Predicting Faculty-Student Interaction: An Analysis of New Student Expectations

Cassandra Bradley, Kelly A. Kish, Aaron M. Krudwig, Tiana Williams, and Ontario S. Wooden

Over fourteen thousand five hundred new undergraduate students from a variety of four-year colleges and universities completed the College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) (Kuh & Pace, 1998) between 1998 and 2000. Findings indicate that background characteristics, institutional characteristics, and students' expectations for college explain expected levels of faculty-student interaction. Implications for theory and practice are presented.

Prior to beginning college, students come with expectations of themselves, the institution, and their instructors. When asked about their expectations, students describe their expected living environments, levels of extra-curricular involvement, and their interactions with faculty members in the academic environment. However, some students have a limited understanding of college life and their expectations reflect these limitations. The focus of this study is to determine if new students with diverse academic majors have different expectations of faculty-student interaction. This study evolved from three bodies of higher education literature: student expectations and motivations, faculty-student interaction, and academic organizations.

Understanding the perceptions and attitudes students bring with them to college is critical in designing effective programs and practices for their service and support. Psychology and sociology literature posit that student expectations are based on past experiences, perceptions, and attitudes (Driscoll, 2000). Drive and achievement theories shed important light on the discussion of students' expectations for college. Hull's drive theory (1943) explains that behaviors are the result of intrinsic drive coupled with habits performed over time. In this theory, some need or drive forces a person to behave in a certain way or perform a certain task. Similarly, Atkinson's achievement theory posits that individuals will work harder to achieve under certain conditions that appeal to them. This theory focuses on students' expectations for success and the value placed on achievement. It is the goal of achievement that provides the motivation for behaviors. Furthermore, Atkinson postulates that students approach individual tasks through a dichotomous

lens of either accomplishment or failure. Atkinson argues that if the tendency toward accomplishment is greater, the individual will probably succeed at the task, but if the tendency toward failure is stronger, the individual will most likely not complete the task (cited in Stipek, 1988).

Finally, Keller (1983) has proposed a model of motivation, performance, and instructional influence that links expectations with performance specifically in academic-related tasks. The model states that expectations are linked to effort, which ultimately affects performance and learning. The theory places a high level of importance on the value of cyclical expectation setting and resetting for accomplishment of the most feasible goals (Keller, 1983). In addition, other literature supports that performance and learning will ultimately be enhanced when high levels of faculty-student interaction are present. Faculty and student affairs professionals should have a solid comprehension of what students expect to get out of college in order to best meet their needs and shape their expectations and experiences.

The Seven Principles of Good Practice, developed by Chickering and Gamson (1987), support the notion of faculty-student interaction. One of the principles addresses this point by stating that quality undergraduate education, "Encourages contacts between students and faculty" (Chickering & Gamson, 1987, p. 1). Frequent faculty-student contact inside and outside the classroom is an important factor in student motivation and involvement; this, in turn, enhances students' intellectual commitment and encourages them to think about their own values and future plans (Chickering & Gamson, 1987). A host of studies indicate that faculty exert much influence in their out of class contacts with students (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). High levels of faculty-student interaction have been shown to influence student development (Feldman & Newcomb, 1969; Lamport, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Volkwein & Carbone, 1994), persistence (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1977), academic achievement (Centra & Rock, 1971), and career and educational aspirations of college students (Thistlethwaite, 1960).

Faculty member's educational influence appears to be significantly enhanced when their contacts with students extend beyond the formal classroom to informal non-classroom settings (Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). The out-of-classroom experience (OCE) not only involves discussing previous class events, but is also an opportunity for academic and social development for the student. This form of faculty-

student interaction develops trust and intimacy between the faculty member and student (Jaasma & Koper, 1999). Frequent faculty-student interaction also contributes to student development and leads to greater interest and commitment to intellectual concerns (Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavry, 1975). Students who interact with faculty tend to develop a greater sense of personal identity, and an increased ability to form close relationships with faculty members. Additionally, these students proceed to influence peers to pursue relationships with faculty (Wilson, et al, 1975).

Kuh and Whitt (1988) posit that subunits within an institution, like academic departments, exemplify distinct cultures. Disciplinary cultures may vary in reflection of the intellectual tasks amongst disciplines, departmental missions, and level of commitment to undergraduate education (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). While most department-level analyses compare faculty experiences, several studies suggest that students' experiences and perceptions also vary in different undergraduate majors. Riley, Ryan, and Lifshitz (1950) asked students to rate the qualities most important to good teaching for teachers in the arts, social sciences, and physical and biological sciences. Results indicated that students' perceptions of effective teaching varied across disciplines; in other words, students have different perceptions of faculty in different academic disciplines. In a related study, Birney, Coplin, and Grose (1960) examined the differences in faculty personality traits as perceived by students. Again, differences emerged in how students viewed faculty in different academic areas.

Biglan (1973) offers a classification of academic subunits based on subject matter in different disciplines. In a study of faculty-scholars, Biglan determined that three main criteria (e.g. existence of a paradigm, concern with application, and concern with life systems) could be used to classify academic units. Biglan identified the differences within these academic subunits as "hard-soft" (Biglan, 1973, p. 201). Today, academic departments are commonly referred to as either "hard" or "soft" disciplines and this distinction carries with it a set of expectations about the subject matter, teaching pedagogies, and environment within that type of academic department. The second dimension Biglan refers to is the practical and applied nature of such fields as education, engineering, and agriculture versus a theoretical purpose for social sciences and humanities. Again, this emphasis on the practical applications of subject matter has implications for the environment of the

department. For purposes of the current study, the differences between academic disciplines must be acknowledged.

Baird (1986), Biglan (1973), Chickering (1969), and Kolb (1988) support that organizational sub-environments, such as the major department, can produce variable influences on student development. Other studies examining the academic subunit culture and its influence on students include Smart (1985), Moran and Volkwein (1988), Hartnett and Centra (1977), and Weidman (1979). The current study is an extension of these early works that attempted to discover differences between academic disciplines.

While student expectations are a good predictor of later experiences, analyzing students at the level of academic major requires acknowledgments of other potentially impacting factors. The need to control for extraneous variables that have been shown to influence major field, faculty-student interaction, or expectations is important. For example, faculty-student interaction differs amongst races in addition to amongst academic disciplines. Clearly, there are a number of extraneous variables that have been shown to impact either levels of faculty-student interaction, expectations, and/or major choice that need to be controlled for in the current study. Race, gender, residency, parents' level of education, institutional characteristics, other expectations for college, and additional variables may explain some part of students' expectations for faculty-student interaction.

Method

Sample

The participants for this study were 14,511 new students that completed the CSXQ between 1998 and 2000. This population includes first-year, full-time students, 19 years of age or younger, who have not had previous college experience and are currently enrolled in public or private institutions of varying enrollment size and Carnegie type. In an effort to ensure a normal distribution of cases across institutional types, only Doctoral and Masters institutions are included in this study. Table 1 provides frequencies on selected background variables (e.g. gender, race, residence status, and first-generation college student status).

Instrument

The College Student Expectations Questionnaire (CSXQ) national database was used to gather data for this study. The CSXQ (2nd

Table 1

Frequencies of Background Variables

Variable Name		Frequencies
Gender	Men	47.1
	Women	52.9
Race	Caucasian	84.4
	Black/African-American	3.9
	Asian/Pacific Islander	3.7
	Hispanic (Mexican-American/Puerto Rican/Other Hispanic)	3.4
	Other Race (Multiracial, American Indian, Other)	4.6
Residence Status	On-campus	80.9
	Off-campus	19.1
First-generation college student	Yes	29.3
	No	69.0

edition, Kuh & Pace, 1998) is designed to gauge what incoming students expect to do in college. The CSXQ was adapted from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) (Pace & Kuh, 1998), which is based on the belief that what students do in college and how they use institutional resources for learning is critical to their success.

The CSXQ consists of 101 questions that ask students to self-report expected levels of interaction with people, activities, and services on campus. The activities items on the CSXQ relate to: Library and Information Technology, Student Interactions with Faculty Members, Course Learning Activities, Writing Experiences, Campus Programs and Facilities, Clubs, Organizations, and Service Projects, Student Acquaintances, Scientific and Quantitative Experiences, Topics of Conversation, Information in Conversations, and Amount of Reading and Writing. Additionally, student perceptions of the college environment are gauged. The last section of the questionnaire collects background information.

The psychometric properties of the instrument are sound. The activities and environment scales have reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) greater than .73. Although participating schools determine administration methods, all sales and operations in conjunction with the instrument are coordinated by the Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning at Indiana University-Bloomington.

Procedure

While the distribution of the CSXQ varies between institutions, each student completes the survey before the end of the first academic semester. Some institutions administer the questionnaire during orientation while others use introductory classes to contact students. Participation is voluntary and each individual school is responsible to their own Human Subjects Committees' guidelines. Therefore, the individuals distributing the survey vary between institutions. Surveys are scanned, coded, and results are entered into a national database.

The dependent variable for this study is a score entitled Expected Level of Faculty- Student Interaction (ELFSI). Nine variables have been selected that provide insight into student expectations of faculty-student interaction. The nine questions ask the students to state the frequency of expected activities. Response options are coded using a Likert scale with scores of: very often (4), often (3), occasionally (2), and never (1). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is .85. Each student's ELFSI score was the sum of his or her responses to the nine individual questions.

These data will be used to compare the expectations of students that are intending to study in different academic fields. The Major variable on the CSXQ allows students to choose one of 23 different majors; therefore, broad academic categories were recoded to compare and report results rather than using the 23 individual majors. Based on established literature, the 23 majors are categorized into seven general fields (Biglan, 1973). The academic areas are Business, Social Sciences, Science and Math, Arts and Letters, Pre-professional, Undecided, and Other.

Results

Data Analysis

Because this study explored differences between majors on one dependent variable, Expected Level of Faculty Student Interaction (ELFSI), a one-factor analysis of variance (one-way ANOVA) was first conducted to determine whether those differences in expected levels were statistically significant (a= .05). Additionally, the Scheffe post-hoc procedure was used to examine all possible linear combinations of group means. Results of the ANOVA and Scheffe post-hoc analysis confirmed that significant differences exist. Means and standard deviations for the major variables and ANOVA results are located in

Table 2

Major Variables

Major	M	SD	N
Arts and Letters	2.49	.51	1862
Business	2.47	.51	2485
Social Sciences	2.47	.51	1963
Science and Math	2.42	.51	4479
Pre-professional	2.56	.50	767
Undecided	2.35	.48	1257
Other	2.43	.52	1166

Analysis of Variance for Major

Source	df	F
Between groups	6	20.090*
Within groups	13972	
Total	13978	

*p < .05.

Table 2. The Scheffe post hoc procedure yielded differences between majors. Specifically, pre-professional majors were significantly more likely to expect greater levels of faculty-student interaction than business, social sciences, science and math, undecided, and other majors (p = .05). Although significant differences were found, the mean differences did not differ more than .2. Because of the large sample size, small actual mean differences become statistically significant while all majors still averaged between "occasionally" and "often" expected levels of faculty-student interaction.

Another explanation for the differences may be due to other variables that influence expected levels of interaction, major, or expectations (i.e. race, gender, institutional type). Therefore, a multiple regression was conducted.

To develop the regression model frequencies and means for all survey items and institutional characteristics were examined. Independent variable subscales were created to reduce the number of variables entered into the model. Variables were entered into a block model using the following three blocks: 1) background characteristics, 2) institutional characteristics, and 3) expectations for college.

Multiple Regression Results

A total of 28 variables, entered in a three-block hierarchical regression, accounted for 44% of the variance (R^2 = .44) in the dependent variable. Student background characteristics explained the least amount of variance, less than two percent (R^2 = .019), in the dependent variable. The block of institutional characteristics accounted for an

Table 3

Regression Model for Variables Predicting Expected Level of Faculty-Student Interaction (N = 11,670)[1]

Variable	Background Characteristics	Institutional Characteristics	Full Model
Background Characteristics			
Male	-.06*	-.05*	.07*
Black	.18*	.07*	.03*
Hispanic	.20*	.06*	.03*
Asian	.04	.01	.01
Other race	.04	.01	.01
First Generation	-.00	.00	.01
On-campus Resident	-.02	.01	-.03*
Major- Business	-.02	-.02	.02
Major- Social Sciences	-.04	-.02	-.01
Major- Science and Math	-.06*	-.07*	-.02
Major- Pre-professional	.05	.02*	.01
Major- Undecided	-.14*	-.08*	-.02*
Major- Other	-.04*	-.02	.02*
Institutional Characteristics			
Carnegie Type (Doctoral)	*.09**	.18*	.05*
Institutional Control (public)	*-.05**	-.02	.05*
Enrollment size of college (>10,000)	*-.04**	-.13*	-.14*
College Expectations			
Course learning scale	*.43**	*.42**	.14*
Writing scale	*.43**	*.43**	.22*
Campus facilities scale	*.45**	*.44**	.15*
Student acquaintances scale	*.35**	*.34**	.04*
Environment scale	*.33**	*.33**	.10*
Reading/writing scale	*.22**	*.20**	.01
Conversations scale	*.43**	*.41**	.10*
Clubs, organizations scale	*.46**	*.46**	.23*
Explain scientific/math theory	*.29**	*.28**	.05*
Out of class academic work	*.19**	*.17**	.01
Advanced Degree	*-.14**	*-.13**	-.03*
Expected grades	*.14**	*.13**	-.03*
R^2	.02	.04	.44

[1] Standardized regression coefficients (Betas) are reported. Note: Italicized coefficients indicate that variables have not yet entered the regression equation.
*p < .05.

additional two percent of the variance (R^2 = .020). The last block, containing variables of students' expectations for college, explained most of the variance in the dependent variable, accounting for 38.2% of the variance (R^2 = .382). All three blocks yielded significant F changes of p = .000.

The beta coefficients for each independent variable within the three blocks are shown in Table 3. Within the first block, Student Background Characteristics, four significant contributors to the regression emerged. Men were significantly more likely than women to expect high levels of faculty-student interaction when all other variables were controlled. Black and Hispanic students were significantly more likely than White students to expect interaction with faculty. The final significant relationship existed between students' residence status and expected level of faculty-student interaction. Students planning to live on-campus were significantly less likely to expect high levels of interaction than those living off-campus. While individual student background characteristics were significantly related to expected level

of faculty-student interaction, the group of variables only explained two percent of overall variance.

As previous literature attested Carnegie type, institutional control, and enrollment size all significantly affect expected levels of faculty-student interaction. Block two of the regression model confirmed those findings, showing that students attending doctoral institutions were significantly more likely to expect interaction with faculty than students at master's institutions. Additionally, students at public schools were significantly more likely to expect interaction than students at private schools. And, students attending schools with enrollments under 10,000 expect significantly higher levels of faculty-student interaction than students at larger schools. Like the first block of the model, the second block contained significant predictors, but only explained two percent of the variance.

The third block of the regression increased R^2 by .4, explaining 38.2% of the overall variance and ten of the twelve entered variables were significantly related to the dependent variable. Interestingly, students who expect to earn high grades expect to interact with faculty significantly less than those students who expect to earn lower grades. This may be because students who expect to earn lower grades anticipate needing more academic support and assistance from faculty or students expecting to earn Bs and Cs during their first year may have more realistic expectations overall of their college experience. However, students who expect to enroll for an advanced degree were significantly less likely to expect faculty-student interaction. Additionally, the remaining six activities scales and the environment scale were positively associated with high levels of expected faculty-student interaction.

What emerges from the regression model is evidence that students who expect to be active in college, in terms of activities, coursework, peer interactions, etc. generally expect to also be actively involved with faculty members. Also, some background characteristics and institutional variables emerge as significant predictors of the variance of expected levels of faculty-student interaction among participants. And, even though the first and second blocks explained only 1.9% and 2% respectively of the overall R^2, both blocks, as well as the third block, produced significant F changes. Although the regression model explains 44% (R^2 = .44) of the variance, major accounted for only 0.8% of the overall variance. In contrast, students other expectations for

college explained the majority of the variance, in contradiction to the hypothesis.

Discussion

Background Characteristics. The purpose of this study was to investigate the connection between students' major and expected levels of faculty-student interaction. While existing literature supports that students' experiences with faculty vary in different majors, the results of this study question previous work on the influence of departmental culture on student experiences by introducing the role of expectations as an additional variable in potentially explaining student experiences. This would suggest that student experiences at the department level might be more complicated than previous studies have suggested.

The findings that men expect higher levels of faculty-student interaction than women, and Blacks and Hispanics expect higher levels of faculty-student interaction than White students raise several questions about the demographics of faculty members on the observed campuses. For example, if the faculty is overwhelmingly male, incoming male students may feel a greater connection and comfort with that group. However, female students may concurrently feel excluded, marginalized, and underrepresented, and articulate fewer expectations for interaction.

Further, Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, and Allen (1999) describe the psychological climate for students on college campuses. Acknowledging this research, students' expectations may be revealing some insight into their feelings or perceptions of campus climate. That is, perhaps Black and Hispanic students feel that the institution has expressed a commitment to minority student success and the students' expectations are reflecting their comfort, inclusion, and acceptance of the campus commitment. Another possible explanation for this finding may be representative of minority students' awareness of stereotypes regarding their academic performance. Thus, their expectations to interact with faculty more frequently than their White classmates could be an attempt to negate the stereotypes.

Another significant finding was the higher expectations of students planning to live off-campus over those planning to live on-campus in regards to faculty-student interaction. This finding may be a result of the perception of on-campus students that their residency automatically creates opportunities for faculty-student interaction. On

the other hand, off-campus students may be articulating higher expectancies of interaction with faculty members because they see their academic life as separate from their residence.

Institutional Variables. There was a bit of contradiction in the findings on the institutional variables type and enrollment size. Students attending Doctoral institutions reported greater expectations for faculty-student interaction than students at Master's institutions. However, students at smaller institutions reported higher expectations than students at larger institutions. These findings seem to contradict each other because typically Doctoral institutions are larger than Master's institutions. However, our dataset includes a cross-section of both large and small institutions of both Carnegie classifications. These findings tend to support the notion that regardless of type or size, students have similar expectations for faculty-student interaction.

Student expectations. Students who expect to pursue an advanced degree and students who expect higher grades in college expect lower levels of interaction with faculty members than their classmates. These findings might relate to the literature on motivation and drive theory. Particularly, students who set goals and have an intrinsic desire to achieve those goals do not anticipate or expect to be working with faculty on the road to accomplishment. Likewise, perhaps these students expect to interact with faculty in advising, counseling, and supportive roles to help clarify those future goals during their college experience.

Practical implications

Discussion groups including students who have just completed the college choice process should be conducted to gain a broader understanding of what students' expectations are for college. Further, admissions and marketing personnel should consider altering brochures, catalogues, and view books to include students' expectations of college as a factor that prospective students should consider before applying.

Additionally, faculty and staff across campus should be aware of students' expectations in order to integrate them into the activities of other programs and departments. Therefore, results of these types of surveys and interviews should be shared with all campus personnel.

Theoretical implications

To extend existing models on college choice, student satisfaction,

recruitment, and retention, a more succinct theoretical model may be developed to further explain or predict faculty-student interaction. If administrators are able to rely on theory to predict which students are more likely to interact with faculty members, then intervention efforts can be focused toward those students who do not expect high levels of interaction. A theoretical model of students' expectations may want to be considered separately for men, women, students of color, and off-campus students because students with these characteristics produced interesting findings in the current study.

Future research should seek to address the 56% of the variance that was unexplained in the current model. Therefore, the question still exists: what additional factors influence student expectations of faculty-student interaction? Future studies may want to include more information on pre-college characteristics (i.e. family, high school variables, college preparatory programs, summer bridge programs, etc.). Thus, researchers could gain a better sense of what students' actual expectations are, and perhaps a clue about the link between past experiences and future expectations. Finally, further research could explore how meeting, or not meeting, student expectations impact student satisfaction and retention on college campuses.

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