instructors need to begin to deliberate as to what sort of teaching strategies may elicit authentic interest in class material. Faculty needs to assist students in separating the tight bond between the students’ grades and success to teach them that learning is a priceless asset earned for personal self improvement and not just for career application and financial gain. Students who are given high grades without high performance tend to display less interest in their tasks, perform worse on measures of learning, and avoid more challenging activities when given the opportunity (Kohn, 2002).

Additional research is needed to examine student expectations and the effects student grades have on satisfaction and ultimately student ratings of instructor

effectiveness. As instructors lose enthusiasm for teaching and class sizes become larger in size but shorter on time, a large number of classes have become a means by which instructors prepare students to take the next class in sequence (Shepperd, 1997). Perhaps one aspect that needs further examination is whether or not students who are able to complete a class and obtain new knowledge (learned), not just understand the material enough to pass the exams, are less likely to be disengaged in higher education and have higher expectations for themselves and their instructors. It would be interesting to discover if these same students were motivated either by grades alone, previous interest in the course subject, or if their instructor was able to engage them and maintain interest once in the classroom.

Research related to changing expectations throughout the college experience may also be useful. A correlated comparison study involving first and fourth year students may determine that length of time spent at a college or university is positively correlated with student consumerism endorsement. I hypothesize that as the novelty of college wears off after freshman year, students begin to devalue or fail to see relevance (disengagement) of course material in relation to their career plans. Longitudinal or cross-sectional studies of college students may be most beneficial in determining whether such attitudes change over time.

Further research could also include study of the suggestions presented by Shepperd (1997). He proposed two seemingly valid orientation changes of faculty towards students. The first proposed orientation is called the professional/client model in which the client comes to the professional and “buys” the professional’s expertise. This sounds similar to an average classroom if it viewed from the student consumerist’s

perspective. Shepperd's second suggested orientation is to change the way by which students as well as professors are perceived to be defined. Through this model, it is suggested that students become more involved with faculty when they struggle with intellectual as well as practical problems with the expectation that instructors help them attempt solutions. After determining the receptiveness of the two orientations, it would be advantageous to compare the data in attempts to find any correlations or changes in student expectations and how such orientations affect student ratings. Additionally, the effect grade inflation has on student expectations, student learning, and faculty-to-student rapport, specifically for students who endorse student consumerism needs further study as well.

The question of what makes a teacher effective has not been precisely answered. Due to the multitude of interpolated variables, it often seems as though attributes of teacher efficacy are capricious and open to interpretation. There are many variables that have been tested, yet none that encompasses specific characteristics and instructional practices that equate a clear and general definition of teacher effectiveness across disciplines. Research needs to specifically define and standardize a description as to what makes a teacher effective. Student evaluation forms also need to be studied to most accurately determine what factors are the best determinants of teacher effectiveness and most beneficial to student learning. In doing so, evaluation forms need to be modified to be standardized and yet applicable to varying disciplines.

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