

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT/INSTRUCTOR RAPPOR, STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR EFFECTIVENESS, AND COURSE GRADE
EXPECTATIONS

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The researcher attempted to determine if a correlation exists between student/instructor rapport, student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, and course grade expectations for freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States. Previous studies have determined that rapport affects motivation (Bergström, 2010; Frisby, Berger, Burchett, Herovic, & Strawser, 2014; Legg & Wilson, 2009), perceptions of teacher effectiveness (Giles, 2011; Kozub, 2010), and evaluation scores (Barth, 2008; Kowai-Bell, Guadango, Little, & Ballew, 2012). The researcher asked the following research questions: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States; and is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States? The study was conducted as quantitative research using a non-experimental correlational research design. The study was conducted at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States using students enrolled in general education courses. Data were collected using two instruments, the Professor-Student Rapport Scale and the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form. The data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's r_s). The study found statistically significant positive correlations between Professor-Student Rapport and Instructor Evaluation and between Professor-Student Rapport and Student Expected Course Grade.

Keywords: perceptions, rapport, correlation, freshman, general education, expectations

Dedication

For Gerry, who never doubted. And for Mom Gray, who didn't just teach. She inspired.

Acknowledgements

This project has easily been the most challenging of my career, and completing it would have been impossible without the support and encouragement of so many people.

To my family -- by blood, marriage, and choice -- thank you for supporting me. Even when I wanted to give up, you never for a second believed I would. That's a remarkable gift.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In his seminal work, *The Child and the Curriculum*, John Dewey (1902) summed up the general thinking of his day this way:

Ignore and minimize the child's peculiarities, whims, and experiences. They are what we need to get away from. They are to be obscured or eliminated. As educators our work is precisely to substitute for these superficial and casual affairs stable and well-ordered realities; and these are found in studies and lessons (p. 8).

Education at the turn of the 20th century minimized a child's uniqueness as a factor in the learning process. But according to Minter (2011), although education is pushing toward learner-centered instruction, failure to account for individuality still persists.

For over one hundred years since Dewey's view of pedagogy, our nation's education has seemed to resist the Dewey approach and has maintained its reliance on the one-way model of communication within the classroom where "pedagogue" behavior persists. Yes, we have the technological intervention of the infamous "Power Point" which serves as an outline for the "pedagogue" to follow while staring at the screen rather than interacting and relating to the students in a darkened classroom. We also have the intervention of "on-line" learning which further puts the learner in a passive and isolated role (p. 56).

Dewey was many years ahead of the thinking of his day he described in 1902. And yet education still struggles to implement his vision. As a result, the body of work on what affects student learning remains very much a work in progress. To that end, this researcher attempted to find whether or not rapport with students affects student perceptions of instructor effectiveness.

Background

This researcher has personally experienced rapport affecting student perceptions of instructor effectiveness as evidenced by student evaluation scores. This researcher hypothesized that the rapport between student and instructor positively affects the students' teacher evaluation scores (Starcher, 2011; Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2012).

Historical Overview

Historically (Dewey, 1902), rapport was not of primary concern, but it began to receive recognition in the latter half of the 20th century. In their seminal work, "Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education," Chickering and Gamson (1987) listed an element of rapport as their first point, finding that "Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement" (p. 3). In her article, "Teaching/Learning Relationship," Ellsworth (1993) argued that, "very little of the process or teaching/learning relationship in education is evaluated or valued or brought to the attention of consumers" (p. 309) and predicted a shift in education, stating, "It is time to introduce the 4th R to education – relationship" (p. 308).

Effects on Education

Research has been done on the effects of rapport. In their study on rapport in the classroom, Frisby and Martin (2010) examined student/instructor rapport, student/student rapport, and classroom connectedness to determine their effects on participation and achievement. "They noted that of the three, only instructor-student rapport 'predicted participation, affective learning, and cognitive learning'" (p. 146). Frisby and Myers (2008) used validated evaluation instruments to find a correlation between positive student/instructor rapport and performance scores for instructors and found "a direct relationship between

perceived instructor-student rapport and affective learning, satisfaction, and state motivation” (p. 30). In their study on characteristics of adult learners, Kenner and Weinerman (2011) determined that “the adult learner is also likely to desire a greater sense of cooperation between the student and teacher as they proceed through the educational process” (p. 89).

Educational Theory

The hypothesis put forth in this study has its roots in Julian Rotter’s Social Learning Theory. In his defining work on the subject, Rotter described the theory as having three constructs: “behavior potential, expectancy, and reinforcement value” (Rotter, 1982a, p. 105). He defined behavior potential as “the potentiality of any behaviors occurring in any given situation or situations as calculated in relation to any single reinforcement or set of reinforcements” (Rotter, 1982a, p. 105). He defined expectancy as “the probability held by the individual that a particular reinforcement will occur as a function of a specific behavior on his part in a specific situation or situations. Expectancy is independent of the value or importance of the reinforcement” (Rotter, 1982a, p. 107). And he defined reinforcement value as, “the degree of preference for any reinforcement to occur if the possibilities of their occurring were all equal” (Rotter, 1982a, p. 107). One particular postulate encapsulates the idea behind the present study:

A person's experiences (or his interactions with his meaningful environment) influence each other. Otherwise stated, personality has unity. New experiences are a partial function of acquired meanings, and old acquired meanings or learnings are changed by new experience. Perfect prediction of acquired behavior would ideally require a complete knowledge of previous experience (Rotter, 1982b, p. 94).

Rotter explains the principle as,

personality becomes increasingly stable as the person grows older, since one tends to select new experiences and new meanings on the basis of an ever-increasing store of previous experiences. Such a conception of increasing stability of behavior is consistent with behavioristic and psychoanalytic conceptions of personality. The danger lies in overemphasizing the fixity of behavior or in arbitrarily cutting off the developmental picture in the belief that the major structure of personality is completed by the time the individual is six (or five or seven) years old, and is then likely to remain the same except for drastic changes instituted by psychoanalysis (Rotter, 1982b, p. 96).

Rotter's emphasis on the whole person, comprised of their personality, experiences, and circumstances, factors into the current study which sought to determine the relationship between student/instructor rapport, student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, and student course grade expectations.

Problem Statement

Research has revealed "a direct relationship between perceived instructor-student rapport and affective learning, satisfaction, and state motivation" (Frisby & Myers, 2008, p. 30). In his phenomenological study on relationships in the classroom, Giles (2011) found that teacher/student relationships had the potential not only to affect a student's experience in the course, but to alter the trajectory of their academic career. Additionally, Awang and Ismail (2010) sought to find what students consider most important in their education. They stated:

As one would expect, students placed a high level of importance or expectation on the knowledge of lecturers in their field, content of the program, good variety of courses provided in the program, excellence [*sic*] learning outcome of the program and fairness of lecturers in their treatment of students (para. 7).

Teachers play a vital role in developing a productive learning environment, as evidenced by literature on the subject (Chickering, 2006; Del Guercio, 2011; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Frisby et al., 2014; Giles, 2011; Malouff & Hall, 2012; Starcher, 2011; Young, Horan, & Frisby, 2013; Zhou, 2012). However, no research has been done that has determined the relationship of rapport on student perceptions of instructor effectiveness and student course grade expectations in students enrolled in freshman general education courses. Finding the extent of that role was the crux of this study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the quantitative, non-experimental correlational research study was to determine if perceived rapport positively affects student perceptions of instructor effectiveness in freshman general education classes and/or their expected overall grade in the course. Several studies (Bergström, 2010; Estep & Roberts, 2013; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Heckert, Latier, Ringwald, & Silvey, 2006) have found that rapport does affect student learning and evaluation scores as well as their perception of their expected overall grade in the course.

The purpose of this study was to test J.B. Rotter's theory of Social Learning that correlates student/instructor rapport, student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, and course grade expectations in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States. Student/instructor rapport was generally defined as interpersonal relationships between students and their instructors as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale designed and tested by Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010). Student perceptions of instructor effectiveness were generally defined as Likert scale results of the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form, created by IDEA Education (2002).

The independent variable was Student/Instructor rapport. This “rapport may enhance perceptions of an interpersonal relationship in the classroom. Specifically, rapport is operationalized using two dimensions: a personal connection and enjoyable interaction” (Frisby & Martin, 2010, p. 147). The dependent variable was student perceptions of instructor effectiveness. According to Socha (2013):

Students’ evaluations of instruction is one method that can be used in a faculty evaluation system to provide: (a) feedback to faculty about their instructional effectiveness; (b) a measure of instructional effectiveness to be used in personnel decisions; (c) information for students to use in the selection of courses and teachers and (d) an outcome for research or teaching” (p. 95).

These variables formed the basic elements of this study.

Significance of the Study

The importance of student satisfaction on learning is quite clear (Awang & Ismail, 2010; Barth, 2008; Delucchi, 2000; Ellsworth, 1993), and one facet of overall student satisfaction is satisfaction with and enjoyment of one’s instructor. Determining what causes one subject to boost a student’s rapport with the instructor might help educators apply that knowledge to other subjects. In the case of the institution where the research was conducted, administration has noted that student satisfaction tends to be higher in certain subjects than others, even when the instructor remains the same (M.A. Thayer, personal communication, May 10, 2010).

Determining if rapport contributes to higher student perceptions of instructor effectiveness and/or student course grade expectations is the first step in finding what makes the difference in satisfaction between subjects.

Student ratings of instruction are the most widely used measure of college teaching effectiveness. Administrators use these ratings in making tenure and promotion decisions. Some faculty members question the usefulness and accuracy of student perceptions. Yet a substantial amount of research exists which supports the validity of such ratings (Kozub, 2008).

Researchers also note the importance of student expectations, ownership of learning, and motivation on student learning outcomes (Awang & Ismail, 2010; Chan, Graham-Day, Ressa, Peters, & Konrad, 2014; Estep & Roberts, 2013; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Garces-Ozanne & Sullivan, 2014). With clear data supporting the idea that non-academic factors influence student perceptions of instructor effectiveness and student course grade expectation, determining if rapport is one of those factors was a worthwhile endeavor.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor

effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

Research Plan

The study was conducted as quantitative research using a non-experimental correlational research design. The research took place at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States using students enrolled in general education courses (comprising sections of English 091, English 098, English 101, English 102, Writing 115, Speech 201, Math 091, Math 099, Psychology 101, and Psychology 111). Data were collected using two instruments, the Professor-Student Rapport Scale designed and tested by Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010), and the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form, created by IDEA Education (2002). The data were analyzed using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) and Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's r_s).

Definitions

The following terms are used throughout this study.

1. *Evaluation* - Evaluation is defined as the gathering of student ratings on subjects including, but not limited to, "teaching effectiveness, both overall and within the dimensions of pedagogical skill, rapport, expected grades, satisfaction with the time of day, and instructor appearance-attractiveness, having an obvious handicap, and gender"

(Kozub, 2010, p. 33) as well as “workload, clarity of the materials, the instructor’s delivery, [and] prior interest by the student” (Barth, 2008, p. 40).

2. *Rapport* - “Rapport is defined as the ability to build a relationship based on trust and harmony and is considered to be a positive and prosocial behavior that is relationally powerful enough to enact cohesiveness, reduce threat, and structure social interaction” (Frisby & Myers, 2008, p. 27).
3. *Freshman* - According to the career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States where the research took place, a freshman is defined as a student with less than 45 credit hours (Baker College, 2014, p. 225).
4. *Professor-Student Rapport Scale* - “We sought to develop a scale for assessing professor-student rapport from the student’s perspective. . . . We also expected rapport to predict student outcomes beyond the prediction offered by immediacy [psychological availability], with student outcomes including attitudes toward the professor and course as well as student motivation, perceived amount learned, and self-reported course grades” (Wilson et al., 2010, p. 246).
5. *IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form* - Using a Likert scale, the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form is an instrument for students to evaluate the instructor and course (IDEA Education, 2002).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This researcher asked the question, does the level of student/instructor interaction (rapport) have a direct connection to students' evaluations of their instructors? Many studies have been performed on this topic. Foundational studies sought to establish a connection; later studies looked for what affects rapport, ways to build rapport, how rapport affects distance learning, rapport in the evolving classroom model, and how communication affects rapport.

Theoretical Framework

The hypothesis put forth in this study had its roots the Social Learning Theory. In his Social Learning Theory, Julian Rotter believed that:

Personality represents an interaction of the individual with his or her environment. One cannot speak of a personality, internal to the individual, that is independent of the environment. Neither can one focus on behavior as being an automatic response to an objective set of environmental stimuli. Rather, to understand behavior, one must take both the individual (i.e., his or her life history of learning and experiences) and the environment (i.e., those stimuli that the person is aware of and responding to) into account.

Rotter sees personality, and therefore behavior, as always changeable. Change the way the person thinks, or change the environment the person is responding to, and behavior will change. He does not believe there is a critical period after which personality is set. (Mearns, 2009, para. 8-9).

The Social Learning Theory formed a foundation for this study in that it accounts for external factors in learning. Post-secondary students come to class with all their previous academic

experiences with the material and with prior instructors. According to Rotter, these experiences affect behavior, an important component in developing rapport.

Related Literature

Foundational Literature

In their seminal work, “Seven Principles for Good Practice in Undergraduate Education,” Chickering and Gamson (1987) listed an element of rapport as their first principle.

Frequent student-faculty contact in and out of classes is the most important factor in student motivation and involvement. Faculty concern helps students get through rough times and keep on working. Knowing a few faculty members well enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans (p. 3).

In her article, “Teaching/Learning Relationship,” Ellsworth (1993) predicted a shift in education, stating, “It is time to introduce the 4th R to education – relationship” (p. 308). She described the state of education in the early 1990s by stating:

We pour energy into preparing, evaluating and recording a linear facsimile of knowledge rather than developing and reporting the rich educational milieu [sic] which is actually in place...very little of the process or teaching/learning relationship in education is evaluated or valued or brought to the attention of consumers, and thus it follows that little attention is directed to the quality of those relationships or the training of participants in ways to provide quality educational processes and interactions (p. 309).

As educators have begun to see the importance of relationships in the classroom, a push to determine what affects rapport has developed.

Factors/Non-Factors in Rapport Building

The literature reflects a slow change in approach in the years since Ellsworth's study. In their study conducted 16 years later, Frieberg and Lamb (2009) shared a similar concern:

Classroom management, based on behaviorism and still common in some areas, discipline is teacher-directed. Fifty years of research demonstrates that person-centered, pro-social classroom management may provide that alternative (p. 99).

They conducted extensive interviews to determine why students love school and discovered the following:

Both elementary and secondary students from low-income communities said they that loved school because:

1. they were trusted and respected—people cared about them (*social-emotional emphasis*);
2. they were a part of a family (*school connectedness*);
3. they felt their teachers were helpers, encouraging them to succeed and listening to their opinions and ideas (*positive climate*);
4. they had opportunities to be responsible, with freedom and choices, but not license to do whatever they wished (*self-discipline*).

The four dimensions are inherent to a person-centered instructional and management framework, where teachers and students share classroom responsibilities and build meaningful relationships (Frieberg & Lamb, 2009, p. 101).

They concluded, "Person-centered classrooms and their management approaches allow teachers and students to see one another as people. Students take on responsibilities and have responsible freedom and choice within the classroom. Teachers establish caring interpersonal relationships

with students” (p. 104). Gruber, Reppel, and Voss (2010) made a similar finding in their study, “Understanding the Characteristics of Effective Professors: The Student’s Perspective,” utilizing the Kano methodology. According to this method,

Satisfaction is a multidimensional construct consisting of the following factors: *Must-be factors* are features that individuals take for granted. The fulfillment of these requirements does not increase satisfaction. If the product or service, however, does not meet expectations, then individuals will be very dissatisfied. *One-dimensional factors* are attributes for which the relationship between attribute performance and (dis-)satisfaction is linear. The more/less an attribute fulfills the requirements, the more/less customers are satisfied. *Excitement factors* are attributes that make customers very satisfied or even delighted (p. 181).

They determined that:

The Kano results stress the importance of building and maintaining good personal interactions between students and professors and professors should also try to create a rapport with their students. The revealed importance of personality factors underscores the strong need for marketing educators to maintain personal interactions with students, build strong relationships and treat students with respect (Gruber et al., p. 184).

In a move to shed further light on this student/instructor rapport, Michael Barth (2008) examined five factors of influence on student evaluation scores: quality of instruction, course rigor, level of interest, grades, and instructor helpfulness.

[Instructor helpfulness] was highly correlated with questions...concerning the instructor's availability and willingness to provide outside help to the students. These questions also highly correlated with [quality of instruction], which measured the overall course quality.

. . . There was also a relatively high loading with...the degree to which the instructor encourages class participation and questions. [Instructor helpfulness] seemed to measure some aspect of the instructor's personality, approachability, or openness with the students, which I labeled as *instructor helpfulness* (Barth, 2008, p. 44).

Barth found that while quality of instruction was the main determinant in the instructor rating (p. 45), of interest to this study is how the helpfulness factor affected the rating as well.

[T]he helpfulness trait, also exhibited a positive relation with the overall instructor rating. This finding indicates an interesting effect because... the rigor of the course, lowered the instructor rating, [It] showed that working with students outside of the classroom could offset the effect. Although instructor ratings can suffer when the material is considered challenging, the helpfulness of the instructor and the availability of the instructor to provide additional help outside the classroom can have a greater impact on the instructor rating than simply lowering the course standards (Barth, 2008, p. 45).

This factor analysis provides valuable insight into the relationship between rapport and evaluation scores, and is carried on in other studies.

In a similar study, Delucchi (2000) measured instructor likability, student perceptions of learning, and teacher ratings, and found a correlation between rapport and perceived learning. “[H]olding constant the effects of all other independent variables, a one point increase in [likability] produces a .12 decrease in perceived learning. In other words, the more students like an instructor, the less learning they report” (pp. 224-225). Delucchi concluded, “Instructor likability, while exerting an appreciable negative effect on perceived learning, has a large positive effect on overall ratings of teaching ability. As a predictor of overall ratings, the

magnitude of the likability effect far exceeds that for effort and perceptions of learning” (pp. 227-228).

While establishing the importance of rapport on teacher evaluation scores is important to this study, it is also beneficial to determine what does not affect evaluation scores. In his study on evaluation, Barth (2008) stated, “An urban legend...says that the easiest way to inflate these instructor ratings and thus positively affect the instructor's annual evaluation is to reduce standards and inflate grades” (p. 45). However, his findings showed that the overall rating of an instructor was based more on the quality of instruction rather than the ease of the class (Barth, 2008, p. 45).

While students can contribute to the learning environment, these studies make clear that the tone is set by the instructor. Not only does the instructor affect the academic environment, he or she also contributes to the personal aspect.

Meeting to Build Rapport

Several studies have examined the importance of face-to-face interaction on rapport. In an effort to build rapport with his students, Starcher (2011) instituted the practice of meeting individually with each student within a month of the beginning of term.

From subsequent in-class surveys, 95% of the students believed the one-on-one meetings were worth their time (most meetings are about 15 minutes in length). Students also reported that, as a result of our one-on-one meeting, they felt more comfortable speaking out in class and asking me questions both inside and outside of the classroom. Students told me (via survey and in person) that because of the one-on-one meetings, they believed I was truly interested in them as individuals—not just as students (p. 162).

He concluded:

Having completed almost 300 of these one-on-one conversations to date, I am now seeing the positive consequences of intentionally building rapport with my students. Classroom discussions flow more easily; student engagement (within and outside of the classroom) has increased; and I have more insight into the primary learning style of each student, his or her level of motivation for doing well in my class, etc. (p. 162).

In a similar vein, Malouff & Hall (2012) conducted a study to test the effectiveness of meeting privately with students at the beginning of the term:

Most of the students in the classes attended an individual meeting. Those who attended indicated in anonymous evaluations that the meetings helped establish rapport with the instructor and also provided the students with useful information. The positive evaluation results were similar (a) across countries, (b) in both private and public universities, (c) across three specific psychology courses, (d) across male and female instructors, and (e) for time periods of both two weeks and two months after the meeting. Similar to the students, we, the instructors, felt an increase in rapport, along with an increase in awareness of student goals and plans (pp. 6-7).

Both studies demonstrate a strong element of rapport-building in forging personal connections with students, and the Malouff & Hall study indicated that this effect exists regardless of external variables.

Instructor Presence

In addition to meeting with students, research has been conducted to determine the role of instructor presence in rapport building. While interviews and email work effectively to build rapport, other methods prove useful as well. In an effort to tap into resources students are using, Greenfield (2011), in her article “Podcasting: A New Tool for Student Retention?” suggested

turning lectures into podcasts for students. This willingness to incorporate modern technology into the learning cycle was found to increase student satisfaction. The study followed six ESL students who did poorly in the first third of a particular class and showed dramatic improvement the rest of the way when the instructor began publishing podcasts of the lectures. One student said:

The podcasts were so great! I could go to class and focus on getting the biggest, most important points and not worry about getting all the details down. This was the first class that I could just sit and listen and really think about the case studies and not just try to write everything down. I could listen to the class again at home and write my notes. With both the big picture ideas of case studies and the details I later added, I felt I was well prepared for the exams. And I saw a big improvement in my grades! (Greenfield, 2011, p. 113).

In this case, students embraced a technology with which they were familiar, which in turn improved their satisfaction with the class.

Experiences like an instructor willing to make lectures available via podcast can have broader implications. In his phenomenological study on relationships in the classroom, Giles (2011) found that teacher/student relationships had the potential not only to affect a student's experience in the course, but to alter the trajectory of their academic career. To that end:

It is critically important that teacher educators, and teachers alike, become more attentive to how their relationship is with their students individually and collectively. Teacher educators, and teachers alike, need an attunement to notice how relationships are mattering in their immediate context (Giles, 2011, p. 80).

Furthering that point, Giles cited a similar study. “Buber (2002) writes that, ‘for the genuine educator . . . concern is always the person as a whole, both in the actuality in which he lives before you now and in his possibilities, what he can become’” (in Giles, 2011, p. 83). Students notice and appreciate instructors who show concern. Giles cited an example of an instructor warning the students in advance before broaching a difficult and sensitive topic for some students in the room. The students responded with appreciation for the concern the instructor showed them as people, not just students. “When the teacher-student relationship matters to both teachers and students, they show a caring concern that connects them relationally” (Giles, 2011, p. 83).

Instructor presence in the Giles study also involves an emotional presence, a foundational element of rapport. (Chickering, 2006; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Frisby & Martin, 2014; Wenger, 2011). Frisby & Martin (2014) described emotional presence as, “confirming, encouraging, and supportive” (p. 149).

Student Course Grade Expectations

Garces-Ozanne & Sullivan (2014) conducted a study on 196 Economics I students to determine what, if any, correlation existed between student course and grade expectations and their overall course grade.

Initially, students have a limited set of signals from which they can base their grade expectations. . . . It is therefore difficult for many students to know what to expect in terms of lectures, course structure and assessments for example. We find that when faced with this uncertainty, most students tend to be quite optimistic. However, though grade expectations and behaviour at the mid-semester changed slightly from the initial survey, we find that students’ grade expectations remain statistically different from actual grades

received. Therefore, despite being faced with reality, what students want is still not what they get (pp. 95-96).

Bates & Kaye (2014) determined one outside influence that affects student expectations. They found that students' expectations for their own performance increased when their education cost increased, as did their expectations for services provided by the institution.

While the available data on student course grade expectations do not address the effect of rapport, the findings indicate that grade expectations can be influenced by external variables, an important distinction for this study.

Student Ownership of Learning/Self Efficacy

Another important element affecting student course grade expectations is student ownership of learning. In their article, "Beyond Involvement: Promoting Student Ownership of Learning in Classrooms" Chan et al. (2014) suggested eight signs of a classroom best suited to student ownership of their learning:

1. Learning targets, written in student-friendly language posted in the classroom
2. Student goals (individual and classwide) and progress charts posted around the room
3. Students actively engaged in lessons that are clearly focused on the learning targets
4. Students self-assessing their work using rubrics, checklists, and self-monitoring forms
5. Students giving each other effective feedback and serving as resources to each other
6. Students recruiting feedback from teachers and peers
7. Teachers sharing examples of strong student work so that students are clear about what quality work looks like
8. Students who are becoming self-reliant learners by knowing what they need to do next to advance their learning (pp. 111-112).

Closely related to student ownership of learning is the concept of self efficacy. In their study “Supporting Academic Persistence in Low-Skilled Adult Learners,” O’Neill & Thomson (2013) explored self efficacy in the adult learner population.

One important finding from this study is that both extrinsic and intrinsic motivation can be used in positive ways to feed back on and increase motivation. While career goals are most salient to adult learners, they are not their sole focus or motivation for achievement. When just over 52% of adults report that they are pursuing a high school equivalency credential for personal satisfaction or to be a positive role model, supporting this aspect of motivation must be an important part of their educational experience (p. 168).

Their findings continued,

Many low-skilled adults who must first earn a high school credential also carry the burden of low academic self efficacy, so it is important for educators to identify ways to support these students, yet empower them to regain and even further develop their sense of competence and autonomy (O’Neill & Thomson, 2013, p. 168).

And finally, they found that, “When students believe that their instructor has a genuine concern for them and their academic success, it has a positive effect on their persistence regardless of the amount of actual contact time” (p. 169).

These studies confirm the theory that motivation drives student persistence, while the literature strongly supports the idea that rapport affects motivation (Awang & Ismail, 2010; Estep & Roberts, 2013; Garces-Ozanne & Sullivan, 2014; Glover, 2012).

Motivation and Rapport

Instructors have a number of ways they can build rapport and enhance motivation. Legg and Wilson (2009) discovered that rapport building can actually begin before the first classroom

session with an introductory e-mail. They premised that “a welcoming e-mail might offer an easy way for professors to communicate immediacy to their students before they even enter the classroom” (p. 205). Their findings supported this. “As data were collected over the semester, it became apparent that many more students who did not receive the e-mail were withdrawing from the course compared to those who did receive the e-mail” (Legg & Wilson, 2009, p. 209). Pre-course contact resulted in a boost in motivation and rapport with the instructor, noted by statistically significant differences in retention. “Analyses confirmed that a positive, welcoming e-mail sent before the first day of school significantly enhanced student motivation, attitude toward the instructor, and perceptions of the course” (Legg & Wilson, 2009, p. 209). Explaining why,

Many students also seemed surprised to receive an e-mail from an instructor and had never experienced this form of introduction from any previous instructors. One student expressed, ‘I started to like you and made up my mind that you would be an awesome professor before I met you,’ and another student wrote, ‘It gave [the professor] a sense of likability that I did not have with my other professors’ (Legg & Wilson, 2009, p. 210).

In their article “Influence of Motivational Design on Completion Rates in Online Self-Study Pharmacy-Content Courses,” Pittenger and Doering (2010) found a similar outcomes from student/instructor email. They examined data from four pharmacological courses taught online to determine why those courses had such high completion rates. While several other factors contributed to the high rates, regular correspondence with the instructor was a factor. “These weekly emails, while not personal messages, functioned as a form of dialog and negotiation. Students also had the option of interacting with the instructor and fellow students through discussion board postings and/or email with the instructor” (Pittenger & Doering, 2010, p. 289).

Pittenger and Doering (2010) also stated, “This relationship between student control of course schedule and teacher-student interaction has been described as a relationship between power and communication; the amount of two-way communication within a course determines the balance of power between teacher and student” (p. 289). As stated earlier, when students feel they share in their learning, they are more likely to be engaged in the process.

Rapport and Classroom Management

Since rapport has an effect on motivation, researchers have sought to determine its role in classroom management as well. Del Guercio (2011) emphasized the importance of rapport in developing a sound classroom management strategy:

Effective classroom management will never be achieved by forcing or coercing a student to learn or behave properly. If a student believes that you have his or her best interests at heart, he/she will want to behave properly and do well in the class. If they believe you are doing your best to make the class relevant and interesting, they are more likely to do what you ask (p. 42).

He went on to list several ways to develop rapport. “A huge step in building rapport with my students is getting involved in school events. . . . Taking an interest in what they like to do may just cause them to view you—and your class—differently” (p. 42). He suggested showing students that the instructor is human by using humor, displaying evidence of personal interests, and incorporating discussion of hobbies and other interests into class time. He also advocated taking an interest in students through observing and commenting on their interactions with one another and paying attention to things that interest them (Del Guercio, 2011).

Rapport and Classroom Justice

Closely linked to classroom management is classroom justice. Students need to sense fairness in their academic dealings, and a lack of it negatively affects rapport.

In their study “Fair and Square? An Examination of Classroom Justice and Relational Teaching Messages,” Young et al. (2013) sought to determine the effects of relational communication strategies (including rapport, confirmation, and affinity-seeking behaviors) on students’ sense of classroom justice.

Classroom justice can be described as distributive, procedural, or interactional. First, distributive justice describes perceptions of fairness regarding outcomes. . . . Second, procedural justice describes perceptions of fairness regarding the process used to determine outcomes. . . . Finally, interactional justice describes fairness regarding interpersonal treatment when classroom policies are implemented (p. 334).

They determined that:

Students’ perceptions of three relational teaching messages (i.e., rapport, confirmation, and affinity-seeking behaviors) and perceptions of justice (i.e., distributive, procedural, and interactional) in the classroom. A general pattern emerged indicating that engaging in enjoyable interactions (i.e., dimension of rapport) with students is important for creating positive perceptions of all three type of justice. Further, effectively answering student questions (i.e., dimension of confirmation) is also important to consider for creating fair perceptions of classroom procedures and interpersonal interactions between the student and instructor. These results extend the literature on relational teaching messages and classroom justice, and provide support for the potential benefits of relational teaching (p. 342).

Their practical implications for rapport building were as follows:

to build rapport, instructors might consider cancelling the official meeting time for class and inviting students to additional office hours when due dates for large assignments (e.g., final papers/presentations) are approaching. This small, but impactful gesture can help to build rapport with the students, as it shows that the instructor cares about student success and is willing to spend extra time on specific projects. Further, instructors can design interactive class activities that encourage classmates to get to know one another to create an enjoyable experience within the classroom (p. 346).

While not revolutionary in nature, the results and suggestions of the above study are in keeping with previous studies' findings on successful rapport building techniques (Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Delucchi, 2000; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Giles, 2011; Gruber et al., 2010).

Rapport in Distance Learning

Distance learning is beginning to have a profound impact on education. The challenges faced in the digital classroom extend to rapport as well. Benton, Li, Gross, Pallett, & Webster (2013) used archived data from 105 institutions that utilized the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction system to determine what characteristics were more commonly found in an online setting, and which were more likely to be found in a face-to-face classroom. They found:

Some aspects of transactional distance make it more likely a course is taught online: teaching soft and applied courses, structuring the classroom experience, and expecting students to share in the responsibility for learning. Conversely, other factors decrease the likelihood of a course being online: establishing rapport, stimulating student interest, and high student effort in the course. Such findings may guide instructors in making

decisions about how to decrease transactional distance in online courses (Benton et al., 2013, p. 216).

In his 2010 study of nursing students, Bergström examined how student/instructor rapport in a distance program affected the learning process, the assessment process, and various approaches to teaching and learning. He found that “the assessment process plays an important role in the student/teacher relationship, which also influences the learning process and, in particular, has implications for the role that students expect their teachers to play” (p. 46).

In their study, “Undergraduate Education: A Gap Analysis of Students’ Expectations and Satisfaction,” Awang and Ismail (2010) sought to find what students consider most important in their education.

As one would expect, students placed a high level of importance or expectation on the knowledge of lecturers in their field, content of the program, good variety of courses provided in the program, excellence [*sic*] learning outcome of the program and fairness of lecturers in their treatment of students (para. 7).

In their article, “Students’ Feelings of and Desire for Sense of Community in Face-to-Face and Online Courses,” Drouin and Vartanian (2010) attempted to determine how much a sense of community (SOC) affected students in their courses. They compared online classes and face-to-face (FTF) classes to see if marked differences in desire for SOC existed between the two. Interestingly enough, the desire was the same between both groups, but students in FTF classrooms reported a greater sense of SOC. This finding should give online educators pause because, as the authors state:

It has long been recommended that instructors create learning environments that foster SOC. These recommendations, which have been emphasized in both FTF and online

classrooms, are based on the idea that when students feel SOC with their classmates, it may promote learning, satisfaction, and retention (Drouin & Vartanian, 2010, p. 155).

Interaction with online instructors might be more challenging because of distance, but it does not negate the importance students place on rapport in their learning experience.

Murphy and Rodriguez-Manzanares (2012) conducted a study exploring rapport in distance education (DE) and found that rapport is required because teachers “have to treat each individual student in a different manner” (p. 175). Additionally, “the more contact that you have with the student and the more familiar you are with them, the more they contact you regularly, the greater the chance of their success” (Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2012, p. 175). In interviewing DE faculty, they uncovered several challenges to rapport building:

Compared to the face-to-face student who is “there partly by obligation,” the DE student is there by his or her “own free will.” As a result, some DE students “don’t want to have any interactions. They’re just getting through it because they have to get through it” (p. 176).

Other challenges expressed by DE faculty included the following:

“There are literally children that [*sic*] send in emails with just attachments; they don’t give any email responses, they don’t write comments, they don’t write questions... I have no sense of them as people... it’s their decision to decide whether they want to contribute” (Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2012, p. 176).

Another commented, “You have to be very careful what you say: you might be trying to make a joke with a student, but if you don’t know their sense of humour, they don’t see it as a joke” (p. 176). Or another, who said:

The people who took distance education in the olden days did so without any contact with the teacher. They received their lessons in the mail, and they completed them, and they mailed them back. . . . there was no chatter at all with the teacher. And so that perception is still out there, and some students who take online courses believe that they're not supposed to contact the teacher, even though we. . . . keep telling them, "Now, please, phone whenever you have a question or need assistance or anything like that" (p. 176).

Of interest to this study is that rapport continues to be an important component of learning, regardless of the format or media used. Whether an online or face-to-face class, with or without the use of various technological components, the above studies demonstrate the importance of rapport.

Communication and Rapport

Studies of online learning consistently emphasize the importance of intentional communication in rapport building (Benton et al., 2013; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Greenfield, 2011; Ilgaz & Gülbahar, 2015; Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2012; Pittenger & Doering, 2010). For example, Wenger (2011) observed that students respond in an emotional language to instructors and are disappointed when they are rebuffed.

Regularly included on the litany of instructors' complaints is students' insistence on bringing up their feelings in class. I hear often an echo of "I don't care what my students' feel; I just want them to think." When I hear this frustrated response, I must admit that I hear teachers' unacknowledged emotion short-circuiting valuable moments of potential learning. It has always been curious to me the ways this complaint hides how students *are*

thinking using the language they have at hand but aren't being heard (Wenger, 2011, p. 49).

She further stated, "Teachers tend not to listen because of their own indoctrination in and gatekeeping of dominant pedagogies reliant on emotion's absent-presence, to borrow Worsham's (2001) language" (Wenger, 2011, p. 49). As stated in Rotter's Social Learning Theory (1982), students come to class with their own set of experiences that shape behavior. To be dismissed in a way that can be construed as closed-minded can be frustrating and discouraging, while affecting the student/instructor rapport.

This openness, as studied by Giles (2011), and the closed approach, as studied by Wenger (2011), are not necessarily mutually exclusive. A friendly personality can mask a closed-minded individual.

Negative Effects on Rapport

In their study "Participation Apprehensive Students: The Influence of Face Support and Instructor-Student Rapport on Classroom Participation," Frisby et al. (2014) sought to determine the effects of "face" on classroom climate. They defined face as such:

The general notion of face comprises two types of face, positive face and negative face.

Positive face is an individual's desire to be liked, to be affiliated with others, and to be perceived as competent....Negative face is an individual's desire for freedom and autonomy and to avoid imposition from others....

They continued on to explain the role face plays in rapport.

Face threats are categorized as either positive or negative, with the positive or negative labels specifying which face is being threatened. For example, a positive face threat signifies that an individual's feelings of liking, affiliation, or competence are being

threatened, while a negative face threat signifies that an individual's feelings of autonomy or freedom are threatened....Similar to the positive or negative labels assigned to face threat, positive face support would support one's need to be liked or affiliated, while negative face support would support one's need for autonomy. To summarize, face threats, whether positive or negative, are considered a threat to one's identity needs and are often detrimental. Face support, whether positive or negative, is considered helpful for one's identity needs and often beneficial (p. 106).

To this end, they determined three things.

First, we now have a deeper understanding of participation apprehension as one barrier to classroom participation. Second, instructors' interpersonal behaviors were perceived differently by LAS [low apprehensive students], MAS [moderate apprehensive students], and HAS [high apprehensive students], suggesting that instructors may not be able to approach rapport-building and classroom engagement in the same way with all students. Finally, instructors' use of face support and reduced use of face threats, both of which are related to perceptions of positive rapport, emerged as prosocial instructor strategies with potential to increase classroom participation and the potential to create perceptions of a safe space with some students (p.117).

For the purpose of understanding rapport, it is also crucial to understand ways in which rapport can be affected by student apprehension. This emphasizes the interpersonal nature of rapport—that it is unique to each student and instructor.

Rapport Among Adult Learners

As the profile of higher education participants continues to change, adult learners must be considered as well. Dealing with adult learners includes its own unique set of challenges which

can affect the rapport building process. In their study of adult learners, Kenner and Weinerman (2011) laid out four characteristics common to adult learners:

- a. They are self directed, take responsibility for their own actions, and resist having information arbitrarily imposed on them.
- b. They have an extensive depth of experience, which serves as a critical component in the foundation of their self identity.
- c. They are ready to learn. As most adult learners return to college voluntarily, they are likely to actively engage in the learning process.
- d. They are task motivated. Adult students returning to college attend for a specific goal and the primary component of their motivational drive tends to be internal (p. 89).

They go on to say, “The adult learner is also likely to desire a greater sense of cooperation between the student and teacher as they proceed through the educational process” (p. 89). In the college in this study, the student population trended toward being non-traditional. A large percentage of the population hoped to make a career transition, so they chose schooling for themselves, in some cases after they obtained a different degree in earlier years. As such, they fit Kenner and Weinerman’s characteristics of the adult learner.

O’Toole & Essex (2012) identified several characteristics of adult learning tied to expectations.

- Classroom learning just one of many learning modes. Also e-learning, workplace-based learning, distance learning and development initiatives such as mentoring, coaching, buddying, shadowing and communities of practice.
- Motivation for learning: career, qualifications, direct knowledge needed to do a job.

- Adults seek out learning that has meaning for them at the time.
- Emphasis on self-directed learning. Learning is process-based, collaborative, facilitated and often problem-oriented.
- Adults bring life-long and life-wide experience to the subject.
- Adults often have strong values and need to unlearn and have these values challenged.
- Few formal qualifications are needed for adult educators (Certificate IV level required by Registered Training Organisations). Some school teachers make the transition to adult education (p. 190).

Rapport for an adult learner will function differently because of the nature of the experiences and different approach to the education process.

Relationships and Rapport Development

In his study “Business Education University Supervisors’ Perspectives of Mentor Teachers’ Competencies,” Fletcher (2012) sought to determine whether the triad relationship between student teachers, their mentor teachers, and university supervisors was of benefit to teacher competency. Through a series of three surveys, the researcher investigated how mentor teachers were most and least able to assist student teachers.

The expert panel believed mentor teachers are most prepared to assist their student teachers with establishing rapport with K-12 students, which is highly related to and oftentimes a strategy in establishing a well managed classroom. Or, it might be related to student teachers’ needs to be liked by their K-12 students. If this is the case, Fuller et al.’s concerns model indicates student teachers are most frequently concerned with how

well their K-12 students like them in the early teaching stage, which is characteristic of novice teachers within the first few years of their teaching careers (p. 67).

Rapport and Student Perceptions

Student/instructor rapport influences students' perceptions of their instructors, and this environmental influence, inherent to Social Learning Theory, affects students' learning. Frisby and Myers (2008) used validated evaluation instruments to find a correlation between positive student/instructor rapport and performance scores for instructors.

There was a direct relationship between perceived instructor-student rapport and affective learning, satisfaction, and stated motivation. This finding makes sense given that students who reported positive relationships with their instructors also reported greater learning, specifically affect toward the instructor and content. . . . Not only do these relational skills impact the ways in which students can improve their academic experience, but these relational skills exert an influence outside of the classroom as students seek mentoring, personal, and career advice from their instructors (pp. 30-31). When this personal connection is strong enough to continue outside the classroom, it indicates that friendships can develop from positive rapport. It would be a natural outgrowth for students to rate their instructors highly in such a situation on student perceptions of instructor effectiveness instruments.

In their article "Instructor-Student and Student-Student Rapport in the Classroom," Frisby and Martin reported their findings in a study designed to measure instructor-student and student-student rapport as predictors of student learning. In the study, which contained 232 participants, researchers found that both types of rapport and "classroom connectedness enhanced student participation" (Frisby & Martin, 2010, p. 146). However, they noted that of

the three, only instructor-student rapport “predicted participation, affective learning, and cognitive learning” (Frisby & Martin, 2010, p. 146).

Mertler (1999) investigated how students’ evaluations of their instructors affected their performance in future courses:

Teachers were also asked to describe ways which they had changed, or were considering changing, their teaching behaviors as a direct result of the feedback from their students. Nearly all of the teachers described how they were addressing weaknesses identified by their students or changes they had already made to certain behaviors. These behaviors included teacher empathy toward students, verbal and nonverbal communication skills, pre instructional planning, and variation in methods of instruction (p. 27).

These studies demonstrate a strong link between rapport and student perceptions of their instructors, both in the classroom and in future course, indicating that rapport has broad reach in a student’s college experience.

Anonymity and Rapport

Student perceptions are valuable (and a crucial element of this study), but it is important to consider the effect on professors as well. Kowai-Bell et al. (2012) sought to determine the effect of sites like Rate My Professor (RMP) on student and instructor motivation.

As hypothesized, students were affected by the comments they read about a professor, in the direction consistent with the valence of the comments (for affect toward taking the class, perceived control, expected grade, and likelihood of recommending the class to a friend). . . . Professors’ confidence that they would be able to teach well in the future was not affected but, as expected, mood, attitude toward teaching again, confidence that students liked them, and confidence that they would have rapport with future students

were affected (in accordance with the valence of the comments). The results of this study suggest that RMP reviews may have an impact on the affective and relational aspects of teaching more than professors' views of their general ability and competence to teach the subject matter. . . . The results of our research suggest that professors should not ignore informal online evaluations. Professors can control the teacher-mediated effects, and professors are well-positioned to make students aware of the potential effects of site content on student motivational factors. Furthermore, directly addressing concerns raised on RMP may keep students who did not read RMP from being subtly influenced by those who did (pp. 347-348)

Students utilizing the anonymity afforded by online services such as Rate My Professor are demonstrated to affect a professor's rapport building in future classes.

Imitation, Interaction, and Rapport

In his study, "The Effects of Reciprocal Imitation on Teacher-Student Relationships and Student Learning Outcomes," Zhou (2012) sought to determine if an instructor imitating student behavior in a one-on-one learning environment would experience changes in rapport as reported by the student:

In the reciprocal imitation condition, 57% of the students reported that they paid more attention to and focus on the interactions and received more attention from the teacher. When the teacher imitated students' behaviors in interactions, 66.67% of the students felt that the teacher was more friendly, patient, and willing to help. More significant differences ($p < .001$) were found in students' feelings of *coordination*, *effective learning*, and *ineffective learning* between the two conditions. When the teacher imitated the students' behaviors in interactions, 76.25% of the students felt that they had more

harmonious and comfortable cooperation with the teacher and received more immediate and helpful responses from the teacher. For learning performance, 72% of the students reported that the atmosphere of the interactions in the reciprocal imitation condition helped them learn the new words. In the reciprocal imitation condition they felt more confident, and had higher levels of satisfaction with and expectation in the learning process and their quiz scores as well. In the random behavior condition, 78% of the students reported less motivation, more tiredness in interactions, and had more confusion about what they had learned (p. 69).

The above study reinforces the idea that relational teaching fosters a stronger student/instructor connection and better learning. Of particular note was that imitation led to more students experiencing three key components of rapport—a friendly, patient instructor who was willing to help them.

Student Expectations

Bryant (2014) looked for the effect of student expectations of quality learning on actual learning. One component of his research involved class size.

This paper's analysis of one semester's learning results, done empirically using lecturer-assigned grade data in preference to collection of student perceptions, suggests that there is a failure of quality assurance across units in all three size ratings, but this failure of quality appears to be dire within large sized units and is seen in low merit attainment by large units. (pp. 36-37).

Bryant concluded,

This pattern does not imply student underperformance and hence student culpability. Rather, it implies factors that are outside the control of students and hence points at

institutional responsibility, which has been discussed in higher education literature in alignment models by Biggs and inevitably might concern assessment choices made prior to student arrivals into units. The implication is that an opportunity exists to investigate the quality of non-merit units with a view to enhancing their academic merit. This could be an empowering step towards firing student minds, thereby enhancing student learning, not to mention strengthening student retention with resulting reductions in student recruitment replacement costs for universities, as well as more effectively progressing students on their degree journeys. (p. 37).

Gabriel, Campbell, Wiebe, MacDonald, and McAuley (2012) wanted to determine student technology usage and classroom expectations for technology usage in their study, “The Role of Digital Technologies in Learning: Expectations of First Year University Students.” They found that:

The student respondents still referred to the brick and mortar buildings of the campus as a means of identifying being at school. Students' most frequent use of technology outside of school was email, Internet, social media, texting on cell phones, instant messaging, and talking on cell phones. The focus was on communication and socializing with others. The students' most frequent use of digital technologies in school were (in descending order) accessing information on the Internet, using email, word processing, math and science programs, texting on cell phones, and accessing electronic databases. In school, the students tended to use digital technologies to collect, select, and work with information. The differences between these two lists are significant. Some students felt that there was a place for all technologies in an educational form, while others wanted to

maintain a separate digital footprint for inside the classroom as well as outside the classroom digital technologies (p. 11).

Interestingly, they found a gender divide in the comfort of online work for courses.

The study does raise the issue of managing expectations at the university-both the expectations of students and those of the professors related to the effective use of technology within the university. When conceptual understandings are more fixed, the 'management' challenge is one of degree or balance: such as providing and utilizing well the Learning Management System and other elearning tools, yet not to the extent that the acknowledged ideal (at this particular institution) of face-to-face teaching is undermined. But the additional challenge is the shifting conceptual understanding of the classroom space. When students do not necessarily need to attend that space for some kinds of learning experiences, then this shifts the management question to what kinds of learning experiences are best conducted in the classroom space. This study revealed a high comfort level among students with the research site's online learning environment and a reasonably similar student comfort level with a number of the university's professors' uses of technology. Clearly this is a strength in the university's learning milieu and needs to be built upon and enhanced. However, it is apparent from this study that in a blended online and face-to-face environment, male students are more comfortable participating in the online learning component than female students. This finding points to the need and the opportunity to support and encourage female students preferentially in the digital learning environment. It is also apparent that not all professors are proactively using the university's elearning platform (Moodle). Again, this reality represents an opportunity to

provide additional support service to professors to facilitate their effective use of elearning opportunities. (p. 11).

Their final recommendation addressed the area of stagnated technology implementation because of instructor resistance.

We recommend that critical conversation address the deeper, conceptual changes to teaching practices as they relate to the historicity and social construction of knowledge. Instructor concerns regarding formal language and individual authorship are two examples of where technological implementation is stalled not because of knowledge or lack of training, but because of deliberate resistances to what digital technology might be changing. Even among the adopters, what is typically missing in digital technology professional development is the social construction of knowledge, and how the ways knowledge is shared shifts expectations for how knowledge should be utilized and valued. Greater uptake in digital technology should mean greater understanding of how the social dynamics of digital technology are already part of the scholarly mobilization, translation, and production of knowledge. Perhaps an emphasis on how to implement has overlooked important conversations of why and what is at stake. (p. 13).

In their study, “A Snapshot of Online Learners: e-Readiness, e-Satisfaction and Expectations,” Ilgaz & Gülbahar (2015) identified expectations of online learners.

Individuals who consider distance education as an alternative, indicated that their expectations were affected due to the accessibility and difference in methods employed in distance education. . . . Other aspects that affected the participants’ expectations are: distance education offering alternative types of content that provide effective learning, and the prestige of the institution where the individuals hope to be educated (p. 180).

They also identified a number of student perceptions related to e-satisfaction. They noted that obstacles to learning were more likely to affect satisfaction (p. 180).

Participants stated that technical problems mostly influenced their dissatisfaction during online lessons, in particular, the experiencing of technical problems during asynchronous lessons due to virtual classroom software issues. . . . Another problem affecting satisfaction was the evaluation system. Especially, participants want online exams instead of face-to-face exams, more active usage of the announcement system by instructors, and the provision of guidance about time management from instructors.

Participants stated that they became bored of lessons, which decreased their interest, where they were presented by instructors with a monotone delivery. They also stated their satisfaction about usage of the system wherever and whenever they wanted, instructors being experts in their respective areas and the variety of materials. . . .

Participants pointed out some negative aspects which they came across during the e-learning process that affected their satisfaction. They especially stated technical problems that originated from both themselves and the system, and delays experienced within the evaluation period as issues that negatively affected their satisfaction. In addition to these, it was determined that content offered in different formats and the academic experience of the instructors positively affected them (pp. 181-182).

Apart from traditional expectations explored in this current study, student expectations also involved class size, facilities, presentation, and variety.

Summary

These various studies indicate links between positive student/instructor rapport and enhanced student learning as well as student satisfaction. The purpose of this study was to

determine if perceived rapport causes student perceptions of instructor effectiveness to be higher. It has been demonstrated in several cited studies that rapport does affect student learning and evaluation scores, and targeted research could very well determine the likelihood of greater rapport affecting student perceptions of instructor effectiveness and course grade expectations.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Design

The current study was designed as non-experimental correlational research. According to Gall, Gall, & Borg (2007):

The principal advantage [of a correlational design] over causal-comparative or experimental design is that they enable researchers to analyze the relationships among a large number of variables in a single study. . . . Another advantage of correlational designs is that they provide information concerning the degree of the relationship between the variables being studied” (p. 336).

The non-experimental correlational research design allowed the researcher to determine if a correlation existed between student/instructor rapport and teacher evaluation scores, as measured by Professor-Student Rapport Scale and the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form. The population for this study was composed of students enrolled in freshman level general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

The independent variable was Student/Instructor rapport. “Rapport may enhance perceptions of an interpersonal relationship in the classroom. Specifically, rapport is operationalized using two dimensions: a personal connection and enjoyable interaction” (Gremier & Gwinner in Frisby & Martin, 2010, p. 147). The dependent variable was student perceptions of instructor effectiveness. “Since students are the only individuals who are constantly exposed to the various elements of a course (e.g., the instructor, a textbook, homework, course content, method of instruction, etc.), they are the most logical evaluators of the effectiveness of those course elements” (Mertler, 1999, p. 19).

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

H₀2: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

Participants and Setting

This researcher selected the population for this study from general education courses (comprising sections of English 091, English 098, English 101, English 102, Writing 115,

Speech 201, Math 091, Math 099, Psychology 101, and Psychology 111) at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States during the Summer 2015 quarter. This college defines the course outcomes for general education classes as:

- Career-ready knowledge and skills
- Attitudes and behaviors that promote success in the workplace and effective social interaction with diverse people
- Information literacy which includes recognizing the need for information and identifying, locating, evaluating, and effectively using that information
- Effective communication in various academic and career settings using technology as appropriate
- Critical thinking—including analysis, synthesis, and problem solving—which are applicable to the field of study, the workplace, and other life situations
- Broad-based knowledge which includes an understanding of cultural, ethical, social, political, and global issues (Baker College, 2015, p. 31).

In general, students are randomly assigned to sections. However, occasionally students request a particular instructor. Those individuals were not included in the survey since they likely had preconceived notions of the instructor. Students who had taken a course with their current professor prior to the course in which data were collected were not included in the population. These determinations were made via questions included on the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (see Appendix C for the instruments utilized). The number of participants in the study after exceptions was $n = 92$ for RQ1 and $n = 129$ for RQ2, which, according to Gall et al. (2007), exceeded the required minimum (66) for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level.

The data were gathered at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States. The college defines itself as a career college, with emphasis on certificates and degree programs of practical value in the workforce (Baker, 2015). Participants were students enrolled in a freshman level general education course.

Instrumentation

Professor-Student Rapport Scale

Although the Professor-Student Rapport Scale is a privately controlled instrument, this researcher requested and received permission from the primary author to use it in connection with this study (J. H. Wilson, personal communication, March 11, 2013).

History.

This study utilized data collected by means of the Professor-Student Rapport Scale designed and tested by Wilson, Ryan, and Pugh (2010). The instrument was constructed when the researchers determined that there were no effective instruments for measuring rapport in the classroom.

We sought to develop a scale for assessing professor–student rapport from the student’s perspective. . . . We also expected rapport to predict student outcomes beyond the prediction offered by immediacy [psychological availability], with student outcomes including attitudes toward the professor and course as well as student motivation, perceived amount learned, and self-reported course grades (Wilson et al., 2010, p. 246).

Development.

Items on the rapport scale were generated from comments provided by a preliminary group of college students. Fifty-one students (13 men, 38 women) provided input during an upper-level class held by one of the authors. To avoid influencing responses, the professor

simply defined rapport as a relationship of mutual trust and liking. Students were instructed to provide, in their own opinion, what constitutes professor–student rapport. They were asked to think of what establishes or creates rapport with professors and to think of how they would assess or measure rapport. Item generation yielded 44 items that were formatted with responses ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) (Wilson et al., 2010, pp. 247-248). The Professor-Student Rapport Scale has been used in numerous studies (e.g., Estep & Roberts, 2013; Rogers, 2015; Ryan, Wilson, & Pugh, 2011; Wilson & Ryan, 2013; Wilson et al., 2010).

Through statistical analysis of student answers, researchers determined that a correlation exists between professor-student rapport and student outcomes, and that the instrument being tested effectively measured those results. “The test–retest interval was 22 days. The results indicated high test–retest correlations between the rapport scale at time 1 and the rapport scale at time 2 ($r = .72, p < .001$). . . . The rapport scale displayed high internal consistency as evidenced by a strong Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .89$)” (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 138).

Correlations between the rapport scale and the conceptually similar social-support scale and WAI [Working Alliance Inventory] were significant and in the expected direction, thus suggesting adequate convergent validity. The correlations between the rapport scale and the social support scale ($r = .48, p < .001$) and between the rapport scale and the WAI ($r = .60, p < .001$) were both strong. Cronbach’s alphas for the social support scale (12 items) and the WAI (12 items) were .85 and .84, respectively (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 138).

IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form

History.

This study utilized data collected by means of the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form, created by IDEA Education (2002). The initial planning for this instrument began in the late 1960s, and IDEA produced the first version in 1975.

Development.

The IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form is an instrument for students to evaluate the instructor and course using a Likert scale. Test validity ranges from .63 to .92, and reliability ranges from .84 to .94 (Hoyt & Lee, 2002, p. 44). The IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form has been used in numerous studies (e.g., Benton et al., 2013; Glover, 2012; Jacksonville State University, 2010).

See Appendix C for instruments.

Procedures

In the summer of 2015, the college administered the Professor-Student Rapport Scale in weeks 6 and 7, and the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form in week 9 (the final week of the term) to each class in the study. The instruments utilized a Likert 1-5 scale. Data were collected at separate times and with a two to three week break in between. The evaluations were anonymous, but each class was tracked individually. Signed consent forms for all participants in the study were collected before administering each instrument. See Appendix B for consent forms.

This study falls under the guidelines for exempt studies under Liberty University's Institutional Review Board's guidelines. In order to receive approval, this researcher included the purpose of the study, a detailed description of the participants and selection process, and data collection method, along with the instruments used, data analysis method, and a description of risks. See Appendix D for IRB approval forms.

The research fundamental to this study was collected over the course of one academic quarter. During the nine weeks of classes of Summer of 2015, the college completed all data gathering as it pertains to the study.

Data Collection

The procedures for collecting data were as follows:

1. In the first week of the term, the dean of general education sent an email to all instructors whose classes would be used for the study requesting date and time preferences for data collection. See Appendix A for text.
2. During the sixth and seventh weeks of the term, a representative of the college visited each class to administer the Professor-Student Rapport Scale. This representative was trained in correct data collection procedures by means of CITI training in Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research. The representative:
 - a. Read Introduction Script for the Professor-Student Rapport Scale. See Appendix A for text.
 - b. Distributed consent form for the Professor-Student Rapport Scale and contact information to participating students. See Appendix B for the consent form.
 - c. Collected consent forms.
 - d. Distributed Professor-Student Rapport Scale to participating students. See Appendix C for the scale.
 - e. Collected Professor-Student Rapport Scale and demographic survey.
3. During the ninth (final) week of the term, a representative of the college visited each class to administer the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form:

- a. Read Introduction Script for the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form. See Appendix A for text.
- b. Distributed consent form for the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form and contact information to participating students. See Appendix B for consent form.
- c. Collected consent forms.
- d. Distributed IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form to participating students. See Appendix C for short form.
- e. Collected IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form and demographic survey.

Data Analysis

This researcher used a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) to determine if a significant statistical correlation existed between student/instructor rapport and teacher evaluation scores. "Product-moment correlation is the most widely used bivariate correlation technique because most educational measures yield continuous scores and because r has a small standard error" (Gall et al., 2007, p. 347). For behavioral sciences, Pearson correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50 regardless of sign are by convention considered small, medium, and large indices of effect size, respectively (Cohen, 1988; Green & Salkind, 2003). The data were anonymous, so the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was run as one group of data.

This researcher used a Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's r_s) to determine if a significant statistical correlation existed between student/instructor rapport and expected course grades. "The Spearman's rank-order correlation is the nonparametric version of

the Pearson product-moment correlation. Spearman's correlation coefficient...measures the strength of association between two ranked variables” (Laerd, 2013, para. 2). For behavioral sciences, Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50 regardless of sign are by convention considered small, medium, and large indices of effect size, respectively (Cohen, 1988; Green & Salkind, 2003). The data were anonymous, so the Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficient was run as one group of data.

Null Hypothesis 1

The population for RQ1 was $N=129$, which, according to Gall et al. (2007), exceeded the required minimum (66) for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level. This researcher used a scatter plot (Figure 1) to determine whether the data used in Null Hypothesis 1 violated assumptions of outliers, linearity, and bivariate normality. By convention, outliers are considered values ± 3.29 standard deviations from the mean (Howell, 2011). None of the values are outliers, as demonstrated in Figure 1. Using the same scatterplot, this researcher confirmed the assumption of linearity, that the data generally follow the best fit line. If they were not linearly related, the best fit line would be a curve (Howell, 2011; Gall et al., 2007). Finally, this researcher confirmed the assumption of bivariate normality. By examining the data points on the scatterplot, this researcher was able to determine that the data are elliptically clustered, which satisfies the bivariate normality assumption (Gall et al., 2007).

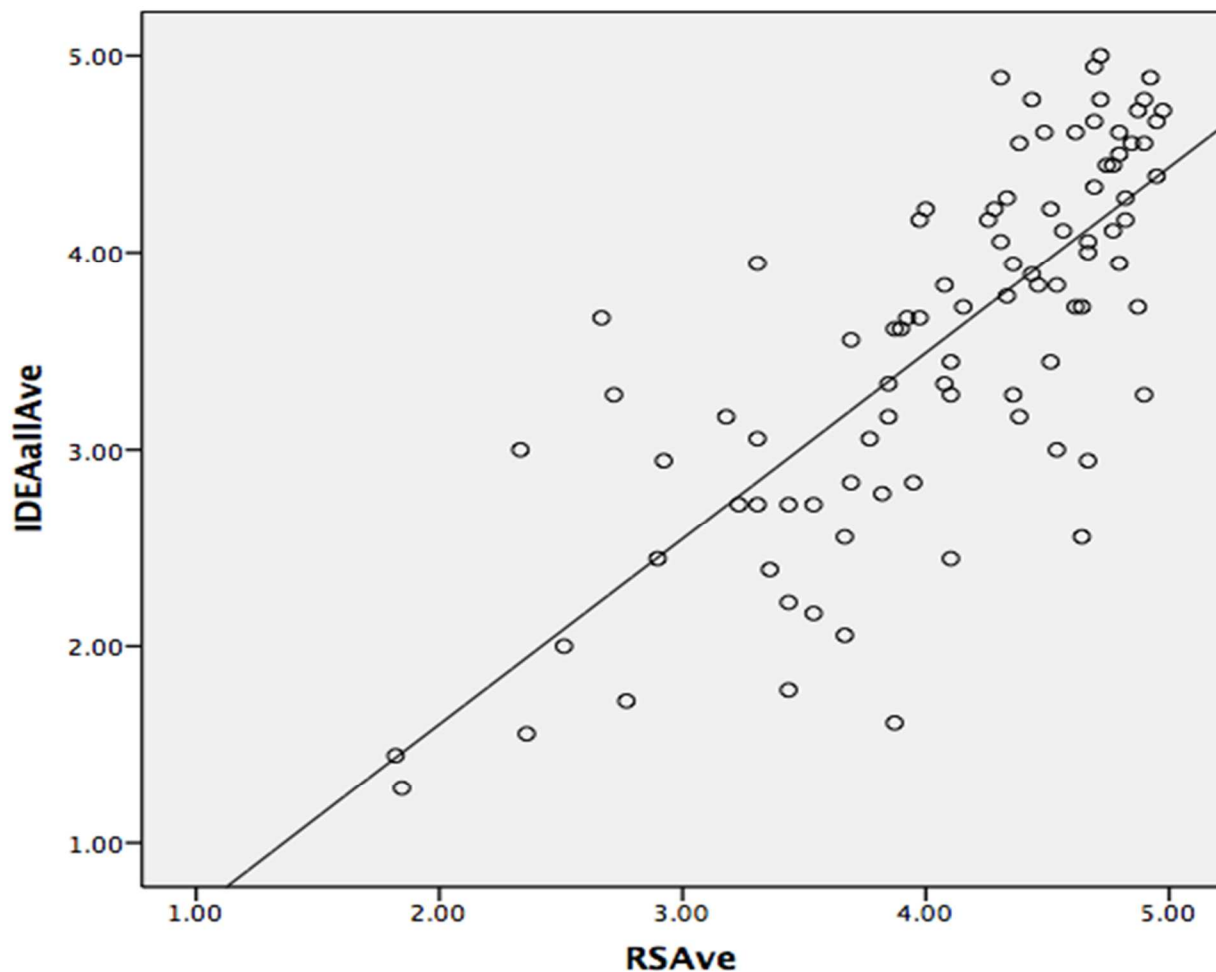


Figure 1. Professor-Student Rapport Scale/IDEA Short Form Assumptions Scatterplot.

Null Hypothesis 2

The population for RQ2 was $N = 92$, which, according to Gall et al. (2007), exceeded the required minimum (66) for a medium effect size with statistical power of .7 at the .05 alpha level (p. 145).

In the case of Null Hypothesis 2, the Grade Expectations data points are ordinal, and the distribution of student expected grade revealed a departure from normality as demonstrated in Figure 2. A Shapiro-Wilks test for Normality ($W=.779$, $p < .001$) was significant. “The Shapiro-Wilks test for normality is designed to detect all departures from normality. The test rejects the

hypothesis of normality when the p-value is less than or equal to 0.05” (Howell, 2011, p. 201). Therefore, the Spearman’s rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman’s r_s) was calculated to address the relationship between professor-student rapport and student expected course grade.

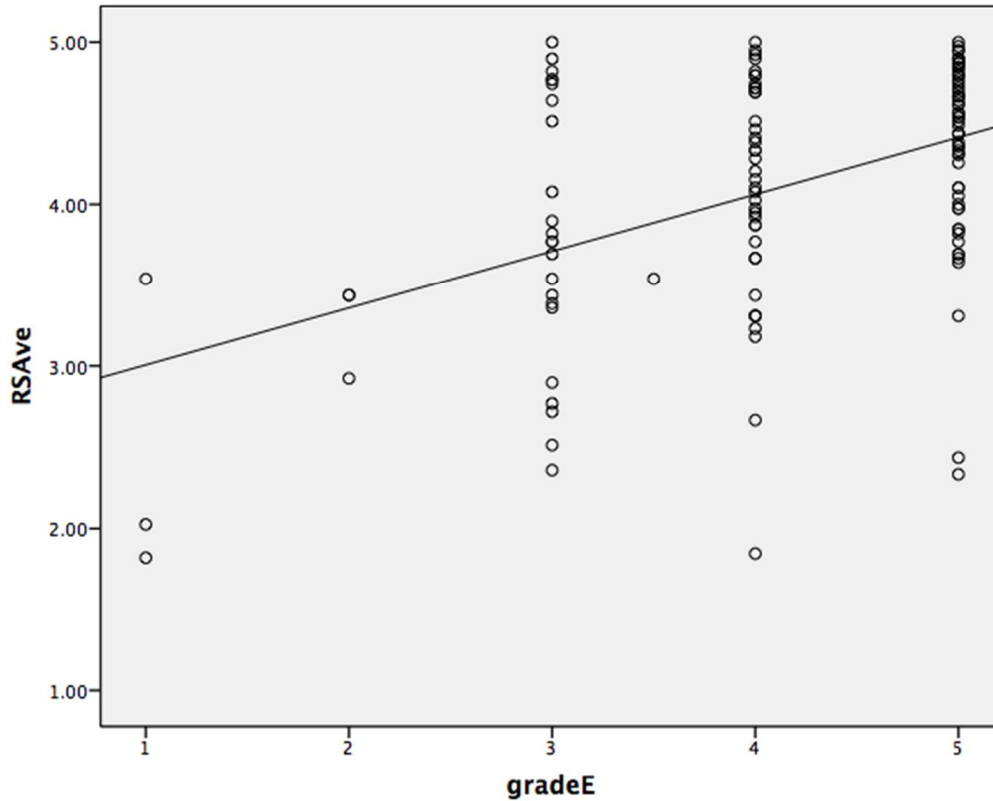


Figure 2. Professor-Student Rapport Scale/Grade Expectations Assumptions Scatterplot.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The data were collected and analyzed as a response to the stated problem. As it stands, no research has been found in the literature that has examined this topic to determine the relationship of rapport on student perceptions of instructor effectiveness and student course grade expectations in students enrolled in freshman general education courses. The purpose of the data collection and analysis was to determine if perceived rapport positively affects student perceptions of instructor effectiveness in freshman general education classes and/or their expected overall grade in the course.

Research Questions

RQ1: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States?

RQ2: Is there a relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States?

Null Hypotheses

H₀1: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA

Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

H₀₂: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants

One hundred sixty-five students participated in this study. Of the 165 participants, 36 participants failed to fully complete either of the study instruments. An additional 39 participants did not complete both study instruments. The omission of these participants resulted in the inclusion of 92 participants in the data analysis of RQ1, representing a 56% completion rate, and 129 participants in the analysis of RQ2 for a 78% completion rate.

Instruments

Professor-Student Rapport Scale.

An exploratory principle component analysis was performed on the original 44 items of the Professor-Student Rapport Scale to establish content validity. Based on this analysis and the a priori hypothesis that the instrument was unidimensional, a single factor was rotated using a Varimax rotation procedure. The rotated solution yielded one interpretable factor, the loading of which confirmed the instrument design. Of the 44 original items, 39 reached a minimum loading value of .50. The measured Cronbach's reliability coefficient for the 39 Professor-Student Rapport Scale items in this study was .97. George and Mallery (2003) suggested the following scale for interpreting Cronbach's reliability coefficient for researcher-developed assessments: “ >

.9 – Excellent, > .8 – Good, > .7 – Acceptable, > .6 – Questionable, > .5 – Poor, and < .5 – Unacceptable” (p. 231). Thus, coefficient of reliability for the administration of the assessment in this study is considered excellent. These findings are consistent with published data regarding the Professor-Student Rapport Scale, as “the rapport scale displayed high internal consistency as evidenced by a strong Cronbach’s alpha ($\alpha = .89$)” (Ryan et al., 2011, p. 138).

IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form.

A confirmatory factor analysis was conducted on the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form instrument following administration. Based on analysis of the IDEA instrument and the a priori hypothesis that the instrument was two-dimensional, two factors were rotated using a Varimax rotation procedure. The rotated solution yielded two interpretable factors, the loading of which confirmed the instrument design. The measured Cronbach’s Alpha for this administration was .95. These findings are consistent with published data regarding the IDEA Student Ratings of Instructor Short Form. Test validity ranges from .63 to .92, and reliability ranges from .84 to .94 (Hoyt & Lee, 2002).

Results

Correlational coefficients were computed for the mean Professor-Student Rapport Scale score with the mean IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form score, and the mean Professor-Student Rapport Scale score with student-reported expected course grade. Mean scores were used rather than sum totals due to the varying number of items of each scale. In order to conservatively control for type 1 error, a p value of less than .05 was required for significance. Means and standard deviations among the study variables are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics

Variable	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Professor-Student Rapport	129	4.11	.74
2. IDEA	92	3.56	.93
3. Expected Grade	129	4.08	1.13

Null Hypothesis One

H₀1: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

The analyses presented in Table 2 suggest that the null hypothesis may be rejected. There is a statistically significant positive correlation between Professor-Student Rapport and Instructor Evaluation ($n = 92$, $r = .76$, $p < .01$). The Pearson correlation coefficient of ($r = .76$) represent a large effect size. The coefficient of determination (r^2) indicates that nearly 58% of the variance in instructor evaluation score is accounted for by its linear relationship with student reported instructor rapport. For behavioral sciences, Pearson correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50 regardless of sign are by convention considered small, medium, and large indices of effect size, respectively (Cohen, 1988; Green & Salkind, 2003).

Table 2

Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient results

		IDEA	P-S
IDEA	Pearson Correlation	1	.762**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
P-S	Pearson Correlation	.762**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Null Hypothesis Two

H₀2: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

The analyses presented in Table 3 suggest that the null hypothesis may be rejected. The Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient revealed a statistically significant relationship between professor-student rapport and student expected course grade ($r_s^2 [127] = .35, p < .001$) (see Table 3). The effect size of this relationship was moderate (Cohen, 1988; Green & Salkind, 2003). The coefficient of determination (r_s^2) indicates that more than 12% of the variance in student expected grade is accounted for by its linear relationship with student reported instructor rapport.

Table 3

Spearman's Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient Results

			gradeE	P-S Rapport
Spearman's r_s	Grade Expectations	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.345**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	Professor-Student Rapport	N	127	92
		Correlation Coefficient	.345**	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	92	92

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Summary

This chapter provided a report of the statistical study findings including a detailed report of measures and analyses utilized in this study. The data were analyzed using SPSS to perform the correlational analyses. The results indicated that both null hypotheses were rejected indicating a significant positive relationship exists among student/professor rapport, student/instructor evaluation, and student expected grades. Further explanation of these findings is discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this quantitative, non-experimental correlational research study was to determine if perceived rapport positively affects student perceptions of instructor effectiveness in freshman general education classes and/or their expected overall grade in the course.

H₀1: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, as measured by the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form (IDEA Education, 2002), in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis. This is in keeping with prior research findings (Barth, 2008; Benton et al., 2013; Bryant, 2014; Chickering, 2006; Delucchi, 2000; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Frisby & Martin, 2010; Giles, 2011; Gruber et al., 2010; Heckert et al., 2006; Kowai-Bell et al., 2012; Kozub, 2010; Legg & Wilson, 2009; Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2012; Starcher, 2011; Zhou, 2012). Delucchi (2000) found:

Instructor likability, while exerting an appreciable negative effect on perceived learning, has a large positive effect on overall ratings of teaching ability. As a predictor of overall ratings, the magnitude of the likability effect far exceeds that for effort and perceptions of learning (pp. 227-228).

The current study focused on a similar aspect of this relationship and confirmed a positive relationship between student/instructor rapport and student perceptions of teacher effectiveness.

Barth (2008) examined five factors of influence on student evaluation scores: quality of instruction, course rigor, level of interest, grades, and helpfulness.

[Instructor helpfulness] was highly correlated with questions...concerning the instructor's availability and willingness to provide outside help to the students. These questions also highly correlated with [quality of instruction], which measured the overall course quality. . . . There was also a relatively high loading with...the degree to which the instructor encourages class participation and questions. [Instructor helpfulness] seemed to measure some aspect of the instructor's personality, approachability, or openness with the students, which I labeled as *instructor helpfulness* (p. 44).

H₀2: There is no relationship between student/instructor rapport, as measured by the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson et al., 2010), and students' expectations of their overall course grade in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes Region of the United States.

As discussed in Chapter Four, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis. This is in keeping with prior research findings (Awang & Ismail, 2010; Bates & Kaye, 2014; Chan et al., 2014; Delucchi, 2000; Estep & Roberts, 2013; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Garces-Ozanne & Sullivan, 2014; Ilgaz & Gülbahar, 2015). Estep & Roberts (2013) concluded that “when students perceive they have a good relationship with their instructor they might have greater expectancy for success and value the course more, which could lead to greater engagement” (p. 189). This research study built upon the work of Estep & Roberts by finding a specific area where student/instructor rapport affected expectations—in the course grade.

Conclusions

When presented with the knowledge that rapport affects learning, instructors could easily dismiss these findings as nothing new. However, the precise details of how it affects learning are harder to determine. To this end, the researcher designed this study to focus on rapport's effect

on two areas: student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, and student course grade expectations. The study used a highly focused participation group—students in freshman general education courses at a career college in the Great Lakes region of the United States—and eliminated those who either requested their instructor or had been in a class with the instructor previously. The purpose behind this decision was to eliminate as many external variables as possible and to attain the most accurate results, reflecting just the effects of rapport in the moment. The study determined that rapport does affect both student perceptions of teacher effectiveness and student expectations of overall course grade.

The researcher utilized two instruments to collect this data, the Professor-Student Rapport Scale and the IDEA Student Ratings of Instructor Short Form. The data were analyzed using a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's r) to determine if a relationship existed between student/instructor rapport and student perceptions of teacher effectiveness, and using a Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficient (Spearman's r_s) to determine if a relationship existed between student instructor rapport and student course grade expectations. Both statistical measures demonstrated a positive correlation.

In regards to the relationship between student/instructor rapport and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness, the results demonstrated a large effect size at $r(90) = .76$. For behavioral sciences, Pearson correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50 regardless of sign are by convention considered small, medium, and large indices of effect size, respectively (Cohen, 1988; Green & Salkind, 2003). While correlation does not indicate causation, the results confirm a strong linear relationship between the two—when student/instructor rapport is high, students are very likely to view their instructors as effective ($r[90] = .76, p < .001$).

Rapport's effect on student perceptions of teacher effectiveness is determined through evaluation scores, and other researchers have done similar studies, albeit with instruments that measured slightly different things than the Professor-Student Rapport Scale and the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form. For example, Barth (2008) identified "helpfulness" as a major determiner of students' perceptions of instruction, and defined the term as "some aspect of the instructor's personality, approachability, or openness with the students" (p. 44). This definition works well for the purpose of this project as well and fits the questions asked of participants in the Professor-Student Rapport Scale.

In regards to the relationship between student/instructor rapport and student course grade expectations, the results demonstrated a medium effect size $r_s(127) = .35$. For behavioral sciences, Spearman's rank-order correlation coefficients of .10, .30, and .50 regardless of sign are by convention considered small, medium, and large indices of effect size, respectively (Cohen, 1988; Green & Salkind, 2003). The results are statistically significant, but the relationship is not particularly strong.

Implications

The results of this study demonstrate both a relationship between student/instructor rapport and student perceptions of teacher effectiveness and student/instructor rapport and student course grade expectations. Confirming these connections supports J.B. Rotter's Social Learning Theory, which suggests that "to understand behavior, one must take both the individual (i.e., his or her life history of learning and experiences) and the environment (i.e., those stimuli that the person is aware of and responding to) into account" (Mearns, 2009, para. 8).

Further, the study builds on the findings of Barth (2008), Bergström (2010), Chan et al. (2014), Chickering (2006), Delucchi (2000), Frisby et al., (2014), and Frisby & Myers (2008)—

that rapport is an important factor in the classroom. Researchers continue to search for means of motivating students (Del Guercio, 2013; Drouin & Vartanian, 2009; Freiberg & Lamb, 2009) and increasing student ownership of their learning (Chan et al., 2014; Estepp & Roberts, 2013; Glover, 2012) while observing that rapport positively affects both engagement (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Gruber et al., 2010), participation (Frisby et al., 2014; Frisby & Myers, 2008) and expectations (Awang & Ismail, 2010; Bryant, 2014; Gabriel et al., 2012; Garces-Ozanne & Sullivan, 2014). Additionally, researchers have linked rapport to a sense of belonging (O'Toole & Essex, 2012; Starcher, 2011) and persistence (Greenfield, 2011; O'Neill & Thomson, 2013). The body of evidence supporting the importance of rapport in the classroom is extensive, and this study confirms two other components in which student/instructor rapport is important— student perceptions of instructor effectiveness and a student's expected course grade. An increase in each has been shown to improve learning (Awang & Ismail, 2010; Chan et al., 2014; Estepp & Roberts, 2013; Frisby & Myers, 2008; Garces-Ozanne & Sullivan, 2014).

Limitations

This study was conducted with several limitations and with the understanding that while these limitations could control for certain variables, they also impacted the study design. The scope of the study was limited to freshman general education courses. This was done to reduce the effect of college experience specifically on students' course grade expectations, but it limited the participant pool. However, the population was sufficient for the power probability of finding a medium effect size, which, according to Gall et al. (2007), exceeded the required minimum of 66 participants.

The research was limited to one academic institution for the purpose of controlling for independent variables that might influence the study outcomes, such as length of course and

institutional policies. While general education courses often share commonalities, each institution has different methodologies, grading requirements, and content. The institution where the study was conducted utilized a quarter schedule instead of semesters, which would have skewed findings for both null hypotheses. Collecting data at the same point in each class on different schedules would have left certain participants with a clearer idea of their overall course grade, whereas others would still have several additional weeks to go. Also, a course with fewer weeks in the schedule (and a different credit system) would have fewer assignments, which would have affected a student's reckoning of their overall course grade.

Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings of this study in regards to Null Hypothesis 1, this researcher has identified several areas of potential for future studies.

1. Measure technology usage as an element of the relationship between student/instructor rapport and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness. Several studies (Bates & Kaye, 2014; Gabriel et al., 2012; Greenfield, 2011; Legg & Wilson, 2009) have tested the effect of technology-driven rapport building, but have not measured its effect on student perceptions of instructor effectiveness.
2. Measure the relationship between student/instructor rapport and student perceptions of instructor effectiveness for core major courses as a point of comparison between this study which focused on freshman general education classes.
3. Measure the relationship between student/instructor rapport and expected course grade for all other general education classes as a point of comparison with this study, which focused on freshman general education classes. With a large effect size of $r(90) = .76$, it would be instructional to repeat this study to determine whether participants with more

completed coursework have different perceptions of instructor effectiveness based on prior experiences in the classroom.

4. Compare the findings of this study to one conducted exclusively with online classes. The effects of rapport in online settings has been the subject of several studies (Benton et al., 2013; Drouin & Vartanian, 2010; Ilgaz & Gülbahar, 2015; Malouff & Hall, 2012; Murphy & Rodriguez-Manzanares, 2012; Pittenger & Doering, 2010), but none have measured the effect of student/instructor rapport in an online setting on student perceptions of instructor effectiveness.
5. Run this study again and collect demographic data to compare results across age, race, socio-economic, and gender lines, as well as declared major and parental education level.
6. Run this study again and collect demographic data to compare results across age, race, socio-economic, and gender lines for the instructors of courses selected for inclusion.

Based on the findings of this study in regards to Null Hypothesis 2, this researcher has identified several areas of potential for future studies.

1. Measure the relationship between student/instructor rapport and expected course grade for core major courses as a point of comparison with this study, which focused on freshman general education classes. With a medium effect size of $r_s(127) = .35$, it would be instructional to see if core subject matter courses in a student's choice of major—which might cause a student to be more invested in a better overall course grade—might have a different result.
2. Measure the relationship between student/instructor rapport and expected course grade for all other general education classes as a point of comparison with this study, which focused on freshman general education classes. With a medium effect size of $r_s(127) =$

.35, it would be insightful to repeat this study to determine whether participants with more completed coursework have different expectations of their overall course grade based on prior experiences in the classroom.

3. Run this study again and collect demographic data to compare results across age, race, and gender lines, not just for student participants, but also for the instructors of courses selected for inclusion.
4. Design a study to determine what variables besides student/instructor rapport have a greater effect on student course grade expectations.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Scripts and Contact Information

Recruitment Script to be Sent to Faculty via Email at the Beginning of the Term

Dear [*insert name*],

My name is Erin Yezbick, and I am a General Education faculty member here at Baker College. I obtained your contact information from Dr. Thayer, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my research study about the relationship between student/instructor rapport and students' perceptions of teacher effectiveness. You're eligible to be in this study because you are teaching at least one section of a freshman level general education course.

If you decide to participate in this study, I will need about 30-45 minutes broken into two chunks over the course of the term—once in week seven or eight (at your discretion), and once in week ten. I will use the information as part of my dissertation research. I have attached the email I will send students in your class (should you choose to participate) as well as the rapport scale and teacher evaluation forms I'll be using, and I would be happy to share my findings if you are interested.

Remember, this is completely voluntary. You can choose to be in the study or not. If you'd like to participate or have any questions about the study, please email or contact me at eyezbi02@baker.edu, or 810-686-5955.

Thank you very much,

Erin Yezbick

(3) Attachments

Introduction Script when Administering Professor-Student Rapport Scale

Introduction Script when Administering Professor-Student Rapport Scale

[Remarks by way of introduction]

“Hello, my name is _____. I am a faculty member in the General Education department here at Baker College of Flint.

I am studying the correlation between student and instructor rapport and the effect it has on evaluation scores students give their instructors. At this time I would like to give you a survey entitled the Professor-Student Rapport Scale that will ask a series of questions related to your perceptions of your instructor.

The information you share with me will be useful in determining how important the relationship is between instructors and their students in terms of the students’ perception of instructor effectiveness

This survey will take about ten minutes of your time.

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality All answers will be anonymous; it is neither required nor expected that you include your name on the survey. There are no other expected risks of participation.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty applied by your instructor or Baker College. You can, of course, decline to complete the survey as well as to stop participating at any time, without any penalty applied by your instructor or Baker College.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact Dr. Mary Ann Thayer (Baker College Dean of General Education) at any time.

I am handing out a consent form to participate in this research as well as a sheet with contact information. I will collect the consent form before you complete the survey so that your responses will remain anonymous.

[Hand out consent form and contact information sheet. Read consent form aloud. Allow one minute. Collect completed consent forms.]

While this survey is completely anonymous, it is important that the study includes only those students who complete both this survey and the evaluation at the end of the term. To that end, please choose a unique identifier that you will put at the top of the survey. It can be a number or a name (your child’s name or your birthday), but it should be significant just to you. It **MUST BE THE SAME** for both surveys. If it will help you to remember what you’ve chosen, you can write it on the contact information and store it in a safe place.

I am handing out the Professor Student Rapport Scale. Please fill this out.

[Hand out scale]

Please write your unique identifier in the blank at the top labeled “unique identifier.”

[Read instructions at the top of the scale page. Check at ten minutes to see if all students are done—allow more time in one minute increments]

[Collect scale]

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Introduction Script when Administering IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form

[Remarks by way of introduction]

“Hello, my name is _____. I am a faculty member in the General Education department here at Baker College of Flint.

I am studying the correlation between student and instructor rapport and the effect it has on evaluation scores students give their instructors. At this time I would like to give you a survey entitled the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form that will ask a series of questions related to your perceptions of your instructor.

The information you share with me will be useful in determining how important the relationship is between instructors and their students in terms of the students’ perception of instructor effectiveness

This survey will take about ten minutes of your time.

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. All answers will be anonymous; it is neither required nor expected that you include your name on the survey. There are no other expected risks of participation.

Participation is voluntary. If you decide not to participate, there will be no penalty applied by your instructor or Baker College. You can, of course, decline to complete the survey as well as to stop participating at any time, without any penalty applied by your instructor or Baker College.

If you have any additional questions concerning this research or your participation in it, please feel free to contact Dr. Mary Ann Thayer (Baker College Dean of General Education) at any time.

I am handing out a consent form to participate in this research as well as a sheet with contact information. I will collect the consent form before you complete the survey so that your responses will remain anonymous.

[Hand out consent form and contact information sheet. Read consent form aloud. Allow one minute. Collect completed consent forms.]

While this survey is completely anonymous, it is important that the study includes only those students who complete both this survey and the evaluation at the end of the term. To that end, please choose a unique identifier that you will put at the top of the survey. It can be a number or a name (your child’s name or your birthday), but it should be significant just to you. It **MUST BE THE SAME** for both surveys. If it will help you to remember what you’ve chosen, you can write it on the contact information and store it in a safe place.

I am handing out the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form. Please fill this out.

[Hand out scale]

Please write your unique identifier in the blank at the top labeled “unique identifier.”

[Read instructions at the top of the scale page. Check at ten minutes to see if all students are done—allow more time in one minute increments]

[Collect scale]

Thank you for your participation in this study.

Contact Information

This information will be distributed with the Professor Student Rapport Scale and IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form.

Contact Information

Contact Information

The supervisor overseeing this research project at Baker College is:
Dr. Mary Ann Thayer
Dean, General Education
Baker College of Flint
1050 W. Bristol Rd.
Flint, MI 48507
Phone: 810-766-2057
Email: mthaye01@baker.edu

Appendix B: Consent Forms

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study (to be handed out with the Professor-Student Rapport Scale)

“THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT/INSTRUCTOR RAPPORT, STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR EFFECTIVENESS, AND COURSE GRADE EXPECTATIONS”

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Baker College. The purpose of this research is to determine the effect relationships in the classroom have on students' perception of their instructor's effectiveness.

Your participation will involve completing the Professor-Student Rapport Scale.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. This research may help us to understand how students perceive their instructors and what affects those perceptions.

Protection of confidentiality

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. All answers will be anonymous; it is neither required nor expected that you include your name on the evaluation. This signed consent form will be collected separately from your completed survey.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise or if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Mary Ann Thayer, dean of General Education, at 810-766-2057.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study (to be handed out with the IDEA Student
Ratings of Instruction Short Form)

“THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENT/INSTRUCTOR RAPPORT, STUDENT
PERCEPTIONS OF INSTRUCTOR EFFECTIVENESS, AND COURSE GRADE
EXPECTATIONS”

Description of the research and your participation

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Baker College. The purpose of this research is to determine the effect relationships in the classroom have on students' perception of their instructor's effectiveness.

Your participation will involve completing the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form.

Risks and discomforts

There are no known risks associated with this research.

Potential benefits

There are no known benefits to you that would result from your participation in this research. This research may help us to understand how students perceive their instructors and what affects those perceptions.

Protection of confidentiality

There is no risk of a breach of confidentiality. All answers will be anonymous; it is neither required nor expected that you include your name on the evaluation. This signed consent form will be collected separately from your completed evaluation.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise or if you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact Dr. Mary Ann Thayer, dean of General Education at Baker College of Flint, at 810-766-2057.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Instruments and Permissions

Professor-Student Rapport Scale

For each of the questions below, circle the response that best characterizes how you feel about the statement, where: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree, 4 = Agree, and 5 = Strongly Agree. Please answer every question.

Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My professor and I get along.	1	2	3	4	5
I e-mail my professor often.	1	2	3	4	5
I visit my professor during his or her office hours.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor replies to my e-mails often.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is not helpful.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is inconsiderate.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is understanding.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is thoughtful.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is disrespectful.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel uncomfortable letting my professor know I need help.	1	2	3	4	5
I understand what my professor expects of me.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is aware of the amount of effort I am putting into this class.	1	2	3	4	5
I respect my professor.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is a mentor to me.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I do not belong in my professor's class.	1	2	3	4	5

My professor encourages questions and comments from students.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is not friendly.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is approachable.	1	2	3	4	5
I dislike my professor's class.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor makes class enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable discussing my personal life with my professor.	1	2	3	4	5
I want to take other classes taught by my professor.	1	2	3	4	5
Question	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My professor's body language says, "Don't bother me."	1	2	3	4	5
My professor maintains eye contact with me.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor feels comfortable asking the class to provide examples.	1	2	3	4	5
I really like to come to class.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor discourages class discussions.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor and I communicate well.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor lectures the entire time we are in class, never stopping to ask questions.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is eager to help students.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is compassionate.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor encourages me to succeed.	1	2	3	4	5

My professor knows me by name.	1	2	3	4	5
I feel I have learned much less from this professor compared to others I have had in the past.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is confident.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor enjoys his or her job.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor cares about students.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is enthusiastic.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is a role model.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor wants to make a difference.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is receptive.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is reliable.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor is unfair.	1	2	3	4	5
My professor will spend extra time going over a concept if students need it.	1	2	3	4	5
What do you expect your final course grade to be?	A	B	C	D	F
Miscellaneous					
Are you 18 or older?	YES	NO			
Have you had this instructor before?	YES	NO			
Did you request this instructor?	YES	NO			

Permission for Publication of Professor-Student Rapport Scale

interest in professor-student rapport scale article in 2010 Teaching of Psychology 



Janie H Wilson <jhwilson@georgiasouthern.edu>

Thu 4:51 PM



Of course! Please do -- Research should be shared!



Yezbick, Erin

Thu 4:47 PM

Janie H Wilson <jhwilson@georgiasouthern.edu> 



Sent Items

Dr. Wilson,

A couple years ago I sent an email asking for permission to use your Professor-Student Rapport Scale for my dissertation. First of all, thank you for allowing me to do so. It worked perfectly for my purposes with phenomenal validity (.97). That was a HUGE load off going forward!

I'm writing again to ask for your permission to publish it in my final dissertation copy. If that is unacceptable, do you have a website I could link to instead?

Thanks again,
Erin Yezbick

IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short Form

For the purpose of copyright compliance, a link the the IDEA Student Ratings of Instruction Short form is provided below.

http://ideaedu.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Student-Ratings_ShortForm.pdf

Appendix D: Institutional Review Board Approvals

Liberty University Institutional Review Board Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 9, 2016

Erin Lewis Yezbick

IRB Application 2422: The Correlation between Student/Instructor Rapport, Student Perceptions of Instructor Effectiveness, and Course Grade Expectations

Dear Erin,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study does not classify as human subjects research. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your IRB application.

Your study does not classify as human subjects research because it will not involve the collection of identifiable, private information.

Please note that this decision only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued non-human subjects research status. You may report these changes by submitting a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Application number.

If you have any questions about this determination or need assistance in identifying whether possible changes to your protocol would change your application's status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

LIBERTY
UNIVERSITY
Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1877

Baker College Institutional Review Board Approval



Baker College System Headquarters
 1101 West 27th Street
 Muskegon, Michigan 49441
 Telephone (231) 756-6200
 Fax (231) 756-6270
 Website: www.baker.edu

To: Erin Yeubick

From: Institutional Review Board

Date: February 1, 2016

Re: The Correlation Between Student / Instructor Rapport, Student Perceptions of Instructor Effectiveness, and Course Grad Expectations

Protocol ID # 16-1

Please refer to this Protocol ID-number in all communications about this project with the IRB.

Thank you for your modification of the above named protocol. Based on your documented revision and submission of the consent form utilized by the original researcher and that no archived student data will need to be obtained, the project has been identified as exempt under guidelines provided by rule of Health and Human Services. Please note that it is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that data is collected and maintained in a manner that meets the established criteria. No changes in procedure or documentation should be made without consultation with the IRB. Changes to procedures may require the project to be resubmitted under a different category.

This project has been approved in its current form for one year (expires on 2-1-2017). If the project extends beyond this date, a request for modification must be submitted no later than 30 days prior to the above date. Please remember that any changes to the protocol will require the submission of a revised protocol to the IRB. Any adverse reaction by a research subject is to be reported immediately to the Chair of the IRB at 510-766-2148 or via e-mail at irb@baker.edu.

Questions concerning the IRB decision or any concerns may be directed to the IRB Chair, through Dr. Denise Blannan, System Vice President for Academic.