

Understanding of How Faculty in Higher Education Make Instructional Decisions  
Without Formal Pedagogical Training

A Dissertation submitted  
to the Graduate School  
Valdosta State University

in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

in Leadership

in the Department of Curriculum, Leadership, and Technology  
of the Dewar College of Education and Human Services

April 2021

Charles L. Conner, Jr.

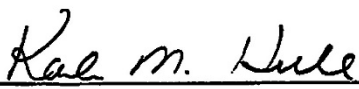
M.A., Furman University, 1996  
B.S., Valdosta State University, 1994

© Copyright 2021 Charles L. Conner, Jr.

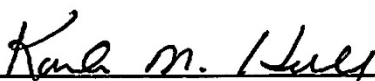
All Rights Reserved

This dissertation, "Understanding of How Faculty in Higher Education Make Instructional Decisions Without Formal Pedagogical Training," by [Charles L. Conner, Jr.], is approved by:

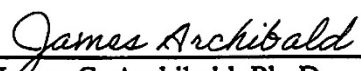
**Dissertation  
Committee  
Chair**

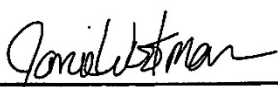
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karla M. Hull, Ed. D.  
Professor of Higher Education Leadership

**Dissertation  
Research Member**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Karla M. Hull, Ed. D.  
Professor of Higher Education Leadership

**Committee  
Members**


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
James G. Archibald, Ph. D.  
Associate Professor of Higher Education Leadership

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jamie Workman, Ph. D.  
Assistant Professor of Higher Education Leadership

**Dean of the  
Graduate School**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Becky da Cruz, Ph. D.  
Dean, Valdosta State University Graduate School

**Date of Defense**

  
\_\_\_\_\_

FAIR USE

This dissertation is protected by the Copyright Laws of the United States (Public Law 94-553, revised in 1976). Consistent with fair use as defined in the Copyright Laws, brief quotations from this material are allowed with proper acknowledgement. Use of the material for financial gain without the author's expressed written permission is not allowed.

DUPLICATION

I authorize the Head of Interlibrary Loan or the Head of Archives at the Odum Library at Valdosta State University to arrange for duplication of this dissertation for educational or scholarly purposes when so requested by a library user. The duplication shall be at the user's expense.

Signature Charles L. Conner, Jr.

I refuse permission for this dissertation to be duplicated in whole or in part.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## ABSTRACT

There is mounting pressure to improve student academic success by addressing the learning environment in higher education classrooms (Lemberger, Brigman, Webb, and Moore, 2011-2012). Oleson and Hora (2014) indicated that university faculty are constantly being evaluated on the types of teaching methods they implement in the classroom environment; however, faculty are often unable to provide a rationale for specific methods because so many different elements, including a lack of formal pedagogical preparation, influence their teaching methods. The purpose of the study was to understand the role of personal and professional experiences influencing pedagogical decisions of university faculty.

A qualitative study was conducted using a basic interpretive study. Structured interviews were conducted with eight undergraduate faculty members from four different disciplines: biology, healthcare, history, and psychology. Data collected through interviews were analyzed to determine the following themes: effective course components, student behaviors, management of behaviors, previous instructor influences, and previous experience reflection.

A key finding in the study revealed faculty from across the disciplines recognized similar elements such as clear learning objectives and outcomes, providing material with real-world relevance, and establishing a clear relationship between faculty and student as effective course components. Another key finding indicated faculty seem to recognize student behaviors that tend to distract from learning across disciplines. A final key finding revealed faculty from across disciplines emphasize positive and de-emphasize negative influences they received from their previous instructors.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter I: INTRODUCTION .....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	3
Significance of the Problem.....	4
Purpose of This Study.....	5
Research Design.....	5
Research Questions.....	5
Limitations of the Study.....	6
Definition of Terms.....	7
Summary.....	7
Chapter II: REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE.....	9
Need for Pedagogical Preparation .....	9
Pedagogical Training of Faculty in Higher Education .....	11
Differences in Pedagogical Training in K12 and Higher Education .....	12
Faculty Interaction Styles in Higher Education .....	15
Role of Relationship and Interaction in Effective College Teaching .....	21
Faculty Instructional Strategy.....	30
Scholarship of Teaching .....	32
The Role of Preexisting Experiences on Instructional Decisions.....	34
Role of Effective Instruction and Retention .....	38

Best Practices for Effective Teaching Pedagogy in Higher Education.....	41
Summary.....	46
Chapter III: METHODOLOGY.....	49
Research Questions.....	49
Group and Participant Selection.....	50
Researcher Background and Bias.....	51
Data Collection.....	52
Data Analysis.....	53
Trustworthiness.....	54
Credibility.....	54
Triangulation.....	55
The Researcher’s “Reflective Commentary”.....	55
Member Checks.....	55
Transferability.....	55
Sufficient Description of the Phenomenon.....	55
Conveyance of the Boundaries of the Study.....	56
Dependability.....	56
Detailed Processes.....	56
Thorough Understanding of Methods and Their Effectiveness.....	56
Confirmability.....	57

Ethics Issues .....	57
Researcher Background and Bias .....	58
Summary .....	64
Chapter IV: RESULTS .....	65
Brief Profiles of the Participants.....	66
Describing an Effective Undergraduate Course in Their Respective Field.....	70
Understanding How Behaviors of Undergraduate Students Impact Faculty Instructional Decision Making.....	77
Influences on Instructional Style and Decision Making of Faculty Teaching Undergraduate Courses.....	88
Summary .....	113
Chapter V: DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	114
Overview.....	115
Discussions of Themes and Conceptual Framework .....	116
Discussion of Research Question One.....	118
Clearly Established Expectations.....	119
Content Geared Toward the Level of the Student.....	119
Real Life Connection .....	120
Influence of student behavior on pedagogy .....	121
Student Behaviors .....	122



Student Attributes .....	123
Student Attendance .....	123
Management of Behaviors .....	124
Discussion of Research Question Three .....	127
Previous Instructor Influence .....	129
Previous Experience Reflection .....	131
Implications.....	132
Recommendations for Future Research .....	137
Conclusion .....	140
REFERENCES.....	144
APPENDIX A: Institutional Review (IRB) Approval.....	152
APPENDIX B: Verbal Consent Script .....	154
APPENDIX C: Email Letter to Perspective Participants .....	156
APPENDIX D: Email Letter to Selected Participants .....	158
APPENDIX E: Interview Guide .....	160

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: <i>Brief Profiles of the Participants</i> .....	66
Table 2: <i>Describing an Effective Undergraduate Course in Their Respective Field</i> ...	70
Table 3: <i>Understanding How Behaviors of Undergraduate Students Impact Faculty Instructional Decision Making</i> .....	77
Table 4: <i>Influences on Instructional Style and Decision Making of Faculty Teaching Undergraduate Courses</i> .....	88

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The doctoral and dissertation process was unlike any journey that I have ever taken. I have no doubt that the journey would not have been possible without an abundance of support and encouragement. To my family, Lauren, Mama, Daddy, Christa, Will, and Tiffany, and to my colleagues (who are really family), Russ, Stacey, Lori, LaGary, Sheri, Mark, and Mike, thank you thank you thank you for your support, guidance, and encouragement. Thank you so much to Dr. Karla Hull for serving as chair of my dissertation committee and for the incredible amount of advice, support, time, and encouragement. I would also like to thank Dr. James Archibald and Dr. Jamie Workman for serving on my dissertation committee and for all of the advice, support, and encouragement. Above all, none of this would have been possible without the ever presence and guidance of God.

## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

There is mounting pressure to improve student academic success by addressing the learning environment in higher education classrooms (Lemberger, Brigman, Webb, & Moore, 2011-2012). Oleson and Hora (2014) indicated that university faculty are constantly being evaluated on the types of teaching methods they implement in the classroom environment; however, faculty are often unable to provide a rationale for specific methods because so many different elements, including a lack of formal pedagogical preparation, influence their teaching methods. The quality of a student's undergraduate success in institutions of higher education are directly related to the level of engagement and involvement established between the faculty and the student (Kuh, 2001).

Knepp (2012) indicated that faculty in higher education may bring a lack of pedagogical training to their university classrooms which can limit the teaching methods used to enhance academic performance. The ability to teach is rarely used as the major criteria for attaining a faculty position. University faculty are often trained in research and the knowledge base for their discipline instead of pedagogy (Knepp, 2012). Jensen (2011) indicated that faculty within institutions of higher education do not have the same standard of pedagogical preparation as primary and secondary teachers. Faculty without formal pedagogical preparation can lack the ability to understand the fine elements of knowledge acquisition that are essential for academic success (Jensen, 2011).

Students enrolling in institutions of higher education bring new challenges to the classroom, including diverse attitudes regarding higher education, different levels of preparedness, and the inability to take responsibility for their own learning (Knepp, 2012). Thus, students may have completely different expectations of what their role is within the classroom setting in higher education and feel that their secondary school preparation will be sufficient in higher education. McDaniel (2014) indicated that current educational trends in secondary schools promote teaching the test, and fail to provide high school students with the academic and social skills needed to transition to an institution of higher education. Faculty may not understand the many intrinsic and extrinsic elements required to provide a suitable learning environment for these students.

Brownell and Tanner (2012) found that there is a significant disconnect between the training that many postgraduate students receive and their careers. The authors indicated that many graduate students are taught how to conduct research but not how to provide classroom instruction and deal with the various elements that they will find in the classroom. Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated that while there have been many studies investigating the training of future teaching faculty, the integration of formal pedagogical training initiatives within and across disciplines continues to be an issue in higher education. Oleson and Hora (2014) indicated there is limited understanding of the origins of instructor knowledge regarding teaching, and the role that prior experiences played in establishment of their instructional practices. This study will provide an understanding of the prior experiences, cognitive processes, and learning models that influence the ways in which university faculty teach.

The conceptual framework for the study is based on preexisting knowledge systems which involves individuals establishing new or enhanced understandings based on previous experiences (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). The conceptual framework is also informed by Bandura's social cognitive theory to explain how classroom and personal experiences inform faculty instructional decisions.

### *Statement of the Problem*

Addressing the barriers between professional identity and a need for pedagogical reform in higher education is a complicated issue (Brownell & Tanner, 2012). Providing students with the necessary academic skills that enhance learning through academic enrichment have proved to be influential components to increase persistence and retention. Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated that college and university faculty with inferior and inadequate teaching abilities actually turned students away from specific disciplines. The authors found that a faculty's inability to engage students influenced retention rates within classrooms and disciplines.

Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) continued to indicate the importance of faculty development strategies which can provide faculty with the academic assistance and enrichment skills necessary to positively influence student persistence and retention. The authors indicated that failure to develop faculty accordingly could result in decreased persistence and retention. The authors also suggested that persistence and retention could be positively influenced when faculty and students were able engage in meaningful relationships that enhanced the student's level of academic engagement and satisfaction.

### *Significance of the Problem*

Hay, Kinchin, and Lygo-Baker (2008) indicated the traditional method of becoming a quality instructor in higher education required a long apprenticeship of observing colleagues as well as a trying an approach to see if it works. Jensen (2011) indicated faculty in higher education could improve their teaching practice by having formal pedagogical training available. Alsop (2018) pointed out that there is be a lack of pedagogical training for students in graduate school, even though the demand for quality teaching in higher education continues to be emphasized. The quality of a student's undergraduate success in institutions of higher education is directly related to the level of engagement and involvement established between the faculty and the student (Kuh, 2001).

Oleson and Hora (2014) suggested additional studies could capture other faculty members from various disciplines within an institution of higher education. The researchers indicated there was a need to identify and understand the role of different types of prior experiences related to the formation of identity as an instructor. Oleson and Hora (2014) also stated faculty have in depth knowledge of practical experience that should be acknowledged and expanded upon through formal training opportunities in the various learning theories.

By understanding the influence of prior professional experiences and their influences on the classroom environment, formal professional development workshops could be established and offered from various departments within an institution of higher education. Faculty teaching in undergraduate programs would have the opportunity to

learn and implement various teaching methods that could enhance their area of expertise, resulting in improved student academic performance.

### *Purpose of This Study*

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of personal and professional experiences that influence pedagogical decisions of university faculty. My study examined the prior experiences and preexisting knowledge of university instructors that influence their instructional decisions.

### *Research Design*

A basic interpretive design was used for my qualitative study. According to Merriam and Tisdell (2016), the primary focus in a basic interpretive design was for researchers to acquire an understanding of the participants' experiences. A detailed explanation of the research methodology was discussed in chapter three. I used structured interviews with eight purposefully selected faculty members teaching undergraduate courses from four different disciplines at a southeastern university. In this study I investigated the types of teaching methods used by faculty in different disciplines and the experiences that have influenced their pedagogical knowledge.

### *Research Questions*

The study answered the following research questions:

- 1) How do faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their field?
- 2) In what ways do the behaviors of undergraduate students impact instructional decision making?



3) What influences instructional style and decision making of faculty teaching undergraduate courses?

#### *Limitations of the Study*

Interviews were the primary source of data in this study. Because interviews involve self-reported data, there were several potential limitations. Independent verification was difficult to obtain because the data will be self-reported. Self-reported data had the potential to include several potential elements of bias including exaggeration, selective memory, attribution and telescoping.

The act of representing outcomes or embellishing events as more significant was referred to as exaggeration, should be noted as a limitation. Selective memory, involving remembering or not remembering experiences or events that occurred at another time, was also a limitation that may impact the study. Attribution and telescoping were two additional limitations. Attribution involved the act of attributing positive events and outcomes to one's own agency but attributing negative events and outcomes to external forces, while telescoping involved recalling events that occurred at one time as if they occurred at another time.

The number of participants available for the study produced limitations for diversity and inclusion in purposeful sampling. The lack of diversity and inclusion in purposeful sampling means data and results provided the perspective of a rather non-diverse and exclusive population. Perspectives could be different if a more diverse and inclusive population of participants was available from which to purposefully sample.

### *Definition of Terms*

*Faculty* – higher education faculty members who have teaching and research responsibilities (Elci, Beith, & Elci, 2019).

*Higher Education* – two- or four-year institutions for providing educational programs and degrees (Wang, 2017).

*Instructional Decision Making* – the choices educators make as they engage pedagogical considerations around teaching and learning (Santos & Areepattamannil, 2019).

*Learning* – mental activities by means of which knowledge, and skill attitude are acquired, retained and utilized (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Makewa, 2015).

*Learning Outcomes* – the display of knowledge attained or skills developed in school subjects designated by test and examination scores or marks assigned by the subject's teachers (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Makewa, 2015).

*Pedagogy* – the principles, practice, and profession of teaching (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Makewa, 2015).

*Teaching* – an activity aimed at bringing about meaningful learning through a method that is morally and pedagogically acceptable (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Makewa, 2015).

### *Summary*

Faculty without formal pedagogical preparation can lack the ability to understand the fine elements of knowledge acquisition that are essential for academic success (Jensen, 2011). Higher education in the US has experienced numerous changes and shifts as institutions try and meet the needs of an ever changing and diverse population of

stakeholders (McKee & Tew, 2013). Faculty within higher education must be able meet societal needs through ongoing enhancement in their abilities to lead stakeholders through an unpredictable and uncertain maze formed by diverse cultural and social demands and expectations (McKee & Tew, 2013). Institutions of higher learning are going through significant shifts in how they function. In order to handle such seismic shifts, academia will require that faculty are able to engage with various students on levels not previously required. Educational activities will have to allow faculty to change and grow in dimensions that they may not have imagined or even wish to enter. Instructional development in higher education will allow institutions of higher education to move in directions that were not thought possible and university administrators and stakeholders much be aware of the impact that an effectively prepared instructor can have on so many different levels of the institution (McKee & Tew, 2013). In chapter two, I provided a review of literature related to my study. In chapter three, I presented my research design, procedures, and strategies for analysis. In chapter four, I presented the data collected related to the study, and in chapter five, I provided an analysis and discussion of the results.

## Chapter II

### REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE

The following chapter offered supportive information relative to the research proposal. The studies below provided insightful evidence to support the proposal by providing an understanding of the elements that directly and indirectly impact faculty instructional decisions. The elements included the following: 1) pedagogical training differences between higher education and K-12; 2) need for pedagogical training; 3) scholarship of teaching; 4) the role of preexisting experiences on instructional decisions; 5) the role of effective instruction and retention; 6) the role of relationship and interaction in effective college teaching; 7) barriers to effective instruction; 8) relationship criticisms; 9) best practices for effective teaching pedagogy in higher education. The following review of relevant literature provided foundational material for the study designed to understand how faculty in higher education make instructional decisions without formal pedagogical training.

#### *Need for Pedagogical Preparation*

DeNeef (2002) was commissioned to assess the Preparing Future Faculty program which began in 1993 through a questionnaire surveys of 129 individuals that completed the PFF, completed their doctoral degree, found employment as a faculty member, and agreed to participate in the questionnaire survey. Qualitative analysis of follow-up telephone interviews with twenty-five individuals was included. The questionnaire surveys included the following categories: Non-PFF Professional Development Programs

on home campus; Knowledge PFF added regarding Academic Job Search; Knowledge PFF added regarding Faculty Roles/Responsibilities; Knowledge PFF added regarding Teaching Issues; Value of PFF Mentor Relationship; Value of Custer Site Visits; Value of PFF Activities at Home Institution; Overall Impact of PFF. The author found that general results indicated that PFF programs organized by the home institution, guidance from faculty mentors, and activities provided within seventeen national PFF programs was most valuable.

The author indicated that graduate faculty are now understanding the importance of formal pedagogical training as a part of graduate programs. The author suggested that graduate students generally feel that their mentors are unsupportive of their desire for structured and formal pedagogical training. There is the feeling that a research focus is more important than a student instructional focus, according to the author. DeNeef (2002) indicated that a focus on student instruction allowed graduate students to better appreciate interdisciplinary faculty involvement more than a research focus that tended not to see benefits of interdisciplinary faculty involvement. An instructional focus allowed new and upcoming faculty to see the importance of interdisciplinary involvement and integration, according to the author. The PFF program has provided a transition between graduate school and initial faculty positions (DeNeef, 2002).

Robinson and Hope (2013) conducted a study using a 43-item survey to better understand the extent to which faculty in higher education perceived a need for graduate degree programs to include instructional pedagogy. The population of the study included 3,528 full and part-time faculty members employed by a four-year college or university within the State University System of Florida. The authors found there was a need to

include pedagogical training in graduate degree programs because of the following: teaching is not profession in which people are automatically skilled, teaching a course in higher education is an important duty, and potentially negative effects such as student complaints and poor student performance can result from improperly trained faculty. Robinson and Hope (2013) found a need for training faculty for teaching in institutions of higher education and found support for such pedagogical training from current faculty. The results of the study support the need to better prepare students to teach in higher education. According the authors, the implementation of instructor preparation would require a different approach to graduate programs so that the addition of instructor preparation does not prolong the program because of the strong research component required in graduate programs.

#### *Pedagogical Training of Faculty in Higher Education*

Tanner and Allen (2006) identified the implementation elements designed to integrate pedagogical training to determine faculty preparation by reviewing the Preparing Future Faculty initiative supported by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The authors identified the professional pedagogical training for science educators at the graduate level and how the level of training influences instruction in institutions of higher education. Minimal instructor development was found when formal pedagogical training was investigated at multiple institutions. The authors found that different disciplines within the sciences made it difficult for institutions to provide discipline specific instructional training. The authors indicated that the future of science instructors will depend on the success or developing formal pedagogical training specific to each discipline within the sciences.

### *Differences in Pedagogical Training in K12 and Higher Education*

Jensen (2011) indicated faculty in higher education tend not to be held to the same standard of instruction and pedagogical training as primary and secondary teachers.

Primary and secondary teachers must become certified via strict requirements set forth by the United States federal government, which requires the three following standards be met: an understanding of the learner and the process of learning, an understanding of the content knowledge, and an understanding of appropriate and effective instructional practices, according to Jensen (2011). Faculty teaching undergraduate courses in higher education are tend to be hired because they have a certain level of expertise within a specific academic field or discipline, even though they lack any of the pedagogical training required for K12 educators. Jensen (2011) indicated that higher education institutions offering undergraduate courses usually require faculty to have a masters or doctoral degree in the discipline being taught. Federally mandated requirements and standards are not the norm for faculty teaching undergraduate courses in higher education.

The American Academy of Arts and Sciences (2017) indicated faculty in higher education be provided with good teaching practices that include the following: fundamental subject matter-knowledge, teaching skills that transfer across disciplines and fields of study, discipline-specific instructional skills combining deep knowledge of subject matter, and culturally relevant teaching practices. The Academy indicated many faculty are experimenting with instructional strategies because they have not been introduced to good teaching practices. A shift from an expertise in discipline only, to a inclusion of pedagogical expertise should be required, according to the Academy (2017).

Brighouse (2019) indicated that most professors in research universities teach but they do so without receiving any significant training on how to teach. The author goes on to state that very few professors engage systematically in ongoing professional learning as instructors, and very few actually make attempts to equally split their efforts between research and teaching.

Quality education and instruction protocols tend to be a public policy discussion priority in K12 education but are all but non-existent in higher education (Baum & McPherson, 2019). Policies and protocols for K12 educators focus on teacher training, evidence relating to the impact of teaching quality on student test scores, and debates regarding the assessment of teacher quality, just to name a few (Baum & McPherson, 2019). Policies and protocols for institutions of higher education tend to focus less on faculty teaching attributes, student learning, and quality of instruction, but instead, tend to focus on the following elements of higher education: admission, cost, and financial return, according to Baum and McPherson (2019). According to Baum and McPherson (2019), the American Academy's Commission on the Future of Undergraduate Education recognizes the importance of strong postsecondary education and it determined that serious examination of the quality of college education, and how it impacts student learning, should be a central focus when looking at the future of higher education. The authors also pointed out that the lack of attention given to the preparation of faculty in higher education is consistent to how faculty are prepared for their profession.

Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated there was a significant difference between the formal pedagogical training for university and college faculty and teachers in secondary schools. Tanner and Allen (2006) found there were no required professional pedagogical



training requirements for most if not all faculty in higher education and measurable standards to evaluate quality of instruction was basically non-existent in institutions of higher education. Institutions of higher education tend to place the responsibility of learning more on the students than faculty. Success and failure within the classroom are more closely tied to student performance and to a much less extent on faculty performance. According to the authors, the incentive to focus on various pedagogical methods by faculty to enhance student learning may be negatively affected due to the fact that the burden of learning in higher education is placed more on the student than the faculty tasked with providing instruction.

Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated that for more than a decade, the Preparing Future Faculty (PFF) initiative was a charge to provide training in many areas, to include extensive training of faculty in the area of teaching. The authors stated that the PFF engaged several hundred institutions of higher education to develop programs from within that would better prepare graduate students to become future faculty members that were knowledgeable and competent in techniques and philosophies that provided quality teaching and instruction. Tanner and Allen (2006) found that PFF programs at some institutions involved creating specialized workshops designed to provide focus on specific elements required to become competent educators. Other institutions were able to develop PFF programs within existing graduate programs in order to better train future faculty members in current instructional philosophies and trends, as well as methods to address future instructional philosophies and trends, according to the authors.

### *Faculty Interaction Styles in Higher Education*

Meyers (2009) integrated research and theory to identify how interaction is a crucial dimension to being an effective instructor in higher education. The author's goal with the study was to establish specific elements of interaction that would address common criticisms and concerns about the interaction styles of faculty in higher education. Meyers (2009) a list based off of students' top five traits of professors, and a list involving professors top five traits; both lists were prioritized from most important to least important. Meyers (2009) indicated that students described their list in the following order: 1) having realistic expectations of students and being fair; 2) being knowledgeable about the topic; 3) displaying understanding; 4) being approachable and personable; 5) being respectful toward students. Meyers (2009) indicated that professors described their list in the following order: 1) being knowledgeable about the topic; 2) being enthusiastic about teaching; 3) promoting critical thinking; 4) being well prepared; 5) being approachable and personable. Meyers (2009) reported that the list indicated, that while there were overlapping points of emphasis, the students placed a greater emphasis on rapport aspect of the relationship. Meyers (2009) indicated that other studies found that students care if the professors care about them as seen in forums such as RateMyProfessor.com.

Meyers (2009) provided specific and direct suggestions related to how professors can develop positive relationships with students within an institution of higher education. He indicated that students identified that their favorite teachers were knowledgeable, articulate, and had clear and high expectations of students; however, he also indicated that component that presented itself as different from the previous components was that

the teachers genuinely cared about the students. The instructional role traits of the teachers that students favored were their knowledge, preparation, and clarity, while the personal role traits of the teachers that students favored were the teacher's concern for students, availability, respectfulness, and willingness to answer questions, and facilitate interaction (Myers, 2009).

Wilson (2010) inferred from a National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment that provosts at doctoral universities identified enhanced engagement of faculty as the number one challenge to assessing student learning, autonomy in the classroom, and overall improvement of instruction in the classroom. Wilson (2010) indicated that even faculty members that believe that they provide high quality of instruction to students have no true standard to measure their perceived high quality of instruction. Wilson found that while there are different methods available to determine faculty effectiveness in the classroom, that faculty truly have no hard evidence to determine the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of their instruction. The author inferred that faculty feel that quality instruction can be attained by a faculty member's ability to respond to content that students are getting and content that they are not.

Frisby, Berger, Burchett, Herovic, and Strawser (2014) conducted a quantitative study of one hundred eighty-nine university students to examine student participation and apprehension to participation in the classroom environment through the use of a survey. The authors' study investigated classroom participation as having threatening and apprehension invoking behaviors, as well as, how faculty could temper the perception of threats leading to apprehension. The results indicated three primary contributions: 1) a deeper understanding of the influence of participation apprehension on classroom

participation, 2) interpersonal behaviors of faculty vary among students indicating that rapport-building and engagement classroom with all students may not be possible, 3) a reduction in facial expression threats by the instructor increased classroom participation for students (Frisby et al., 2014). The authors indicated that the findings could directly impact instructor-student relationships because an ever evolving and diverse student population will require instructors to tailor their interaction to individual students instead of the student body as a whole.

Anderson, Hunt, Powell, and Dollar (2013) conducted a qualitative study to understand students' perspectives on the relationship between instructor transparency, and active learning. The study involved ninety students from a sociology of family, social problems, and principles of sociology course with a 71 percent overall average response rate. Students within the study completed open-ended questions concerning their dislikes and perceived deficiencies of transparency from instructors during the aforementioned courses. The authors indicated that transparency involved a teaching style with the following two elements: provides students with a clear understanding of the lesson plans used by the instructor; provides students with specific information regarding how those choices are related to course goals. According to the authors, students can actively engage in a learning environment when active learning and instructor transparency are utilized simultaneously. Anderson et al. (2013) found that students' perspectives were positive when faculty provided clear and logical course planning and provided specific connections to goals and learning outcomes. Anderson et al. (2013) indicated that most instructors did not measure student performance because the in-class

activities were ungraded which could be related to the instructor's lack of training regarding classroom activity assessment and evaluation.

Hoffman (2014) indicated while positive teacher-student relationships can truly enhance a student's learning environment and experiences, negative teacher-student relationships have been shown to result in decreased self-esteem, disengagement from classroom activity, and a decreased probability that the student would remain committed to the class, program, or institution. The author indicated it has been theorized that there are several factors that might prevent teachers from developing strong, positive relationship was that the climate of institutions of higher education favored research more than developing relationships often initiated through teaching and classroom instruction. The author also found many institutions demanded that teachers spent more time focused on developing material for promotion and tenure so that teachers had less time to focus on developing relationships with their students. Hoffman summarized that there are four primary reasons why teachers did not focus on relationship development with students: lack of time, lack of incentive and reward from the institution, different core values and philosophies related to teaching and research, and a lack of competence in building positive and influential relationships with students.

Hoffman (2014) indicated that while positive teacher-student relationships can truly enhance a student's learning environment and experiences, negative teacher-student relationships have been shown to result in decreased self-esteem, disengagement from classroom activity, and a decreased probability that the student would remain committed to the class, program, or institution. Hoffman found that it has been theorized that there are several factors that might prevent teachers from developing strong, positive

relationship was that the climate of institutions of higher education favored research more than developing relationships often initiated through teaching and classroom instruction. Hoffman (2014) also found that many institutions demanded that teachers spent more time focused on developing material for promotion and tenure so that teachers had less time to focus on developing relationships with their students. Hoffman (2014) indicated four primary reasons why faculty did not focus on relationship building with students: 1) lack of time, 2) lack of incentive and reward from the institution, 3) different core values and philosophies related to teaching and research, 4) a lack of competence in building positive and influential relationships with students. O'Keefe (2013) indicated that successful faculty-student relationships in institutions of higher education were based on making the student feel welcomed and not threatened. The author reported that developing faculty-student relationships in institutions of higher education could be difficult for multiple reasons. The author found that there is a tendency for students to become overly anxious when face to face interactions occur and the resulting level of anxiety caused many students to interact through electronic means, thereby reducing the quality of interaction between the faculty and student. O'Reilly-Knapp (1994) indicated that students did not receive the level of support that they felt they needed from faculty which resulted in students feeling as if they could not receive support from faculty. O'Keefe (2013) found that issues such as gender and ethnicity caused various levels of anxiety that could negatively influence the faculty-student relationship.

Hoffman (2014) indicated that while positive faculty-student relationships can truly enhance a student's learning environment and experiences, negative faculty-student relationships have been shown to result in decreased self-esteem, disengagement from

classroom activity, and a decreased probability that the student would remain committed to the class, program, or institution. The author indicated that it has been theorized that there are several factors that might prevent teachers from developing strong, positive relationships. One factor was that the climate of institutions of higher education favored research more than developing relationships often initiated through teaching and classroom instruction. The author also found that many institutions demanded that teachers spent more time focused on developing material for promotion and tenure so that teachers had less time to focus on developing relationships with their students. Hoffman summarized that there are four primary reasons why faculty did not focus on relationship development with students: lack of time, lack of incentive and reward from the institution, different core values and philosophies related to teaching and research, and a lack of competence in building positive and influential relationships with students.

Cotten and Wilson (2006) found faculty and student time constraints prevented many interactions which decreased the opportunities for relationships to be formed. The authors indicated that because of busy schedules, for both faculty and students, interactions tended to be infrequent and did not allow for in depth conversations to occur. Cotten and Wilson (2006) found that students were hesitant to interact and build relationships with faculty because they question how interested the faculty were in their academic involvement and success. The authors indicated that the institution's campus might present a problem because even though faculty and students share the campus, on most occasions, faculty and students spent the majority of their on-campus time in different places, resulting decreased opportunities for interaction and relationship building.

Institutional climates that do not allow for relationships to be established between faculty and students for the primary reason that institutions have other aspirations for its faculty can lead to an environment that prevents student integration and interaction (Berger, 2001-2002). Institutions of higher education that recognize the need to diversify the responsibilities of faculty to include student needs tends to find the overall working and learning environment of the institution is more satisfying to both faculty and student (Berger, 2000). Students' perspectives relative to how they view the institutions willingness to allow faculty-student relationships to be established directly and indirectly influences whether or not students allow interaction to occur or not (Banks, Slavings, & Biddle, 1990).

#### *Role of Relationship and Interaction in Effective College Teaching*

Faculty-student relationships based on a positive, supportive, and encouraging foundation influenced student retention (Wyckoff, 1998). Institutions of higher education are looking for specific variables or factors that affect student retention and they are looking specifically at variables and factors that they can have direct control or impact. Faculty-student relationships are one factor or variable that institutions of higher learning are focusing their attention (Hoffman, 2014). Hoffman (2014) found that faculty-student interaction that occurred before, during, and immediately after class were typically viewed as being more formal types of interaction. Her study found that positive interactions could also come about more informally when the interactions occurred in hallways, faculty offices, or via digital communication.

Micari and Pazos (2012) indicated that relationships of faculty and students in institutions of higher education repeatedly had impacts on a student's academic and



social experiences and learning. The Micari and Pazos (2012) study focused on three variables, student looking up to the instructor, feeling comfortable approaching the instructor, and feeling that the instructor respects the students, that correlated to positive student outcomes. The authors indicated that there were many features of the faculty-student relationship in institutions of higher education that could positively influence student retention. Faculty who share their personal professional interests and ideas with students were able to create a positive connection with students. Faculty who encouraged students to utilize office hours and out of class interaction opportunities to discuss classroom and subject matter material in a more relaxed and inviting atmosphere were able to create an environment with significantly less perceptions of anxiety and stress. The authors also reported students who feel that faculty demonstrate a genuine and sincere interest in them felt a strong sense of belongingness and connectedness to both the faculty and institution which resulted in a more positive environment which encouraged retention.

Relationship development between faculty and students must be emphasized and the institution must be aware of the importance of the relationships and foster environments that are conducive to relationship building (Astin, 1999). Institutions of higher education have historically required faculty to spend more time on research and less time on building influential relationships with students (Marsh & Hattie, 2002). Institutional requirements of faculty have resulted in misleading perceptions that teachers care and devote more of their time to research instead of concentrating on the success and wellbeing of their students (Fairweather, 2002). Faranda (2015) indicated that institutional policies and procedures cause faculty to develop certain behaviors and characteristics that can lead to greater faculty-student relationships or the policies and

procedures can cause faculty to divert their attention from the students resulting in a lack of student interaction and persistence.

Umbach and Wawrynski (2005) conducted a study to answer the following questions: What faculty behaviors and attitudes are related to student behaviors and linked with positive undergraduate outcomes? Do the behaviors and attitudes of faculty create a cultural context for learning that encourages student engagement behaviors, positive student perceptions of environment, and high levels of student self-reported gains? Interactions that related to course material were found to positively engage or involve the student. The authors found that gains in student involvement from frequent interaction in both formal and informal settings enhanced the overall learning experience from the student's freshman year until the student graduated from the institution. The results of the study suggested that relationships between faculty and student in institutions of higher education can foster significant levels of engagement and involvement of the student, especially when faculty utilize active and collaborative learning techniques. Umbach and Wawrynski (2005) indicated that the study indicated that faculty behaviors and attitudes have a significant influence on student learning and involvement. The authors indicated that institutions that emphasize frequent and positive interactions between faculty and students can create fulfilling undergraduate learning experiences which tend to increase student retention and persistence.

Institutions of higher education have been criticized for a lack of attention and focus on undergraduate education and specifically on student engagement and involvement (Umbach & Wawrynski, 2005). The authors' study included many of the same attributes of student involvement that Astin's involvement theory addressed. The

researchers' found that faculty-student interactions and relationships play an important role in the development of the undergraduate student. Knowing that faculty-student relationships influence student involvement and persistence, institutions of higher learning that tend to foster relationship building as much as research and tenure could create an academic and educational experience that would directly and indirectly increase student retention rates. Institutions of higher education that emphasize faculty-student relationships decrease attrition rates (Umbach & Wawrynski, 2005).

Approachability was a concept associated with teacher-student relationships in higher education; however, compartmentalizing the concept into an affective or supportive dimension was difficult because the concept was considered multi-dimensional (Hagenauer and Volet, 2014). The authors found that teachers who were characterized as being highly approachable displayed the following traits: knowing a student's name, staying in class to meet a student, verbal greetings to a student, smiling often. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) found that teachers who were characterized as being highly unapproachable displayed the following traits: verbally disrespected a student, missed meetings and office hours, and appeared bored when meeting or conversing with a student. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) indicated that approachable teachers in higher education who provided immediate feedback and assistance were described as be very helpful for a student's success in both academic and social integration to the institution. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) concluded that teachers were considered approachable when they provided a necessary level of support and were considered approachable when the students felt that a high level of trust had been established and that the student simply mattered to the teacher.

Hoffman (2014) indicated that there were multiple means in which faculty and students interacted in current college and university environments and the methods of interaction provided both benefits and problems. The author indicated that email was a common and useful interaction method that had been found to offer positive faculty-student interactions based on frequency and quality. Hoffman (2014) reported that email provided students with an opportunity to express thoughts and ideas to faculty without having to do so in a face to face environment. The author indicated that email was considered by some to be an impersonal option that allowed for communication between teacher and student but did not provide essential components that positively fostered a true relationship. Hoffman (2014) indicated that social media was noted form of communication and interaction between faculty and students in institutions of higher education, however, findings from the study indicated that there were mixed opinions about using social media. Hoffman (2014) reported that teachers and students felt that social medial violated their personal space and created a sense of intrusion. The author concluded that email and social media should be seen as options that foster positive and appropriate relationships between teachers and students in institutions of higher education.

Increased student retention rates in institutions of higher education required positive and supportive faculty-student relationships (Hoffman, 2014). The author indicated multiple elements that created a positive and supportive relationships that included: maintaining regular office hours, clarification of concepts, thoroughly explaining assignments, or providing extended formal and informal learning and communication opportunities often. Hoffman (2014) concluded that the teacher was

responsible for establishing foundations for which positive and supportive student relationships could occur in institutions of higher education and that diverse methods that promote approachability and connectedness should be established as well.

Hoffman (2014) indicated that connected relationships between student and faculty in the actual classroom setting were predominantly academic in nature and were considered more informal in nature. The author also indicated that informal, out of class interactions in the faculty's office or other areas outside of the classroom provided teachers with opportunities to expand on and clarify ideas and concepts that were presented in more formal settings. Hoffman stated that out of class, informal faculty-student meetings were associated the increased student motivation, increased academic self-confidence, an increased sense of purpose, an increased concern over grades and assignments, and a decreased overall level of anxiety. Hoffman indicated that when students perceived a teacher as being approachable and caring, that the results were increased levels of motivation and enthusiasm towards the area of study and increased enjoyment in the overall learning process.

Richardson and Radloff (2014) conducted a study focused on ways in which faculty and students engage in collaborative educational relationships that could improve the overall learning experience for the student. A notable component of the student was perceived differences that occur when faculty and students engage in formal and informal environments. The researchers found that students were highly engaged with asking questions or seeking advice from the faculty. The authors found that junior and senior level teachers responded to questions and advise in different ways. Senior level faculty focused more on the needs and interests of the students while junior level faculty

displayed lower levels of interest when answering student questions and providing advice. Richardson and Radloff (2014) concluded that it was imperative that institutions provide the necessary training and resources needed to ensure that the formal and informal interactions between faculty and students are quality interactions that enhance the students learning through engagement and involvement. The authors indicated that quality interaction between faculty and students was a critical element that should not be overlooked or perceived as insignificant when the institution was focusing on methods to increase student retention and persistence.

Faculty-student interactions that occurred in informal settings impacted student self-concept and confidence which directly influenced academic skill and knowledge integration (Kuh, 1995). Faculty-student interactions which increased student skill and knowledge integration positively influenced the student's commitment to and retention at the institution (Strauss & Volkwein, 2004). Kuh and Hu (2001) indicated that in their faculty-student interaction was significantly influenced in both a positive and negative manner by the frequency and nature of the interactions.

Cotten and Wilson (2006) conducted a study focused on determining whether faculty and students interacted in institutions of higher education, and if so, how did the interaction occur? The authors conducted a qualitative study, utilizing focus groups and purposive sampling, that investigated frequency, nature, determinants, and underlying dynamics associated with faculty and student relationships in institutions of higher education. The authors found that students reported infrequent interactions with faculty and when interactions did occur, the interactions were related the need of the student requiring assistance for a class assignment. The authors also found teachers that

enhanced the student involvement in academic areas of interest increased the meaningfulness of the relationship. The type of interaction made a difference. Cotten and Wilson (2006) found that faculty-student interactions that occurred outside of class, in an informal setting, actually enhanced the formal, in-class interactions. The authors indicated that informal interactions between the faculty and student helped to establish a relationship that carried over into the classroom. Student involvement levels increased and overall student satisfaction increased, according to the authors. Cotten and Wilson (2006) found that faculty that displayed a sense of humor and were open to sharing personal experiences during formal and informal interactions greatly influenced faculty-student relationships and positively influenced student involvement and academic integration.

Myers (2009) indicated that rapport with instructors influenced a student's attitude toward the class, the student's academic behavior, the extent to which the student learned, and the student's level of persistence. His study revealed that increases in teacher-student rapport can result in greater student enjoyment of the class, improved attendance and attention, increased study time, and additional course enrollment within the discipline. Myers (2009) indicated that faculty could express a caring attitude toward students and reduce conflict and misunderstandings when the teacher 1) communicated with respect, interest, and warmth toward the student; 2) spoke with the student outside of class; and 3) focused on the student's feelings. An interesting note provided in the study was that the administrative strategies in many institutions of higher education do not address faculty-student relationships, the intangibles, and instead focus on deadlines and grading criteria, the tangibles.

Hagenauer and Volet (2014) indicated that quality relationships can have a distinct impact on human beings from variety of aspects that could include motivation, social competence and wellbeing, and across various educational contexts. The study focused on the “belongingness hypothesis” developed by (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) that stated “human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong, that is, by a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments.” Hagenauer and Volet (2014) focused a review on the quality of faculty-student relationships from an educational or psychological perspective. A lack of conceptualization of the quality of faculty-student relationships was attributed to the following factors: 1) most studies did not treat faculty-student relationships as the “variable-of-interest” (dependent variable), but instead, used it as an “explanatory” (independent variable) among other variables to explain outcomes such as student motivation and student retention; 2) few studies had de facto focused on faculty-student relationships as the variable-of-interest are primarily qualitative that provided insight but did not take empirical findings to more broader, more generalized aspects of faculty-student relationships; 3) most of the literature focused on faculty-student relationships or interactions without defining the quality of the relationship or interactions (Hagenauer & Volet, 2014). Hagenauer and Volet (2014) found in their review that empirical findings related to the quality of faculty-student relationships were divided into an affective dimension and a support dimension. Their findings indicated that there was strong empirical support in general literature related to the “caring component” (e.g., honesty, trust, respect) for students.



Austin and McDaniels (2006) stated that traditional doctoral education focused on the discovery and production of new knowledge through conducting research. The authors indicated that over the last decade there has been a shift in the responsibilities of faculty beyond research into helping students learn. Faculty should be socialized in graduate school to the ever-changing roles and expectations and an area that in growing emphasis is that of faculty-student engagement. Austin and McDaniels (2006) stated that effective faculty engagement involves self-assessment and evaluation of one's own instructional abilities. A lack of formal pedagogical training could impact how faculty self-assess and evaluate their instructional abilities, according to the authors.

Hagenauer and Volet (2014) indicated that quality relationships could have a distinct impact on human beings from variety of aspects that could include motivation, social competence and wellbeing, and across various educational contexts. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) focused a review on the quality of teacher-student relationships from an educational or psychological perspective. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) found that the quality of interactions between faculty and students were divided into an affective and a support influence. My study will include the perspectives and understandings of the affective and support influence from the faculty's viewpoint.

#### *Faculty Instructional Strategy*

Cox, McIntosh, Reason, and Terenzini (2011) conducted a study of over 5,000 faculty members from forty-five institutions with various academic philosophical approaches. The authors developed survey instruments and questionnaires to gather information. Cox et al. (2011) indicated that lecturing remains the most used instructional strategy in higher education even though empirical evidence indicates that

active learning, collaborative learning, cooperative learning, small-group learning, constructivist-oriented approaches, and learning communities have been found to result in statistically significant and positive effect sizes when compared with traditional pedagogical strategies. Cox et al. (2011) began the study to determine how institutions of higher education valued teaching versus research. If teaching were to be under or de-emphasized then the instructional and learning strategies utilized by faculty could be directly and indirectly impacted. Cox et al. (2011) explained that the culture of how institutions of higher learning emphasize the importance of teaching for promotion and tenure compared to research can impact the resources that faculty and institutions allocate to instructional effectiveness initiatives. Cox et al. (2011) concluded teaching-related policies have minimal effects on faculty' perceptions and behaviors, such policies could directly impact the perceptions, behaviors, or outcomes of other important institutional and non-institutional stakeholders.

Sorcinelli (2007) conducted a major study by asking faculty development professionals the types of goals and purposes that guided and directed their studies. The study involved five hundred members of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education from research and doctoral universities, comprehensive universities, liberal arts colleges, and community colleges to name a few that identified three primary challenges and forces of change: the changing professoriate, the changing nature of the student body, the changing nature of teaching, learning, and scholarship. Sorcinelli (2007) found the need to develop instructional strategies that focus on student-centered teaching was a major challenge for faculty in higher education. The author indicated that faculty instructional philosophies tend to be based on an

approach that is perceived as easiest, most comfortable, or most common for the faculty member.

Sorcinelli (2007) inferred there are many learner-centered teaching strategies, approaches, and philosophies that faculty members could incorporate to some extent within the classroom. The author also found that faculty may tend to stay with a specific instructional approach because they are unsure and uncomfortable with the extensive technological elements that can increase and enhance learner-centered teaching. Faculty members need to learn how to develop a better understanding of how learning occurs in their classrooms. Faculty have no formal training on how to implement and assess the techniques available to better understand the learning processes within their classrooms (Sorcinelli, 2007).

### *Scholarship of Teaching*

Faculty who do not have formal pedagogical instruction may not truly understand the scholarship of teaching as much as they do the scholarship of research. Sorcinelli (2007) indicated that because of a lack of formal training, many faculty members are unaware of advanced instructional options such as peer review of teaching, development of teaching and course portfolios, and interdisciplinary collaboration within the course and classroom setting. The roles of faculty are in a constant need of evolution to address the ever-changing dynamics of the classroom setting (Sorcinelli, 2007). The author concluded the changing professoriate will directly impact how the entire faculty is developed and sustained, how faculty impact an ever changing and diverse student body, and how faculty development will require a substantial development to address

constantly evolving issues such as teaching for student-centered learning, retention, learning technologies, and assessment.

Colbert (2010) investigated how individual and institutional backgrounds directly and indirectly influence how faculty can recognize the forces that influence student behavior and how the instructor-student relationships can create a more interactive learning environment. Faculty from within an institution were asked to address questionnaires related to the five social institutions of influence, and institutional culture perceptions. The author defined culture as a collaboration of shared meanings or common beliefs among an organization's members. He stated that culture seeks an identity and the drive of the culture is to maintain individuality while understanding the connections that exist between it and other cultures.

Ferrare and Hora (2014) used interview questions and classroom observation to collect data from 41 instructors from math and science disciplines from three research-intensive universities. The authors concluded the coordinated activity within classroom environments occurs because cultural models of how individuals and their behaviors occur without explicit instructions. Cultural knowledge could be arranged into cognitive schemas that activated under specific circumstances (Ferrare & Hora, 2014).

Wilson (2010) indicated it was the culture of higher education that prevented faculty from emphasizing their roles as teachers within the institution. The author found that an institution's decreased emphasis on the role of faculty as teachers resulted in many faculty having almost complete control and autonomy in the classroom. Wilson stated faculty typically have most, if not all the say in what goes on in the classroom. Classroom autonomy in the classroom can lead to tremendous variation in how courses

are structured and delivered, to include a single course having multiple sections taught by different faculty members (Wilson, 2010).

Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated even though graduate teaching assistants do gain experience teaching, most of the experiences are not the equivalent of implementing pedagogical training but are in fact more of a “sink-or-swim” experience. The authors stated graduate students tend to have little or no formal pedagogical training, no discipline specific classroom instructional strategies. Graduate students tend to only teach for one semester because of the research components related to the educational experience (Tanner & Allen, 2006).

#### *The Role of Preexisting Experiences on Instructional Decisions*

Oleson and Hora (2014) conducted a qualitative case study to understand instructional decision making and practice within three, large, public research universities, focusing on undergraduate math and science faculty. The researchers found there were four primary types of preexisting experiences that participants consciously drew upon: 1) experiences as faculty formed their knowledge base; 2) experiences being a former student; 3) non-academic experiences through the influences of familial relationships, consulting with significant others, and being involved with activities outside of the academic realm; 4) as a researcher, faculty could instruct students based on their own findings from personal research which allowed them the opportunity to expose students to the elements of academic research. Oleson and Hora (2014) also found other areas in which faculty could draw experience from included: 1) reflections on feedback from formal and informal student evaluations of the instructor, 2) interactions with other faculty through formal and informal methods, 3) how they learned by reflecting on

learning strategies utilized when they were students, 4) how they were taught by reflecting on teaching strategies utilized when they were students.

Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999) explained that research based on learning styles suggest that there are a variety of methods that could be used in various academic majors resulting in the development of in depth understanding of the subject matter. Bransford et al. (1999) explained that expertise in a specific field or subject matter did not guarantee that the individual would be good at helping others learn the information. Expert faculty, with the help of formal pedagogical preparation, are aware of the difficulties that students often face and have the ability to tap into students' existing knowledge to make new meanings and understanding of the information (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). The authors indicated that designing the classroom learning environment would require careful attention to the development of the educational goals for specific academic programs.

Bransford et al. (1999) indicated there was a distinct difference between pedagogical content knowledge and knowledge form general teaching methods. The authors indicated that expert faculty understand the structure of their discipline which provides the expert instructor with the ability to direct students down specific paths of knowledge and understanding. Faculty in higher education are not necessarily guided by the knowledge of the discipline structure because faculty tend not to reflect on the pedagogical methods that could enhance the delivery of the knowledge (Bransford et al.1999). My study included the issue of a lack of formal pedagogical preparation and training that could enhance faculty understanding of the importance of incorporating pedagogical teaching methods into the classroom environment.

Lukowiak and Hunzicker (2013) conducted a qualitative study of education majors during their first, second, third, and fourth year of undergraduate education with data collected via classroom observations, faculty written reflections, and student course evaluations. The authors indicated that students in higher education tend to be engaged more often when active discussions were incorporated into the classroom environment, along with assignments that required higher order thinking. Assignments that were viewed as relevant and were emotionally connected to the course content motivated students to become more engaged in the classroom setting (Lukowiak & Hunzicker, 2013). These findings provided a few of the insights into the type of learning students bring into the classroom environment. Instructor teaching methods that do not allow for this type of student engaged learning could negatively influence academic progress and success. The authors revealed that students are motivated by diverse instructional strategies and faculty that lack diverse instructional strategies may not be able to engage and motivate students in a positive and constructive manner.

Richardson and Radloff (2014) investigated a study focused on the different methods in which students and faculty in collaborative educational environments could enhance the overall learning experience for the student. The authors indicated that perceived differences that can occur between faculty and students in both formal and informal environments could directly and indirectly impact academic performance. Richardson and Radloff (2014) cited that students were more actively engaged within the classroom when they felt comfortable asking questions and seeking advice from the faculty. According to Richardson and Radloff (2014), faculty with more experience in the classroom environment focused more on the needs and interests of the students while

students with less experience in the classroom environment appeared to be more interested in course content than answering student questions and providing assistance. The findings of the study concluded that it was essential that institutions of higher education provide the necessary training and resources necessary to enhance formal and informal interactions between the instructor and student because academic success is greatly influenced by more than just providing students with facts and information. The information provided in the study provided evidence that an instructor must bring more than a lecture to the classroom environment in order for learning and academic success to occur.

Dandy and Bendersky (2014) indicated that there were limited studies in higher education that compared instructor and student perspectives and beliefs about learning in an institution of higher education and how essential information related to this issue could enhance teaching and learning. A quantitative study was conducted using surveys to ascertain specific definitions, perspectives, and beliefs of faculty and students regarding the learning concept. Dandy and Bendersky (2014) found that while there were similar definitions about learning, issues related to a lack of student preparation, course management issues, time management, and teaching styles each created obstacles that hindered academic success. Additional research to investigate the influence of teaching styles and learning style inconsistencies among faculty and students in an institution of higher education is recommended (Dandy & Bendersky, 2014). Data from this study will provide additional information to add to the findings of this study and to the suggestions for additional investigations.



Dumbford, Cogswell, and Miller (2016) indicated that an essential component of the classroom environment in an institution of higher education was the specific learning styles students used in order to gain knowledge of the subject matter. A quantitative study was conducted by Dumbford et al. (2016) in order to investigate learning styles across various academic programs. The authors found that learning styles can vary significantly depending on the academic degree program. Dumbford, et al. (2016) cited that there is a need for a more purposeful inclusion of learning strategies within disciplines because learning requirements can be different from one academic program to another. Results from this study would add to information found in this study and the findings could have general transferability to other disciplines within an institution of higher education regardless of the level.

#### *Role of Effective Instruction and Retention*

Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) indicated that initially, retention was predominantly viewed as an element of an institutions enrollment management which resulted in a focus on retention through the development of predictive models of attrition. The authors indicated that research on retention shifted to discovering strategies that lessened student attrition, the search for best practices, and valid and reliable outcomes. Retention research then expanded to incorporate institutional elements of success by creating institution wide initiatives to positively influence retention. Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) found retention research expanded even further to focus on the influences that competent and caring faculty and staff have student retention initiatives institution wide.

Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) reported that a review of literature suggested two fundamental questions that are foundational elements for theoretical models of student

retention: Why do students leave? Why do students stay? The authors indicated that there had been a great deal of focus on factors that caused students to leave, but far less focus on factors that caused students to stay. Institutions of higher education unable to understand the importance of addressing both questions do not seem to understand the various elements influencing student retention, ultimately causing the institution fall short in its attempt to make substantial improvements in its overall retention indicators (Voight & Hundrieser, 2008).

Brownell and Tanner (2012) indicated that there were three significant barriers that influence pedagogical strategies in higher education. The authors stated that once faculty adopt a specific pedagogical style that the ability to change or modify their pedagogical style is hampered by the fact that they are not prepared in evidence driven methods to improve classroom instruction and management. Brownell and Tanner (2012) cited that a second significant barrier involved a lack of time to focus on a teaching method or style. The authors inferred that faculty have several other requirements that require significant time, thus preventing them from analyzing positive and negative elements of their pedagogical style. The authors indicated that a third barrier to adopting different pedagogical styles revolved around the lack of incentive to do so. Incentives for modernizing pedagogical philosophy were significantly lower than other areas such as research and service to the institution.

Faculty members could be suffering from an identity crisis. Brownell and Tanner (2012) found that many faculty members are taught to be experts in their fields of study. With a significant amount of attention on research, faculty feel that research and expertise in their respective field is of most importance. The authors indicated that faculty could

be afraid of being identified as teachers instead of researchers and experts in their field. Brownell and Tanner (2012) found that when faculty indicated during their graduate studies that their primary interest was teaching that several graduate faculty no longer included them in outside research opportunities.

Bean and Eaton (2001-2002) indicated that various psychological theories could explain how social and academic integration occur and how social and academic integration influenced student retention in institutions of higher education. The authors indicated it was essential that students believe they are effective in social and academic environments and students believe they are personally responsible for their own social and academic outcomes. The authors recommended that institutions of higher learning become active participants in influencing academic and social integration by facilitating faculty and staff development programs, designing and implementing programs that combine academic and social activities among teachers and students that address each of the four psychological theories that directly and indirectly influence student retention rates in institutions of higher education.

Astin (1999) provided multiple traditional pedagogical theories which are used in various ways in institutions of higher learning of all types. The traditional pedagogical theories impacted institutions, faculty, and staff in different ways. Astin (1999) indicated that each traditional pedagogical theory was designed around a common pedagogical philosophy and that each pedagogical theory provided a unique academic culture that was not without its limitations. Astin (1999) focused on the attributes of the following pedagogical theories: the subject-matter theory, the resource theory, the individualized theory, and the involvement theory.

The subject-matter theory attributed student development and learning on exposure to the right subject matter. Faculty that utilized the subject-matter theory believed that students learned by attending lectures, reading specific assignments, and working in the library. Astin (1999) indicated that the most detrimental limitation of the theory was that students are given a passive role in the academic learning process. The theory, based on Astin's work, favored the highly motivated student but worked against students that had no intrinsic interest in the subject matter, which could directly and indirectly influence the student's level of persistence.

The resource theory tended to be utilized by administrators and policymakers that believed that enhanced learning environments, such as laboratories, libraries, well-trained support personnel, financial aid, and extramural funding, would significantly influence student learning and development (Astin, 1999). Astin (1999) indicated that the theory focused less on recruiting and maintaining faculty members, but instead, focused its efforts on providing a campus that enhanced student learning and development. The theory, based on Astin's interpretation, did not allow for a relationship to develop between teacher and student because the emphasis was placed on student recruitment.

*Best Practices for Effective Teaching Pedagogy in Higher Education*

Jenson (2011) questioned whether there is evidence to suggest that a lack of training actually poses a problem. Many institutions of higher education will confirm that instructional quality is a part of quality education yet measuring quality instruction and its impact on the student is difficult to determine based on current assessment instruments such as student evaluations and other non-standardized assessment instruments (Jenson, 2011). Jenson went on to indicate that faculty who teach in

disciplines outside of education preparation programs are not provided with the same level of pedagogical training because research tends to be of greater importance. Jenson adds that in situations in which pedagogical training is not provided, faculty members begin teaching

Robinson and Hope (2013) indicated that no extensive research had been conducted relating to the preparation of graduate students to teach in higher education. Robinson and Hope stated that professorial productivity is often measured in terms of teaching, research, and service, and that an assumption can be made that a teacher who is well prepared can better execute the skills needed to be a more effective teacher. Robinson and Hope (2013) conducted a survey research study using a 43-item survey that was to be completed by full and part-time faculty members within a state university system. The results of the study indicated that graduate students preparing to become professors in higher education received more training related to research than instructional preparation. The authors argued that because the primary responsibility for many faculty in higher education is teaching, that a disservice was occurring in the preparation of graduate students to actually perform their primary responsibility at a high level. Robinson and Hope concluded that there was a strong need for pedagogical training for future instructors in higher education.

Gopal (2011) developed a framework based on Deardorff's process model examining the need for faculty to be prepared to teach in a cross-cultural environment in higher education by focusing on attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills. Gopal (2011) indicated the need for developing the framework was due to the lack of research in regards to preparing faculty to teach cross-culturally in higher education.

Gopal (2011) pointed out the importance of faculty in higher education being able to develop competence in embracing other cultures, being able to convey ideas and thoughts, and enhancing one's ability to acquire effective communication skills which will enhance the meaningfulness of cross-cultural communication. Gopal (2011) indicated that because faculty members are increasingly tasked with providing cross-cultural instruction, a need exists to properly train faculty to perform these tasks.

Dunn, Hooks, and Kohlbeck (2016) conducted a study to explore the best practices of pedagogical training by using a survey of recent accounting doctoral-program graduates which indicated that in many institutions of higher education that teaching was considered as or relatively more important than research, specifically course development, course implementation, and course modifications to include innovative teaching strategies. The authors indicated that course development required the inclusion of the various components related to specifying learning objectives, describing learning objectives, and establishing benchmarks on which to assess and evaluate the learning objectives. Dunn et al. (2016) stated that course implementation was usually specific to the course instructor and could vary from similar sections of the same course that were taught by other faculty. The authors explained that course implementation included the following: enabling students to learn course content and skills, effective delivery methods, effective student engagement techniques, promoting classroom interaction and civility, and preventing policy and ethics violations.

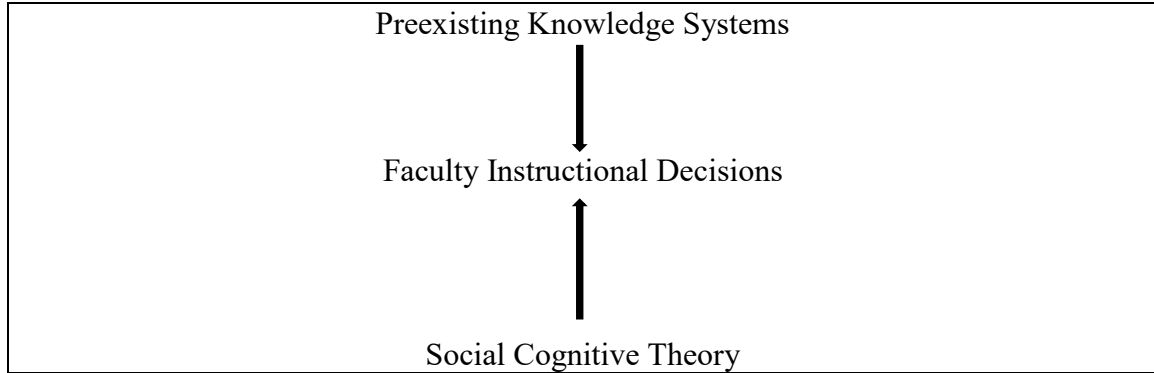
Dunn et al. (2016) explained that course modifications and innovative teaching strategies were essential in facilitating learning among different students based on the diversity of student learning strategies. The authors indicated that faculty choose the

most effective teaching and learning strategies based on the individual needs of the students. Dunn et al. (2016) found that the best practices for effective teaching pedagogy included two individual components of equal importance: a university designed pedagogy course focusing on specific subject matter and an apprenticeship-type model to increase practical application and classroom specific understanding of effective teaching. The authors concluded that an expanded approach to pedagogical training for accounting doctoral students would be beneficial and formal pedagogical training components should be viewed as a best practices approach.

Colbert (2010) examined an approach to establishing a dynamic learning and teaching environment by emphasizing faculty development and collaboration. The findings from the focused workshop series indicated that cultural awareness within the classroom was the first step. Colbert (2010) indicated that faculty needed to critique their current pedagogical approaches to ensure that cultural diversity initiatives are incorporated into the classroom setting. Instructor classroom behaviors can impact the learning environment. The author found that the institution must be prepared to examine current and future pedagogical approaches to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse learning environment.

The conceptual framework for this study, depicted in Figure 1, was based on actual classroom and personal experiences and Bandura's social cognitive theory and how each relates to faculty instructional decisions.

## Conceptual Framework



*Figure 1. Conceptual framework component of the research design.*

This study was informed by Bandura's social cognitive theory as a framework for explaining how actual classroom and personal experiences inform faculty instructional decisions. Typically, instructional decisions were made by formal and informal instruction. In higher education, many faculty do not have formal pedagogical training and instead, rely on informal pedagogical training. For the purpose of this study, informal pedagogical training related to the way faculty base decisions on previous or past experiences. Schoenfield (2000) indicated faculty's pedagogical techniques and the understanding of subject matter could be greatly influenced by preexisting knowledge systems. Kay and Kibble (2016) stated the shaping of cognition, behavior, and identity has been recognized in cognitive psychology and education research as being influenced by preexisting knowledge systems. Preexisting knowledge systems involve individuals establishing new or enhanced understandings based on previous experiences (Bransford et al., 1999). The authors stated a primary source of association and knowledge structure was an individual's direct experience with the world, especially through an individual's observations of other people's behaviors. Sugrue (1997) stated instructor identities could be influenced by previous mentors, family, knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter, and the individual's practical experience from time spent in the classroom.



The influence of faculty's prior experiences on the classroom environment were explained by Bandura's social cognitive theory. Social cognitive theory incorporated the following observational learning processes: 1) attention determines what is observed and extracted from modeled events, 2) retention includes retaining knowledge about the modeled event, 3) reproduction requires learners to convert memories related to an event into appropriate actions, 4) motivation relates to an incentive or lack of incentive to demonstrate a learned behavior (Bandura, 1986). The social cognitive theory can be directly related to understanding how instructional decisions are made in the classroom environment. Bandura (1977) found that changes in behavior could be influenced by vicarious observations of positive and negative experiences. He indicated that observations and experiences could be represented in the mind and be accessed in inform and influence future behavior. The social cognitive theory can be directly related to understanding of meaning in the classroom environment. Zentall, Galizio, and Critchfield (2002) indicated that Bandura's model of observational learning was highly beneficial when outcomes are attained through instructional modeling, demonstration, and imitation. Bandura (1977) indicated through anticipatory thoughts, anticipatory beliefs regarding specific outcomes could influence a person to continue down specific paths to achieve the expected outcomes.

### *Summary*

Understanding how faculty in higher education make instructional decisions without formal pedagogical training, as based on the aforementioned relevant literature review, can be a complex process. Previous research and the examination of relevant studies to the subject matter confirm the complexity that can exist between faculty and

instructional decision making. Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated that there was a significant difference between the formal pedagogical training for university and college faculty and teachers in secondary schools.

Institutions of higher education tend to place the responsibility of learning more on the students than faculty. Success and failure within the classroom are more closely tied to student performance and to a much less extent on faculty performance. Robinson and Hope (2013) found a need for training faculty for teaching in institutions of higher education and found support for such pedagogical training from current faculty. Wilson (2010) indicated that it was the culture of higher education that prevented faculty from emphasizing their roles as teachers within the institution. Bransford et al. (1999) explained that research based on learning styles suggest that there are a variety of methods that could be used in various academic majors resulting in the development of in depth understanding of the subject matter. Voigt and Hundrieser (2008) found retention research expanded even further to focus on the influences that competent and caring faculty and staff have student retention initiatives institution wide.

Institutions of higher education have historically required faculty to spend more time on research and less time on building influential relationships with students (Marsh & Hattie, 2002).

Hoffman (2014) also found that many institutions demanded that teachers spent more time focused on developing material for promotion and tenure so that teachers had less time to focus on developing relationships with their students. Colbert (2010) indicated that faculty needed to critique their current pedagogical approaches to ensure that cultural diversity initiatives are incorporated into the classroom setting. The author

indicated that instructor classroom behaviors can impact the learning environment. This study will seek to understand how the participants make instructional decisions and will attempt to understand how the elements provided within the conceptual framework influence those decisions.

## Chapter III

### METHODOLOGY

As the researcher for the study, I achieved the following goals: 1) I was able to understand the perceptions and experiences that faculty in higher education bring to the classroom environment; 2) I was able to understand how those perceptions and experiences were influenced and established; 3) I was able to understand how prepared and ready faculty are for teaching and learning in higher education, and 4) I was able to understand how to aid faculty's teaching in higher education.

A qualitative study was conducted using a basic interpretive study. Qualitative studies are designed to recognize the meaning and beliefs of the participants are a major part of what the qualitative researcher wants to understand (Maxwell, 2013). A basic interpretive qualitative study resolved meaning through inductive analysis and descriptive outcomes. A basic interpretive qualitative study allowed the researcher to understand the perspectives of the participants (Merriam, 2002). In this study I was able to understand perceptions of faculty teaching undergraduate students. Data collected through interviews was inductively analyzed to determine developing themes and pattern (Merriam, 2002). Upon IRB approval (See Appendix A for IRB Approval), sampling, data collection, and data analysis began.

#### *Research Questions*

The study answered the following research questions:

- 1) What were the perceptions of faculty regarding the influence of their instructional decisions on the student learning experience?
- 2) What were the perceptions of faculty regarding their preparedness to teach students in undergraduate courses.
- 3) How did faculty teaching undergraduate courses describe their preparation for teaching in higher education?

#### *Group and Participant Selection*

Purposeful sampling was used to answer the research questions. Seidman (2006) explained that an in-depth study would prohibit the use of true random sampling. A small number of participants were typically studied by qualitative researchers and the participants' individuality is preserved during data analysis (Maxwell, 2013). The sample for this study included a total of eight faculty members who taught undergraduate major courses. Two faculty members were chosen from each of the following undergraduate majors: biology, healthcare, history, and psychology.

All participants were from the same four-year public university in the Southeast. Gender, race, and ethnicity were not considered part of the criteria for sample selection. Because the study was a basic interpretive qualitative study, the number of faculty (eight) provided me with the ability to gain a deep level of information and understanding in order to answer the research questions.

I contacted the Department Heads of the disciplines of biology, healthcare, history, and psychology, and asked them to provide a list of candidates that meet the criteria. I sent eligible participants an email asking if they are willing to participate in the study. The first participant who responded for each discipline was selected to participate.

An email was sent to them thanking them for their participation and asking for days and times that would be best for the interviews to be conducted. See Appendix C for email requesting participation and Appendix D for the email thanking them for participation and setting up interview days/times.

### *Researcher Background and Bias*

I was a faculty member at the institution of higher education in which the study took place. I was also within the same college as some of the participants. Seidman (2006) when discussing interviewing acquaintances, stated “the interviewer may follow-up or in some other way distort the interview process because of concern for his or her other relationship with the participant and the result is either incomplete or distorted information on a key aspect of the subject of the study” (p. 42). I let faculty members, who are within my college, know from the beginning that the purpose of the study was to describe how faculty made instructional decisions. I made sure to only involve participants who could be treated like all of the participants, regardless of the previous or current relationship between the researcher and participant. I thoroughly explained to all participants the reason for the study and addressed any questions or concerns they might have had related to participation within the study. The research relationship was one in which confidence and trust would be of the utmost importance. Participants knew personal identifying information would not be made available publicly or privately as a result of their participation. Participants were informed that pseudonyms would be used to protect all personal identifying material and information. Participants were informed that the institution would be given a fictitious name in order to help protect all personal identifying material and information.

### *Data Collection*

Participant interviews were conducted. Interviewing assumes there was purpose to the perceptions of others and that interviews reveal someone else's perceptions and understandings (Patton, 2002). Data collection procedures included one interview of 60-90 minutes in length with each faculty member. The interviews allowed for the following: 1) an understanding of the participants' biographical information, 2) an understanding of personal experiences, 3) an understanding of professional experiences, 4) a reflection on the influences of both personal and professional experiences.

A general interview guide approach was used prior to beginning the interview which helped ensure consistent lines of inquiry existed with each participant interviewed (Patton, 2002). See Appendix D for the interview protocol. The interviews also included open-ended questions which allowed the participants to include detailed and meaningful information (Maxwell, 2013). A variety of questions were used including: storytelling, opinions and beliefs, feelings, knowledge, background and demographics, and distinguishing elements. Answers including key and/or repetitive terms and themes were investigated further through probes (Seidman, 2006). Each participant was interviewed in a location in which the participant indicated as an environment that he or she considered to be the most comfortable and convenient for each of them.

These interviews were transcribed and confidentiality was ensured through the use of pseudonyms. All interviews were recorded digitally using an Olympus digital voice recorder. The recordings were secured and saved on the digital voice recorder recordings so there was no chance of accidental public sharing. The recordings were transcribed into word documents on a computer and a back-up hard drive with a secured

password. Both the computer and back-up hard drive were password protected to keep data secure in case the loss or theft. Recorded digital files and transcripts were saved and each recorded interview session and any other data files from the study were kept and secured. As a part of the informed consent process, audiotaped interviews included the researcher reading aloud the consent statement to participants (See Appendix E for the consent script). In order to maintain confidentiality, participants were reminded not to identify themselves or others during the audio taped interviews and/or focus group sessions.

### *Data Analysis*

Data analysis provided rich description of the data from the interviews that provided answers to the research questions. Descriptions included the following: 1) data related to the participants' extra personal influences, such as actual classroom experiences and personal experiences, that directly and indirectly impacted the participants' perceptions and understandings of the classroom environment; 2) data related to the participants' intrapersonal influences, such as resulting influences of previous interactions, with the participants' various environments (Maxwell, 2013).

Data gathered from participant interviews, including memos, were analyzed to search for and develop connections, categories, and themes with assistance from a qualitative software program (Maxwell, 2013). Coding, allowed data to be organized and grouped to indicate shared characteristics and was used to represent and expose the primary data content discovered through interviews and observations which indicated repetitive connections, categories, and themes. Data were analyzed based on the connections, categories, and themes found or developed from coding in order to establish



meanings and outcomes (Maxwell, 2013). Member checking was used during the data analysis process to address the possibility that I might be misinterpreting the data (Maxwell, 2013). Participants were asked to proof the transcribed interviews to help establish accuracy.

Data analysis initially occurred by analyzing the transcripts of each participant interview. Categorizing strategies, coding and thematic analysis, occurred after each participant interview and interview (Maxwell, 2013). Upon completion of the interviews, coding and thematic analysis occurred in order to analyze the completed interview process for each participant.

### *Trustworthiness*

Trustworthiness is a qualitative approach to address the concepts of validity and reliability. Trustworthiness was addressed by utilizing the following elements of trustworthiness: credibility, triangulation, the researcher's reflective commentary, member checks, transferability, sufficient description of the phenomenon, conveyance of the boundaries of the study, dependability, detailed processes, thorough understanding of methods and their effectiveness, and confirmability.

### *Credibility*

Credibility addressed internal validity, in which one seeks to ensure that the study measures or tests what is actually intended (Shenton, 2004). The following strategies were used to ensure credibility: 1) triangulation; 2) the researcher's "reflective commentary;" 3) member checks.

### *Triangulation*

Triangulation involved the use of different methods, especially observation, focus groups, and individual interviews (Shenton, 2004). I compared and contrasted information from participants with different lengths of teaching, and different disciplines.

### *The Researcher's "Reflective Commentary"*

"Reflective Commentary" involved the researcher seeking to evaluate the project again as it develops (Shenton, 2004). I recorded initial impressions from each observation and interview to determine if patterns or themes emerge.

### *Member Checks*

Member checks involved the participants considering whether their words match what they actually intended (Shenton, 2004). I asked participants to check for accuracy their statements during and at the end of each interview session. I used member checking to verify emerging theories and inferences realized during the interview process.

### *Transferability*

Transferability addressed the extent to which the findings of one study could be applied to other situations (Shenton, 2004). The following strategies were used to ensure transferability: 1) a sufficient description of the phenomenon; 2) conveyance of the boundaries of the study.

### *Sufficient Description of the Phenomenon*

A sufficient description of the phenomenon involved allowing the readers to have a proper understanding of what was under investigation (Shenton, 2004). I ensured participants understood the context in which the study was conducted. I ensured

participants had a proper understanding of the phenomenon within the study so they were able to compare the phenomenon that emerged in their similar situations.

#### *Conveyance of the Boundaries of the Study*

Conveyance of the boundaries of the study involved providing the following information from the beginning: the number of individuals/organizations involved in the study, the representative sample used, specific data collection methodology (Shenton, 2004). I ensured the participants were aware of the criteria used for the representative sample. I ensured that participants understood the methodology and the rationale for the methodology used in the study.

#### *Dependability*

Dependability addressed the issue of ensuring that if work were to be repeated in the same manner, with the same methods, with the same participants, the results would be similar (Shenton, 2004). The following strategies were used to ensure dependability: 1) detailed processes, 2) provide a thorough understanding of methods and their effectiveness.

#### *Detailed Processes*

Detailed processes involved allowing future researchers the opportunity to repeat the study (Shenton, 2004). I provided participants with precise and detailed information from all aspects of the study. I provided participants with an in-depth understanding of the processes so that repeated studies could be conducted.

#### *Thorough Understanding of Methods and Their Effectiveness*

A thorough understanding of methods and their effectiveness involved the following: 1) painting a detailed picture of the design and its implementation, 2)

providing specific details related to data gathering, 3) providing an overall appraisal of the project (Shenton, 2004). I provided participants with the specific methods used to conduct the study, gather information, as well as, an understanding of the overall effectiveness of the methodology.

### *Confirmability*

Confirmability addressed the issue of objectivity and involved steps to be taken to help ensure that the researcher's findings were the result of the experiences and ideas of the participants and not the influence of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). The following strategies were used to ensure confirmability: 1) admission of researcher's beliefs and assumptions, 2) recognition of shortcomings in the study's methods and their potential effects.

Validity threats were of significant concern when conducting the study. I was aware of researcher bias. Maxwell (2013) indicated that a key element of the proposal was explaining possible biases and how they would be addressed. I included my concern for researcher bias in specific areas to inform participants of the concern. Triangulation was used to layer the data to provide a source of validation of the conclusions. (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017).

### *Ethics Issues*

Being mindful of ethical issues within a qualitative study was important. Merriam (2002) stated that "ethical concerns should be involved in every aspect of design, particularly in relation to methods, goals, selection of research questions, validity issues, and critical assessment of your conceptual framework" (p. 7). The Valdosta State University's Institutional Review Board provided essential protocol related to ethical

concerns and treatment of participants within the study. Consent was given by the participants to the researcher via actual participation in the interview process. The participant's rights were provided and included the following information: 1) voluntary participation, 2) right to withdraw, 3) right of reviewing and withholding interview material, 4) the right to privacy (Seidman, 2006).

### *Researcher Background and Bias*

I remember when I got accepted to Valdosta State College. I had chosen Valdosta State College because it was the only university in the state that offered an accredited athletic training education program. I had talked to several people about the athletic training program at VSC and had visited the campus and talked to a couple of the faculty members of the program. When I met with the faculty members on my visit, I noticed something...I noticed that they were very passionate about the program that they offered and I knew after my meeting that I wanted to be a part of it.

I spent the first two quarters at VSC applying to get into the program. I knew that it was a competitive program. Program admission at that time could occur at the end of winter quarter or the end spring quarter. I did not get accepted in the first round (after winter quarter). I remember feeling like a failure. I met with the faculty members of the athletic training program after the winter quarter to tell them that I was going to continue the admission process and hopefully get in after the spring quarter. My conversations with the faculty members during that time were unlike any conversations that I had ever had. The conversations were positive and encouraging but they were also real in that I was told what I needed to do to put myself in a position to be accepted after spring

semester. The conversations with the faculty were genuine and I could tell that the faculty cared. I was admitted after spring semester.

My relationship with the faculty only grew stronger as I matriculated through the program. My goal as a student in the program was not to just get through it, but to excel in it. Academics came first. Learning as much about the athletic training profession was where all of my efforts were directed. My classes that were strictly athletic training were unlike any classes that I had ever taken. I knew that I would be challenged in those classes and I did not want to fail. The relationship that I was able to form in the classroom with my teachers was one of respect and dedication. I was challenged daily. The way that I was challenged was, for the most part positive. Constructive criticism was used to help ensure that I was putting forth my best effort. The discussions that I had with my teachers in the classroom were extremely productive because I had prepared for the class by reading and reviewing the necessary material. I saw classroom discussion as a means to better understand the chapters that I had read in the textbook. I think that my teachers saw that I was prepared and the classroom discussions did exactly what I had hoped that they would do.

My relationship with my teachers in the athletic training program grew both inside and outside of the classroom. Because I knew that they wanted the best for me and because I knew that they would provide honest advice, whether I agreed with it or not or wanted to hear it or not, I took advantage of every opportunity to meet with them outside of class to further my education. I knew that they were the type of faculty that wanted to see students be proactive students. The faculty was devoted to the program and they wanted students that were just as devoted. Even to this day, I'm not sure if I learned

more sitting in a structured class with the teacher or sitting in their offices or across from them at the table at lunch. Both components were equally important. The relationship I had with the athletic training faculty encouraged my learning in both formal and informal settings.

I was a “B” student in high school. My study habits were not the best but most importantly, my motivation and drive to prepare were not strong. My first two years of college were about the same. I made a mixture of As and Bs. I remember learning most of the material in my core classes for the sole purpose of the grade. The grade was by far the most important part. As a student in my major courses of study, everything changed. I wanted nothing less than an A. I wanted to know the information inside and out and be able to apply the information. My study skills were still a work in progress so I found it helpful to seek the advice of my course faculty. Their advice was priceless and was extremely beneficial. I brought an attitude of wanting to succeed and not failing to the classroom. I brought an attitude of wanting to learn as much as possible. I brought an attitude of wanting to show myself and my faculty that I was sincere in my goal to be a good student.

I began teaching in an institution of higher education in August 2000. Prior to teaching, I worked in clinical settings. I enjoyed the clinical settings but there was a part of me that wanted to try out the classroom. I got the chance when I was fortunate to be hired at Valdosta State University and teach in the program that I graduated from. As a new instructor, I was knowledgeable of the content but my teaching methods and styles were, to a large extent, based on teaching methods and styles of my faculty. When I was a student, I had faculty that were firmer and more direct and faculty that were less firm

and less direct. Initially, I incorporated the firmer and more direct approach. I look back now, after more than 16 years of teaching and recognize that that initial approach was not the best approach. Now, after more than 16 years of teaching in an institution of higher education, I believe that I have found a middle ground that is somewhat firm and somewhat direct. Because I truly care about the student and the success of the student, I make every attempt to let this side of me come through in my interaction with students both inside and outside of the classroom. I continue to have high expectations and continue to strive to get students to understand that they are more capable of success than they think. I continue to strive to get students to understand the importance of being competent and proficient and the importance to achieve a level of mastery. I do this in a different way than I did when I first started teaching. Most of my teaching methods and styles were implemented without significant formal pedagogical preparation and training. I did have a course or two in graduate school that provided insight into teaching methods but that was the extent of my formal pedagogical preparation and training.

My study is extremely important to me. As a college student, my experiences in the classroom are some of my fondest college memories. The interaction between my faculty and fellow students created a unique learning experience for me. My college faculty had high expectations of me and they let me know that. I grew to have high expectations of myself. I was no longer content with being a B student and transformed into a student that understood that while As are important, a thorough understanding of the material was priceless. As an instructor in an institution of higher education, the best part of my job and the best part of my day is being in the classroom. Interacting with my students is priceless. I view the classroom as a shared space. The classroom is ours; it's



mine and it's the students. I believe that the study will provide a significant amount of information that can be used by both faculty and students to enhance the teaching and learning that takes place in a classroom environment in an institution of higher education.

I believe that faculty and students are both equally important components of the classroom environment in an institution of higher education. Faculty in higher education should understand that they play an important role within the classroom environment but that they do are not the only participants. I believe that faculty must understand that the outcome of student success cannot occur from them and is only possible if both participants bring their very best to the classroom environment. I believe that faculty must recognize both their strengths and weaknesses in order to be great. Accentuating the strengths and addressing the weaknesses takes an individual that is real and honest with themselves. Many of my faculty during my undergraduate studies were these types of individuals. They did not see success as a measure of their accomplishments, but as a measure of the accomplishments of both participants in the classroom environment.

I believe that instructor-student interpersonal behaviors are absolutely essential for fostering relationships that result in learning and growth both inside and outside of the classroom. A total learning experience in college cannot only occur in the classroom. It must also be allowed to take place in an instructor's office, over a cup of coffee in the lobby, and in many different ways. Learning as a whole, requires instructor-student interpersonal behaviors that allow for trust, compassion, honesty, and inclusion. Certain behaviors need to be shown that provide for the most productive learning environment possible, whether that be formal (classroom) or informal (outside of the classroom). Interpersonal behaviors do not guarantee that a student will be successful in the class or

program but they can result in an environment in which successful completion of the class and the program are much more likely. Kindness, mutual respect, patience, and persistence by both faculty and students is needed to reach the common goal that each should strive for, academic success. My relationship with my teachers in the athletic training program at VSC was strengthened because the interpersonal behaviors provided a climate of success that both parties ultimately wanted. Formal and informal learning opportunities can be greatly enhanced by recognizing the teacher-student interpersonal behaviors that create such an environment.

I expect that faculty that choose the college setting hopefully do so with the goal of influencing and impacting the lives of their students, students that have chosen to learn a major/profession from them. College students that choose a certain college and major hopefully do so with the goal of gaining as much knowledge and insight into their desired profession as they possible can from their teachers. By understanding instructor-student interpersonal behaviors and how they impact formal and informal learning opportunities, perhaps faculty will have an opportunity to influence and impact their students even more and perhaps students will have an opportunity to learn all that faculty have to teach them in both formal and informal learning opportunities. I expect that by knowing the perceptions and understandings that faculty and students bring to the classroom environment, that enhanced academic performance and success can result. I expect that academic performance and success can be positively influenced by faculty understanding their current level of teaching preparedness and by students understanding their current level of learning preparedness and readiness in a classroom environment in an institution of higher education.

### *Summary*

The methodology used for the study helped to achieve the following goals: 1) I was able to understand the perceptions and experiences that faculty in higher education bring to the classroom environment; 2) I was able to understand how those perceptions and experiences were influenced and established; 3) I was able to understand how prepared and ready faculty are for teaching and learning in higher education, and 4) I was able to understand how to aid faculty' teaching in higher education. A basic interpretive qualitative study allowed for an opportunity to understand the perspectives of the participants (Merriam, 2002). The goals were met because participants in the study provided honest reflections and insight to the interview questions related to the research questions. Answers to the research questions were made available through the use of purposeful sampling and sound data collection and analysis. Validity and reliability were established through the various elements used to show trustworthiness, such as credibility, triangulation, and transferability.

## Chapter IV

### RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of personal and professional experiences that influence pedagogical decisions of university faculty. Chapters one through three provided an introduction to the problem of addressing the mounting pressure to improve student academic success by addressing the learning environment in higher education classrooms by indicating how faculty in higher education are often unable to provide rationale for a lack of formal pedagogical preparation and the influences of their instructional methods. A review of literature relative to the study, and the methodology utilized during data collection and analysis are provided in Chapter three. This chapter will provide the results of the findings that emerged as well as brief profiles of the instructor participants.

Eight university instructors participated in individual face-to-face or individual phone interviews. The interviews were recorded and the recordings were transcribed by the researcher at the completion of the interview. In order to insure the participant's interviews conveyed their true meaning, each participant was provided with the transcript of their interview for review. The interview transcriptions were entered into a matrix based on their relationship to the research questions. Common themes were discovered among the participants by using key phrases that connected the interview questions.

## Data Analysis and Findings

Eight undergraduate college faculty members participated in the study. Face-to-face interviews consisted of semi-structured interviews allowing the faculty members to share their experiences related to instructional influences and instructional preparedness. Individual phone interviews were necessary for some of the participants because circumstances beyond anyone's control made this the necessary method for interviews. Individual phone interviews consisted of the same semi-structured interviews allowing the faculty members to share their experiences related to instructional influences and instructional preparedness.

Table 1

### *Brief Profiles of the Participants*

Participant 1	Caucasian	Female	11 years in higher education	Undergraduate healthcare discipline
Participant 2	Caucasian	Female	2 years in higher education	Undergraduate healthcare discipline
Participant 3	Caucasian	Female	27 years in higher education	Undergraduate history discipline
Participant 4	Caucasian	Female	4 years in higher education	Undergraduate psychology discipline
Participant 5	Caucasian	Female	16 years in higher education	Undergraduate biology discipline
Participant 6	Caucasian	Male	23 years in higher education	Undergraduate biology discipline

Participant 7	Caucasian	Male	12 years in higher education	Undergraduate history discipline
Participant 8	Caucasian	Male	26 years in higher education	Undergraduate history discipline

*Participant 1.* Participant one originally helped as a clinical instructor. Being a part of the teaching environment clinically, stirred the interest of actually teaching students. During her graduate program, they had an option between education or leadership, and education was chosen because of the perceived comfort level in the area. The participant helped with the Certified Nursing Assistant program designed for high school level students but focused on teaching college level students because they tended to be more goal oriented and were actually pursuing the nursing profession.

*Participant 2.* Participant two had several family members who were in her respected healthcare discipline. The participant was looking for a family friendly schedule and started as an adjunct instructor. She found she really enjoyed teaching and applied for a full-time instructor position. Participant two indicated she enjoyed being a part of and having an influence on students' futures.

*Participant 3.* Participant three became interested in her respected discipline at a very young age. She was fascinated by Colonial Williamsburg and had the opportunity to read about and visit several historical sites throughout her childhood. The enjoyment of history was just there from the beginning. She had the opportunity to be a teaching assistant in college and assisted in courses related to European History, American History, and specifically the American Revolution. Participant three provided instruction

in these areas and students within the course asked questions and seemed interested in the material which caused the participant to consider the field of teaching because there was a passion for teaching revealed.

*Participant 4.* Participant four indicated her initial area of interest was business but when they took a few psychology courses, she found her passion was in the discipline of psychology. Before becoming an educator, participant four spent over a decade in an administrative environment. Both parents were college professors, with their father focusing on the discipline of psychology. About 10 years before moving from administration to teaching, she knew teaching in higher education was the goal. Participant four indicated higher education was a very unique environment where a person can teach and build relationships with students.

*Participant 5.* Participant five indicated her specific interest in her discipline started in high school. Her initial interest was in physics; however, the physics lab caused a decrease in interest because they revealed that physics was not the discipline for her. The interest moved to biology, specifically molecular biology and genetics. Documentaries on molecular biology triggered her intellectual curiosity to uncover how nature works. Participant five revealed her career started with a focus on research and academia. She found that a better avenue to conduct research could be found when a teaching component was included. She indicated she had absolutely no teaching experience which made it very challenging. She revealed it took them time to figure to know what works and what does not work.

*Participant 6.* Participant six indicated he was never really interested in teaching at any level other than the university level. Teaching at the university level provided the

freedom to pursue his specialized field of interest, which allowed a combination of teaching and research. The participant revealed that while walking across a college campus one day, it became clear that he could spend the rest of his life working in this type of environment. He indicated he did not truly understand all that was involved in having a faculty position at the university level.

*Participant 7.* Participant seven indicated when he completed his undergraduate degree, his first job was at a state museum because that was where a person with a history degree could actually use the degree. The museum job did not work out and enrolling in graduate school provided a way out and a path to focus on their interest in writing and publishing. The participant revealed he was very confident entering academia because it would provide an ideal opportunity to write and publish. The teaching aspect had never been done before and while it seemed like a foreign concept, was actually found to be very enjoyable. He indicated the learning curve for teaching was much more than that for research and writing.

*Participant 8.* Participant eight took classes in the psychology discipline and found a connection with the discipline and the course material. He indicated he fell in love with psychology because of the connection between the discipline and the course material. The participant revealed teaching in higher education was not what he set out to do. While research was the primary interest, those opportunities were not easy to come by, which left teaching as the other option. He revealed that while he was nervous teaching for the first time, once the lecture began, students showed interest and the nervousness faded away. Interestingly, he found the enjoyment of teaching was more for themselves than for the students in the course.



## Themes from Research Question 1

Research Question 1: How do faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their field?

The first research question for the study was designed to understand how faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their respective field. Face to face interviews and individual phone interviews were conducted and recorded. Interview recordings were then transcribed and analyzed by identifying common ideas, common phrases, or common comments across all eight participants.

Common themes addressing research question 1 from face to face interviews and individual phone interviews are listed below in table two.

Table 2

### *Describing an Effective Undergraduate Course in Their Respective Field.*

Theme	Quotes
Effective Course Components – Clearly Established Expectations	An effective undergraduate course clearly defines the learning objectives, goals, and outcomes to assist the student to understand the criteria or what they will be learning.” (Participant 7)  “There is going to be a lot of basic information that you need to go over and help them to understand so then the ideal course would include instructor generated materials.” “It would include going over

	<p>very carefully basic concepts, basic vocabulary, integrating lecture, discussion, hands-on projects with the students.” (Participant 3)</p>
<p>Effective Course Components – Content Geared Toward the Level of the Student</p>	<p>“The intro level as well is one, you need to have some breadth of coverage with a little bit of depth in the course work itself but not to the extent that it would not be for a major kind of thing...someone who is enrolled in the major.” (Participant 8)</p> <p>“And again, the expectations would be that you are aiming the information to an audience who’s less familiar with the material because they are not history majors. And then also preparing those students that are majors for what to expect when they take more advanced classes.” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“I think that in the earlier collegiate courses, content is more of a priority in that we want the students to understand what happens in history. I think that in the upper level courses, we are wanting</p>

	<p>them to understand that as well but we also want them to understand how the literature on that, on those situations has evolved over time.” (Participant 7)</p>
<p>Effective Course Components – Assessment Implementation</p>	<p>“After that, I design the formative and summative assessments and then I start designing the lecture and all of the activities incorporated into the lecture. I try to continue to implement up-to-date pedagogical methods and adapt them to my students.” (Participant 5)</p> <p>“Once you have given them kind of a real-world example of the material, that in and of itself isn’t enough, you then have to go into some sort of formative assessment stuff to make sure they are understanding what it is.” (Participant 8)</p>
<p>Effective Course Components – Real Life Connections</p>	<p>“Within the lecture I also try to relate subjects to their everyday life, something they can relate easily to like genetics of cancer, stem cells, genetic counseling.” (Participant 5)</p>

	<p>“Another description would probably be relatable and I try and make it real-life scenarios, real-life situations to help that learner understand the material a little better, to bring it into perspective of different examples.” (Participant 7)</p>
<p>Effective Course Components – Critical Thinking Elements</p>	<p>“In science courses we also have a lab component which gives me more flexibility as opposed to the lecture where you have a limited time. There are more opportunities to engage in critical thinking within the lab activities such as developing research questions hypothesis and design experiments. I often use inquiry-based labs, where they have to do some research on the current knowledge first, develop their questions, develop their hypothesis that has to be testable.” (Participant 5)</p> <p>It needs to be theoretical because we are a theoretical discipline. It has to have a high level of application which can be challenging with undergraduate</p>

	<p>populations. So, looking at the ideal class, you are going to have some components that create opportunities for intense critical thinking about the topic but also application to self.” (Participant 4)</p>
--	--

Several faculty members indicated they described an effective undergraduate course in their field based on the course having clearly established expectations. Faculty members from history revealed an effective undergraduate course clearly defines learning objectives and outcomes in order to assist students in understanding course criteria and expectations. Basic information to provide an overall understanding of learning objectives, along with basic concepts and vocabulary would be essential in order for students to integrate the lecture, discussion, and hands-on material. A faculty member in biology indicated learning goals and outcomes should be defined in the beginning.

Many faculty members indicated effective course components would relate to the course or grade level of the student. A faculty member in psychology pointed out that introductory level courses should have some breadth of coverage with little depth if the course would not be for the student’s actual major. Faculty in history revealed that expectations would be to aim at the audience within the course. Students less familiar with the material because the course is not within their major should be presented with the information in a different way. Students within the major should be prepared for the expected advanced course content as they progress from lower level to higher level

courses within the major. Interestingly, one faculty member in history indicated he wants lower level and upper level students to understand what happens in history, however, upper level students should also understand how the literature related to those elements of history evolved over time. A faculty member in psychology indicated an effective undergraduate course in their field would involve opportunities at the lower levels to relate to personal responsibilities, while upper level courses should see a much higher level of analysis and statistical comparison because of the field being so theoretical in nature.

Two faculty members, one in psychology and one in biology, indicated an effective undergraduate course in their field would involve formative and summative assessments. Providing real-world experiences would not be sufficient and some sort of summative or formative assessment would be needed to help establish an understanding of the content and material. Interestingly, a faculty member also in psychology revealed the need to include multimodal approaches in order to incorporate writing opportunities in addition to traditional test-based assessments for a course in her discipline to be effective.

Faculty members within three disciplines indicated the need for real-life connects in order to have an effective course in their respective disciplines. A faculty member in biology revealed she infuses everyday life into her lectures so students can better relate to the subjects being studied. A faculty member in history felt information in a course within his field should be relatable by designing real-life scenarios and real-life situations so students have a better understanding of the material. The real-life scenarios and real-life situation provide diverse perspectives for students. Interestingly, a faculty member in

psychology pointed out students in his respected field of study see to have a difficult time dealing with abstract information and need something they can sink their teeth into in order for a class to be successful. Students need an anchor to tie content and material together and visual-aids can help accomplish the task.

Two faculty members felt courses in their respective fields should have a critical thinking element to them in order for them to be effective. A faculty member in biology indicated her courses have a lab component which provides significant flexibility to provide opportunities to engage students in critical thinking activities within the laboratory portion of the course. Developing research questions, hypotheses, and designing other experimental elements, along with inquiry-based labs based on current research and student original research was considered essential for an effective course. A faculty member in psychology again pointed out her courses must be theoretical in order to be effective because the discipline is theoretical. The ideal course should include components which create opportunities for intense critical thinking about the topic.

#### Themes for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: In what ways do the behaviors of undergraduate students impact instructional decision making?

The second research question for the study was designed to understand how behaviors of undergraduate students impact faculty instructional decision making. Face to face interviews and individual phone interviews were conducted and recorded. Interview recordings were transcribed and analyzed by identifying common ideas, common phrases, or common comments across all eight participants.

Common themes addressing research question two from face to face interviews and individual phone interviews are listed below in table three.

Table 3

*Understanding How Behaviors of Undergraduate Students Impact Faculty Instructional Decision Making.*

Theme	Quotes
Student Behaviors	<p>“So another thing too is the barriers could also be other students talking, cell phones, it could be they are worried about the next exam and so they are studying for their next exam and not getting the material that they need at that time. I think the biggest annoyance from students is not focusing on the instructor and either playing on their phone or talking or just to me I can tell some of them are already looking at other material as I’m teaching the courses and not focusing on the time that I’m spending with them to retain that or you know get that material that they need at that moment.” (Participant 1)</p>



“They don’t follow directions and what annoys me the most is when a student complains that I didn’t tell him/her about something that I just explained several times, wrote clearly on the board, it is in the procedure in the manual they have as a reference, and if something goes wrong his/her attitude is “you didn’t tell us this”.

(Participant 5)

“They often ask what you, as instructor, would like to see or want.” (Participant 5)

“Students only want to be provided with the answer to a question, instead I would like them to understand why that’s the answer and how you get to the answer.

(Participant 5)

“They are just trying to retain about 70% of the information. All they really seem to be concerned about is passing the class or getting a particular grade. That focus is their entire motivation for some students...it’s to just pass a class with a certain grade and they don’t care about

	<p>retention. They don't see the usefulness of the information until later." (Participant 8)</p> <p>"I have noticed or some things that I have perceived or seen in your attitude that presents an heir of knowing it all or an heir of thinking that ah there is an overconfidence." (Participant 1)</p>
<p>Student Behaviors (Unique responses)</p>	<p>"Some of them simply aren't prepared for college expectations and I think we attribute it a lot on this campus to first time, first gen students. This has been going on for years, it's just in earlier times people would just fail out and move on. But there are so many implications at this point for the university systems and within higher education to ensure that we are retaining, that we are trying to fix some of these issues - and we should." (Participant 4)</p>
<p>Management of Behaviors</p>	<p>"I always have to remind myself to leave enough time to give the students abundant time to get projects done, to give them</p>

	<p>little nudges to kind of nag at them to see how they are progressing.” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“Making myself available, making sure I’m reading my email, my course posting, relevant announcements to keep the students up with what’s going on in class and what should be going on with their projects.” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“I think I have to be adaptable and I try and stay adaptable. I have found that I am at my best when I’m able to really connect with that student and sort of put aside some of my own frustration. If I’m not adaptable and responding to the student appropriately, it’s really easy to get frustrated and allow those things to become attached to the student than rather than a part of the situation and circumstance. I have to remind myself a lot that this is one student’s situation but differentiating need and instruction in a sea of faces that you may or may not know - it’s usually the ones that you don’t know</p>
--	---

	<p>that need the most support and are least likely to ask.” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“To handle that is to correct them and then give the rational for why what they said is wrong and this is what’s right.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“Calling them out and being negative or demeaning isn’t going to fix that.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“The way I handle it is very politely and I will say that’s interesting and a good point but, we need to look at these things which are more relevant. The main point is not to get angry because that’s just pointless. Try to gently remind people of what we are doing. I don’t like confrontation and I try not to ever get confrontational. Handling things this way partly because of my upbringing. Being confrontational doesn’t really help the other students in the class that are trying to learn something.” (Participant 3)</p>
--	---

<p>Management of Behaviors</p> <p>(Unique responses)</p>	<p>“It’s a respect issue. The things that really bother me come down to relationships. It comes down to respect. I might use “indirect shame” but to use the environment to say you violated a rule or norm that we have established in this classroom and they have to stop.”</p> <p>(Participant 4)</p> <p>“I ignore student behavior until it’s clear that it's negatively impacting other students. Part of my view on that is that I am not their parent so I’m not going to correct your behavior until you are becoming a distraction to other people because it’s not my place. Legally they are adults. You don’t want to read or do your assignments...fine, but there will be consequences for not doing that which will result in a lower grade by default.”</p> <p>(Participant 8)</p>
--	---

Several faculty members indicated there were behaviors of undergraduate students that impacted their instructional decision making. The behaviors tended to involve behaviors directly and indirectly related to the amount of information provided to

students and the students' perception of the importance of the information. Other behaviors tended to involve actual behaviors students displayed that were of the disruptive nature.

Disruptive behaviors such as inappropriate use of cell phones in class, talking among students, the inability to follow instructions, as well as a lack of attention and focus in class appeared to be a common issue for several of the faculty members in the study. These types of disruptive behaviors seemed to be consistent among faculty in healthcare, history, psychology, and biology. There was consistency from all faculty members that the aforementioned behaviors were a common occurrence among most, if not all of the courses in which they taught. One faculty member in healthcare indicated a common disruptive behavior was students not paying attention in class because they were too busy with last minute preparations for an exam in the next class or in a class later in the day. A faculty member in history indicated a disruptive behavior comes in the form of students who do not pay attention to directions and protocol in class give attitude to the faculty member and blame the faculty member for not providing essential details. A faculty member in psychology stated he provides students with opportunities to share thought, ideas, and options on class or topic related information, but instead of following directions, the students spend their time discussing social issues related to what they did over the weekend or what they will be doing over the next weekend.

A second type of behavior that faculty members indicated impacted their instructional decisions involved the students' perspective on the importance of the information that is presented in the course. A faculty member in biology indicated a major behavioral issue involved students who only want to be provided with the answers

to specific questions without any desire to understand the content in depth or without any desire to understand the rationale and context behind the answer. The faculty member stated students typically just want to know what the instructor wants to know in order for a high grade to be earned. A faculty member in psychology indicated many of his students were just concerned with trying to retain about 70% of the information provided in the class because all they were really concerned with was just passing the class or getting a particular grade. He indicated his students did not care about retaining the information and could care less about the usefulness of the information later.

The two faculty in healthcare revealed a student behavior impacting their instructional style. Both faculty indicated a perceived heir of overconfidence and know-it-all attitudes can impact their instructional style. The faculty found these students make things difficult because they do not know the right answer or have the correct response but will provide the answer or response to faculty with complete confidence, an overconfidence.

Interestingly, a faculty member from the psychology discipline had a unique perspective compared to the other participants in the study. She perceived the student behaviors that tend to directly and indirectly impact faculty instructional styles and student learning experiences, could be that some students are not prepared for the expectations of college. The faculty member indicated at one point, these types of student behaviors at one point would result in the student just failing out and moving on, but now, because of so many different implications within the university and within the university system itself, more of this disruptive behavior is tolerated to ensure that the

student is retained. The focus of retention above all else prevented more absolute resolutions to these types of disruptive and academically challenging behaviors.

A faculty member in history believes attendance, or a lack of attendance is one of the biggest behavioral problems that they face. She indicated several times, students will miss class and will have no idea how much class they have missed, or more importantly, how much material they have missed. The students then seem to have an unrealistic perspective on how long it will take them to catch up on the missed content and in many cases, catching up never really happens.

Faculty management behaviors for student behaviors impacting instructional style seemed to involve a focus on faculty behavior modifications that could directly and indirectly counteract the disruptive behaviors without creating a negative environment for the student. Faculty attempted to make more time to correct disruptive behaviors and for student accommodations. Faculty also attempted to make students aware of the disruptive behavior and change them using neutral to positive reinforcement instead of negative reinforcement.

In order to address students who, for a number of reasons, do not seem able to stay up to date with their assignments, some of the faculty specifically indicated they intentionally leave enough time within their courses to give students abundant time to get projects done, as well as, enough time to give several reminders to stay up to date on material and projects that have specific due dates. They also tended to distribute activities across the semester so that students can better management the assignments and their time. A faculty member in biology indicated she not only distributes activities and



assignments across the semester for the students' benefit, but also, uses this method in particular to help them manage their time as well.

Faculty members in history and psychology, revealed they address the student behaviors that directly impact their learning by making themselves more available to the students via office hours, email correspondences, and electronic postings within the courses themselves. These same faculty members indicated they had to be adaptable and stay adaptable in order to counteract disruptive student behaviors by attempting to stay connected with them. One of the faculty in psychology revealed that if she does not remain adaptable, the student behaviors will have her so frustrated that she could easily attach those behaviors to the students as a whole, instead of the part of the situation or circumstance that is causing the disruptive behavior. The same faculty member indicated she has to remember the cause of one student's behavior may not be the cause of the another's. Staying adaptable and available allows the faculty member to focus on the students that do not know they need support and are least likely to ask for it. Disruptive behaviors are more likely to continue in those circumstances according to the faculty member.

Faculty members in healthcare revealed their behavioral management style was specific to the disruptive behavior being displayed. The heir of overconfidence is managed by trying to humble the student and make sure they know they are not smarter than anyone else in the classroom, including the faculty. They indicated they do not believe that most of these students even realize what people around them perceive of them. The faculty do not want their students to be perceived as overly confident because in their respected field, being overly confident can negatively impact the need for

continued growth and learning. Addressing the heir of overconfidence is done by always providing sound rational when correcting them on why their answer was wrong and why the right answer was right.

Several faculty members across many disciplines indicated they address the disruptive behaviors of students by creating a non-confrontational, calming, understanding, and positive environment. A faculty member in healthcare revealed calling students out and being negative or demeaning has never positively impacted a disruptive behavior. Faculty members from within the College of Humanities and Social Sciences indicated the best way to address disruptive behaviors is to remain polite, non-confrontational, and look at the specific issues or behaviors in question. Treating students with respect with the intent of having respect shown mutually and equally was a direct method for managing disruptive behaviors. A faculty member from the biology discipline indicated she not only remains calm and non-confrontational, but she also focuses on calling the student by name and providing as much support for the student as possible in order to understand the behavior and as a means of attempting to reduce the disruptive behavior.

Three faculty members had interesting perspectives on managing the disruptive behaviors of students focused on the use of less positive management options. A faculty member in psychology revealed that she tends to want to save the savable and some of them are not save able. The faculty member also indicated that she might use indirect shaming as a way to show an established rule or norm in the classroom had been violated and needs to stop. A faculty member in history would confront students which involved the student signing an academic dishonesty form, failing them, or turning them into the

university if the disruptive behavior involved an issue deemed significant such as cheating or plagiarism. A second faculty member in psychology had a particularly interesting perspective on managing disruptive student behavior. He tended to ignore disruptive behavior for the most part until it clearly negatively impacted other students. The reason for this particular management style was he views the students as legal adults, does not see themselves as a parent figure, and feels that if you want to engage is disruptive, non-productive behavior them fine, but understand that there are consequences for such behavior such as a lower grade by default.

#### Themes from Research Question 3

Research Question 3: What influences instructional style and decision making of faculty teaching undergraduate courses?

The third research question for the study was designed to understand the influences on instructional style and decision making of faculty teaching undergraduate courses. In order to remain consistent with research question one and research question two, transcriptions were analyzed to identify common ideas, common phrases, or common comments across all eight participants and are listed below in table four.

Table 4

*Influences on Instructional Style and Decision Making of Faculty Teaching Undergraduate Courses.*

Theme	Quotes
Previous Instructor Influence	“My teachers were definitely an influential factor in how I teach now. I actually did my internship with an instructor that was

	<p>one of my previous instructors and so I learned her technique of how to teach.”</p> <p>(Participant 1)</p> <p>“Again, I think what really shapes the way I think about things is that I remember all of the good professors that I had and I want to honor them, emulate them, and because if feel that I learned in their class was more than content, I learned how you teach people, how you interact with people, what makes an effective college experience.” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“As a master’s student my main professor was the one I think that I pattern most of my thinking on when it comes to how to do the classroom...how to manage a classroom.” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“But, you go back and think about those things and think about your undergraduate experiences and why you liked the classes that you liked and what the elements of those were and the classes that I liked were the ones were a lecturer who</p>
--	---

	<p>understood how to structure a narrative that not only gave you a lot of information and gave you a lot of interesting stuff, but also did so in a clever way that told a story and that allowed for questions throughout but gave you, the student, the option to kind of listen that particular audiobook and absorb it.” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“I think those that come in and they do not have an heir of professionalism, sometimes they come in and they joke around with students and try to be their friend and not their mentor. so that lead me to think of a professor as unprofessional or an instructor that doesn’t take their job seriously.” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“Building a relationship was almost impossible, and I think that that was just a part of who he was. He didn’t connect well with other people, was a nice person, but connection just wasn’t there.” (Participant 4)</p>
--	---

	<p>“She didn’t give clear assignments and she didn’t seem to have much respect for the class. discussed in class.” (Participant 3)</p> <p>“He was very clear in his expectations. He approached the class with a level of clarity, a level of expectation that was really high. What was very clear as a student coming in was that he expected nothing but the best. What he also communicated was that he was going to teach us the skills to do that but it was our job to develop it. But he had a very low tolerance, if any tolerance, for not putting in everything that you had.” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“They would have the students’ attention; they would command their attention but would not be so formal or aloof that you couldn’t approach them.” (Participant 6)</p> <p>“For whatever reason, the faculty that had the most impact on me were like that as well...they were tough, they had high</p>
--	---

	<p>standards, but they weren't bad people.”</p> <p>(Participant 8)</p> <p>“She was quite available and was very approachable. She was sympathetic towards us students. I like that she wrote out her notes. She interacted with us. I have another one that I remember well and she was very calm and I appreciate that. She would stay calm and that would keep the classroom calm. Very important because these two instructors were very approachable and very available, they were calming, they were willing to interact, talk, take the time, they made that known.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“The ones that I considered the best, there wasn't an implied barrier between faculty member and student. Removing that barrier that they were at a higher level than you made you feel more comfortable asking questions, made you feel more comfortable challenging them when they said something that you have evidence for</p>
--	--

	<p>like from another class or from another source that contradicts that. Their response to being criticized and challenged...it was just open communication. There was never a sense of how dare you challenge me kind of thing. They were just very relatable. They kind of talked to you at your level even though they were an expert and you knew that they knew their stuff really well, they never beat you over the head with it, never made you feel inferior in any way.” (Participant 8)</p>
<p>Previous Instructor Influence (Unique responses)</p>	<p>“There was a sense of arrogance but it wasn’t an arrogance about ‘I’m better than you’ but more about I have the information and the skills and if you want it I’ll give it to you, but you have to work for it. And, that resonated with me. I have adopted and implemented some of his tools and approaches - we are all shaped by people that teach us at some point.” (Participant 4)</p>



<p>Previous Experience Reflection</p>	<p>“I like the hands on and I can actually demonstrate a lot of that material in the classroom.” (Participant 1)</p> <p>“That kind of interaction with the instructor is important for me. I responded better to that as a student and enjoy it more as an instructor. The intellectual challenge of being able to explain that material and do so in a way that makes sense for the students is one of the reasons I enjoy teaching those classes. I feel like they can be more effective.” (Participant 6)</p> <p>“It’s that point where you break through their resistance to learning those new skills where they actually see the usefulness of those skills. It’s like when a student has that kind of Aha moment...that is where you got through to them and they understand why they need to do these things. That is very enjoyable.” (Participant 8)</p>
---------------------------------------	--

“One of the things that makes it difficult for me is that I have not had a lot of exposure to those types of classes. After a number of years of teaching this class, I have figured out ways to bring in themes and talk about how the field of knowledge has progressed in different areas of biology historically. I’ve found things that seem to work in the course but still feel like I’m not as effective in terms of presenting the material and maybe it’s because I’m not as confident in my knowledge of the material as I would be in some other classes. There are places in the class where I kind of hit my stride and there are places where I think that this isn’t going where I’d like it to go.”

(Participant 6)

“Part of the reason that I don’t think that I enjoy it as much is that there is just too much to cover.” (Participant 8)

“Collaboration and formal and informal research are important.” (Participant 4)

	<p>“I try to keep up with education research and pedagogy.” (Participant 5)</p> <p>“Whatever students are telling me is one of the most important things.” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“I have made several adjustments to my class based on SOIs. I have learned a lot about my classroom from them. When there are suggestions that come from an honest place I really do try and incorporate it into the class and it has made my teaching a lot different than it was when I started and most of that is from the suggestions that I get from SOIs.” (Participant 7)</p> <p>“I think first is confidence. Another thing is knowledge um of course of the you know when you start teaching it every year your knowledge of the material um but also too, how to handle classroom management, how to handle students, and different situations. I can pick up on those key components student needs and student</p>
--	--

	<p>learning problems or issues and then also definitely classroom management.”</p> <p>(Participant1)</p> <p>“I am more comfortable so I can be a little more relaxed and that allows me to... I don’t feel so stiff as I did in the beginning. And I can get more creative...I’m more comfortable with the material and delivery and so it’s easier to incorporate um other ways of learning I guess.” (Participant 2)</p> <p>“I am simply more relaxed and flexible now because I am more comfortable with what I do. I want to make things work for my students and the departmental stuff will take care of itself. I’m much more comfortable with a “fly by the seat of my pants” and try something and if it works it works and if it doesn’t it doesn’t.”</p> <p>(Participant 3)</p> <p>“It has definitely changed a lot. On my year one, besides having a large class that wasn’t easy, I think I was expecting too much from students because I was coming</p>
--	--

	<p>from a post-doc position, strictly doing scientific research only. I was used to a higher level of thinking. I didn't have a feel or knowledge of what an undergraduate student could understand. Throughout the years I improved the clarity of my explanations and learned how to break down complex subjects, which is one of my strengths now, according to students' SOIs." (Participant 5)</p> <p>"I cringe when I think about my poor students back as a graduate instructor and what that class must have been like because today I think I totally failed those students as in I must have been terrible because I know so much more now." (Participant 7)</p> <p>"I guess it's changed from the standpoint of it became less information or material focused and more student focused. Now year one of teaching was all about the information that was being conveyed and</p>
--	--

	<p>you have to give them everything so the amount of information became more important than whether students are actually understanding what you are telling them. I was overly concerned with that and also kind of concerned with students liking me. I wanted students to have a good opinion of me. I don't really care if a student likes me or not and part of that reasoning is that because it's not my job to get you to like me. My focus becomes on making sure that students learn, that students get the information.”</p> <p>(Participant 8)</p>
<p>Previous Experience Reflection</p>	<p>“The key is can we all develop our own teaching style along the way. I think I have done some of that.” (Participant 4)</p> <p>“I tell students in all of my classes that you will have questions that I will not know the answer to and I will tell you that I don't know but I'll try and find out for you. I don't know everything, I don't pretend to know everything, it's not my</p>

	<p>job to know everything. I just don't do that. I dislike it immensely when someone deflects a question because they view it as I can't let this person know that I'm not as superior as I think I am so I'm just going to make up an answer and talk over their head." (Participant 8)</p> <p>"I don't agree with just a cut-and-paste from pedagogical literature to your classroom, you really have to have a critical eye based on your experiences. You always have to adapt it to fit the needs of your students, and to your teaching style and personality." (Participant 5)</p> <p>"One thing that I do, and this can be tough for me sometimes, is I never make any decision on an "in of one occurrence." When I think there is a problem with the course, I don't make an immediate change in the semester that it occurs. I see if it happens the following semester. It could be the students or me so I try and not have</p>
--	--

	<p>a knee jerk reaction to instructional decisions. The other thing that I do is usually because a lot of times it's in a few of the classes an underlying technical component that overlaps several classes. When I make an instructional change in one course, I'll also pilot it in others to find out if it's benefiting all students or was it something with this particular occurrence...an anomaly." (Participant 8)</p> <p>"You learn a lot each semester." (Participant 2)</p> <p>"The reality is that we will probably feel the same way ten years from now about the students we are teaching today. It really is a process of evolution that has yet to stop. I assumed that as a graduate student that at some point you would get to the point where you just knew how to do it...but it really isn't like that...you are always changing things, new options, new technology, new literature...it really</p>
--	--



	<p>doesn't stop with the way that you structure things." (Participant 7)</p> <p>"How well you make adjustments and that can result in how successful or unsuccessful you are." (Participant 8)</p>
--	--

Several faculty members indicated their previous instructors influenced their instructional decision making. The influences of previous instructors were based in some way on factors such as personality, classroom management styles, and faculty-student relationships and interaction. Participants in the study made it clear their previous instructors impacted their current instructional decision and style in some positive way. That being said, participants in the study also provided behaviors of previous instructors that could be seen as a way to not manage a classroom or as a way to not base an instructional style.

A few faculty members revealed their previous instructors directly impacted their instructional style. One indicated she learned to teach based on how their previous instructor taught, and she strives to teach the way in which they were taught. A second faculty member indicated she emulates her previous instructors' instructional and classroom management style as a way to honor them because their previous instructors knew what makes an effective college experience. A third faculty member revealed he patterns most of his thinking when it comes to how to manage a class on their previous instructor. The same instructor indicated when he goes back and thinks about his undergraduate classes and the elements of those classes that made them so interesting, it

all goes back to the instructor and their instructional style and classroom management style.

A faculty member in nursing revealed that previous instructors who were stricter and more stern were influential in that students knew the expectations, guidelines, and policies for the class. These elements were not gray. The instructional and classroom management styles were also very on target and prevented distractions from becoming issues within the course. A faculty member in psychology had a very similar impression from a previous instructor who was very tough on students, had high standards for the class and the students, but was still considered a positive influence as an instructor. She revealed many of her previous instructors also had very clear expectations and students were made aware from the very beginning that nothing but the best was going to be expected. The same faculty member indicated her best previous instructor's instructional style involved skill instruction but it was the student's job to develop the skill set and there was a very low tolerance, if any tolerance for the student not putting in the time. A faculty member in biology indicated a previous instructor who was very influential was so because the instructor had the students' attention and would command their attention in an informal and approachable manner.

A faculty member in history had an interesting perspective. He indicated the instructors who had a significantly positive impact on him were not the ones that would traditionally be thought of as the best instructors by most others. The faculty member revealed his favorite instructors came to class, gave a compelling narrative about a given subject with interesting analysis, and whose instructional style allowed for continued learning of the subject matter outside of the class.

Several faculty members indicated the previous instructors who had dynamic and positive influences over their instructional styles were those instructors whose personality characteristics resonated with students. A faculty member in healthcare revealed the types of instructional qualities found in previous instructors who influenced her from an instructional standpoint. The previous instructor was available, approachable, was sympathetic towards students, always remained calm, and always took the time to interact with students. A faculty member in history pointed out a previous instructor's willingness to share a great deal about themselves with the class, including elements related to their personal lives, personal passions, and personal interests. The faculty member revealed a unique perspective about the influence of the previous instructor. She stated the instructor's instructional style was based on sheer and unbridled enthusiasm. An example of the instructional style being based on sheer and unbridled enthusiasm was made evident when classroom instruction would get behind and it was going to be impossible to cover everything in the syllabus, the previous instructor's response indicated that they did not care about not covering everything because a good time was being had by all in the class, though provoking stories were being told, and the class as a whole was following along and enjoying themselves. Instructional styles were also influenced by previous instructors' abilities to infuse humor and anecdotal elements, along with factual elements into the lesson.

A faculty member in psychology provided a unique perspective in terms of previous instructors who positively influenced their instructional style. The instructor he considered to be highly influential was thought to be so because there were no implied barriers between faculty and staff. The removal of these barriers made students feel

comfortable asking questions, even questions that might challenge something provided to the class by the instructor. The previous instructor did not see questions and being challenged by students as criticism, but instead, viewed this as just a means of open communication which allowed students to feel as though they were more on the level with the instructor instead of feeling a sense of inferiority in any way. A second faculty member in psychology also had a unique perspective regarding a previous instructor's style positively influencing her instructional decisions. The instructor was said to have a sense of arrogance that wasn't the typical sense of arrogance resulting in an I'm better than you outcome. The sense of arrogance was more about I have the information and skill set and if you want it, I'll give it to you, but you will have to work for it. The faculty member said she has adopted this instructional approach and implements some of the instructor's tools within their courses. The faculty member pointed out that we are all shaped by people that teach us at some point.

Several faculty members indicated there were previous instructors whose instructional and classroom management style provided examples of how they did not want to develop their own instructional and classroom management styles. Many faculty members revealed behaviors that directly and indirectly impacted the student in terms of relationship and status were instructional behaviors they chose not to imitate. A faculty member in history pointed out she had a previous instructor who walked into class each day and conveyed to the class that they had a superior education. The previous instructor would yell at students who they felt were not making the best decisions regarding the optimal way to prepare for the class. Students unfamiliar with specific jargon and lingo related to the subject matter were picked on and made to feel less than important. A

faculty member in healthcare revealed a similar memory of a previous instructor who entered each class as though they had something to prove and would become almost vindictive when students would call them out for not having provided misinformation, which was common. A faculty member in psychology indicated a former instructor would just start talking over everyone's head when they were asked questions they did not know the answer to and the faculty member described this type of behavior as one he disliked immensely.

These faculty members indicated previous instructors added to their negative impression of productive instruction due in part to the randomness in which information was provided and the strict, extremely formal, and unapproachable methods used. A faculty member in psychology pointed out that the strict and rigid approach used by a former instructor resulted in a great divide in the class between instructor and student. The overbearing, non-approachable, and non-personable approach of the former instructor only added to the great divide. Another faculty member in psychology shared of a former instructor who made building a relationship with students almost impossible and made no effort to connect with students.

Several faculty members pointed out that former instructors provided additional examples of how instructional decision should be made based on questionable understanding of the subject matter and the presentation of the subject matter. One faculty member in psychology revealed that a previous instructor covered only about 25% of the material at best which made the class feel more like an independent student course because actually attending the class was a complete waste of time. Time would have been better spent staying away from class and reading the assigned material.

Another faculty member in psychology had similar experiences in which the students, in essence, taught themselves the material because of the particular presentation format of the class. Course content and exam items were not updated to reflect current trends and application of the material. A faculty member in biology shared an experience with a former instructor who, in the opinion of the students, had no idea what they were actually teaching about. There was no real point to even being in the course and the fact the instructor had a disinterested attitude about being in the class provided additional examples of instructional styles to avoid. Interestingly, a faculty member in healthcare had an instructor whose lack of interest and unprofessional demeanor related to course content turned students off because in their opinion, they did not take their job seriously.

A few faculty members had interesting comments related to the influence of previous instructors on their instructional decision making. A faculty member in the history discipline revealed he practiced voice cadences so they could provide information in a way that was as compelling as some of their instructors were. A faculty member in psychology pointed out she tried to take all the things out of the faculty they liked as an undergraduate and incorporate them into their instructional style.

Influences on undergraduate faculty instructional decisions was also based on the reflections of the faculty's previous experience. The previous experiences were based on previous experiences as a student or as a faculty member. Previous experiences as a student included both positive and negative experiences, while previous experiences as a faculty member focused current and past instructional decisions and classroom management styles. Faculty members provided insight into the types of classes they enjoy teaching, as well as classes they would rather not teach. Faculty members also

revealed methods they currently use to assess and expand their instructional decision making, as well as a reflection on how they have evolved as an undergraduate faculty member from their year one of teaching.

Faculty members in healthcare indicated they thoroughly enjoyed the hands-on component of their courses. They pointed out that the hands-on component of the classes decreased the monotony of the lecture portion, while allowing a much better understanding of the knowledge base and skills sets needed to provide patient care. The hands-on practice actually made learning more fun. One of the faculty members in healthcare mentioned her classroom experience as a student actually resulted in them adopting a lot of hands-on demonstrations of material in their class as a faculty member. Interestingly, a faculty member in psychology found hands-on courses were extremely enjoyable because they allowed students to learn new skills in unique ways.

Several faculty members indicated their instructional style was influenced based on how impactful they are on the students, which included the level of student interaction within the course. A faculty member in history indicated she considers a class to be productive based on the sort of reaction they get from students. Students tend to react better and focus more on the elements of the class when students react well to the course and seem engaged. A faculty member in psychology pointed out when she can see students enjoying a class, it is a good class. Interestingly, this faculty member also loved to see students appear clueless because she sees it as an opportunity to help students connect conceptually with an idea. She revealed a specific type of reaction that indicated students were engaged in the learning process and this occurred when they see the students remark “oh wait does that mean,” and this is where application begins to happen.

Faculty members in both psychology and biology indicated they respond better and enjoy being an instructor more when there was the intellectual challenge of being able to explain material in a way that made sense to students, and the students enjoyed the challenges. They also point out that when they were able to break through the resistance of learning new skills and when students were actually able to see the usefulness of the knowledge and skills. A faculty member in psychology found instruction enjoyable when students had an Aha moment where a breakthrough occurred because it was at that moment when he knew he had gotten through to them.

A lack of knowledge of course material and the complexity of courses were found to be reasons for faculty members to not be confident and comfortable with instructional decisions within specific courses. A faculty member in healthcare indicated the complexity of courses impacted how she attempted to provide student instruction. She indicated it was extremely difficult to find a way in which students could understand the material because of the complexity of the course. A similar response was provided by a faculty member in biology. He indicated a lack of exposure to the content needed to successfully provide instruction was difficult, especially when it was a new course that was needed to be taught. He pointed out that after several years of teaching the class, he believes his instructional style finally became effective. Interestingly, a faculty member in psychology indicated his instructional style suffered when there was just too much information to cover in the course. Deciding what to include and what to leave out could be very difficult causing the course not to be enjoyable.

Several faculty members indicated a lack of student engagement, enthusiasm, and comprehension impact their instructional decisions. A faculty member in history



struggled when students lacked enthusiasm and were not able to comprehend the material effectively and efficiently. She indicated her initial response was to change something about her instructional style. If the students lack engagement then she focuses on what changes in her instructional decisions need to be made to draw them out and get them to be more engaged. A faculty member in psychology had an interesting perspective. She developed her instructional decisions based on questions of am I getting the student where they need to be in preparation for where they are going. Do my instructional decisions provide enough foundational information and structure to learn the material or is it learn it and then brain dump?

Faculty were asked how their instructional decisions were assessed, developed, and modified. Several faculty members indicated multiple elements that influenced the development or altered their instructional decision making. Two faculty members indicated they were taking instructional technology course to understand how to provide better instruction to student in the healthcare discipline as the student learning environment incorporates more online types of instructional and learning components. Faculty across several disciplines indicated the influence of current instructional and pedagogical literature and research on their instructional decisions. National and international conference provided an opportunity to discover the newest elements to infuse best practices into the classroom setting. Interestingly, a faculty member in history incorporates ongoing self-improvement on a daily or weekly basis as a means of developing and modifying their instructional decisions.

Faculty indicated assessments and modifications of their instructional decisions came through review of Student Opinions on Instruction available at the end of each

semester, as well as reviewing the statistics from exams given over the semester. Two faculty members indicated they base modifications of their instructional decisions on student suggestions. They pointed out they listen to what student tell them about their feels regarding the course. They did indicate that when students provide sound, honest suggestions, they try to incorporate as many of the changes as possible.

Faculty were asked how their instructional decision making has changed since their year one of teaching. Multiple faculty members indicated they were much more confident and relaxed now than in their year one. They indicated they were more comfortable with material because they had been teaching it for several years and were able to present it using more creative instructional methods when needed. Knowledge of material and understanding specific material that is most important for student success increased. A faculty member in biology revealed his instructional decisions had become more philosophical and he was able to draw on previous years of instruction to find more meaningful methods of instructions. The same faculty member pointed out that he was more comfortable in terms of their pedagogy. A faculty member in history indicated her instructional decisions revolve more around things that work for her students, instead of things that work best for the department.

A faculty member in biology indicated her instructional decisions when she began teaching did not consider the level of student comprehension and understanding. As she has reflected on her early years of teaching, she revealed she expected too much from students and did not have a feel or understanding of what an undergraduate student could understand. Her understanding of a lack of undergraduate knowledge was based on the fact that she began teaching right after leaving a post-doc position, which was highly

scientific and research based causing them to be more accustomed to a higher level of thinking. A faculty member in psychology also indicated he had a misunderstanding of the knowledge level of undergraduate students. Early in his teaching career, he was all about conveying an enormous amount of information to students and did not focus on whether the students were able to understand or comprehend so much information. The focus shifted over time and now the goal becomes more about making sure the students actually learn the material they have been given.

Several faculty members revealed unique perspectives on how their previous experiences influence their instructional decision making. A faculty member in biology indicated she does not agree with a cut and paste from pedagogical literature approach. She believes a critical eye based on one's own experience is essential. She pointed out that an instructor has to adapt to fit the needs of the student and this adaptation includes their teaching style and personality. A faculty member in psychology discipline had an interesting take on previous personal experience influences on instructional decisions. He indicated his decisions are never based on a single occurrence. Immediate changes are not made in order to better understand the cause of the problem. He revealed that when an instructional change was made in one class, the change will be piloted in other courses to see if benefits are specific to a course or courses across the spectrum. A faculty member in history had an interesting perspective. He indicated he will probably always feel the way he did during his first year of teaching because the type of student that we teach is constantly changing, as well as the methods that need to be used in order to teach an ever-changing student population. A faculty member in psychology simply stated how well you adjust can result in how successful or unsuccessful you are.

### *Summary*

Understanding how faculty in higher education make instructional decisions without formal pedagogical training required analysis of the data collected from the interview process. The interview process began with an interview of eight undergraduate faculty members teaching from within four specific disciplines: biology, healthcare, history, and psychology. The experience level of the participants ranged from two years to 27 years. Participants were provided with a series of interview questions, most of which provided specific information needed to answer one of the three research questions. Interview questions provided specific answers and participants' answers were then analyzed to determine common elements, themes, and categories. At least two themes were found to address each research question. The first research question for the study was designed to understand how faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their respective field. Clearly established expectations, content geared toward the level of the student, assessment implementation, real-life connections, and critical thinking elements were recognized themes. The second research question for the study was designed to understand how behaviors of undergraduate students impact faculty instructional decision making. Student behaviors and management of student behaviors were recognized themes. The third research question for the study was designed to understand the influences on instructional style and decision making. Previous instructor influences, both positive and negative, as well as previous experience reflections were recognized themes. Data analysis of participants' answers provided insightful perspective related to each of the three research questions.

## Chapter V

### DISCUSSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter contains an overview of the study. The chapter also contains a section devoted to discussing the findings as it relates to the research questions and the conceptual framework. The chapter further contains significant findings that were found from the data analysis in chapter four. Key findings are linked to the research questions and conceptual framework. In the concluding section, implications to higher education administrators and educational practitioners in higher education provide an understanding for how faculty members in higher education make instructional decisions impacting the classroom instruction, management, and student learning. Additionally, recommendations for future research are presented to offer alternative research options related to faculty instructional decisions impacting classroom instruction, management, and student learning in higher education.

The purpose of this study was to understand the role of personal and professional experiences that influence pedagogical decisions of university faculty. Sorcinelli (2007) inferred that faculty members need to learn how to develop a better understanding of how learning occurs in their classrooms. The author indicated faculty have no formal training on how to implement and assess the techniques available to better understand the learning processes within their classrooms. Sorcinelli (2007) provided an opportunity to understand pedagogical influences and strategies. My study examined the prior experiences and preexisting knowledge of university instructors that influence their instructional decision making. My study provided an understanding of how university

instructors from academic fields of biology, healthcare, history, and psychology make instructional decisions directly related to the learning environment and classroom management.

### *Overview*

Participants in this study all reported little to no formal pedagogical training at any level of their academic preparation. This aligns with Jensen (2011) who indicated that faculty within institutions of higher education do not have the same standard of pedagogical preparation as primary and secondary teachers. Jensen (2011) also revealed that faculty without formal pedagogical preparation can lack the ability to understand the fine elements of knowledge acquisition that are essential for academic success.

Oleson and Hora (2014) indicated there is limited understanding of the origins of instructor knowledge regarding teaching, and the role that prior experiences played in establishment of their instructional practices. This study provided an understanding of the prior experiences, cognitive processes, and learning models that influence the ways in which university faculty teach.

A qualitative study was conducted using a basic interpretive study. Qualitative studies recognize the meaning and beliefs of the participants are a major part of what the qualitative researcher wants to understand (Maxwell, 2013).

Purposeful sampling was used to answer the research questions. The sample for this study included a total of eight faculty members that teach undergraduate major courses. Two faculty members were chosen from each of the following undergraduate majors: history, nursing, sociology, and biology. All participants were from the same

four-year public university in the Southeast. Gender, race, and ethnicity were not considered part of the criteria for sample selection.

The following research questions guided the study:

1. How do faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their field?
2. In what ways do the behaviors of undergraduate students impact instructional decision making?
3. What influences instructional style and decision making of faculty teaching undergraduate courses?

The next section is a discussion of the emergent themes linked to current literature.

#### *Discussions of Themes and Conceptual Framework*

The themes in the study were generated from analysis of the interview responses that aligned with the research questions. A total of nine emergent themes were identified from the data analysis transcripts. After themes were established for the three research questions, each theme was aligned with one or more elements of Bandura's social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986) and of preexisting knowledge systems (Schoenfield, 2000).

The following discussion focuses on the significant themes that emerged from the study. The themes align with the three guiding research questions and strategically include the aforementioned elements of the conceptual framework, Social Cognitive Theory and Preexisting Knowledge Systems. Relevant literature is discussed to methodically connect the study's findings with existing literature.

### *Discussion and Key Findings*

Undergraduate faculty are tasked with designing and implementing a high quality and diverse learning environment. Lemberger, Brigman, Webb, and Moore (2011-2012) indicated there is mounting pressure to improve student academic success by addressing the learning environment in higher education classrooms. Undergraduate faculty in higher education tend to bring a specific level of expertise to their respected discipline. We know that undergraduate instructors tend not to have the same level of formal pedagogical training, if any, as their counterparts in elementary and secondary schools. Participants in this study did not have a significant level of formal pedagogical training. Each participant was identified as a worthy participant by their respected department head or dean. Because they were identified as quality faculty members in the classroom by their respected department head or dean, without significant formal pedagogical training, the following questions were asked: 1) How do faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their field? 2) In what ways do the behaviors of undergraduate students impact instructional decision making? 3) What influences instructional style and decision making of faculty teaching undergraduate courses?

The first research question provided insight from the participants based on what they thought influenced effective instructional decision making. In order to explore the perceptions of faculty on what influenced their pedagogy, the second question provided insight from the participants based on what they thought deterred instructional decision making and how those deterrents were managed. Oleson and Hora (2014) indicated that university faculty are constantly being evaluated on the types of teaching methods they



implement in the classroom environment; however, faculty are often unable to provide a rationale for specific methods because so many different elements, including a lack of formal pedagogical preparation, influence their teaching methods. Expanding on Oleson and Hora's (2014) study, the third research question provided insight from the participants based on the influences of previous instructors and their own previous teaching experiences on their instructional decision making.

#### *Discussion of Research Question One*

Research question one asked how do faculty in higher education describe an effective undergraduate course in their field? This aligns with a study conducted by Anderson, Hunt, Powell, and Dollar (2013), to understand students' perspectives on the relationship between instructor transparency and active learning. Their study indicated that transparency involved a teaching style with the following two elements: provides students with a clear understanding of the lesson plan used by the instructor; provides students with specific information regarding how those choices are related to course goals. In this study several themes provided insight into understanding how faculty in undergraduate courses describe an effective course in their field. The themes provide an understanding, from multiple perspectives, on the importance and relevance of specific instructional methods. Clearly established expectations, content geared toward the level of the study, assessment implementation, real life connections, and critical thinking elements were themes used by the participants to describe an effective undergraduate course in their field. It was clear the faculty in this study had some understanding of a competent and effective teaching in spite of a lack of specific and formal pedagogical training.

### *Clearly Established Expectations*

Three of the eight faculty, including two teaching history revealed the need to incorporate clearly established expectations into their courses. The need for well-defined learning objectives and outcomes, along with basic information, concepts and vocabulary. They felt students needed to understand basic and advanced course information and understand the learning criteria for the course they were taking.

### *Content Geared Toward the Level of the Student*

Four faculty members from history and psychology indicated students taking entry-level courses in the discipline or students taking courses in the discipline as a part of the core curriculum should cover information with little depth and breadth when compared to students taking courses in the discipline as a part of the actual major. Upper-level courses should cover information with significantly more depth and breath, as well as a higher level of analysis and understanding of the information and how the material relates to the literature related to the discipline. For students majoring in the discipline taking one and two thousand level courses, these courses should prepare them for what to expect when advance material in upper level courses are provided. Understanding the level of the breadth and depth needed by undergraduate students for the specific course and understanding the expectations of the course should not exceed the student's ability, were common sentiments of the participants. Interestingly, while there was a focus on the level of the student, participants did not indicate a great concern for student engagement when making instructional decisions.

### *Assessment Implementation*

Faculty members from psychology and biology found formative and summative assessments of some sort were needed to help ensure the students were adequately understanding the course material. Multi-modal approaches providing additional assessment opportunities to compliment traditional formative and summative assessments was also revealed to be important. The information provided by the participants indicated similar findings to Sorcinelli (2007) who found the need to develop instructional strategies that focus on student-centered teaching was a major challenge for faculty in higher education. The study also indicated that faculty instructional philosophies tend to be based on an approach that is perceived as easiest, most comfortable, or most common for the faculty member. Incorporating critical thinking opportunities provides an opportunity to build on foundational information and knowledge. Implementing critical thinking opportunities into a course in which a high level of skill and knowledge application is needed creates an opportunity to challenge students and assess their level of skill and knowledge application.

### *Real Life Connection*

Faculty across three of the four disciplines revealed the need to incorporate real life and every day connections within course instruction. The participants indicated the incorporation of real life and every day connections were an important part of the informal assessment process. The participants in this study did see value in assessing assimilation and comprehension of material through the use of relatable and everyday life examples. In contrast to the Anderson et al. (2013), study which indicated that most instructors did not measure student performance because the in-class activities were

ungraded which could be related to the instructor's lack of training regarding classroom activity assessment and evaluation. They found that having subject matter relatable to everyday life was found to provide a foundation in which students could relate. Abstract examples which include unknown concepts for students does not allow assimilation and comprehension of the material in the way relatable everyday life examples do.

Sorcinelli (2007) inferred there are many learner-centered teaching strategies, approaches, and philosophies that faculty members could incorporate to some extent within the classroom. The author also found that faculty may tend to stay with a specific instructional approach because they are unsure and uncomfortable with the extensive technological elements that can increase and enhance learner-centered teaching. Although faculty in this study did not speak about technological ways to enhance learner centered teaching, they did identify many strategies and practices that indicated a learner-centered mindset. For instance, understanding the need for scaffolding the depth and breadth of information provided to students.

*Influence of student behavior on pedagogy*

#### *Discussion of Research Question Two*

Research question two asked in what ways do the behaviors of undergraduate students impact instructional decision making? In this study we found themes which provided insight into understanding ways in which behaviors of undergraduate students impact instructional decision making. While common student behaviors were found to impact instructional decision making across all academic fields, management of behaviors was found to be based on elements consisting of both constructive and destructive behavioral management styles influenced by the participants' previous

faculty, as well as, management styles based on personal feelings and beliefs on how student behaviors should be managed. This ties in with a study by Knepp (2012) who indicated students enrolling in institutions of higher education bring new challenges to the classroom, including diverse attitudes regarding higher education, different levels of preparedness, and the inability to take responsibility for their own learning. Knepp's study also revealed that students may have completely different expectations of what their role is within the classroom setting in higher education and feel that their secondary school preparation will be sufficient in higher education. This also aligns with a study conducted by Colbert (2010), who investigated how individual and institutional backgrounds directly and indirectly influence how faculty can recognize the forces that influence student behavior and how the instructor-student relationships can create a more interactive learning environment. This study provided the faculty perspective on student behaviors but more importantly, it incorporates a real-life context regarding study behaviors that may influence faculty to change and choose certain strategies that may impact pedagogy.

### *Student Behaviors*

The study revealed diverse behaviors identified by the participants as being disruptive in nature. Faculty members from various disciplines indicated disruptive behaviors such as students participating in conversations amongst themselves as opposed to focusing on the instructor as a disruptive component in the learning environment. Using phones and other electronic devices for non-class purposes provided an additional disruptive component in the learning environment. Students choosing to simply focus on anything but what is being provided in class was identified as a disruptive behavior

because it typically results in students not following directions, causing them to complain that they are not being provided necessary instruction and material.

### *Student Attributes*

Participants in the study also revealed student attributes related to perceived attitudes or philosophies related to learning. Two faculty members in psychology and one in biology addressed an issue related to student attitudes towards learning. The faculty members found students depth and breadth of learning was based on students expecting faculty members to provide only essential information and to provide the essential information without requiring students to answer questions indicating comprehension of the material. Retaining just enough information to pass the class and not understanding or caring about the usefulness or relevance of the material was found to be typical.

### *Student Attendance*

Participants revealed student attendance influenced instruction and the learning environment. A faculty member teaching history revealed attendance was a major issue influencing the learning environment. Often times students miss so many classes they are not aware of just how much information they have missed and how missing such a large quantity of information influences their ability to connect current information to future information. A faculty member teaching psychology revealed a concept impacting the learning environment. The faculty member indicated some students simply are not prepared for college expectations and the lack of preparedness directly and indirectly influences the learning environment.

### *Management of Behaviors*

The study revealed how faculty members across disciplines structure their courses in order to address the student behaviors influencing and impacting the learning environment. This aligns with Hoffman (2014) who indicated that when students perceived a teacher as being approachable and caring, that the results were increased levels of motivation and enthusiasm towards the area of study and increased enjoyment in the overall learning process.

Distributing information across the entire semester and creating courses capable of adapting to student learning needs were revealed by faculty. Being available to students and creating an environment in which students feel they can ask questions related and unrelated to the course content was revealed by faculty to be essential. Students in undergraduate courses today need support in and out of the classroom and the level of support can vary significantly among students.

Participants in this study revealed how faculty handle students who believe they know more about the course than the faculty member or how faculty handle students who believe their behavior is not a negative influence to the learning environment. This aligns with a study by Umbach and Wawrynski (2005) who indicated faculty behaviors and attitudes have a significant influence on student learning and involvement. Their study revealed that faculty tended to handle these issues by addressing students with respect and in a professional way which typically involves discussing the matter with students in a one-on-one environment. Faculty tended to provide rational and perspective on why the behavior was inappropriate, how it impacting the learning environment for others, and how they could have better handled the situation moving forward. The authors found that

teachers who were characterized as being highly approachable displayed the following traits: knowing a student's name, staying in class to meet a student, verbal greetings to a student, smiling often.

Participants in the study indicated that previous instructors who were disrespectful, demeaning, created a divide between instructor and students, lacked professionalism, and lacked enthusiasm towards the subject matter, were instructors whom they chose not to mirror and chose not to implement those types of behaviors into their courses. This aligns with Hagenauer and Volet (2014) who found that teachers who were characterized as being highly unapproachable displayed the following traits: verbally disrespected a student, missed meetings and office hours, and appeared bored when meeting or conversing with a student.

Faculty indicated addressing behavioral issues with respect and in a nonconfrontational manner has the best chance of correcting the behavior and prevent future disruptive behavior. Getting to know the student, understanding unique qualities of each one, calling them by name, and paying attention to them was revealed by faculty as a behavior management strategy that could positively impact student behavior issues. This aligns with Hagenauer and Volet (2014) who concluded that teachers were considered approachable when they provided a necessary level of support and were considered approachable when the students felt that a high level of trust had been established and that the student simply mattered to the teacher.

This also aligns with a study conducted by Meyers (2009) identified how interaction is crucial dimension to being an effective instructor in higher education. The author's goal with the study was to establish specific elements of interaction that would



address common criticisms and concerns about the interaction styles of faculty in higher education. A list based off of students' top five traits of professors, and a list involving professors top five traits; both lists were prioritized from most important to least important. Myers indicated that students described their top five professor traits as: 1) having realistic expectations of students and being fair; 2) being knowledgeable about the topic; 3) displaying understanding; 4) being approachable and personable; 5) being respectful toward students. Meyers (2009) indicated that professors described their top five professor traits as: 1) being knowledgeable about the topic; 2) being enthusiastic about teaching; 3) promoting critical thinking; 4) being well prepared; 5) being approachable and personable. Creating a respectful relationship with students, understanding the student's level of understanding, and being available to students were also common comments from participants. Several of the participants revealed their teachers were definitely influential factors, good professors really shaped who I am as a teacher, I want to honor and emulate them because I learned how to teach people from them, they had high expectations and would command attention, and they were always available and very approachable were frequently made comments from participants. Being adaptable, responding to students appropriately, and understanding that students needs and situations are different were responses given by participants based on the influences of previous instructors and based on personal experiences from their teaching over several years.

One participant had a unique perspective when it comes to how she approaches student learning and behavior management in the classroom. She stated, "I tend to want

to save the savable and some of them aren't. It's a respect issue. The things that really bother me come down to relationships. It comes down to respect.”

### *Discussion of Research Question Three*

Research question three asked what influences instructional style and decision making of faculty teaching undergraduate courses? The study revealed it was clear their instructional style was influenced by their previous instructors and their own current and past personal experiences. According to participants in this study, the influences that directly guide their instructional decision making were based on their experiences with instructors in their academic journey because their educational preparation did not include any significant pedagogical training to influence their classroom instruction and management. Elements of classroom instruction tend to be designed based on those influences. Their view on what makes an ideal course in their respective field, their preparedness to manage disruptive behaviors that impact the learning environment, and their perspective on their readiness and preparedness to teach undergraduate college courses tended to be reflective of their previous instructor's influences. Learning objectives, goals, understanding criteria for what was need to provide a positive learning environment were used often by participants. Other specific course components were influenced by their experience in similar courses and with previous instructors in their undergraduate courses.

This aligns with Oleson and Hora (2014) whose conducted a qualitative case study to understand instructional decision making and practice within three, large, public research universities, focusing on undergraduate math and science faculty. The researchers found there were four primary types of preexisting experiences that

participants consciously drew upon: 1) experiences as faculty formed their knowledge base; 2) experiences being a former student; 3) non-academic experiences through the influences of familial relationships, consulting with significant others, and being involved with activities outside of the academic realm; 4) as a researcher, faculty could instruct students based on their own findings from personal research which allowed them the opportunity to expose students to the elements of academic research. Oleson and Hora (2014) also found other areas in which faculty could draw experience from included: 1) reflections on feedback from formal and informal student evaluations of the instructor, 2) interactions with other faculty through formal and informal methods, 3) how they learned by reflecting on learning strategies utilized when they were students, 4) how they were taught by reflecting on teaching strategies utilized when they were students. Some of the participants in this study indicated their reflection on their past and current instructional decisions have been based on results from formal student evaluations such as student opinion of instructor surveys, as well as informal student comments in class or in meetings in which students indicated elements of instruction they found either beneficial or non-beneficial.

Typically, instructional decisions are made by formal and informal instruction. In higher education, many faculty do not have formal pedagogical training and instead, rely on informal pedagogical training. For the purpose of this study, informal pedagogical training related to the way faculty base decisions on previous or past experiences which aligns with the following studies. Participants in this study revealed a better understanding and appreciation of what was and was not effective instructional decisions by reflecting on past and current instructional decisions made in their respective courses.

This tends to align with Schoenfield (2009) who indicated faculty's pedagogical techniques and the understanding of subject matter could be greatly influenced by preexisting knowledge systems. Preexisting knowledge systems involve individuals establishing new or enhanced understandings based on previous experiences (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 1999). The authors stated a primary source of association and knowledge structure was an individual's direct experience with the world, especially through an individual's observations of other people's behaviors. While faculty in this study indicated the significant influences of their previous instructors, their ability to again reflect on their own past and current instructional decisions resulted in changes and modifications to their respective courses. This tends to align with information provided by Bransford, Brown, and Cocking.

#### *Previous Instructor Influence*

The participants' influences were revealed to be both positive and negative. Positive in that the participants emulated and incorporated instructional elements of previous instructors into their own instructional decision making. Negative in that the participants made conscious efforts not to include instructional elements of previous instructors into their own instructional decision making. The study aligned with Bandura's social cognitive theory as a framework for explaining how actual classroom and personal experiences inform faculty instructional decisions. The study also aligned with Sugrue (1997) who stated instructor identities could be influenced by previous mentors, family, knowledge of pedagogy, subject matter, and the individual's practical experience from time spent in the classroom.

Participants across the academic fields provided the following positive comments related to the influence of previous instructors on their own personal instructional styles. “My teachers were definitely an influential factor in how I teach now, again what I think really shapes the way I think about things is that I remember all the good professors that I had and I want to emulate them, my main professor was the one I think I pattern most of my thinking...how I manage a classroom.” Additional positive comments related to the influence of previous instructors on their own personal instructional styles included instructors that had stories to tell made learning more satisfying, instructors that provided information by providing it in an interesting and clever way, instructors were stern, and provided clear expectations and their classroom management was very on target, instructors approached the class with a high level of clarity and expectation, instructors would command the students attention but in a way in which they remained funny and approachable, instructors were calming and available, and instructors shared elements of their personal lives and stories, and instructors had unbridled enthusiasm. One participant in the field of psychology revealed the previous instructors that he considered the best were the ones in which there were no implied barriers between faculty and staff, always an open line of communication, and did not mind being challenged by students...never made to feel inferior.

Participants across the disciplines provided the following negative comments related to the influence of previous instructors own their own personal instructional styles. Instructors just wanted to talk about themselves, instructors who picked on students who were not up on the lasted jargon and lingo associated with the subject matter, instructors with a lack of professionalism more interested in befriending students

than actually teaching, instructors who were extremely rigid, disrespectful, and vindictive, and instructors who could not and would not connect with students resulting in a great divide between them and the students. Additional negative comments related to the influence of previous instructors own their own personal instructional styles included instructors who did not know how to manage the classroom and learning environment, instructors who did not give clear assignments, and instructors who left learning up to the students resulting in students questioning the need to attend the class at all.

#### *Previous Experience Reflection*

The participants in the study provided insight into how their experiences undergraduate faculty influence their instructional decision making. This aligns with Austin and McDaniels (2006) who stated that effective faculty engagement involves self-assessment and evaluation of one's own instructional abilities. A lack of formal pedagogical training could impact how faculty self-assess and evaluate their instructional abilities, according to the authors. The author concluded the changing professoriate will directly impact how the entire faculty is developed and sustained, how faculty impact an ever changing and diverse student body, and how faculty development will require a substantial development to address constantly evolving issues such as teaching for student-centered learning, retention, learning technologies, and assessment.

The study also aligns with Tanner and Allen (2006) who found there were no required professional pedagogical training requirements for most if not all faculty in higher education and measurable standards to evaluate quality of instruction was basically non-existent in institutions of higher education. Institutions of higher education

tend to place the responsibility of learning more on the students than faculty. Success and failure within the classroom are more closely tied to student performance and to a much less extent on faculty performance. According to the authors, the incentive to focus on various pedagogical methods by faculty to enhance student learning may be negatively affected due to the fact that the burden of learning in higher education is placed more on the student than the faculty tasked with providing instruction. According to participants, previous experience reflections were influential in how they understand and manage the learning and classroom environment. Many of the participants used previous experience reflections to better understand how and why they use a particular classroom management style or various classroom management styles for certain courses they teach. Comments and phrases such as practicing skills makes learning more fun, seeing a class really excited about a topic they can't wait to jump into and learn more, seeing a student connect conceptually with an idea all of the sudden because of a particular teaching style, and challenging students who resist learning and ultimately have a breakthrough point were reflections that guide and direct instructional decisions. According to participants, additional comments and phrases such as when they are not enthusiastic or having trouble then I think I have to do something different, am I getting the students where they need to be in preparation for where they are going,

### *Implications*

Brownell and Tanner (2012) found that there is a significant disconnect between the training that many postgraduate students receive and their careers. The authors indicated that many graduate students are taught how to conduct research but not how to provide classroom instruction and deal with the various elements that they will find in the

classroom. Participants in this study also mentioned that very little, if any emphasis was placed on pedagogy, with research being the primary focus in their postgraduate studies. There is a need for some level of pedagogical training in postsecondary academic programs when teaching will be an expected part of a future faculty's job description. Tanner and Allen (2006) indicated that while there have been many studies investigating the training of future teaching faculty, the integration of formal pedagogical training initiatives within and across disciplines continues to be an issue in higher education. Although the participants in this study indicated they had little to no formal pedagogical training as a part of their post graduate education, that does not mean that faculty currently teaching in other specific fields of study did not also have a lack of formal pedagogical training as a part of their post graduate education.

The eight-undergraduate faculty provided insightful and informative details concerning how they make instructional decisions in their undergraduate higher education courses without any significant formal pedagogical training at all. The findings of the study add to the current body of literature relating to the impact of faculty instructional styles and decisions and their impact on learning. The findings also contribute to the growing body of literature on preexisting knowledge systems which involves individuals establishing new or enhanced understandings based on previous experiences. Preexisting knowledge systems are also seen as a primary source of association and knowledge structure via an individual's direct experience with the world, especially through an individual's observations of other people's behaviors. The findings also contribute to the influences of faculty's prior experiences on the classroom environment are explained by Bandura's social cognitive theory.



The study has implications for colleges and universities of all sizes. Participants acknowledged the lack of formal pedagogical training played a role in how they determined essential elements needed in course in their respective fields. Participants also acknowledged the lack of formal pedagogical training played a role in understanding what does and does not influence many of the issues they must address in the classroom. For example, understanding how they recognized student behaviors and attributes that influenced their instructional decision making, as well as the management strategies they used in order to create a positive learning environment takes time to master. A participant in the study from the field of biology stated “I started teaching with absolutely no teaching experience, realized pedagogical training and direct experience teaching in classroom is needed to know what works and what doesn’t, and it takes time to acquire that.” Finally, participants revealed the lack of formal pedagogical training influenced their instructional decision making because decisions on what to do and not to do were, to a large extent, based on the influences of their previous instructors and reflections on their current and past instructional decisions.

Participants in this study indicated the importance of having effective course components which included the following: clearly established expectations, content geared toward the level of the student, assessment implementation, and real-life connections, critical thinking elements. The inclusion of these effective course components into their instructional decision making could indicate the understanding of essential and effective instructional methods from undergraduate faculty who were not formally trained to understand the importance and effectiveness of these instructional components. Even though the participants in the study understood the importance of

including effective course components when making instructional decisions without formal pedagogical training, universities need remember that not all faculty will have this level of understanding. Faculty in higher education tend to be hired based on their knowledge and skill set in a specific field. Without formal pedagogical training, it is highly probable that faculty, especially new faculty will not be aware of effective course components that should be included in instructional decision making. There will be a learning curve for faculty to gain this experience over time. Student learning could suffer during this transition period as new faculty learn important instructional decision elements that are often a part of formal pedagogical training. Universities need to provide new faculty with instructional enrichment workshops and resources to reduce and possibly prevent the negative impacts of the learning curve. The focus should be on how to include how to present and assess essential information using diverse methods and techniques that would have been provided had formal pedagogical training been a part of the faculty member's background. Departments and programs within the university need to provide senior faculty mentorships to assist new faculty in understanding the essential and effective elements required when making instructional decisions. Departments and programs would be able to provide more discipline or field of study specific assistance to new or inexperienced faculty members. Understanding of instructional elements that tend to work and not work in a specific field of study could prevent or reduce negative outcomes from a lack of understanding.

The study also revealed participants understood certain student behaviors, student attributes, and student attendance could directly influence the learning environment. Management of specific behaviors and attributes was also revealed by the participants in

the study. The recognition of specific student behaviors and attributes which could directly influence the learning environment could indicate the participants' awareness of such behaviors and the know with all to management such behaviors in a way that could result in a more positive and harmonious learning environment. The diversification of the student body on university campuses continues to evolve. With this continued diversification of the student body, faculty must be more aware of student behaviors and attributes that can not only enhance the learning environment, but also be detrimental to the learning environment. A lack of formal pedagogical training could reduce a faculty member's ability to recognize detrimental student behaviors and attributes until they impact the learning environment in a significantly negative way. Universities must be aware that new faculty, especially faculty that are teaching in higher education for the first time, may lack the ability to identify subtle behaviors that could be detrimental to the learning environment, as well as, methods to manage such behaviors. Universities and departments within the university could provide opportunities for new and inexperienced faculty to discuss typical and atypical student behaviors and attributes, as well as useful management strategies with members from the offices of student success and counseling centers. New and inexperienced faculty could gain tremendous insight from discussions with personnel from these areas.

One of the most insightful components of the study, as indicated by the participants, involved the reflections on the influences the participants' previous instructors had on their instructional decision making. The participants were able to provide insight and examples on the positive and negative instructional influences of their previous instructors. The participants in the study also revealed how their own personal

previous experience as undergraduate instructors influenced their current and future instructional decision making. The recognition that the participants' previous instructors did indeed influence them in some cases, both positive and negative ways could indicate the awareness of constructive and destructive influences. The recognition that their own previous experiences influence current and future instructional decisions could indicate the participants are aware of the need for self-reflection to determine the elements of their instructional style that are and are not working effectively. If new and inexperienced faculty members are hired without significant formal pedagogical training, and if teaching is a primary and significant aspect of the position, universities and departments with the university should ascertain, during the interview process, the following: 1) describe your instructional style; 2) describe your classroom management style; 3) describe your management of student behaviors that could negatively impact the learning environment. Faculty being hired because of their expertise in a specific discipline or field of study and who are expected to provide students with a positive learning experience should have at least some basic foundation related to the elements above. Universities and departments within universities should consider these elements as much as they consider the level of expertise a candidate has when considering them for a true teaching position. Knowledge of subject matter without the knowing and understanding how to best instruct and assess said knowledge could negatively impact the learning environment.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

The study exclusively investigated the experiences of eight undergraduate female and male faculty with no significant formal pedagogical training, teaching in four specific

fields, biology, healthcare, history, and psychology within a four-year state institution. Due to the exclusivity of the study, the following recommendations are made for future research:

1. Purposefully select diverse undergraduate faculty from other fields of study within the same four-year state institution. This study only examined the perceptions of female and male faculty within four specific fields of study. Purposefully selecting undergraduate female and male faculty from other fields of study within the same four-year state institution could potentially triangulate data by comparing themes from additional instructors in different fields of study.
2. Purposefully select diverse undergraduate faculty in similar and different fields of study from four-year state institutions across the state, region, and nation. This study only examined the perceptions of female and male faculty within four specific fields of study. Purposefully selecting undergraduate female and male faculty from similar and different fields of study from four-year state institutions across the state, region, and nation could potentially triangulate data by comparing themes from additional instructors in similar and different fields of study.
3. Investigate students enrolled in undergraduate courses taught by faculty without significant pedagogical training to determine their perspective on faculty instructional decision making. Investigating students' perspectives on faculty instructional decision making could potentially provide insight on the effectiveness of faculty instructional decision making from the student point of view. Analyzing student perspective, along with faculty perspective could help

understand elements of instructional decision making regarding effective course components needed for academic success and classroom management styles needed to develop a highly effective learning environment.

4. Conduct research on the perspectives and outcomes of diverse undergraduate faculty without significant formal pedagogical training who participate in instructional enrichment opportunities specific to their field of study. Many of the participants stated how a lack of formal pedagogical training definitely influenced and impacted how they make instructional decisions. Investigating the impact of participation in instructional enrichment opportunities specific to their field of study could potentially reveal how incorporation of data driven instructional components enhances the perception of how undergraduate faculty view effective course components and behavioral management.
5. Purposefully select students from different sections taught by the same faculty member to determine their perspective on the faculty's instructional style and instructional decisions. This study did not include student perspectives in any way, but instead, focused only on faculty perspectives. Investigating the perspectives of students could provide a better understanding of effective a faculty member's instructional decisions are from the student perspective.
6. Purposefully select diverse faculty members who have no significant pedagogical training to take part in college and university available instructional enrichment activities to determine their perception of how beneficial the instructional enrichment activities are in impacting their instructional decision making. This study did not focus on faculty taking part in college and university available

instructional enrichment activities. This could be beneficial in that it could provide faculty members that were hired with no significant pedagogical training the opportunity to obtain essential instructional decision-making knowledge and skills immediately, instead of relying predominantly on the influence of their previous instructors in their first few years of teaching undergraduate courses.

7. Conduct research to understand the level of importance of quality instruction at research one, comprehensive, and state universities from the viewpoint of administrators. This study did not focus on the importance of quality instruction at various types of universities from administrators' perspectives. This type of study could be beneficial in determining the importance of quality teaching versus knowledge of the subject or discipline.
8. Conduct research to understand the convenience, practical application, and quality of instructional improvement programs provided by the college or university. This study did not focus on faculty's views on the convenience, practical application, and quality of instructional improvement programs. This type of study could be beneficial in determining how likely faculty who have not had significant pedagogical training are to take part in college or university instructional improvement programs.

### *Conclusion*

The instructional needs of institutions of higher education and the students attending these institutions continues to evolve. Undergraduate faculty should have the ability to adapt their courses and the instructional elements associated with those courses to meet institutional and student needs. Instructional decision making by undergraduate

faculty in higher education can directly and indirectly impact the learning environment. Institutions of higher education that focus on teaching and the creation of positive learning environments tend to hire faculty who have a specialty in a specific field of study yet lack the formal knowledge and training on how to best pass on the knowledge and skill set related to their specific field of study to the student body. Brighthouse (2019) indicated that university instructors tend to be compensated more for the research they do as opposed to their teaching and this type of reward system can negatively impact an instructor's view towards the importance of quality teaching.

Undergraduate faculty are being hired to teach yet they have never been formally trained to teach. They are unaware of the instructional instruments available to provide a high quality, effective, and efficient learning environment. This aligns with Sorcinelli (2007) who indicated that because of a lack of formal training, many faculty members are unaware of advanced instructional options such as peer review of teaching, development of teaching and course portfolios, and interdisciplinary collaboration within the course and classroom setting. Sorcinelli (2007) indicated the roles of faculty are in a constant need of evolution to address the ever- changing dynamics of the classroom setting.

Institutions of higher education and students who attend them have certain expectations of the college experience. Academically, institutions of higher education expect faculty to provide high quality, effective, and efficient learning environments. Students attending institutions of higher education expect undergraduate faculty to provide higher quality, effective, and efficient learning environments while at the same time, expecting undergraduate faculty to establish a positive and individualized learning experiences. Richardson and Radloff (2014) conducted a study focused on ways in



which faculty and students engage in collaborative educational relationships that could improve the overall learning experience for the student. Many faculty are more formally trained to provide knowledge about a specific field of study and less formally trained to actually teach.

Baum and McPherson (2019) indicated that addressing the quality of instruction in higher education is at least as important as ensuring college affordability and student success. According to the authors, quality of higher education refers to the following: how the classroom and broader educational environment build student knowledge, add value, and how it can be used to help students approach life. Faculty in higher education tend to teach based on the influences of previous instructors and there tends to be little training or monitoring of instructional effectiveness (Baum & McPherson, 2019).

Brighouse (2019) revealed that faculty who feel they provide at least a level of quality instruction tend to stay in a certain pattern of teaching for prolonged periods of time without realizing the lack of quality instruction that they are actually providing.

This study sought to understand how undergraduate faculty describe elements that influence their instructional decision making. The intent was to better understand how undergraduate faculty from within four specific fields of study, describe an effective undergraduate course in their field. The study was also intended to describe behaviors of undergraduate students impacting instructional decision making. Finally, the study was intended to understand what influences their instructional style and decision making in their undergraduate courses.

Overall, the participants in the study shared similar experiences when describing the different elements of their undergraduate courses. Many of the participants shared

similar experiences when describing what they considered as essential elements in designing effective courses in their field of study. All of the participants affirmed the influence of their previous instructors and the influence of their own past and current teaching methods on their instructional decision making. The lack of formal pedagogical training by all participants compelled many of them to base many of their instructional decision on the influences of their previous instructors and reflections on their experiences from courses they have previously taught. While these influences can provide valuable insight into elements impacting instructional decisions that may or may not work, these influences lack the diverse and time-tested elements used to make sound instructional decisions commonly found through formal pedagogical training. Formal and structured pedagogical training for faculty in higher education should not be less than the training formal and structured pedagogical training primary and secondary teachers receive. Quality of instruction should at least be as important in higher education as it is in primary and secondary schools.

## REFERENCES

- Alsop, E. (2018). Who's teaching the teachers? *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 64, 1-7.
- American Academy of Arts & Sciences. (2017). Strengthen the student educational experience. *The Future of Undergraduate Education*, 8-12.
- Anderson, A. D., Hunt, A. N., Powell, R. E., & Dollar, C. B. (2013). Student perceptions of teaching transparency. *The Journal of Effective Teaching*, 13(2), 38-47.
- Astin, A. (1999). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development*, 40, 518-529.
- Austin, A. E. & McDaniels, M. (2006). *Using doctoral education to prepare faculty to work within Boyer's four domains of scholarship*. Wiley Periodicals.
- Banks, B. J., Slavings, R.L., & Biddle, B.J. (1990). Effects of peer, faculty, and parental influences on students' persistence. *Sociology of Education*, 63, 208-225.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall.
- Bandura, A. (1977). Self-efficacy: Toward a unifying theory of behavioral change. *Psychological Review*, 87(2), 191-215. Retrieved from <https://www.uky.edu/~eushe2/Bandura/Bandura1977PR.pdf>
- Baum, S. & McPherson, M. (2019). Improving teaching: Strengthening the college learning experience. *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 148, 5-13.

- Baumeister, R. F., & Leary, M. R. (1995). The need to belong: Desire for interpersonal attachments as a fundamental human motivation. *Psychological Bulletin*, *117*, 497-529.
- Bean, J., & Eaton, S. (2001-2002). The psychology underlying successful retention practices. *Journal of College Student Retention*, *3*, 73-89.
- Berger, J. B. (2000). Organizational behavior at colleges and student outcomes: A new perspective on college impact. *Review of Higher Education*, *23*, 177-188.
- Berger, J. B. (2001-2002). Understanding the organizational nature of student persistence: Empirically-based recommendations for practice. *Journal of College Student Retention*, *3*, 3-21.
- Bransford, J. D., Brown, A. L., & Cocking, R. D. (Eds.). (1999). *How people learn: Brain, mind, experience, and school*. Washington DC: National Academy Press.
- Brighthouse, H. (2019). Becoming a better college teacher (if you're lucky). *Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, *148*, 14-28.
- Brownell, S. E., & Tanner, K. D. (2012). Barriers to faculty pedagogical change: Lack of training, time, incentives, and...tensions with professional identity. *CBE-Life Sciences Education*, *11*, 339-346.
- Colbert, P. J. (2010). Developing a culturally responsive classroom collaborative of faculty, students, and institution. *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, *3*, 17-25.
- Cotten, S., & Wilson, B. (2006). Student-faculty interaction: Dynamics and determinants. *Higher Education* (*51*), 487-519.

- Cox, B. E., McIntosh, K. L., Reason, R. D., & Terenzini, P. T. (2011). A culture of teaching: Policy, perception, and practice in higher education. *Research in Higher Education, 52*, 808-829.
- Dandy, K. L., & Bendersky, K. (2014). Student and faculty beliefs about learning in higher education: Implications for teaching. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 26*(2), 258-380. Retrived from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1060843.pdf>
- DeNeef, A. L. (2002). The preparing future faculty program: What difference does it make? *Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1-32*.
- Dumford, A. D, Cogswell, C. A., & Miller, A. L. (2016). The who, what, and where of learning strategies. *The Journal of Effective Teaching, 16*, 72-88. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1092706.pdf>
- Dunn, K. A., Hooks, K. L., & Kohlbeck, M. J. (2016). Preparing future accounting faculty members to teach. *American Accounting Association, 31*, 155-170.  
doi:10.2308/iace-50989
- Elci, Al., Beith, L. L., & Elci, At. (2019). *Handbook of research on faculty development for digital teaching and learning*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global.
- Fairweather, J. (2002). The mythologies of faculty productivity: Implications for institutional policy and decision making. *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*, 26-48.
- Faranda, W. T. (2015). The effects of instructor service performance, immediacy, and trust on student-faculty out-of-class communication. *Marketing Education Review, 25*, 83-97.

- Ferrare, J. J., & Hora, M. T. (2014). Cultural models of teaching and learning in math and science: Exploring the intersections of culture, cognition, and pedagogical situations. *Journal of Higher Education, 85*, 792-825.
- Frisby, B. N., Berger, E., Burchett, M., Herovic, E., & Strawser, M. G. (2014). Participation apprehensive students: The influence of face support and instructor-student rapport on classroom participation. *Communication Education, 63*, 105-123.
- Gopal, A. (2011). Internalization of higher education: Preparing faculty to teach cross-culturally. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education, 23*, 373-381.
- Hagenauer, G., & Volet, S. E. (2014). Teacher-student relationship at university: An important yet under-researched field. *Oxford Review of Education, 40*, 370-388.
- Hay, D., Kinchin, I., & Lygo-Baker, S. (2008). Making learning visible: The role of concept mapping in higher education. *Studies in Higher Education, 33*(3), 295-311. doi:10.1080/03075070802049251
- Hoffman, E. M. (2014). Faculty and student relationships: Context matters. *College Teaching, 62*, 13-19.
- Jensen, J. L. (2011). Higher education faculty versus high school teacher: Does pedagogical preparation make a difference? *Perspectives, 37*, 30-36.
- Kay, D., & Kibble, J. (2016). Learning theories 101: Application to everyday teaching and scholarship. *Advances in Physiology Education, 40*, 17-25. doi:10.1152/advan.00132.2015

- Knepp, K. A. F. (2012). Understanding student and faculty incivility in higher education. *The Journal of Effective Teaching, 12*, 32-45.
- Kuh, G. D. (1995). The other curriculum: Out-of-class experiences associated with student learning and personal development. *Journal of Higher Education, 66*, 123-155.
- Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the National Survey of Student Engagement. *Change, 33*(3), 10-17.
- Kuh, G. D. & Hu, S. (2001). The effects of student-faculty interactions in the 1990s. *The Review of Higher Education, 24*, 309-332.
- Lemberger, M. E., Brigman, G., Webb, L., & Moore, M. M. (2011-2012). Student success skills: An evidence-based cognitive and social change theory for student achievement. *Journal of Education, 192*(2-3), 89-99.
- Lukowiak, T., & Hunzicker, J. (2013). Understanding how and why college students engage in learning. *The Journal of Effective Teaching, 13*, 44-63. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1092152.pdf>
- Marsh, H. W., & Hattie, J. (2002). The relationship between research productivity and teaching effectiveness: Complementary, antagonistic, or independent constructs? *The Journal of Higher Education, 73*, 49-73.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- McDaniel, K. N. (2014). Read long and prosper: Five do's and don'ts for preparing students for college. *The Clearing House, 87*, 83-87.

- McKee, C. W., & Tew, W. M. (2013). Setting the stage for teaching and learning in American higher education: Making the case for faculty development. *New Direction for Teaching and Learning*, 133, 3-14. doi: 10.1002/tl.20041
- Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2016). *Qualitative Research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, California: Jossey-Bass.
- Micari, M. & Pazos, P. (2012). Connecting to the professor: Impact of the student-faculty relationship in a highly challenging course. *College Teaching*, 60, 41-47.
- Myers, S. A. (2009). Do your students care whether you care about them? *College Teaching*, 57, 205-210.
- O'Keefe, P. (2013). A sense of belonging: Improving student retention. *College Student Journal*, 47, 605-613.
- Oleson, A., & Hora, M. T. (2014). Teaching the way they were taught? Revisiting the sources of teaching knowledge and the role of prior experience in shaping faculty teaching practices. *Journal of Higher Education*, 68, 29-45.
- Ololube, N. P., Kpolovie, P. J., & Makewa, L. N. (2015). *The handbook of research on enhancing teacher education with advanced instructional technologies*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global.
- O'Reilly-Knapp, M. (1994). Reports by baccalaureate nursing students of social support. *Image*, 26, 139-142.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.



- Ravitch, S. M., & Riggan, M. (2017). *Reason and rigor*. Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, Inc.
- Richardson, S. & Radloff, A. (2014). Allies in learning: Critical insights into the importance of staff-student interactions in university education. *Teaching in Higher Education, 19*, 603-615.
- Robinson, T. E., & Hope, W. C. (2013). Teaching in higher education: Is there a need for training pedagogy in graduate degree programs? *Research in Higher Education, 21*, 1-11.
- Santos, I. M., Ali, N., Areepattamannil, S. (2019). *Interdisciplinary and international perspectives on 3D printing in education*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global.
- Schoenfeld, A. H. (2000). Models of the teaching process. *Journal of Mathematical Behavior, 18*, 243-261.
- Siedman, I. (2006). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, New York: Teachers College Press.
- Shenton, A. K. (2004). Strategies for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research projects. *Education for Information, 22*, 63-75.
- Sorcinelli, M. D. (2007). Faculty development: The challenge going forward. *Peer Review – Emerging trends and key debates in undergraduate education, 9*, 4-8.
- Strauss, L.C. & Volkwein, J. F. (2004). Predictors of student commitment at two-year and four-year institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education, 203-227*.

- Sugrue, C. (1997). Student teacher's lay theories and teaching identities: Their implications for professional development. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 20*, 213-225.
- Tanner, K., & Allen, D. (2006). Approaches to biology teaching and learning: On integrating pedagogical training into graduate experiences of future science faculty. *CBE-Life Sciences Education, 5*, 1-6.
- Umbach, P., & Wawrynski, M. (2005). Faculty do matter: The role of college faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education, 46*, 153-184.
- Voigt, L., & Hundrieser, J. (2008). Student success, retention, and graduation: Definitions, theories, practices, patterns, and trends. *Noel-Levitz Retention Codifications*, 1-22.
- Wang, V. C. X. (2017). *Encyclopedia of strategic leadership and management*. Hershey, Pennsylvania: IGI Global.
- Wilson, R. (2010). Why teaching is not priority number 1. *Chronicle of Higher Education, 1-6*.
- Wyckoff, S. (1998). Retention theories in higher education: Implications for institutional practice. *Recruitment and Retention in Higher Education, 12*(2), 2-7.
- Zentall, T. R., Galizio, M., & Critchfield, T. S. (2002). Categorization, concept learning, and behavior analysis: An introduction. *Journal of Experimental Analysis of Behavior, 78*(3), 237-248. doi:10.1901/jeab.2002.78-23

APPENDIX A:  
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval



APPENDIX B:  
Verbal Consent Script

You are being asked to participate in a qualitative research project entitled “Understanding of How Faculty in Higher Education Make Instructional Decisions Without Formal Pedagogical Training” which is being conducted by Chuck Conner, and I am a doctoral student in the Leadership program at Valdosta State University.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. The research involves a 60-90 minute interview. The interview will be audio recorded. Once the interviews have been transcribed, the audio recording will be destroyed. The transcripts will be stored on a computer and back up drive that are password protected to keep data secure in case of loss or theft. I will be saving transcripts for the designated time frame of three years as required by the IRB. Once that time frame has passed, each of the transcripts will be permanently erased from the secure hard drive.

You will be given a pseudonym to ensure confidentiality. Your name will not appear on any document associated with this study, including the transcription of the recorded interview. Likewise, your institution will remain anonymous.

You may choose not to partake in the interview, to stop responding at any time, or to skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you choose to leave the study, your audio taped conversations, and any written information linking them to the research study will be destroyed/shredded.

You must be at least 18 years of age to participate in this study. Your completion of the interview serves as your voluntary agreement to participate in this research project and your certification that you are 18 or older. You may be contacted after the interview if I have any additional questions to ask relating to your experiences and feedback.

I will give each participant a copy of the following information before beginning the interview: Questions regarding the purpose or procedures of the research should be directed to Chuck Conner and [cconner@valdosta.edu](mailto:cconner@valdosta.edu). This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal Law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concern or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5045 or [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu).

APPENDIX C:

Email Letter to Perspective Participants

Dear / To: Perspective Participant's Name

You are being asked to participate in a qualitative research project entitled "Understanding of How Faculty in Higher Education Make Instructional Decisions Without Formal Pedagogical Training" which is being conducted by Chuck Conner, and I am a doctoral student in the Education Leadership program at Valdosta State University.

The purpose of the study is to understand the role of personal and professional experiences that influence instructional decisions of university faculty. The study will examine prior experiences and preexisting knowledge of university instructors that influence the instructional decisions of faculty.

The data collection procedures will include an individual interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes. Interviews will take place at a time and place that is most convenient to the participant. Pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality.

This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal Law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concern or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5045 or [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu).

I would like to thank you for considering being a participant in this study. I understand that your time is valuable and I will be respectful of that issue. Responses to this email can be directed to me at [cconner@valdosta.edu](mailto:cconner@valdosta.edu) or by calling 229-630-8570. I hope to hear from you within the next five to seven days.

Sincerely,

Chuck Conner  
Doctoral Student – Education Leadership Program  
Valdosta State University



APPENDIX D:

Email Letter to Selected Participants

Dear / To: Selected Participant's Name

Thank you for accepting the invitation to participate in the qualitative research project entitled "Understanding of How Faculty in Higher Education Make Instructional Decisions Without Formal Pedagogical Training." I would like to begin scheduling a day, time, and location that is best for you. As a reminder, the data collection procedures will include an individual interview lasting approximately 60-90 minutes.

As a reminder, the purpose of the study is to understand the role of personal and professional experiences that influence instructional decisions of university faculty. The study will exam prior experiences and preexisting knowledge of university instructors that influence the instructional decisions of faculty.

This study has been exempted from Institutional Review Board (IRB) review in accordance with Federal regulations. The IRB, a university committee established by Federal Law, is responsible for protecting the rights and welfare of research participants. If you have concern or questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the IRB Administrator at 229-259-5045 or [irb@valdosta.edu](mailto:irb@valdosta.edu).

I would like to thank you again for accepting the invitation to be a participant in this study. I understand that your time is valuable and I will be respectful of that issue. Responses to this email can be directed to me at [cconner@valdosta.edu](mailto:cconner@valdosta.edu) or by calling 229-630-8570. I hope to hear from you within the next five to seven days.

Sincerely,

Chuck Conner  
Doctoral Student – Education Leadership Program  
Valdosta State University

APPENDIX E:  
Interview Guide

1. Imagine and describe what an effective undergraduate course in your field looks like to you.
2. In what ways do your undergraduate classes reflect what you just said?
3. What barriers do you face when attempting to implement this type of effective classroom?
4. How do these barriers influence the student learning experience?
5. Describe the undergraduate course that you most enjoy teaching? What makes it the most enjoyable? Was this one of the courses you enjoyed as a student? How did your instructor influence how much you enjoyed the course as a student?
6. Describe the undergraduate course that you least enjoy teaching? What makes it the least enjoyable? Was this one of the courses you least enjoyed as a student? How did your instructor influence how much you least enjoyed the course as a student?
7. How did you become interested in your specific discipline?
8. What factors influenced your decision to teach in higher education?
9. Describe the characteristics of the best instructor/professor that you had as a student.
10. Describe the characteristics of the worst instructor/professor that you had as a student.
11. What student behaviors annoy you and how do you handle those types of students and what is that based on?
12. How do you describe the influences of your instructional decisions on the student learning experience?
13. If you were mentoring a new faculty member, what would you encourage them to do to improve their teaching?
14. What do you base your instructional methodology, classroom management style, and instructor/student relationship on?
15. What do you do to improve your instructional decision making?
16. How has your instructional decision making changed since your year one of teaching?