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EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING MOTIVATION IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

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EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING MOTIVATION
IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS:
A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

by

Kristin Grosskopf

A DISSERTATION

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EXPLORING THE COMPLEXITIES OF LEARNING MOTIVATION
IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS:
A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH

Kristin Grosskopf, Ph.D.

University of Nebraska, 2009

Adviser: Roger Bruning

This qualitative, grounded-theory study investigated learning motivation differences among three achievement groupings of undergraduate students enrolled in the College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Nine students participated in in-depth interviews that explored their reasons for pursuing their degree, their learning experiences in a university setting, their perceptions about meaningful learning experiences, and the nature of factors that both enhance and challenge their learning motivation. Participant responses conveyed strategies and conditions that were coded and analyzed, and a theoretical model was developed describing causal conditions that underlie students' motivation to learn, phenomena that arose from those conditions, contexts that influenced learning motivation, intervening conditions that influenced the development of learning motivation, actual study and coping strategies, and consequences of context and specific strategies. Subcategories of each component of the theoretical model were identified and illustrated by narrative data. Implications for learning motivation research and instructional practice extended Dweck's (2000) self-theories construct. Mastery learning was more likely to occur when content was perceived to be related to career goals, and higher achievers tended to exhibit a greater facility for multiple perspective-taking.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This qualitative, grounded theory study explored the reasons students provided for their motivation to learn. It also sought to uncover what differences and similarities might exist among students with varying levels of academic performance. Qualitative research can bring to light meanings people assign to their experiences; and illuminate the causal connections individuals make between the environment and their actions on it. A qualitative study was conducted because qualitative approaches offer the potential for garnering the experiences and perceptions of individuals, such that the data comprise the exact words used by the people who are the research participants (Creswell, 2007; Hoshmand, 1989). In general, qualitative research refers to studies that produce findings not determined by statistical procedures or other means of quantification; such research entails an attempt at "...understanding individuals' lives, stories, and behaviors, but can include interactional relationships and organizational functioning" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 17). Grounded theory is one kind of qualitative approach. In a grounded theory study, the intent is "to move beyond description (as in phenomenology, or case studies), and to generate or discover a theory" (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). The principal idea is that a resulting theory is generated or grounded in data from participants who have experienced the process or phenomenon of interest. In the present study, a grounded theory approach was used to examine the perceptions of students in a college setting regarding the factors motivating academic performance and reasons for learning. An additional goal of this study was to formulate a theoretical model that would identify and describe these factors.

The field of motivation is enormous; many theories have proliferated over the past half century. Theories on the topic of motivation were so numerous that some researchers called for some form of unification of theories, both formally and informally.

Although my personal belief is that researchers do talk to people about the subject, do listen to students in order to inform their theoretical perspectives, few qualitative studies have been done when compared to the volume of quantitative studies. The current study attempted to find out what might be uncovered by listening to students speak about their motivations to learn. In addition, I wanted to try this methodology.

By probing students' views about factors affecting the goals they have chosen in college environments, variables affecting their college success, and their perspectives about their own levels of performance, the study has the potential for expanding our understanding of the current knowledge about learning motivation among pre-service teaching students. Since a grounded theory approach can extend an existing theory or identify a new theory of learning motivation, the current study also has the potential for contributing to current views regarding the nature of the learning motivation among a particular sample of college students.

A huge number of studies conducted in the past half century, the majority of them quantitative, have explored the factors influencing student performance (Bempechat & Elliott, 2002; Turner & Patrick, 2008). Especially prominent have been those that focused on learning motivation and self-regulatory behaviors (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008). The studies have resulted in, or have been accompanied by a host of theoretical constructs developed to help us better understand and characterize student motivation and assess the degrees to which students' achievement may be influenced by learning-related

motivations. Examples of phenomena that have been studied include epistemological beliefs about intelligence (e.g. Dweck & Leggett, 1988), attributions for success and/or failure (e.g. Weiner, 1994), learning goal orientations (e.g. Dweck, 2000; Maehr & Midgley, 1996; Nicholls, 1984), self-efficacy (e.g. Bandura, 1997; Pajares, 2008), goal setting (e.g. Locke & Latham, 2002; Zimmerman, 2008a) and metacognitive awareness about learning processes (e.g. Pintrich, 2000).

Since the 1970s the academic community has attempted to unify many of the theories that had proliferated on the topic of learning motivation (Murphy & Alexander, 2000). Yet by the mid 1990s, the motivation literature continued to be replete with “fuzzy but powerful constructs” (Pintrich, 1994, p. 139). Pintrich at that time argued for the collective research and practical benefits that would be derived from increased specificity and the development of integrative models. He called for a return to the problems of knowledge acquisition, learning, and transfer, a desire that other researchers seemed to share. Murphy and Alexander’s (2000) analysis of the motivational literature resulted in nine terms aligning with motivation: achievement, affect, attribution, self-competence, self-efficacy, goals, engagement, motivation and self-regulation. Subsequently, self-regulation became a leading motivational reference related to the construct of academic achievement or development (Murphy & Alexander, 2000).

There is an impressive list of other learning motivated behaviors that have been and continue to be studied in the field of education. Goal setting is one area that has consistently revealed positive effects both in academic achievement and in work environments (employee performance). Many learning behaviors have been further refined and correlated with achievement, such as specific and proximal goal-setting,

setting challenging goals, attributional feedback, and strategy use (e.g. Bandura, 1986; Locke & Latham, 1990, 2002; Otis, Grouzet, and Pelletier, 2005; Schunk, 2001; Winne, 2001; Zimmerman, 1990, 2008b). A question of interest is whether there is a connection between three prominent streams of motivational research: Dweck's (2002) self-theories as an extension of attribution theory (Dweck & Molden, 2005; Weiner, 1994), and Zimmerman's self-regulated learning, including related goal setting constructs (Zimmerman, 2008b). Dweck and Master (2008) suggest a connection between the self-theories and self-regulated learning construct relative to students' use of learning strategies.

This study attempts to uncover how students' reported experiences may relate to the voluminous studies conducted on the topic. By eliciting students' views regarding their background, their educational experiences leading up to the present, their goals and their recent learning experiences in college, it may be possible to elucidate an existing construct as especially potent or informative currently. This approach begins to address Turner and Patrick's (2008) recommendation for "...better understanding both the *how* and *why* of motivation—how students' motivation is contextualized in particular activities, persons, discourse, and materials at specific places and times, and why it changes" (p. 123). The interview process used allows the opportunity for participants to describe the impact of their history, family, friendship, and classroom contexts. An attempt also is made to allow to emerge, specific student behaviors as responses to specific sets of circumstances, addressing once again, Turner and Patrick's (2008) proposal. Capturing students' subjective experiences, insights and beliefs could either

generate a new theory, or extend an existing theory, both being possible outcomes from conducting a grounded theory study (Creswell, 2007).

The Problem

Multiple researchers have developed constructs relating to learning motivation over the past decades, resulting in a plethora of components believed to impact achievement (e.g. Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Schunk, 1981; Bempechat, London & Dweck, 1991; Greene & Miller, 1996; Locke & Latham, 2002). Bempechat and Elliott (2002) have argued, however, that while such research has been useful in furthering our understanding of various constructs, it has primarily tested logically deduced hypotheses from existing theories. While their approach undeniably has furthered our knowledge about various constructs, Turner and Patrick (2008) also argue that the corpus of motivation research has shortcomings. In their view, it has not adequately yielded explanations about how students think about learning, why they learn, why they choose to allocate energies toward learning when they do, or how their thinking as a whole may be organized. Another author (Rinn, 2005) has claimed that “Very little research exists concerning the academic achievement of college students, separate from research that examines academic achievement in relation to some other construct, such as self-concept or aspirations” (p. 158). This study is an attempt to allow factors contributing to students’ motivation to learn to emerge directly from participants’ reflections, as free as possible from predetermined explanations.

Another concern expressed by Bempechat and Elliott (2002) was that dichotomous conceptual frameworks (e.g. success vs. failure, ability vs. effort, intrinsic vs. extrinsic interest) seem to have dominated research on learning and achievement.

Academicians in the area of cognitive development would likely point out that identifying opposites is necessary in order to then make sense of the gradations between the dichotomies. In actual experience, however, it seems reasonable that "...human learning and achievement experiences rarely involve only these polar opposites" (Bempechat & Elliott, 2002, p. 1). This study attempts to identify whether a single theory adequately describes learning motivations among a specific sample of college students, or if any new phenomena or additional components more completely explain learning motivation.

Bempechat and Elliott (2002) further argue that a significant amount of quantitative research is relatively decontextualized. This means that when theories of achievement and work motivation may be the result of thousands of individuals having completed surveys and questionnaires or are the result of experimentally manipulated environments, it may be difficult to uncover the multitude of possible factors unique to individuals' life experiences that may also influence the phenomenon of interest. Not only is the task of indentifying single influencing factors daunting, but to also capture the way in which multiple factors may affect each other as well as the phenomenon of interest is something that qualitative methodology is suited, by design, to help researchers recognize (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). One dimension of learning motivation that remains unaccounted for is what learning and achievement may mean to students personally. This study is an attempt to discover whether a new theory of motivation emerges from the words of the student-participants, whether any existing theories may be extended, or whether the academic community has sufficiently saturated our collective understanding of learning motivation among college students. If this study

is successful in finding a new relationship, then a qualitative approach will have served to complement existing knowledge and more typical methodologies. Any new connections identified in the current study could warrant further research that would be able to generalize findings beyond a small, deliberate sample of research participants.

Turner and Patrick (2008) detailed a call for a change in how the collective academic community studies motivation. They posit that we have not maximized our research potential in this area, expressing a desire to be able to account for *how* motivation develops and *why* it changes. Turner and Patrick (2008) claim that much motivation research to date "... has separated individuals and their contexts and has failed to capture the dynamic and situational nature of motivation" (p. 121). They further claim that "studying how change happens should be a major goal of motivation research" (p. 123). Though there are many useful methods for achieving the very changes called for, qualitative methods can allow for the emergence of themes that may have managed to stay hidden from the view of well-intended and highly capable researchers. Due to its generation of codes and categories that are derived from raw data (the actual words and perceptions of research participants) rather than from hypotheses that are logically deduced, grounded theory is a method of study that can be well suited to capture phenomena that previously may have escaped notice. In other words, qualitative data complements quantitative data by allowing the researcher to categorize the research participants' own thoughts and experiences.

Beyond its general focus on providing a detailed account of participants' reports of their experiences as they relate to learning, this grounded theory study will attempt to uncover thematic differences across students reporting varied levels of achievement

(based on cumulative grade point average or classroom performance). It will attempt to achieve a greater understanding in terms of how students think about learning, why they engage in efforts to learn at some times but not others, and then what is different (if there are differences) across students whose performance varies. By exploring the complexities surrounding students' lives, this study will attempt to further describe how college students learn, how they conceptualize learning and how they ultimately achieve in a formal educational environment by providing students the opportunity to tell their stories relative to what learning means to them. To more fully understand what learning means to students in this study, it seems pertinent to include some historical context, such as how participants' families viewed learning, how their friends may impact their learning, what their learning experiences were like prior to attending college, and why they decided to pursue a bachelor's degree. The results of these reflections speak to conditions that caused participants to be in pursuit of a post-secondary educational degree, as well as to the nature of their engagement in learning processes.

If the current study is successful at increasing our understanding of learning motivation, it could help inform educators and educational administrators about additional factors, or constellations of phenomena that may enhance or inhibit students' motivation to learn. It could serve to identify areas in which educational practices are highly successful, as well as areas in which they may be less so, including the reasons for such outcomes. Beyond maximizing the practical benefits students might enjoy in educational environments, the more that we understand learning motivation from insights uncovered by every methodological tool available to us, the more educational systems and educators may productively respond to individual learners as a whole and orchestrate

environments in ways that account for the dynamic nature of students' backgrounds and existing motivations. The better we understand individuals and their circumstances, the more successful we can be in nurturing their motivation to learn. As a result, the more precision that can contribute to our collective understanding of what makes students want to learn, the more successful we can become at orchestrating educational efforts that proliferate social equity and contributing members of society who are equipped to take on the growing challenges we face in a rapidly changing, information-saturated global society.

The literature review that follows in Chapter II is organized to reflect the central phenomenon of this study, which revolved around students splitting their learning efforts differently, based on whether their goals were to perform for course exams, or because they perceived course content as something which would enhance their competency in their future teaching careers. In other words, based upon the results of the study (see Ch. IV), it is pertinent to focus a review on Dweck's (2002) self-theories, as well as attribution theory because Dweck's work seems to have extended that of Weiner (1994, 2000) who applied attribution theory to the classroom environment. This will be followed by a review of self-regulated learning to the degree that it relates to a dimension of Dweck's theory (e.g., the self-regulated learning components of implementing effective learning strategies, setting learning goals, monitoring and assessing goal progress, etc.). Goal setting is another construct that is noteworthy to include in the review of the literature, because components of participants' behavior impacted the goals they conveyed, and environmental influences also drove reported goals. Following the protocol identified for structuring the reporting of a grounded theory study (Creswell,

2007), the research question will be identified, including the central research question, issue subquestions, followed by the procedural subquestions.

Chapter III includes the methods used in the study, detailing the study participants (including why and how they were chosen for participation) and the study procedure, including entry into the field and the data sources. A description of the method used for data collection and data analysis then follows.

Chapter IV provides results of the data analysis, including a review of the central question, issue subquestions, procedural subquestions, and the resulting paradigm model that proposes a model describing what motivates students to learn in a university setting. Because the issue subquestions reflect the intent to understand what might be different about the learning motivation of students based on their academic performance, detailed explanations describing exactly how participants in each of the three performance groupings were similar or distinct from each other on every dimension are also provided.

The concluding chapter provides a discussion of the research findings relative to its potential value, its strengths and limitations, and directions that future research might productively take in response to the findings of this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Three methods typically are available in which to position literature reviews in grounded theory research. One is to extend a seminal theory with the results of a grounded theory study, as a response to a belief that said seminal theory is no longer sufficiently complete in describing a phenomenon. A second method is to use the literature as a second source of data to the theory one is investigating, to complement the interviews themselves, to fill in the gaps that the interview data do not produce. A third method is to position the literature post hoc, linking theories that already exist to the findings of a grounded theory. This study could be considered to extend a seminal theory in that it identifies specific circumstances that elicit elements of Dweck's self-theory construct (2002), and linked an additional emergent concept. This review of literature will focus on the seminal theory that is most closely related to the central phenomenon, Dweck's (2002) self-theory. As described by Creswell (2007), the central phenomenon is the core category resulting from an analysis of a story line that emerges from descriptions within the research data. This core phenomenon is the most abstract concept among all of the identified categories. All of the identified categories connect to the central phenomenon.

A review of self-theories follows because it is the seminal theory that the results of this study extends, followed by a review of attribution theory which is the theory extended by Dweck (2002). This is followed by a review of self-regulated learning which also seems relevant, as it seemingly shares many features found in the types of learners described in Dweck's (2000) theory, corroborating Dweck and Master's (2008) claim for

relatedness between self-theories and self-regulated learning. A brief explanation of goal setting constructs as they relate to self-theories concludes the chapter.

Self-Theories: Meaning Systems that Determine One's Purpose for Action

Self-theories create meaning systems that determine students' purpose for action in learning environments. Self-theories attract certain competence goals and certain attributions, which culminate in nurturing particular strategies that are either helpful or deleterious to achievement, especially in the face of threat or challenge (Dweck & Molden, 2005). Dweck's research began with elementary-school youth, but within eight years, investigations of middle school, high school, and college students consistently reflected similar findings. This body of research will be discussed after the following detailed descriptions for each form of learning system and the differential responses students have to failure/setbacks.

Students who hold entity theories of intelligence tend to have performance goals, believing that their behavior demonstrates competence or incompetence as defined by others. "Entity theorists want to look smart and avoid looking dumb" (Dweck, 2000, p. 15). Students who hold incremental theories of intelligence tend to have learning goals, believing that task mastery and competence result from efforts toward that end. The mastery pattern emerges regardless of confidence in ability, often despite a belief that one does not have an ideal "amount" of native intelligence. Students with learning goals tend to strive to improve their competence, to learn and/or master new skills, to ultimately get smarter. Behaviors that mastery students describe as making them feel smart include "throwing themselves" into new tasks, exerting effort to master something, stretching their skills, and enjoying putting their knowledge to good use (e.g. by helping other

students learn). These conceptual distinctions consistently arose in Dweck's research such that a 40/40/20 split occurred, wherein 40% of most groups (e.g. classrooms, sports teams, business organizations) reflected one of the two goal orientations, and 20% did not really belong to either grouping (Elliot, 2005). Dweck (2000) indicated that 15% of most groups of interest did not consistently reflect either orientation. These orientations emerged when individuals were identified for entity versus incremental beliefs (via responses to questionnaire items) prior to being placed into experimental conditions. The same orientations also appeared in responses to manipulations of success and failure in authentic learning situations, when students were not identified prior to the experiments.

Terminology used by the academic community to refer to the self-theory construct is varied. Entity theorists sometimes are referred to in the literature as having ability goals, ego-involved goals, performance goal-orientations, beliefs in fixed intelligence, or seeking competence validation. Incremental theorists are sometimes referred to as having learning goals, task goals, mastery goal-orientation, beliefs in the malleability of intelligence, or seeking competence acquisition. For the sake of efficiency and clarity, I will hereafter refer mainly to mastery- and performance-goal orientation as the distinct forms of meaning systems aligned with learning regulation.

Some repercussions for performance orientation students are that, because they believe intelligence is fixed, they tend to worry about how much intelligence they have, resulting in placing efforts towards looking and feeling as though they have enough, while ensuring that they don't do anything that makes them appear to be unintelligent. Strategies include choosing tasks that are easy for them, or tasks in which they already have competence, while striving to outperform other students. Whenever performance

oriented students have to exert effort, experience difficulty or setbacks, or witness higher performing peers, there is a tendency for students with this meaning system to question their own intelligence. Even in authentic learning experiments where students were successful at certain tasks, when subsequently presented with learning opportunities that had similar tasks but that were more challenging and promised to present learning opportunities, performance-oriented students would not choose the learning opportunities if they believed they might make mistakes. They would literally disengage from a task once they experienced obstacles. When these students could not perform similar but more challenging tasks, many of them over-inflated their past failures and no longer believed they could succeed at the same tasks in the future.

Repercussions for mastery-oriented students seem to cluster around typical measures of normative achievement. Elliot (2005) commented that there was little evidence that achievement scores differentially identified mastery from performance goal students. However, this claim seems to run counter to Dweck's descriptions of mastery behaviors. Mastery students, in her view, will tend to readily sacrifice opportunities to look smart in favor of opportunities to learn something new, and report thinking that it doesn't make sense to worry about looking smart or dumb when they could be becoming smarter. In addition, mastery oriented students are described as being "able to plunge into either performance goals or learning goals depending on what the situation calls for" (Dweck, 2000, p. 27).

Robins and Pals (2002) found that performance-oriented college students' grades declined throughout their college career at the University of Berkeley, California, compared to their mastery oriented peers; mastery students placed more value on

knowledge gained than on grades received. Performance-oriented students exhibited helpless, versus mastery oriented responses when faced with challenge and had lower levels of self-esteem that progressively worsened throughout college. Shields' (1993) study found that non-traditional students placed more value on learning for its own sake; and other researchers (Morris, Brooks & May, 2003) found that non-traditional college students, compared to traditional college students (age 22), endorsed more mastery goals, used more task-oriented coping, and reported higher grade point averages. Another study indicated that college students were most likely to convey mastery orientation to learning in their freshman year, but that they were substantially less likely to want to master their subjects in subsequent years as they became more performance oriented and focused on grades (Lieberman & Remedios, 2007).

An investigation at Stanford examined the role goal orientations might play in stereotype threat. The achievement context was such that the climate of a predominantly white, intellectually elite college could add an extra burden for African American students, such that stereotypes of their cultural group may be evoked, eliciting feelings of having less fixed intelligence than their majority counterparts, compromising achievement efforts and outcomes. "For example, it could lead them to make low-ability attributions for any difficulty they may be having, create distracting doubts when they are trying to perform intellectually, or foster a defensive withdrawal of effort" (Aronson & Fried, 1998, as cited in Dweck, 2000, p. 37). The researchers tested this theory by teaching undergraduate students an incremental theory in order to reduce the stereotype threat and improve their academic achievement. Lessons centered around scientific explanations and testimonies that every time people meet a challenge, exert mental effort

and learn something new, their brain grows neurons and they become more intelligent; other measures were taken to reinforce this idea. At the end of the academic term, grades were compared between students who had seen the presentation with those who had not.

They found that for students who had not received the incremental message, the gap between the minority and majority of students was the same as before: The GPAs of the majority students were significantly higher than those of the Black students. However, for the students who *had* received the incremental message, the gap was appreciably reduced...Black students who learned the incremental theory of intelligence and the incremental approach to challenge and achievement, showed a marked improvement in college achievement. What's more, they reported enjoying school more and seeing themselves as more academically oriented than their peers in the control group (Dweck, 2000, p. 37).

Students with internal/stable causal attributions to failure typically exhibit expectancies that are the most difficult to change; detailed in the next section that reviews attribution theory. This attributional phenomenon was typically used to describe students who had a history of low achievement (Weiner, 1994). However, Dweck's (2000) research uncovered response differences to failure on achievement tasks among students of equal ability, which were reliably connected to beliefs about intelligence, such that the performance oriented students exhibited a helpless pattern when tasks became challenging. These phenomena occurred even after students experienced unbroken strings of successes and superior performance in related tasks compared to their mastery oriented peers. Dweck claims that a cognitive system subscribing to performance orientation seems to interfere with students' ability to use their minds effectively. In contrast, mastery-oriented students persevered. The conceptual distinction is not about a few extreme students, given that on average, 40% of the populations examined expressed one of the two systems (Dweck, 2000).

Emotional responses and their impact on behavior during challenging tasks were captured in various studies across the conceptual dimensions. Students with performance orientations felt pleased with themselves during task successes, but once challenge was encountered they expressed boredom, negativity and usually blamed their intelligence. They tended to stop applying themselves despite having previously used sophisticated and effective problem-solving strategies. They seemed to see failure as an indictment of themselves. These findings are reflective of students in grade school, middle school and college. The mastery oriented pattern was to blame no one; they did not focus on reasons for failure or consider themselves to be failing; they saw only problems to be tackled and instructed themselves on ways to improve their performance. Mastery students remained upbeat during challenging tasks, expressed happiness at confronting challenges, and tended to improve or teach themselves more sophisticated strategies. In some instances, more than 80% of mastery oriented students maintained or improved their strategies, while 25% fully improved strategies to the extent that they solved problems identified to be beyond their grade level (Dweck, 2000). Others have also found mastery orientation to predict the use of deeper, more effective learning strategies and that they tend to apply what they've learned more effectively (Ames & Archer, 1988, Dweck, 2000; Dweck & Master, 2008; Graham & Golon, 1991; Pintrich & Garcia, 1991). Similar positive effects have also been noted among workers in organizations (Button & Mathieu, 1996).

Connections have been made between self-theories and goal choices. Dweck (2000) first found evidence of a causal connection by setting up conditions to change (at least temporarily), students' theories of intelligence. Grade school children chose either a performance goal task or a learning goal task merely after reading passages about famous

people whose accomplishments were attributed either to their efforts or their intelligence. This finding was extended to college students who, after being primed with performance or mastery oriented situations were given a nonverbal ability test, were given feedback that they either did “pretty well,” or “pretty poorly” compared to their peers. These college students were then offered a tutorial that proved to be effective in improving performance on the test for most people. Most college students (both mastery and performance) who were told they did well on the first test (60-73%) took advantage of the tutorial. However, among the students who were told they did not perform well on the first test, 73% of the mastery students, and only 13% of the performance students wanted the tutorial (Hong, Chiu, Dweck, Lin & Wan 1998). When students had a fixed view of intelligence, those who most needed remedial work were the ones who avoided it (Dweck, 2000). Similarly, Thompson and Musket (2005) primed college students with either an entity or incremental view of ability, and found that even those students whose dominant orientation prior to the study was that of performance (entity theorists), persisted after initial failure as did the other participants who were subsequently primed for mastery goals (incremental theorists).

Performance feedback is an on-going part of most learning environments. Given the choices the students made in response to manipulated feedback in the previously mentioned study, it is plausible that students will likely adopt either a performance or mastery orientation based on their perceptions of classroom structure. In fact, other researchers (Ames & Archer, 1988; Maehr & Midgley, 1996) have found that individual students tend to adopt the orientation they view as most prevalent in a class. Further, when the classroom atmosphere reflected a greater value for mastery orientation, students

used effective strategies more often, expressed more positive attitudes in the class, and indicated a stronger belief that their successes were a result of their efforts. In contrast, when students perceived a classroom environment where performance orientation was prominent, they tended to focus on their ability, exhibited more detrimental self-evaluations, and reported beliefs that their failures were due to task difficulty. Dweck's (2000) cumulative research also indicates that classroom structure can elicit mastery or performance goals among students. For example, a group of students was given the same task, but told either that they would be evaluated on their performance or that the task offered opportunities to learn some valuable things. Performance goals were elicited and observed in the first case. Mastery goals were elicited and observed in the latter. These findings illustrate that student efforts tend to mirror the types of goals asked of them, indicating that self-theories have malleable, rather than trait qualities as Nicholls (1989) conceptualized.

Trait-centered approaches often have proved misleading in the study of culture and motivation, as the tendency to focus on this perspective arguably limits our understanding about the ways in which teachers, parents, even employers can serve to impact the motivation of others. Arguing for an alternative perspective to trait theorists, Maehr and Ames (1989) specified the utility of studying motivation as a response that is prompted by certain situations, contexts, and conditions. Given the evidence supporting the mastery- and performance-orientation construct, much research energy has been extended to determine whether teachers and parents should stress mastery goals and avoid performance goals (e.g., Harackiewicz & Linnenbrink, 2005; Linnenbrink, 2005). The consensus has been that both orientations serve to motivate students into action, but

some argued that performance motivation came at an unwelcome price (Midgley, Kaplan & Middleton, 2001). The price referred to revolves around the test anxiety, negative affect, and reserved effort due to fears of looking inept, which mirror the basic helpless response Dweck described when performance-oriented students stopped using their minds effectively in the face of challenge (2000; Dweck & Master, 2008).

Dweck (2000) has argued that both mastery and performance goals are productive and can motivate achievement. However, she also commented that mastery and performance goals are often in conflict, and when the two goals are simultaneously available, nearly half of students will tend to choose one, while the other half will tend to choose the other. Perhaps it is most productive to seek some sense of balance in achievement environments, such that teachers invoke whichever method seems to be the most appropriate for the individual and the setting, while ensuring opportunities that elicit both orientations. This view is shared by Magnusson and Stattin (1998), who suggested that person-centered analysis is important because the effects of either orientation singularly would accumulate to the individual person over time. As Harackiewicz et al. (2005) suggested, it may be that a focus on mastery while simultaneously trying to do better than others (a high mastery/high performance pattern) would result in maximally positive outcomes. To that end, it may not matter what type of goals are pursued, but rather that the goals lead to affective and cognitive involvement in learning tasks. In light of the differential findings between mastery and performance goal learners, Pintrich (2000) suggested that individuals may follow developmental trajectories over time that are fostered by different goal orientations. They end up in the “same” place in terms of actual achievement, Pintrich claimed, even if “...performance-orientation students may

experience less interest, less positive affect, and perhaps more anxiety or negative affect along the way...and loss of interest over time” (p. 545). This view reflects a perspective rooted in the status quo, ignoring opportunities to work with individuals in such a way as to maximize their emotional and intellectual growth by nurturing positive meaning systems and a lifelong desire to learn.

Dweck’s body of work indicates that student attributions for success and failure may be impacted by environmental influences. What follows is a review of the attribution literature, reviewing how internal/stable causal attributions to failure and success may impact student behaviors in terms of achievement outcomes.

Attribution Theory

Analysis of concepts such as *ability* and *effort* fall within the first dimension in Weiner’s taxonomy (internal locus), but are placed in different categories within the other two dimensions: *ability* is uncontrollable and stable, where *effort* is controllable and unstable. Weiner (1994a) suggested that the distinction between ability and effort lies at the very core of several fundamental issues in motivation and attribution theory, including the domains to which attributional analyses may be applied. But where Weiner specified that causal thinking, action and expectancies are mediated by emotions, Dweck and Leggett (1988) suggested that children (adolescents and adults as described earlier) tend to exhibit one of two general beliefs about ability; that ability/intelligence is either fixed and uncontrollable, or that one may improve ability and control its development. The former refers to holding an entity theory of intelligence; the latter refers to an incremental theory of intelligence.

The attributions students make about their achievements and/or failures can have a dramatic effect on their motivation to learn and related behaviors. Take for example a college student, who does not earn an A on the first course exam. She agrees to meet with classmates to review for the retake because her instructor suggested this so that she may learn what study strategies her peers may be using, as well as how others might conceptualize theories, main ideas, and applications of theory to their experiences. When she arrived at the meeting place, however, she stated that she would not study any more for the retake exam than she already had for the first exam. The reasons for her lackluster performance after the first attempt seemingly revolved around her stated perceptions that test questions were vague because they included several plausible response choices, and expressed dismay that the instructor didn't simply allow her to write explanations for her incorrect exam item responses much as other instructors have done. As a result, her grade on the retake exam was no different from the first outcome. A different student, whose performance on the first exam was similarly undesirable, chose to study differently for the retake exam. She reported spending more time studying key concepts while thinking through connections across concepts. The second student improved her score by eight points, a full letter grade.

Attribution theory offers explanatory power in the analysis of the very different responses to the results of testing outcomes described above. One student attributed her low exam score to vague exam questions that had multiple correct choice options, whereas the other student determined that she did not study certain concepts in sufficient detail and changed her study method as a result. Heider (1944, 1958) introduced the concept of naïve analysis of actions and causes, extending concepts used by Gestalt

psychologists in object perception to social perception. Heider (1944) developed two propositions regarding the analysis of interpersonal perception. The first proposition was that interpersonal relations are a function of interpretations of other people's behavior. The second proposition was that the motives underlying attributional processes alleviate people's needs for understanding behavior in terms of enduring dispositional traits and stability in their environments. Heider portrayed this search for stability to be adaptive, allowing for consistency in behavior and predictability of future events. Weiner (1986) is credited with linking attribution theory to academic settings, and proposed a taxonomy of causal thinking.

Weiner (1986) developed the proposition that causal thinking and action are mediated by emotions. The first taxonomy dimension is that of internal versus external locus of causality. A location of a cause is either within or outside the student. External locus attributes to academic performance might include biased instruction, competing demands from peers, help from others, task difficulty; internal locus causes of outcome might include one's perceived ability, aptitude, effort or mood. The second dimension characterizes the notion of controllability; a student's ability to effect change in behaviors directly related to the outcome of interest, such as effort, indicate control; luck exemplifies an uncontrollable factor. The third dimension (causal stability), refers to whether a perceived cause has been consistent or inconsistent over time. Writing aptitude could be conceived as constant, where other causes such as luck are unstable or fleeting (Weiner, 1994, 2000).

Further, parallel in time to when motivational research began to direct attention to self-directed emotions (e.g. the mid-1990s) such as pride, shame and guilt, Weiner (1994,

2000) posited that personal feeling states influence which cause is selected to explain an outcome, a concept which he used to integrate interpersonal- and intrapersonal motivation theories of attribution in achievement settings.

Intrapersonal motivation refers to self-directed emotions, a tool we use while increasing our understanding of ourselves and our environment and then acting on that knowledge. This approach begins at the conclusion of an event, such as success or failure on an exam, and ends in the form of a response. When an outcome is positive, a student may feel happy at reaching a goal; when an outcome is negative they may feel sad at not reaching a goal. The types of affective reactions that elicit attributional searches are when unexpected, negative, or important events occur; otherwise, there is not often a tendency to search for reasons leading up to the event. Weiner argues that “all causes can be located within (the) three-dimensional causal space” (2000, p. 5), as described in the taxonomy earlier.

The stability dimension is more closely aligned with expectancy. For example, if a student has always performed exceedingly well in the past, she/he is likely to expect to continue to perform well. Locus and controllability are most closely related to feeling states. The controllability and locus dimensions determine whether an individual experiences pride, guilt or shame. Responsibility is posited to be an important precursor to guilt, so that if failure is attributed to a lack of effort (internal/controllable), guilt likely ensues. Alternatively, shame (humiliation and/or embarrassment) is posited to be the emotional successor to failure that is due to internal- but uncontrollable causes (e.g. aptitude). Feelings of shame result in withdrawn effort, hiding, or running away due to the perception of helplessness. Guilt, on the other hand, is associated more with a

motivation to compensate for the undesirable behavior, and to take measures to act differently in the future (Weiner, 1994; 2000).

Expectancies and causal attributions reliably seem to describe differences in student achievement such that higher-achieving students tend to attribute their success to ability, where setbacks are not a reflection of ability; and lower-achieving students tend to attribute failure to lack of ability (Bempechat, 2004). Higher-achieving students with high performance goals report internal-stable causes (I'm good in history) and very high expectancy; but if performance is low, attributions are internal-unstable (No time to study), and expectancies are high. Low-achieving students with high performance exhibit external-unstable causes (I was lucky, or My tutor helped me), and have low expectancy or confidence. Another high performing low-achieving student may also indicate internal-unstable causes (I got through all of my homework for this section this time), and have increased expectancy (hope). Note that the high-achieving students typically reflect an internal causal locus, where low-achieving students exhibit unstable attributions. Low-achieving students whose performance is also low indicate internal-stable causes (I'm just not smart enough), resulting in very low expectancy or confidence. It is this latter group, whose failure is attributed to a stable factor of ability (rather than one that is unstable, such as effort) whose expectancies are the most difficult to change (Weiner, 1986).

Interpersonal motivation refers to one's behavior toward others. This concept conveys an understanding that performance in achievement settings is contextual, and that peers, teachers and parents experience joy and sadness in light of others' performance. These contextual others may express anger, sympathy, and may reward,

punish, help, or neglect the performer/student (Weiner, 2000). Evidence in the mid-1990s revealed an interaction between evaluation of students and causal attributions for student performance. If an evaluator (e.g. teacher, parent) believed that a student's failure was the result of a student's lack of ability, then the evaluator would tend to convey sympathy, withhold punishment, and the student's performance seemingly continued to suffer. The implication is that one does not have the ability to perform well. But if an evaluator attributed a student's failure to a lack of effort, then the evaluator tended to express anger toward the student (sometimes resulting in punishment) and the student's performance would improve. The evaluator's response sends the message that the student has the capability to perform better. There was no claim that the evaluator's anger response caused the apparent positive change in performance, but it warranted more investigation (Weiner, 1994).

Weiner concluded that a necessary differentiation between controllability and personal responsibility explained the phenomenon just described. When personal responsibility is assigned to an action, that person is assumed to have free will and/or choice (having the ability to do better). Where aptitude, by definition, is not something one makes a decision about, low aptitude does not usually result in inferences of responsibility. But should a student fail because of lack of effort, they are more likely to feel personally responsible. When others attribute responsibility to an actor for a negative outcome, it gives rise to anger; a causal decision to an inference about the person is made. As a result, the assumption was that the way we think determines what we feel, and that feelings bridge thinking and doing. In addition, there seemed to be an underlying

assumption on Weiner's part, that the emotions conveyed by an evaluator reliably transition into feelings of shame or guilt on the part of the one who is evaluated.

An integrated view of interpersonal and intrapersonal motivation included the notion that these motivational systems are interactive. Weiner (1994) conveyed that the differentiation between social and personal motivation is hard to maintain, but that doing so serves as a heuristic that he uses to unify these aspects of motivation into one theoretical framework. For example, sympathy (an other-directed emotion) is considered to be congruent with shame (a self-directed emotion). In experiments that varied affective feedback to elementary students in conditions of induced failure at an achievement task, after a teacher conveyed sympathy, students attributed their failure to lack of ability (internal and stable), indicating a low expectancy of success and increased feelings of shame and humiliation, and tended to decrease their persistence at the task. In view of the other attribution of lack of effort for failure on interpersonal evaluation and intrapersonal motivation, Weiner suggested that anger (an other-directed affect) and guilt (a self-directed affect) are congruent (1994). This means that anger from others has the potential for individuals to infer self-responsibility for the failure (internal, controllable), raising guilt and subsequent effort, resulting in improved performance. As Weiner (2000) stated, "The two motivational theories overlap and influence the thoughts, feelings, and actions of both an actor and an observer" (p. 13).

As a personal reflection, this researcher does not believe that it was Weiner's intent to suggest that it is either appropriate or desirable for instructors to strategically convey anger towards students if instructors do not believe students exert sufficient effort toward learning tasks. However, structuring learning environments with attributions in

mind allows for the orchestration of success expectancies and may improve interpretations of affect reflected by learners such as pride, guilt and shame. An instructor may determine whether instructional environments serve as metaphorical courtrooms, serving as “judge and jury” by determining locus of responsibility, handing out punishment or conveying sympathy followed by support. Alternatively, attribution theory may be used to help teachers better guide learning so that more productive thought and action may be modeled and elicited from students. Understanding attributions may help students understand and predict reactions to success and failure, while enhancing a collective awareness of the impact potential behind evaluation and resulting reactions of support or sympathy. It is useful for educators to know that they have a reasonable capacity to reorient students’ attributions in ways that increase their perceptions of control (free will), moving students to behave in ways that are more likely to result in positive achievement. Positive achievement should, by extension, reflect learning.

Integrating personal and social causal attributions was an important contribution to the motivational literature. As stated earlier, it is typically when unexpected or negative events occur that attributional or causal searches among individuals are initiated. One logical conclusion however, is that we know less about attributions for success (beyond feelings of pride) than for failure, and don’t have information regarding what students’ thoughts were that mediated positive or neutral outcomes. In addition, Weiner’s research focused on achievement environments in general, a useful but rather broad context that does not capture situational specificity. Carol Dweck’s work with self-theories, which accomplishes both situation-specific analyses as well as improved understanding of cognitions that drive achievement behaviors, seems to have

accomplished an extension of Weiner's work on attribution theory in the context of formal education.

After reviewing the ways in which students internalize or externalize the locus of causality of their efforts, as well as the impact achievement outcomes may have on students' attributions and subsequent behaviors, we turn now to a different research stream. Research focusing on self-regulated learning extends research beyond cognitive concepts. Self-regulated learning links student behaviors and self-awareness, describing and prediction the degrees to which students are active participants in their own learning process.

Self-Regulated Learning

By the late 1980s, the scholarly community had mostly agreed to combine research on processes such as learning strategies, metacognitive monitoring, self-concept perceptions, volitional strategies, and self-control under the single rubric, self-regulated learning. Self-regulated learning (SRL) refers to the degree to which students are metacognitively, motivationally, and behaviorally active participants in their own learning process (Zimmerman, 1990). Self-regulated learning refers to processes that learners intentionally use to fuel thought, affect and behaviors that are positively geared toward achieving learning goals (Schunk & Zimmerman, 2008). Students who are considered to be high in self-regulation are aware of what they know (factually) as well as what their skills are. They seek information independently when needed in order to master something and find ways to succeed despite obstacles, accepting responsibility for their achievement outcomes (Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1986, 1990).

Zimmerman (1990) outlined three components to self-regulated learning (SRL): metacognitive awareness, motivation, and behavior. The metacognitive component refers to the planning, goal setting, organization, self-monitoring, and self-evaluative processes that self-regulated learners go through in the process of learning new information. The motivational processes refer to self-regulated learners' reports of high self-efficacy, self-attributions, and intrinsic task interest. It is in this process that effort and persistence during learning reside. The behavioral processes invoked by self-regulated learners refer to their selection, structuring, and creation of environments that maximize learning. Self-regulated learners seek advice and self-instruct while acquiring knowledge and self-reinforce during performance.

Zimmerman (1990) also described a self-oriented feedback loop. This refers to students monitoring their own learning methods for effectiveness, resulting in a continuation of a student's process or changing the methods or strategies a student is using (e.g. self-instruction, proximal goals, etc.). Learners' perceptual processes might also change (e.g. self-concepts, self-efficacy, etc.) in light of one's perceived effectiveness.

Another component involves the reasons why a learning strategy is chosen, whether it is due to contingent external rewards, punishment, social approval or self-actualization. Zimmerman (1990) included self-efficacy, cognitive equilibrium or achievement success as additional viable motives. A key aspect of SRL theories is that student learning and motivation are isomorphically connected—that learning cannot be understood without also attending to motivational components, and vice versa. This view considers the learner to be more than a passive recipient of data, because of the proactive

nature (some) learners exhibit by seeking out learning opportunities and self-evaluating, to benefit from learning activities.

More specifically, self-regulated learning strategies include self-reported approaches, and Zimmerman (1990) identified 14 such strategies included in the extant research: self-evaluation, organization and transformation, goal setting and planning, information seeking, record keeping, self-monitoring, environmental structuring, giving self-consequences, rehearsing and memorizing, seeking social assistance (peers, teachers, other adults), and reviewing (notes, books, or tests). The significance of self-reported strategy use among learners appears in studies comparing related behaviors between higher achieving and lower achieving students. Zimmerman and Martinez-Pons (1986) developed the Self-Regulation Learning Interview Schedule (SRLIS) from interviews with higher-achieving and lower-achieving students, and found a distinct difference in a high school population: the higher achievers' reported strategy use predicted their subsequent achievement with 93% accuracy across learning contexts. These higher-achieving students reported high strategy use for all but one (self-evaluation) of the 14 strategies identified by Zimmerman (1990). By contrast, the lower achieving students reported varied reactive statements reflecting low, or no initiative, such as doing what they were told to do, or that they simply work harder when they are struggling with motivation. Similar findings appeared in a developmentally delayed adult population seeking entrance into a community college: 94% of the at-risk students failed to combine any of the 14 SRL strategies as compared to the general community college population, as measured by the SRLIS (Ley & Young, 1998).

However, simply teaching students strategies does not appear to guarantee later use of the strategies (Dweck & Master, 2008; Zimmerman, 2008a; 2008b). The problem is that students do not spontaneously invoke SRL processes in non-experimental learning contexts. Awareness of learning outcomes and subsequent decision-making is considered to be crucial to continued use of SRL processes, and further research is needed to uncover which specific components of SRL are most essential (Zimmerman, 2008a). The range of SRL component processes and strategies that one could investigate is voluminous. Research over time on SRL processes have revealed, however, that good self-regulated learners set better learning goals, implement more effective learning strategies, monitor their progress better, and remove learning obstacles better. They also are better at seeking help when needed, and in adjusting strategies and goals when appropriate (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2008). Goal setting is one component of the motivation dimension of SRL that seems to have received a great deal of attention in both educational and work settings.

Goal Setting Constructs

Goals have been investigated at varied levels of analysis, each resulting in important findings. One major line of research on goals is captured by the work of Bandura (e.g. 1982) and Locke and Latham (e.g. 1990, 2002), who frame goals as the outcomes for which individuals strive, including standards of performance. Goals become a source of personal feedback about our effectiveness and self-regulatory control (Zimmerman, 2008b). Within a goal attainment framework, variables of consideration include the level of challenge associated with the goal (see particularly, Locke & Latham, 1990), types of feedback provided (Bandura & Cervone, 1983), as well as perceptions of ability or expectancy of success (Bandura, 1982; Cervone & Peake, 1986). The goal

attainment research has revealed the importance of setting challenging goals, of efficacy beliefs, and expectancy value.

Another research direction in goal theory seeks to identify related outcomes of a higher level, or belief systems that could be considered to be antecedents to resulting SRL processes and strategies, including goal-setting behaviors (e.g. Ames, 1992; Dweck, 1986, 2000; Read & Miller, 1989). Put another way, identifying superordinate classes of goals may reliably predict specific outcomes students seek; superordinate classes of goals may also impact many separate components described in many self-regulated learning processes and strategies. For example, students who wish to *prove* their competence exhibit different patterns of thought, behavior and affect when compared to students who wish to *improve* their competence; reflecting qualitatively different goal patterns. The former represents a performance goal orientation, while the latter reflects a mastery goal orientation (Dweck & Leggett, 1988).

Finally, where more cognitive approaches to motivation tend to examine rather specific levels of goals (e.g. to remember a list of items, to choose a relevant study method), goal classes or orientations predict challenge seeking, and identify the classes of goals in which such perceptions or expectancies make the greatest difference (Dweck, 2000; Elliott & Dweck, 1988). Further, the goal orientations just described are connected to students' beliefs about intelligence, which is further connected to causal thinking and/or attributions students make.

Zimmerman (2008a) expressed a need for research to examine why it is that students who are taught learning strategies, who experience success with these strategies in controlled environments, fail to use these strategies autonomously. Dweck's self-

theories (and by extension, attribution theory) may offer explanatory power to Zimmerman's question. To the extent that students attribute learning to their efforts, they may be more likely to invoke productive learning strategies. If students also believe their efforts improve their intelligence, any initial confusion becomes irrelevant, and they may be more likely to be active participants in their own learning.

Conversely, if students believe that they are born with a fixed amount of intelligence, it may compromise efforts to work through confusing learning tasks. If students attribute their learning successes in controlled environments to any aspect of the situation rather than their own efforts, they may not be likely to invoke useful learning strategies. Knowledge of, and past successes with any arsenal of learning strategies may not be put to use if the locus of attributions remains external to the student. If students believe their intelligence is fixed, they may not be likely to draw upon useful strategies in the face of challenge.

Research Questions

With the multiple avenues researchers have taken to investigate learning motivation, this study attempts to complement the current literature by exploring pre-service teacher education students' perceptions of their own learning motivation. The primary research question in the present qualitative investigation addresses the factors that represent qualitative accounts for what motivates students to learn in a university setting: What motivates college students to learn? In order to address this question, students with different levels of academic success were interviewed in order to further understand how the student participants think about learning, what motivates them to

learn, why they expend effort to that end, and to find out how their thinking is organized as it relates to various challenges.

The *central question* of this study focused on what it means to be motivated to learn in a university setting. This question began by an exploration of higher- and lower-achievers, but soon included a middle-achievement grouping in order to contribute explanatory power. An investigation of differences across higher, medium and lower achievement groups as defined by reported cumulative grade point average (CGPA) was then explored.

Issue subquestions included 1) What environments elicit (and diminish) learning motivation, 2) What do higher achievers do (compared to the other achievement groups), 3) What do higher achievers not do (compared to the other achievement groups), 4) What do higher achievers consider to be challenges, and how do they respond (compared to the other achievement groups), 5) When are higher achievers aware of their learning (compared to the other achievement groups), 6) What impact does family culture have on learning motivation, and 7) How does one's social environment affect learning motivation?

Procedural subquestions included 1) What are the general categories to emerge in a first review of the data, and 2) What is the phenomenon of interest, and 3) What caused the phenomenon of interest?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Qualitative research methods are an inductive methodology used in the exploration of causal connections between and among phenomena. They often are enlisted to uncover meanings people assign to their experiences (Creswell, 2007; Hoshmand, 1989). A grounded theory research method, which is a specific kind of qualitative methodology, is designed to aid in the systematic collection and analysis of data and the construction of a theoretical model. This is accomplished by taking inductive comparisons from data and constructing abstractions with simultaneous efforts to ensure that the abstractions remain connected to the data. The process of exploring idiosyncratic perceptions and experiences allows for insight into specific and general phenomena, seeing what may be new in them, and then exploring any links to larger issues. The methods used in grounded theory are chosen to clarify the meanings participants assign to their learning motivation, and involve a) developing codes, categories, and themes inductively rather than imposing informed, yet predetermined classifications on the data (Glaser, 1978), b) generating working hypotheses from the data, and c) analyzing narratives of participants' learning experiences as well as phenomena that either facilitate and/or present challenges to learning (Creswell, 2007).

Participants

Research participants were five men and four women, all between the ages of 19-22, who reported majors in secondary education, were of at least sophomore standing, and were enrolled in different sections of an Educational Psychology course at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. The entire participant pool was racially homogeneous.

All were Caucasian and each reported their family's hopes for them to be that of "serving as an accomplishment" (See Appendix 3). The following participant descriptions are organized by achievement groupings, beginning with the lower group and ending with the higher group. See Table 1 for a visual depiction.

The first group had two men and one woman, comprising a 2.00 to 2.60 Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) grouping. Parental occupations ranged from office work to laborers. Course goals included "to learn as much as I can," "to be better prepared," and "to complete a degree requirement." Two lived off campus with roommates; one lived on campus in a residence hall. One participant did not work outside of school; one worked five hours per week, and the other 12 hours per week. The second group was made up of two men and one woman whose grades fell into a 2.90 to 3.20 CGPA range. Parental occupations for these students ranged from professional to laborers. Course goals included "to earn an A with little effort," "to learn as much as I can," and "to work hard for an A." One lived at home, one lived in a residence hall, and one lived off campus with roommates. One did not work outside of school, one worked five hours per week, and another worked 20 hours per week outside of school. The third group comprised two women and one man whose CGPAs ranged from 3.90 to 4.00, and parental occupations ranged from professional to laborer. Course goals included "to earn an A with little effort," "to be better prepared," and "to work hard for an A." One lived at home; two lived in residence halls. Two did not work outside of school, and one worked 15 hours per week.

Procedure

Entry into the Field

Research participants were recruited (See Appendix 1) to complete an informed consent form (See Appendix 2) and the demographic questionnaire (See Appendix 3) in an undergraduate class required for students enrolled in Educational Psychology at the

Table 1

Student Demographic and Background Questionnaire Grouped by CGPA

CGPA	Work Hrs/Wk	Gender	Class	Reside *	Goals **	Occ 1 ***	Occ 2 ***	Parents' **** Hopes	Age
2.30	0	M	junior	c	e	Web Dvpt	Military Officer	a	22
2.00	5	M	soph	b	f	Cashier	Factory Work	a	19
2.56	12/15	F	soph	c	b	Well Driller	Cosmet- ologist	c	20
2.99	15	M	soph	c	a	Hair Stylist	Nurse	c	20
3.00	5	F	soph	b	d	ESL Teacher	Laborer	a	19
3.10	5	M	soph	c	b	Farmer	Hospital Laborer	a	19
4.00	0	F	junior	b	a	Photo- grapher	Unemployed Web Dvpt	d	19
3.89	15	M	soph	a	d	Maintenance Supervisor	Support Staff	a	22
3.90	0	F	soph	b	a	Business Manager	Elementary Teacher	a	20

* "Reside" refers to current living situation: a=Live at home, b=Live on campus, c=Live off campus with roommates.

** "Goals" refers to primary course goals for all classes in general: a=To earn an "A" with little effort, b=To learn as much as I can, c=To pass, d=To work hard for an "A", e=To simply be better prepared for my career, f=To complete a degree requirement.

*** "Occ 1 and Occ 2" refer to occupations of participants' parents.

**** "Parents' hopes" refers to reports of family's hopes for participants relative to earning a bachelor's degree: a=To serve as an accomplishment, b=To follow in their footsteps, c=To increase income potential, d=To increase possibility that the participant could obtain the career their child wanted.

University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Data from the demographic questionnaire were used as the basis for contacting students to participate in semi-structured interviews. First students were identified for at least sophomore standing, to ensure that participants had at least two full semesters of experience at the University, and for being education majors. Second, participant achievement groupings were determined using students' self-reported CGPAs, which could range from 0.00 to 4.00. Three participants reporting a CGPA of 2.5 or below, three reporting a CGPA in the range from 2.8 to 3.2, and three reporting a CGPA of 3.5 or above were selected for contact. The principal investigator discussed the meaning of cumulative grade point average with one of the College's academic advisers in order to calibrate perceptions about meaningfully distinct groupings. As a result of that meeting, the CGPA groupings were determined. The researcher identified the CGPA groupings, and respondents were then selected to maximally represent variation across other variables, such as gender, parents' occupation, work hours, primary course goals [e.g. *earning an "A" with little effort, learning as much as I can, to simply pass, etc.*], family support of educational pursuits, and living conditions.

Due to the researcher's experiences in a post-secondary educational institution, the principal investigator took effort to maximize the differences represented, and to select out those students who may have extenuating circumstances likely to impact achievement, in the pursuit of emergent themes connected to differences more specific to learning motivation. In the researcher's experience, certain environmental factors have consistently correlated with poor performance in academic programs. Some of these factors are superfluous to students' abilities or desires to succeed or to prepare for one's future. One example that the researcher had noticed is that when students work nearly

full-time at a job outside of their student responsibilities, there often are time constraints that can serve as the primary hindrance to a student's performance, even to the extent that disenrollment results. Active non-support from parents or significant others also had appeared as a very strong negative factor in students' engagement and persistence in an academic program. Living with roommates versus alone or with parents can add challenges that affect academic performance. Parental occupation also seemed to potentially impact a student's performance, possibly due to the amount of inferred formal education and related support. The principal investigator also included questions pertaining to general course goals, in order to maximize potential differences found that could relate back to this. Such demographic factors may often be less related to learning motivation than to life circumstances, and have the potential to confound themes not centrally related to the research question. Therefore, students were selected out if they reported a strong lack of support from family and/or significant others, as were those who reported working 30 or more hours per week. The researcher then maximized the variation of responses to each category as much as was possible from the sample.

The principal investigator called selected questionnaire respondents to schedule a time for an interview. All those selected and reached agreed to participate. When prospective participants arrived at the researcher's campus office, the purpose and scope of the study were reviewed. Informed consent was detailed prior to the interview. After a participant signed the informed consent, audio recording onto an MP3 device commenced.

Based on the qualitative inquiry sampling strategies outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 28, as cited by Creswell, 2007, p. 127), soliciting participants from a

class within my own academic department of Educational Psychology is considered to reflect a sampling strategy of convenience because doing so saves time, money and effort. However, since the researcher sorted for CGPA groupings (*lower* 2.60 and below, *middle* 2.80 - 3.20, and *higher* 3.50 and above) and a variety of environmental factors, the sampling strategy also is considered to reflect a *maximum variation strategy*. By maximizing differences at the beginning of the study, the likelihood that findings will reflect different perspectives related to the question of interest are increased (Creswell, 2007). By extension, such a sampling strategy contributes robustness to the findings. Resulting findings can more reliably connect to the phenomenon of interest, rather than to spurious factors such as work hours, the stress that could result from experiencing a lack of support from significant others, living environment, gender, class standing, and parents' occupations (which speaks to family culture).

Data Sources

Each of the nine students participated in a 60- to 90 minute semi-structured, open-ended interview, during which they responded to questions such as: "Why are you pursuing a Bachelor's degree here at UNL," "Tell me about your learning experiences," "What are your favorite classes and why," "What are your least favorite classes and why," "What creates barriers for you," and so on (See Appendix 5 for the complete set of interview questions). Interview questions were reviewed with an expert qualitative research consultant, and a visiting professor who has conducted qualitative studies for over 10 years.

The researcher began with the intent to interview participants over the telephone in order to increase the likelihood that participants would be comfortable and, as a result,

more open in their responses. Due to the discovery that potential participants used cell phones on which it was difficult to discern many words, the realization that participants could be performing other tasks during a phone interview, and the willingness of all contacted students to come in for an interview however, all interviews were conducted in person.

The researcher contacted students by telephone, and each agreed to meet at the researcher's campus office for the interview. Upon their arrival, IRB protocol was discussed, and participants signed an informed consent form to be interviewed (See Appendix 4). Each participant was offered a bottle of water, and at the conclusion of the interview, received a \$10 gift certificate for a local retail store.

Data Collection, Analysis, and Writing

All of the audiotapes were transcribed verbatim. The principal investigator transcribed the first three interviews to experience the process. In the interest of time, another individual was identified who performs transcriptions as her principal occupational task who then transcribed the remainder. The principal investigator read all of the resulting transcriptions while listening to the audiotapes. By listening to the audiotapes while reading the transcripts, the researcher was able to correct some typographical errors. It also allowed the researcher to replace words that were not audible to the transcriptionist. Because the researcher was more familiar with the environment the students are in, course acronyms and related referents for which the transcriptionist had no frame of reference for understanding could be recorded.

After interviewing the first two participants who had been selected to represent higher and lower cumulative grade point averages, including a middle achievement group

seemed to be warranted. The differences between the first two students seemed so stark that the researcher wondered what might be missed by not investigating a middle achievement grouping. In addition, by including only two polar groupings, this study would be more likely to represent dichotomies, rather than a more meaningful student sample that could contribute explanatory power. Thus, the middle achievement group was added.

The grounded theory analytic process was based on immersion in 370 pages of transcribed interviews that focused on students' learning experiences, motivations for learning, and any barriers and supports that they perceived as impacting their achievement through repeated sortings, codings, and comparisons that characterize the grounded theory approach. Analysis began with *open coding*, the process of discovering and naming thematic categories by capturing every point made within individual words, phrases, and sentences to label or conceptualize phenomena. Strauss and Corbin (1990) described open coding as "the process by which concepts are identified and developed in terms of their properties and dimensions...making comparisons for similarities and differences between each incident, event, and other instances of phenomena. Similar events and incidents are labeled and grouped to form categories" (p.74). The language of the participants guided the development of code and category labels to represent the emergent themes with in vivo codes for achievement and learning processes. These codes and categories were systematically compared and contrasted, resulting in increasingly complex and inclusive categories.

The principal investigator also wrote analytic and self-reflective memos to document and enhance the analytic process, to reveal implicit thoughts and expand the

literal data. This is done by incorporating questions and speculations that come up in the open coding process, and helps when cross-referencing codes and categories that emerge from the raw data.

Open coding, which required taking data apart to identify categories, their properties, and dimensional locations, was followed by *axial coding*, which puts data “back together in new ways by *making connections between a category and its subcategories*” (italics in original, Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). From this process, categories emerged and category labels were assigned to them. The focus in this part of the process is to specify a category of the conditions that give rise to it (causal conditions), identifying the context (the specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomenon), strategies (actions used in response to a phenomenon under a specific set of perceived conditions), intervening conditions (conditions that facilitate or constrain the strategies taken within a specific context) and the consequences of the strategies (outcomes of action and interaction). Identifying the specific features of a category are referred to as subcategories, and they provide specificity or precision to a category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Many hours and combinations of codes and categories were attempted in order to arrive at a storyline that captured a phenomenon of learning motivation across all research participants. At least 14 reiterations of a paradigm model were constructed. The final corpus of data that grouped codes and categories comprised 53 pages of documentation.

Naming categories is one of the tasks that occurs in the open coding process. An important source of concepts and words are the words and phrases used by participants

themselves, "...catchy ones that immediately draw your attention to them. These terms are called '*in vivo*' codes" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 69).

Selective coding was the final, integrative process of selecting the core category (central phenomenon), systematically relating it to other categories, and affirming those relationships by looking for confirming and disconfirming examples. This methodology is supported by Charmaz (2006), Corbin and Strauss (2008), and Creswell (2007).

Categories were pared down if insufficient codes were found to validate their utility.

Codes and categories were sorted, compared, and contrasted until saturated, which means that relationships between codes and categories were compared and contrasted across all participants until no further categories could be identified, and no further relationships were apparent.

What remained after this process was a grounded theory paradigm model. Criteria for core status included: 1) a category's centrality in relation to other categories, 2) frequency of a category's occurrence in the data, 3) its ability to relate to other categories or "fit" into a logical storyline, and 4) meaningful implications for a more general theory.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

“In grounded theory studies, the researcher varies the narrative report based on the extent of data analysis” (Creswell, 2007, p. 191). What follows is a description and results of the Central Question, followed by the Issue Subquestions and results, concluding with the Procedural Subquestions and related findings. Next, the Paradigm Model is introduced, which depicts the storyline that emerged from the data. The Paradigm Model is a theoretical model that describes the results of the central question (resulting in the central phenomenon) and related categories. Elements of the Paradigm Model, the categories noted in the diagram, are presented in both a figure and a narrative format, bringing more light to the actual voices of the interview participants as the storyline is described. Adding a further dimension to this study, differences across achievement groupings are included for every category within the Paradigm Model. As will be revealed in the Issue Subquestions, exploring what differences may have appeared across the three achievement groupings was another question of importance.

Central Question

The central question in this study is: What does it mean to be motivated to learn in a university setting? Research directions in the literature on learning motivation have proliferated into many distinct paths that do not often explicitly intersect. In grounded theory research, the central question is meant ideally to reflect a distillation of the entire phenomenon of interest into a single, overarching question. It is supposed to be a statement of the broadest question one could possibly pose about the research problem, while avoiding the tendency some researchers have, to form specific questions based on

traditional training (Creswell, 2007). The research question again, is: What does it mean to be motivated to learn in a university setting?

The central question results in a central phenomenon. The central phenomenon has been defined as “the central idea, event, happening, about which a set of actions/interactions is directed at managing or handling, or to which the set is related. We identify the *phenomenon* by asking questions such as: What is this data referring to? What is the action/interaction all about?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 100).

Findings revealed that all students expressed both mastery goal orientation and performance goal orientation, as described by Dweck (2000). This is consistent with Elliot’s (2005) claim that achievement scores do not identify said learning goals. However, when students prepared for an exam, goal orientations reflected performance goals. When participants were exposed to course material that they could link to improving their competence as future teachers, mastery goal orientations were expressed.

A distinction among achievement groupings did appear, in that the highest achievers reported more complex perspective-taking abilities than did participants in the other two achievement groups. The higher group voiced a greater willingness to value their own knowledge on matters, while reflecting on WHY experts and others expressed their views, and did not take personally disagreements others may have had with them. Participants representing the other achievement groups focused on meeting the standards set by experts and others, and described “that” other people have distinct views on things, without describing “why” this may be. The language used by the middle, and lower achievement groups served to either rebuff disagreements others had with them, or simply reflected statements that they did not engage in conversations with others who

disagreed, because views or perspectives were unchanging. This finding serves to extend Dweck's theory beyond one's beliefs about the nature of intelligence and related mastery-goal and performance-goal oriented behaviors. The findings of this study indicate that perspective-taking abilities may promote the ability to exert performance goals in achievement conditions where it's useful to do so, while also finding ways to express mastery goal behaviors when learning is personally meaningful.

What follows are results in response to the issue subquestions related to the central question. Issue subquestions included:

1. What environments elicit/diminish learning motivation?
2. What to higher achievers do, compared to the middle and lower achievement groups?
3. What do higher achievers NOT do, compared to the middle and lower achievement groups?
4. What do higher achievers consider to be challenges, and how do they respond, compared to the middle and lower achievement groups?
5. When are higher achievers aware of their learning, compared to the middle and lower achievement groups?
6. What impact does family culture have on learning motivation?
7. How does one's social environment affect learning motivation?

Procedural subquestions will follow, and include:

1. What are the general categories to emerge in a first review of the data? (This refers to the initial open coding process and appears on p. 58.)
2. What is the phenomenon of interest? (This refers to the central phenomenon.)
3. What caused the phenomenon of interest? (This refers to the paradigm model on p. 63.)

The paradigm model will then be introduced, and will include descriptions of achievement group differences within each paradigm model category. Throughout the remainder of this document, words in italics represent in vivo codes; exact words used by interview participants. (See Table 2 for a list of in vivo codes that emerged from the research participants who participated in this study.) Words in all capital letters indicate participants' emphasis.

Table 2

In Vivo Codes

In Vivo Codes reflecting the voices of the interview participants, appearing in italics in the text

Dynamic (teachers)*Connect* (teachers who connect, when I can connect)*Enjoying life**Memorizing* (learning)*Meaningful* (learning that is personally relevant)*Hands-on experiences**Regurgitation* (for exams)*Grain truck method* (study method: knowledge in, knowledge out when tested)*Crammed* (studying for exams)*Enjoy**Hang-out**Fun* (teachers who are, classes that are...)*Care* (relative to teachers who...)*Book-smart versus people-smart**Difficult**Doing* (rather than discussing)*Interested**Get through* (instructional demands)*Classroom learning*

Issue Subquestions***What Environments Elicited and Diminished Learning Motivation?***

Phenomena that elicited learning motivation included course content that participants perceived to be relevant to their career choice; when they reported the highest mastery goal orientation. Alternatively, when course content was not perceived to be specifically connected to their career major, learning motivation reportedly was temporary in nature. Reported behaviors related to performance goal orientation came into play. Other phenomena that elicited learning motivation included instructional environments that solicited student participation, small group discussion, and authentic

learning activities. *Dynamic* teachers who could *connect* with students and who were approachable also elicited a desire to learn among the participant population. Phenomena that diminished learning motivation included instructional environments that involved lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and assessments because they were perceived to require *regurgitation* of course material. Papers or projects tended to be preferred assessment venues relative to traditional exams. Further, instructors who were not approachable and who failed to *connect* with students weakened motivation to learn among the research participants.

What Did Higher Achievers Do (Compared to the Other Two Achievement Groups)?

Higher achievers in this study tended to search for career relevance in their courses where it was not immediately apparent. Two of the participants dropped classes, for example, if they believed they would not be able to earn an A. One even changed majors because of a B+ resulting in one of the core classes for a previous program. Higher achievers seemed to exhibit a greater capacity for comparing and contrasting information from varied sources, and for synthesizing information. They also were more likely to be able to understand another's perspective in relation to their own, and to see where others held similar or different views, noting where there may be overlap. They were more likely to consider biases that potentially impacted knowledge claims made by others, including experts, exhibiting an ability to consider why others may say or believe the things they do. Higher achievers also reported friendship groups with similar achievement goals regarding their education; they all wanted to do well in a formal educational setting, and supported each other in that effort by giving them space when study time was needed. Grades were of utmost importance to this group. Participants

exhibited both mastery and performance goal orientations, depending on what was called for.

The middle achievement group tended to concentrate on learning what was perceived to be relevant to their career plans. These participants also directed their energies toward social goals and *enjoying life* in place of *memorizing* content not deemed to be *meaningful* to their future. They tended to exert more effort *memorizing* course material than did their higher achieving peers, and relied on this study method despite declarations of knowledge that this is not the most productive method; but because they continued to achieve As and Bs "...it seems to work, so why change?" This group reported learning better with *hands-on* experiences because this added meaning to learning. This may be due to their perspective-taking abilities, as will be discussed further in the description of the logic diagram. While this group (as well as the lower achieving group) reported an understanding that others have different views, they did not tend to reflect as to why those differences may exist, nor did they reveal thoughts about where their own views may have intersected with those of others. The *hands-on* experiences had a tendency to make an activity personally relevant, increasing the chances that relevancy would become apparent. However, without assistance in making those connections, a form of disconnect emerged, wherein learning meant that they had to accomplish the goals of the teacher, and *meaningful* learning meant that they were aware of the relationship between course content and that which was personally relevant. They truly appeared to engage in learning that was connected to their career plans (to the degree that they are committed to a career) and/or related authentic experiences.

Lower achievers reported listening in class and observing others as primary learning methods. They reported a preference for challenging tasks over easy ones, in order that they might learn something, and said they were stimulated by challenge. They tended to feel “smart” when they were able to help others understand things, and sought the instructor’s help when they “wanted to remember something.” They reported spending hours trying to learn things that were *meaningful* to them. These behaviors and preferences all are reflective of mastery goal orientations. This group reported reflections and behaviors that focused on developing their procedural knowledge, though they exhibited a greater disconnect between formal educational activities and life learning. Lower early achievement scores in the university setting seemed to have contributed to this disconnect, as well as their performative response to challenge as reflected in their disengagement in certain course content.

What Did Higher Achievers Not Do (Compared to the Other Two Achievement Groups)?

Interestingly, higher achievers did not report spending as much time studying as the other groups might have, unless they were working on something of interest, which meant courses directly related to increasing their future competence in their teaching careers. Although they *crammed* for exams and *memorized* like the other groups for classes they did not *enjoy*, they did not spend more than a few minutes doing so in most cases. They did not reserve effort by not attending class they did not *enjoy*, and they did not sacrifice academic performance in the pursuit of social goals. In fact, they would resist calls from friends to *hang out* if they needed to study, (e.g., not playing X-Box instead of studying). While they attributed high grades to their effort, they also tended to believe they had a knack for picking things up quickly. They also did not focus as much

on *hands-on* experiences, as they did more varied forms of authentic learning; in other words, authentic learning could be managed in the abstract, and could be self-initiated. This group did not consider achieving a bachelor's degree to be a means to an end, rather, they considered the educational process to provide instances of improving their competence as future teachers. This group reflected both mastery, and performance orientation thoughts and behaviors.

Middle achievers did not seem to put forth much effort when they did not *enjoy* a class; they attended class less frequently and sacrificed grades so they could focus on the classes they did *enjoy*—where they exerted more mastery goal behaviors. Their language indicated a lack of engagement in classes that relied on lecture or PowerPoint presentations, nor did they report engaging in classes unless instructors were *dynamic* and *fun*, nor did they tend to read very much. They did not put off social goals in order to attend to academic goals. They did not tend to integrate varying perspectives, so the likelihood that their general educational experience remained a “means to an end,” where the journey was not valued, remained prominent. For this group, the reward was in completing something; achieving As and Bs. This was reported to show they *cared* about their performance and were rewarded for their work ethic. This group reported thoughts and behaviors that reflected both performance and mastery orientations; they reported high engagement in career-related courses, but reported having little choice in having to learn non-career-related material for tests.

Participants in the lower achievement group did not engage in most learning activities that might have resulted in improved performance on traditional summative assessments. Perhaps it is because there was a tendency to focus on the distinction

between being *book-smart* versus *people-smart*; “I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm really book smart, um, I, I don't know, I'd have to try a lot harder in school to GET things.” A related view was, “You learn things in school because you have to perform on tests.” Perhaps as a result, this group did not seem to focus on grades as a motivational tool, nor as an accomplishment goal. In addition, they did not seem to manage their social time well, to the extent that friends served as more of a hindrance to learning than it did for the middle group. They reported seeking challenge in content they deemed to be relevant, but described disengagement from course content they did not perceive to be related to career plans. This group reported the greatest difficulty in overall academic pursuits, and suffered the most in terms of not engaging in anything that was not clearly going to help them in their careers, or was not fun. Though their engagement toward career-related course content was reported in ways that reflect mastery-orientation, they seemed to truly disengage in all other course material. Disengagement from the majority of academic challenges appeared thus to be the greatest in this group.

***What Did Higher Achievers Consider to be Challenges, and
How Did They Respond (Compared to the Other Two Achievement Groups)?***

Higher achievers considered repetition of course content to be challenging. They expressed issues with patience in such situations, and tended to disengage when this occurred. If a subject was not related to their career goals, or had no interest value, they tended to engage performance goal behaviors to achieve an A. They would only participate in class by listening in such cases, because they did not want to be seen “being wrong.” They were not entirely engaged in the class. They reported attending class only to be better prepared for exams. Rather than putting effort into *meaningful* learning, they reported memorizing information for tests, only to subsequently forget the material.

However, if they had difficulty grasping course concepts, and could not figure things out after 15 minutes of effort, they would tend to disengage completely. The latter scenario was rarer than it was common, as they usually were able to achieve the high grades they “had to have.”

In contrast to the higher achievement group, middle achievers tended to view university classes to be more challenging overall. Participants in this group suffered more direct consequences to class difficulty than those in the previous group. When they did not *enjoy* a class, they reserved effort, attended classes less, sacrificed grades and focused on other classes where they exerted more mastery goal behaviors, concentrating on learning what was relevant to their career plans. They also reported directing their energies toward social goals and *enjoying life* in place of memorizing content not deemed *meaningful* to their future. If these participants’ parents viewed their work life as more drudgery than engaging, such may have served to influence a value towards finding a balance between work and play, or *enjoying life*. For this group of participants, however, because courses were described as being more difficult, they reflected a performance goal orientation with challenging classes (because their failures, or lower grades, were due to external causes—class difficulty). Consequently, directing their energies elsewhere (e.g. social goals) could have been a diversion; they did not want to appear to be inadequate, so they made the choice to put effort into classes they liked, and avoided the ones they did not until cramming for exams.

Classes that did not include significant peer interaction were *difficult* for the lower achieving participant group. Though they also valued teachers who were *fun*, the personal interaction was strikingly valuable for these participants compared to the other groups.

The reasons transcend the reported lack of desire to read (the higher achievement group also reported reading very little). Instead, they seemed to center around the value of *doing* rather than reading. This group enjoyed instructional activities that involved *doing* things, which is another form of achieving *hands-on* experiences, and was likely valued by this group for the same reason it was valued by all of the achievement groups. Further, activities for the lower achievement group helped to promote *meaningful* learning for individuals who do not have facility for intersecting others' perspectives with their own.

***When Were Higher Achievers Aware of Learning
(Compared to the Other Two Achievement Groups)?***

The higher achievement group reported being aware they had learned material when they could connect it to either their own experiences, or when they could make connections from class to things they encountered in their environment both during and outside of class.

In contrast, the middle achieving group was aware of their learning when they could recall information without looking it up. They knew they had learned when they could perform a learning task.

The lower achieving group reported knowing they had learned when they could perform a procedural task after having observed or practiced it. One individual made reference to remembering factual knowledge, such as dates of wars or political leaders' birthdays, though he could not report these dates precisely.

What Impact Did Family Culture Have on Learning Motivation?

Home environments that encouraged and modeled reading seem to have had a significant impact on achievement in all groups, and in most cases, on willingness to read academic material as long as it related to improving their competencies as a future

educator. Implied authoritative parenting styles, as opposed to those that were either authoritarian or permissive, seemed to support offspring in both efforts and decision-making. An authoritative approach may have impacted the ability of their offspring to weigh options in life, and to weigh arguments at a more abstract level than those who experienced more authoritarian, or permissive parenting styles. Families that conveyed value for formal education for various reasons (e.g. to have a positive experience, to enjoy something the parents were not able to, etc.) had children who achieved at higher levels. Families that promoted education as a means to an end, or a means of ensuring that their child's future work life would be less arduous as a result had children who achieved at the middle, or lower level. Participants who described their parents as "smart," whether or not they attained formal education, tended to achieve higher grades in a university setting than did their counterparts.

How Did Participants' Social Environment Affect Learning Motivation?

Participants in all groups whose social life included like-minded friends tended to achieve the highest levels of performance, exhibiting more learning motivation. None of the participants were currently involved in formal social groups, but one middle achiever was highly involved in such groups prior to enrollment at the University. However, having roommates reportedly did tend to present more challenge in completing academic work.

Procedural Subquestions

A grounded theory research method is designed to aid in the systematic collection and analysis of data and the construction of a theoretical model by taking inductive comparisons from raw data (interview transcripts) and constructing abstractions that

reflect the data. The procedural subquestions that follow describe the analytic process utilized. A theoretical model was created in the process of addressing these questions. After a review of this process, the resulting theory represented in the logic diagram, or paradigm model, will be detailed.

What are the General Categories to Emerge in a First Review of the Data?

Open coding describes the initial process, wherein data is taken apart to identify potential categories, their properties, and their dimensional locations are identified as they emerge from the data. A category represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Early general codes included: “childhood library visits,” “background experiences,” “expectations,” “wanting a stable job,” “increasing income potential,” and “trying hard or not in high school.” Other codes included, “preparing for exam,” “self-concept,” “learning occurs only in class” “having friends,” “core class or not,” “career plans,” “course demands (reading vs doing/activities),” “planning for career,” “being confused,” “exam structure,” “dynamic teacher,” “accessible teacher”, “encouragement,” “class structure,” “study timing,” “help-seeking,” “reserving effort,” “conflicting views,” “protecting image,” “protecting beliefs (e.g. about value of grades)”, and “connecting new information.” The remaining codes included, “engagement,” “self-knowledge,” “good/bad grades,” “authentic experiences,” and “meaningful learning.”

Creswell (2007) recommends identifying 20-30 such codes, out of which 5-6 main categories should be identified. From this list of codes, the researcher then went back to the data in order to identify one open coding category on which to focus, referred

to as the core category, or central phenomenon, after which point it could be determined how categories were embedded in relation to the core phenomenon.

What is the Phenomenon of Interest?

The *phenomenon of interest* was identified in the process of taking information from data and comparing it to emerging categories. Another way to describe this process is called the constant comparative method of data analysis. The central phenomenon is needed to reflect experiences occurring across all interview participants and in different contexts. The phenomenon of interest that emerged in this study was “managing evaluation outcomes, while learning relative to career choice.” In keeping with Strauss’ (1987) recommendation for core status criteria, the chosen core phenomenon was 1) centrally related to other categories, 2) occurred frequently throughout the data, 3) related to all of the other categories, 4) had meaningful implications for extending a more general theory, and 5) became increasingly, theoretically powerful as the details of surrounding categories were worked out. Once this core phenomenon was identified, the researcher then returned to the data to identify categories around the core phenomenon.

What Did the Axial Coding Process Reveal?

Where open coding fractures the data, allowing some categories to emerge, and allows the researcher to identify properties and dimensional locations, axial coding is a process of putting data “back together in new ways by *making connections between a category and its subcategories*” (italics in original, Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 97). Using Strauss and Corbin’s (1990) prescription for types of categories to identify around the central phenomenon, the researcher then selected categories that worked within the prescribed category types in relation to the core phenomenon.

The prescribed category types consist of **causal conditions** (factors that caused the core phenomenon), **strategies** (actions taken in response to the core phenomenon), **contextual, and intervening conditions** (specific, and broad situational factors that influence the strategies), and **consequences** (outcomes from using the strategies). These categories relate to and surround the core phenomenon. (Creswell, 2007, pp. 64-65)

These specifying features or category types are referred to as subcategories because they afford precision to the central phenomenon. Categories and their properties are then identified for each of these subcategories. Phenomena (Categories) that **caused** the phenomenon of interest included 1) participants' background and experiences (e.g. family culture, family expectations, and previous educational experiences), and 2) participants' expectations relative to attaining their degree. The **contextual conditions** resulted in two core categories: 1) course enjoyment and 2) course difficulty. The **intervening conditions** that influenced the phenomenon of interest include: 1) friendships, 2) perspective-taking, and 3) rewards. The **strategies** that resulted from intervening conditions and context include: 1) managing evaluation outcomes, and 2) learning about things that will make one more competent in their career choice. The **consequences** of these strategies were 1) self-discovery, 2) learning (temporary or enduring), 3) disconnect (academic performance can be unrelated to meaningful learning), and 4) grades. Detailed descriptions of each of the paradigm category types follows, including how participants differed according to their achievement grouping. Appendix 6 shows the raw data connected to paradigm categories (a component of Axial coding). It is from the iterative process of moving quotes and codes among categories of meaning that resulted in the paradigm model. The paradigm model provides a visualization of the storyline that resulted from interviewing student participants about what motivates them to learn.

Paradigm Model

The theoretical paradigm model for what motivates students to learn in a university setting, evolving from Strauss and Corbin's (1990) framework and developed within the present investigation, is presented in Figure 1. The framework and central phenomenon is a reflection of the findings relative to the central question that instigated the study.

The central phenomenon has been defined as “the central idea, event, happening, about which a set of actions/interactions is directed at managing or handling, or to which the set is related. We identify the phenomenon by asking questions such as: What is this data referring to? What is the action/interaction all about?” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 100). Once the central phenomenon is identified, the researcher systematically relates it to other categories, and affirms those relationships by looking for confirming and disconfirming examples (Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2007). Categories are selected out if insufficient codes are found to validate their usefulness.

In the present study, codes and categories were sorted, compared, and contrasted until saturated, which means that relationships between codes and categories were compared and contrasted across all participants until no further categories could be identified, and no further relationships were apparent. What remained after this process was a grounded theory paradigm model.

Differences across the higher-, medium-, and lower CGPA achievement groupings appear within the core categories and will be discussed after describing the similarities that connect them. In keeping with Creswell (2007) and Morrow and Smith (1995), the final step will be to offer hypotheses that interrelate the categories in the model. Quotes from participants appear throughout the reporting narrative, but a greater

sample of raw data appears in Appendix 6, organized by categories appearing in the Paradigm Model.

Causal Conditions of Phenomena Related to Learning Motivation

Two types of causal conditions emerged from the data, which ultimately led to reported motivations and experiences related to learning in a post-secondary educational environment. These causal conditions were 1) background experiences that include family culture and secondary education, and 2) expectations connected to attaining a bachelor's degree. These appear in the first box in Figure 1.

Background Experiences

By the time they were in middle school, all nine participants reported that they had come to believe they would be attending a college or university. In their judgment, this was due both to formal educational environments that promoted this belief, as well as parental messages that this was an expectation. Parents tended to promote a college education because either they did not have the chance to do the same, or because they were glad to have had the experience. All participants who were born in Nebraska said they wanted to attend the University of Nebraska Lincoln (UNL) because of the "Husker" identity; one participant from out-of-state attended UNL for a scholarship which paid her entire tuition. Participants described family cultural values that they found useful in their student roles, such as patience, work ethic, and/or emotional support. (See Appendix 6, p.143, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. Differences across the three CGPA groupings were not highly varied, but the differences that did appear were clear. Higher CGPA participants stood apart from all other participants in that they had home cultures that valued reading.

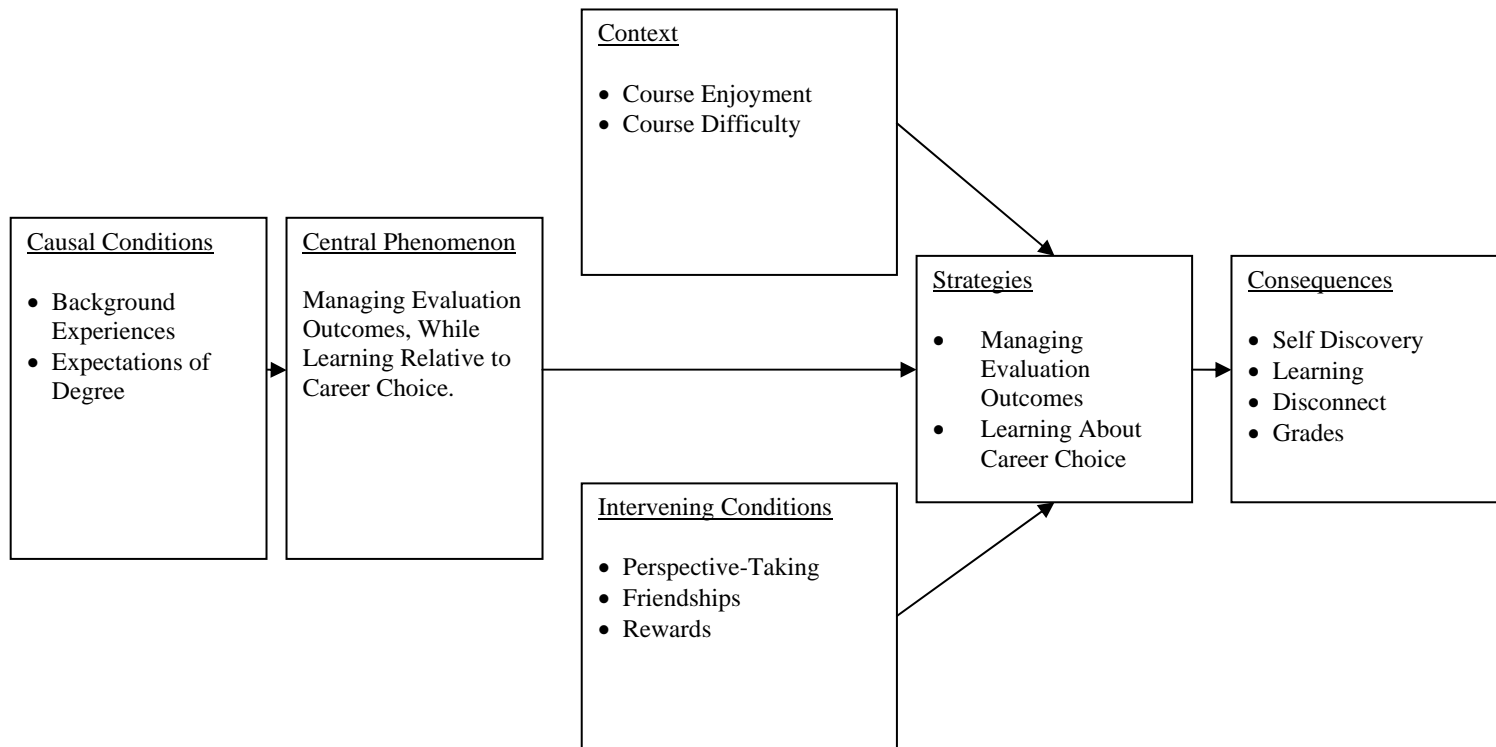


Figure 1. Theoretical paradigm model for what motivates teacher education students to learn in a university setting.

Participants in this group also described their parents as “smart,” whether or not their parent(s) attended college. Mary’s (all names are pseudonyms) experience was that “Growing up reading was normal; it was weird if you DIDN’T read...Mom always took us to the library...Dad always read to us...through school she was always, ‘You should try harder...You should do well in school’ and stuff like that...Dad always read to us, but I associate reading with mom more because of the library trips.”” She also reported remembering her first grade, which she got in 6th grade: an A that she reported getting with little effort. This group also took AP classes in high school, except for Jack who described himself as “one of the nerds in sixth grade who played Pokemon.” It is important to point out Jack’s predilection for tendencies ascribed to nerds because he later “slept through high school.” His singular priorities during high school were very different from those of all of the participants. However, he described parents who encouraged him to make commitments, which he said helped him a lot in retrospect. He described his parents as supportive, “Parents make you feel good about yourself, that what you’re doing is worthwhile and will pay off.” Secondary teachers and parents of this group also seemed to spend more time explaining why education was important, including things they would need to know for college. Jane reported having parents and teachers often explaining why it was important to learn various things in school, and also remembered her first performance grade as being a “poor one,” “I got a 50% and was full of tears; it was on a 5th grade spelling test...You couldn’t retake it.”

Participants comprising the middle group described parental support that was more general than specific relative to the value of education, while also high in work ethic. John claimed that “...dedication was always important in my household. My

parents strongly encouraged learning, but learning on the farm is like an apprenticeship; that's different from reading books and memorizing." He also reported learning respect from his parents, "You get one name, don't screw it up." Respect meant acknowledging others, being polite, helping strangers in need. He reported never having read as a child despite encouragement to do so; he preferred outdoor activities. Ed said his parents thought learning was important, though neither attended college. Both parents worked very hard: "My dad put in 140 hours per week, and I do NOT want to do that." He described how likeable his teachers were in high school, "Teachers are likeable when they have activities and look like they wanna be there, wanna help teach you; I haven't had many teachers like this in college yet..." He described himself to be in "the middle of the pack" regarding intelligence, because of the ACT score he achieved in middle school, "so I guess I've kind of accepted that niche." Sue's dad promoted college because she said he didn't want her to get stuck in a job the way he felt stuck in. Her mom supported college to help ensure she got a better paying job. She also described learning a high work ethic from her dad as well as the value of life lessons. "Learning prepares you for work; you learn from your mistakes." Sue explained that learning was always a top priority at home, that "school comes first." She reported that grades were not in her consciousness until high school; at which time they became something for which to aim. In general, this participant group reflected cultural backgrounds that connected formal education to a more general "preparation for work." Teachers and parents were described as "coaching them to get their homework done" rather than explaining "why" learning was valuable.

Participants representing the lower achievement group generally did not describe much connection between education and their families. Rick said that he wasn't read to as a child, but that he took things apart and enjoyed putting them back together and declared that his "...teachers and I got me through public school" after being asked if his parents ever helped him with homework. David's formative years were largely unpredictable; his father had to move to the east coast, while his mother had to stay in Omaha due to her illness. He described flying back and forth between Omaha and Maryland, with memories of his mother talking and listening to him, as she was immobile. By the time he was searching for colleges, he and his dad (who was an officer in the Army) explored ROTC, but he said he "knew I didn't CARE enough about grades to join." Becky's parents earned associate degrees, and she almost sought to do the same, but just wanted to try a four-year institution "to see what it was like." She reported her first recollection of being graded in second grade: she stayed in from recess to get help with math and felt proud because she "got it," and then also received a good grade. She considered medical school because her sisters were in such a program, but she found out she did not like science. She reported "knowing that dad believes in me no matter what," and learned from her mom to speak up for herself. She described the time when she removed herself from the National Honor Society because two boys got kicked off for bad behavior, while a girl who did the same thing did not because her father was the principal of the school. She reported telling them that "the political nature of that made the designation bull."

Expectations from a Bachelor's Degree

The second causal condition identified consisted of expectations of what a college degree would do for either earnings capacity or job security. Some parents advocated that a bachelor's degree would help their offspring “not have to work their fingers to the bone” later in life, and that a degree would offer the promise of job security. Participants described attaining a bachelor's degree as a minimum necessity for entering the workforce. As David explained, “You have to have at least a bachelor's degree for anyone to consider you for employment, and in some cases you have to have a master's degree, or even a Ph.D.” (See Appendix 6, p. 147, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. Differences across achievement groups were not very great on this dimension, but the participants in the higher achievement group tended to refer more to achieving job security and stability, as well as a desire to prepare for a teaching career. In contrast, the middle- and lower achievement groups referred to wanting a bachelor's degree in order “not to have to work so hard” later in life, and it is in these groups that the degree was referred to as a means to an end. “Educational degrees are a payoff; I just want to graduate so I can pay my bills.”

Central Phenomenon

The central phenomenon is at the core of the category types associated with it, and is what drives the actions taken by all participants. Analysis in the present study showed that causal conditions—background experiences and expectations connected to having a bachelor's degree—were tied closely to two core categories of learning motivation. The first core category of learning involves managing evaluation outcomes, or learning enough information in order to achieve a grade. The second core category of

learning involves learning relative to career choice. (See Figure 1, second box) These categories support and extend Dweck's (2005) description of behaviors reflective of the mastery goal and performance goal orientation construct. The categories also support Elliot's (2005) claim that there has been little evidence that achievement scores differentially identify mastery from performance goal student tendencies due to the norming standards of grading. This research indicates that mastery-orientation behaviors appear across all achievement patterns (as depicted by CGPA), as do performance-orientation behaviors. Mastery-goal behaviors were more likely to appear within the context of educational content that participants believed to be relevant to their career choices. (Reminder: italicized words reflect in vivo codes, and words in all capital letters indicate emphasis used by the interview participant.)

Jane (high CGPA) exemplified this dual learning motivation when she said, "If it's relevant to what I'll need to know when I teach, I'll work longer to figure it out and research the Internet. But if it's like a math problem, then I'm gonna...I don't care." Throughout the data, others reflected a similar conceptual duality, as when Becky (lower CGPA) stated, "It still MATTERS if I get good grades, but I don't emphasize grades as much as I do what I LEARN." The analytic moment in which this category emerged was after I had sifted through the data numerous times, resulting in the following analytic memo:

It seems that everyone has specifically different learning preferences, such as *learning by doing or when it's hands-on, or because I'm interested, or when they care about a class*. But then someone else states that he *should care about all his coursework, but he didn't; he just memorized and regurgitated on the test and it was done*. When he *cared about a class, he also memorized information... also tried to apply it outside of class*. Is the larger category career preparation (they care about their chosen careers)? Many categories fit under that: connecting new information to future job duties, seeking help when they want to remember

material, if it's related to what I'll be doing it's meaningful, attaching temporary meaning to grades vs. enduring meaning to content for career competency. They memorize content for grades (performance), but try to remember things related to their future careers in order to increase competence (mastery).

Existing and emergent codes and categories were compared and contrasted with this category. The category then was modified to accommodate the data, producing the phenomenon that was labeled “managing evaluation outcomes, while learning relative to career choice.” Learning related to career plans was consistently identified as meaningful by all participants, while all else was connected to grades.

The differences across achievement groups will be detailed in the *strategies* sub-category, after examining the areas that influenced the actions taken; contextual, and intervening conditions. These are the category types that describe specific and broad situational factors that influence the strategies which appear in the upper and lower boxes placed between *Central Phenomenon* and *Strategies* in Figure 1.

Context in Which Learning Motivation Developed

In general, participants seemed to develop some methods for learning in response to course content that was related to career goals, while other strategies were used to *get through* instructional demands. These strategies were influenced by particular contextual markers related to both causal conditions and the resultant phenomena. These contextual markers included 1) enjoyment and 2) perceived difficulty (see Figure 1, upper box).

Course Enjoyment

All participants reported enjoying class structures that incorporated small, and large group discussions, authentic learning activities, and specifically career-related activities. The majority of participants also said they enjoyed having access to, and positive rapport with their instructors; teachers who connected course content to their

own experiences (as well as the students' experiences), who were dynamic and who *connected* with the students. Participants reported *connections* with instructors who conveyed that they cared about students through their accessibility, and their ability to explain content to participants in language they could understand. For example, Sue needed "precise, detailed explanations of how things work," where David relished discussion with instructors about ill-defined problems. Yet Becky needed the instructor to show her how to do things. It didn't matter if the instructor doing the explaining or modeling was the actual professor of the lecture course, or a teaching assistant who ran a lab—all the instructors were seen as potentially contributing to the enjoyment and perceptions of learning.

The most visible connection to enjoyment was when instruction was reported to be meaningful--content was *meaningful* when it could be applied to teaching. Specific classes were provided as exemplars of where meaningful learning occurred. These usually included classes where the content focused on classroom management, or having students practice lesson plan construction. An exemplar provided by Mary was a class that focused on "current issues facing the field of education." As Jane explained, "Whenever it has to do with ACTUAL teaching, then I find it more meaningful." Practicum experiences also were lauded when students were able to spend time with experts in the field. Such experiences Jane claimed "added a layer of value/meaning to teaching" when she described the mutual respect her master teacher generated with students, and noted her genuine *caring* for the students, which helped her look at teaching as "more than a job." Meaningful learning was also reported from student participants who had taken organismic biology, an online course. Relative to Jane's experiences with

a lecture biology course, the online class “motivated me to learn because there wasn’t the restriction of huge lab reports that I had to b.s. my way through; instead, I learned A LOT about insect classifications; it was COOL because I could walk around outside, see an insect, and know what it was.” (See Appendix 6, p. 149, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. Few group differences appeared in the category of course enjoyment. One distinction reflected in comments by individuals in the higher achievement group centered on reading and writing in two cases, and requirements for extensive effort from students prior to assessments and lecture. The two who reported enjoying writing activities said that it helped them organize their thoughts and synthesize information. The two participants further offered that instructors who required paper assignments “expect you to work with the information, not just *regurgitate* it,” as Mary explained. Jane said she enjoyed having choices in terms of topics to pursue, or directions to take in her arguments. Jack described his favorite class as one where students had to 1) read the material, 2) do the homework, and 3) then get quizzed on it: “...THEN he explains to us what was going on, how it worked, and then it just kind of CLICKS. This is exactly how I like to learn...this is how I will teach.” Jack further described *cool* teachers as those who helped him learn, explained things, were not monotone, yet he also clearly reported a preference for instructors who “want him to think, not just collect information and *regurgitate* it on a test.”

Beyond what was highlighted in the paragraphs earlier, the middle and lower achievement groups seemed to indicate slightly more emphasis on the value of group projects. Sue incorporated this emphasis when she stated, “*Hands-on* activities, group projects, and doing presentations...help me learn a lot more.” Becky spoke for these two

achievement groups when she reported that her “favorite teacher was A LOT OF FUN...liked her method: She would work out a problem, then get a student to work out another one on the board, so WE’D GET REALLY INVOLVED, do A LOT OF LABS AND ACTIVITIES THAT WERE A LOT OF FUN.”

Course Difficulty

Course difficulty was reported to impede student learning. In the examples participants provided, such courses included instruction that failed to make *connections* to either life in general, or any of their own experiences. In addition to the nature of teacher access and rapport (e.g. low access related to increased perceived difficulty), instructional delivery methods that relied on lecture and PowerPoint presentations were reportedly not engaging, according to all participants. Ed said that while PowerPoints helped him organize his notes and provided hints for test material, they were not engaging and did not promote learning beyond getting through an exam. Textbooks were also unanimously vilified, though Ed added that he could tell after reading the first chapter whether or not he would be interested in reading any further. This indicated that positive experiences with textbooks likely did exist, but were definitely not the norm. Another persistent theme across all student groups was that *regurgitation* of content was never considered to be enjoyable; the more a student was expected to recall declarative knowledge, or perform on a summative assessment, the more difficult the class was perceived as a result. (See Appendix 6, p. 152 for a greater sample of raw data.)

Group differences. This higher achievement group generally perceived difficulty in classes that were repetitious. Repetition was perceived to occur not only when content was repeated within a class, but when content was repeated across classes. Mary

described this frustration by saying, “It’s helpful to go through the legal things but like having to go through that over, and over, and over and over again, it’s just like ok, we’ve heard that once, can we go on please?” Jane described her least favorite class as being “hard” because she started out being so interested in biology, but felt “let down” because the teacher lectured and had them fill in color sheets everyday; she “hated that, found it boring, and didn’t know things.” Still, whether classes were enjoyable or not, this group reported ways to remember information long enough to perform well on assessments, and said they expected college to be more difficult overall. One exception to this achievement scenario was revealed when two participants described a few classes as being difficult because they couldn’t seem to understand the material quickly enough; because so much effort was required to grasp concepts, they simply dropped these classes, and one participant changed majors because of the challenge presented in a core program class. No participants from other achievement groups dropped a class due to perceived level of difficulty.

The middle achievement group seemed to be more susceptible to having their course achievement reflect their level of enjoyment; they achieved lower grades in courses they did not enjoy. But again, they remained enrolled in classes for which they suspected a final grade to be below an A. Relative to the higher achievement group, this group was the most outspoken about their dislike of PowerPoint as an instructional tool and lecture as a teaching method. John was emphatic about not learning very well when “a teacher just goes up there, yack, yack, yack, yack, yack,” though he admitted that PowerPoints helped him take better notes and make better flash cards, because they usually included hints about things that would be on a test. This preference reflected that

of others in this group. While the middle group also expected their college experience to be more difficult than their current experience has been, their performance expectations were to achieve “As or Bs” and include goals of *enjoying life* in addition to attending to coursework. This group was serious about their academic performance, but also sought to achieve a sense of balance between scholastic demands and time spent with family and friends.

The lower achievement group conveyed the most difficulty in learning in classes that required extensive reading. As Rick explained, “I definitely gravitate toward ‘doing’ and avoid reading because reading is painful.” He reported that lecture classes were tolerable when he could relate the content with his own experiences. As his achievement suffered, he adjusted his original goal for the course grade, and tried to muster the energy to attend the class. He wouldn’t drop a difficult class in the hope that he might learn something useful despite his deteriorating interest and performance, and described some lessons from the hospitality class he did not enjoy, but that he would be able to apply to teaching. David refused to be accountable for details or factual knowledge, only broad analysis of ill-defined problems or concepts. If writing assignments did not include teacher feedback, the task was viewed only as “proof to the instructor that you get it,” which turned the exercise into a “tedious task” for him.

Intervening Conditions Influencing Learning Motivation

In addition to context, there also were intervening conditions, which were broad, general conditions that influenced participants’ choices of learning strategies. Intervening conditions included a) friendships, b) perspective-taking, and c) rewards. Friends were influential both in the similarity and differences in their interests, the encouragement they

could provide, as well as in their potential to convince participants to stop studying so they could spend time socializing (see Figure 1, lower box).

Friendships

Common themes in friendships pointed simply to the general perception that they were valuable. (See Appendix 6, p. 155, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. Friendship cohorts among the higher achievement group exhibited a similar focus on learning, or at least sought to perform very well in school. These participants' friends also planned on attending college at a young age, and many friends from high school were attending the same university. Participants reported that friends respected their time when they needed to study. They said their friends made it a point not to bother them at such times. Compared to Mary who described friends who were similar in most every way to her, Jane described one friend who also entered a career-specific degree program, where her other friend "just wanted to do something she LOVED and is a philosophy major...doesn't know what she'll do after grad school, which would frustrate me!" Yet that friend, in Jane's view, had influenced her to diverting her focus on grades, and more toward learning for the pure joy of it, something for which Jane reported significant gratitude. Jack described current friendships as people who were also interested in doing well in school, yet they seemed to struggle a little more than did Jack. In sum, friends served as a support system for achievement at the University.

While the middle achievement group described friendships with people from high school who were also attending the University (John said his friends actually encouraged him to enroll at UNL), these friendship groups were not very focused on formal

education. In John's case, his friends tended to have family farms where he said many individuals ended up returning. He claimed that "...they (friends) don't care if they don't learn anything (formally) I guess." He went on to state that "...time with friends (and family) are more important than studies." Ed was in ROTC and explained that his friends tried to push each other along, yet they also "...come over to play sports, or to play X-Box which is definitely a problem, and really interferes with school work...They're not focused on school, and neither am I." He further described how they all push off studies by mid-day though he reported that they "shouldn't." Sue didn't feel as though she knew anyone here (at UNL), relative to knowing everyone in the small town in which she grew up, though some of her friends attended the University as well. She focused more on the fact that she didn't know everyone, took classes more seriously, and valued learning because she assumed everyone did. This assumption was rooted in recollections she had about missing information in classes throughout high school because everyone talked all the time, whereas her experience here had so far been different. She described her current friends as preventing her from learning; they often convinced her she would do fine without studying so that she could *hang out* with them. However, like her, her friends had parents who valued learning, and they shared a goal of wanting to be well-regarded by teachers and others. However, she and her friends "would rather go out and have fun than learn something." She appeared not to be simply describing friends from her hometown, as she recently changed majors to speech pathology, and as a result, her friendship group had grown to include others in the same major.

The lower CGPA group described friendships as comprising a distinctly separate aspect of their lives relative to academic pursuits. Becky did say that a lot of her friends

thought grades were important, “but I don’t think they’re as positive and open-minded about stuff as I am.” Her descriptions about the role friends played in her education evolved into the ways in which they helped her be a genuine person, in that she described strivings to be consistently the same (interpersonally) across various situations. She was involved in a lot of formal groups in high school which exposed her to a variety of people. However, she “still hangs out with the same group of people.” In her view, friendships, as well as parents, had taught her how to be a good person. David’s friends did not seem to have common interest in education. He valued his friends for “listening to him babble,” and stated that he listened to them more than they had to listen to him, because he said that he finds it more interesting to listen to others. He described his friends as having opposing political views. One of David’s stories included a friend who asked him how much longer he was going to stay on a certain tangent, because he couldn’t “stand listening to that liberal b.s. much longer.” Rick’s friends did not seem to be interested in formal education either, according to his descriptions. However, they were very important to him in terms of serving as a respite from school. He believed that the time he spent with his friends helped him avoid “burn-out” from school.

Perspective-Taking

Common themes in perspective-taking were revealed in the way participants described what they thought of rules, how they justified knowledge, how they distinguished fact from opinion, and how they responded to criticism. All of the participants valued and trusted the information they got from instructors as well as from published sources, without much reflection as to the validity of the information. In other words, most information from external sources was deemed to be true, and in one case

information was deemed to be true if her parents and friends believed it to be so. One participant admitted that the more confident someone was in their claim, the more likely he would to believe it to be true. Criticism was usually met with efforts to conform, and thoughts participants themselves may have about a subject were uniformly considered to be “opinion.” Knowledge was found in teachers and publications, and was something to be collected (and in Mary’s case, “synthesized;” in Jack’s case, “built-upon”). However, there was one dimension that revealed a stark difference across the achievement groups. (See Appendix 6, p. 157, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. When participants were asked how they knew what was true when experts or varied sources disagreed on a point, or when someone disagreed with them, the higher achievement group reflected on their knowledge and experiences, and considered the potential biases and experiences of the other sources. Mary explained, for instance, that “...if reputable sources disagree, you have to see where they’re coming from,” and in other matters she “would also judge which claims fit better with my experiences.” She also “...considers how her decisions affect other people.” Jane spoke of “trusting my own moral compass,” and Jack stated that “when experts disagree, I try to understand their biases.” When Jack experienced personal disagreements with peers or professors, he “seeks common ground.” In other words, everyone in this group operated on the reasons “why” others make the claims they do, not simply “that” they disagreed. This achievement group seemed to understand that they had views, and that others had views, and that there was usually common ground there somewhere. Jack went further in articulating efforts to understand and explain that overlap, and sought to achieve some degree of integration between seemingly separate views when others disagreed with him.

Figure 2 provides a visual depiction of perspective-taking capacity of this achievement group.

The middle achievement group tended to voice their views without considering others' perspectives or the reasons behind their claims. Different perspectives remained disconnected from each other; "there's my view," and "there's your view." As mentioned above, Ed would agree with someone if they were confident in their claim, John and Sue would "argue (their respective) point." Figure 3 illustrates these distinct points of view.

Similarly, the lower achievement group also considered perspectives to be static, and unique to the individual. For example, Becky stated that she "...might explain her side, but you can't change what people believe." David said he liked to "challenge people for their beliefs to see how they compare" to his, and Rick didn't speak in terms of differences in perspectives beyond procedures for building or constructing physical things. However, when Rick reported that when he was confident about his procedure and someone disagreed with his method, he would just listen because he didn't think they would change their minds, and explained that he was raised in a family context that valued politesse, so he didn't want to appear to be rude (see Figure 3).

Rewards

Common themes in rewards for learning were connected to the meanings participants attached to their participation in the formal educational environment. All but David found a degree of reward in the grades earned, and all felt rewarded when they learned something "meaningful." Things that were meaningful were those things that were perceived to be related to their career choice (teaching). (See Appendix 6, p. 160, for a larger sample of raw data.)

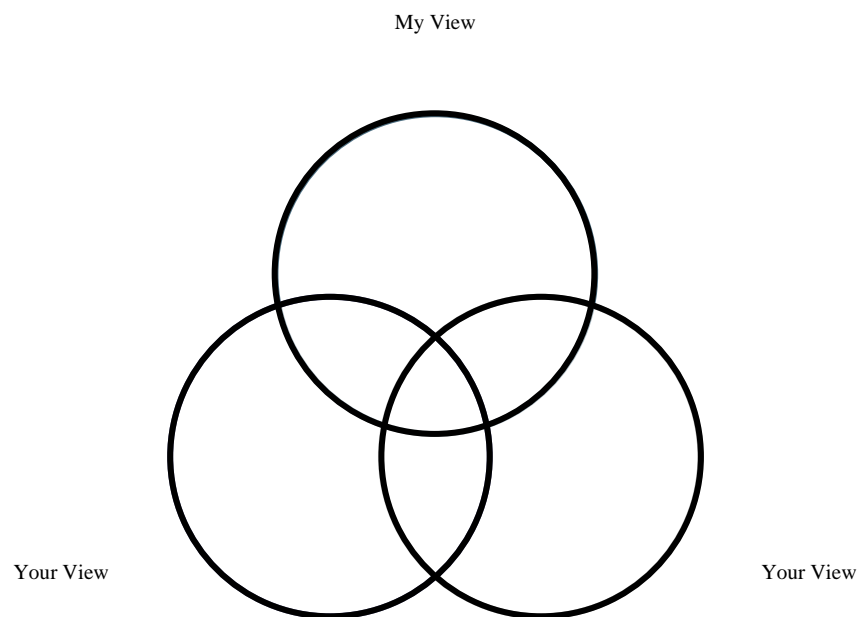


Figure 2. Visual representation of perspective-taking described by the higher achieving group.

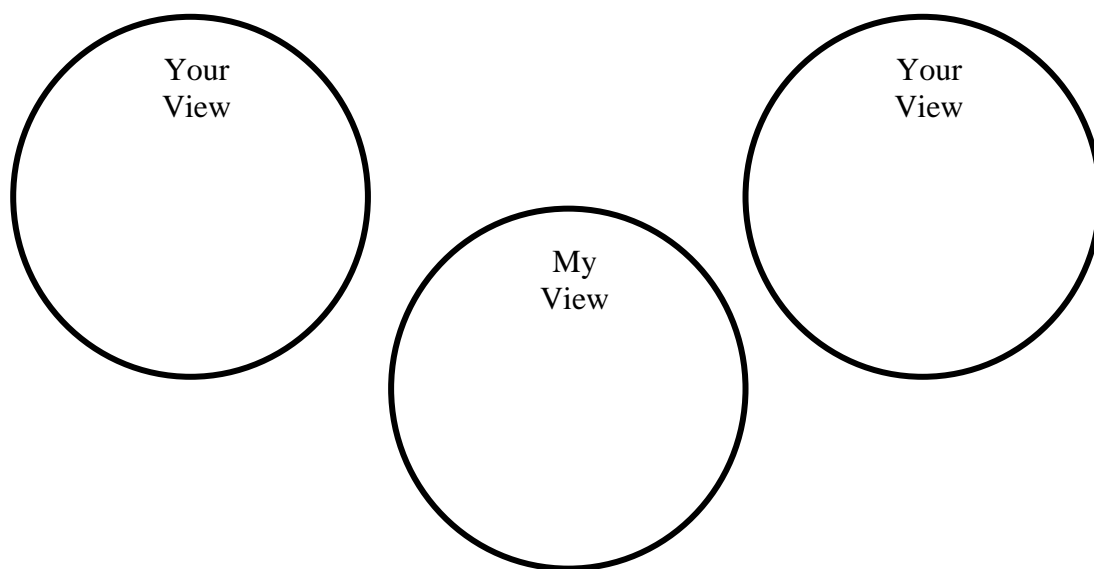


Figure 3. Visual representation of perspective-taking described by the middle and lower achieving groups.

Group differences. The higher achievement group universally valued grades. For Jack, “Grades mean EVERYTHING.” He didn’t care about grades in high school, but then achieved a 4.0 at ITT (a technology school he attended prior to attending UNL). Even though it was “easier there (at ITT),” he still expected to achieve a 4.0 here (at the University). Achieving high grades satisfied his competitive nature as well. Grades were also a priority for Mary; top grades allowed her to keep a full ride scholarship. Though also finding reward in having been able to pursue topics for course assignments that interested her, the greatest reward for her was maintaining a “free education.” Jane also felt the most successful after getting an A, expected As in all of her classes, and needed them to keep her scholarship. She reported enjoying seeing the connections between what she learned in school and her future career.

John, in the middle achievement group, described school as a means to an end, where the journey was of little interest, “I’m not the biggest fan of going to school to learn. I’d rather go to school to teach.” He liked classes that pertained to things he liked to do, such as biology, “...because it’s about animals, plants, how things grow, why things are the way they are...and I’ll be teaching about these things as well.” His rewards came in the form of “getting homework done” and being able to perform tasks, while he expected to do well (get As) on exams. “Grades don’t really mean a whole lot, but show you care.” He spoke of two types of intelligence: “book smart” and “people smart.” “I’m not the book intelligence...I’m intelligent on stuff I *ENJOY*, like biology and hunting.” Ed’s reward was also related to grades, though he adjusted his goals in this regard throughout the semester, “I meet some (grade goals), not others,” and focused on “learning about what I’m going to be doing in a few years in my life.” Sue measured her

success by getting good grades and usually got them, but her “expectations for top grades were different because college was harder than high school...My favorite classes included things I wanted to learn, that were related to my career field, so I’m interested in it; if I don’t like the class, I’m not gonna try very hard.”

The lower achievement group was even less grade-focused. Becky’s high school experience centered on getting As and Bs, “...but it’s HARD in college and I’m more laid back. I think of learning as a process.” Her focus had shifted from grades as a reward to being better prepared for whatever she decided to commit to (she was wavering on her major choice), meeting expectations of authority figures (parents and teachers), and having an authentic disposition. David appeared to be rather rebellious about grades, describing them as “...a way of categorizing me without knowing me.” He reported feeling rewarded by interaction with others as well as by helping others. He found it “...increasingly difficult to care about coursework...outside coursework just kind of, it doesn’t seem to do what uh, you would hope it would, at least for me; generally outside coursework is just supposed to reinforce material, or help you have a heightened understanding of what’s going on and just for me, I get all that in class.” He did say he valued classes when they seemed related to career choice as well as classes that allowed for interaction. Rick said that rewards came in the form of improving his repertoire of wood working skills. At the end of each semester, the fruits of his efforts were found in some piece of furniture he had built. By the end of his program, he hoped to have an entire set. He also was rewarded by being able to help others do the things he had learned to do.

Strategies for Learning

In the presence of the context and intervening conditions described earlier, one overarching phenomenon--the central phenomenon--led to the development of two core strategies for learning motivation: 1) managing evaluation outcomes, and 2) learning relative to career choice. These strategies are found in the fifth box of the paradigm model in Figure 1. Key aspects of the two core strategies are illustrated in Figure 4. What follows is a description of the first core category, followed by differences across groups. Subsequently, the second core category will be described and followed by differences across groups.

Managing Evaluation Outcomes

Students arrived at the University with experiences in college-preparatory learning environments, so it was not surprising that most of them conveyed knowing a variety of strategies for enhancing learning in a formal educational setting. The strategies that emerged from participants across all achievement groupings when describing how they prepared for evaluation included: 1) memorizing course material; 2) attending class; 3) participating in class; 4) seeking help; and 5) reserving effort. However, the manner in which these strategies emerged differed across participant groupings. (See Appendix 6, p. 161, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. The higher achievement group tended to spend little time reviewing notes, but more often described an ability to memorize a majority of course content by listening in class and quickly reviewing material prior to testing. For instance, Mary explained, "I read through my notes once the night before, and then right before the exam...I try to keep up with readings, but usually get behind and so then quit...I never

really learned how to study...I don't like to study." She reported not missing class because she didn't like not knowing what she might have missed. She usually participated in class by listening, unless classmates expressed views that are what she considered to be "wrong," meaning that they either didn't know as much as she did about the topic, or they were not considering the context or perspectives of the people being discussed. (Mary reported efforts toward developing more patience toward others.) She sought help from the instructor if she couldn't get interested in the subject, explaining that she would try to see if she could do alternative assignments. She said she enjoyed writing projects on topics of her choice. This may relate to having parents, her mother in particular, either providing options or supporting her choices.

Mary described her mother as actively helping her to weigh options among other alternatives throughout her life. She reported having had opportunities in sixth-grade to pursue ill-defined topics for research papers. One area in which Mary reported reserving effort entirely was that she would drop a course if it seemed too difficult and would stop trying if she got behind in the readings. She reported learning best by listening in class. She said that she will drop a class if she does not think she would be able to achieve an A without much effort in.

The apparent desire to avoid difficulty appeared to be a phenomenon that Jane shared. Jane changed majors after receiving a B+ in a science class: She would have preferred an A. She reported studying the night before a test, or maybe three hours before a test. She described having poor time management, but that she had been able to do well anyway. Jane reported excellent class attendance because she said she didn't want to miss

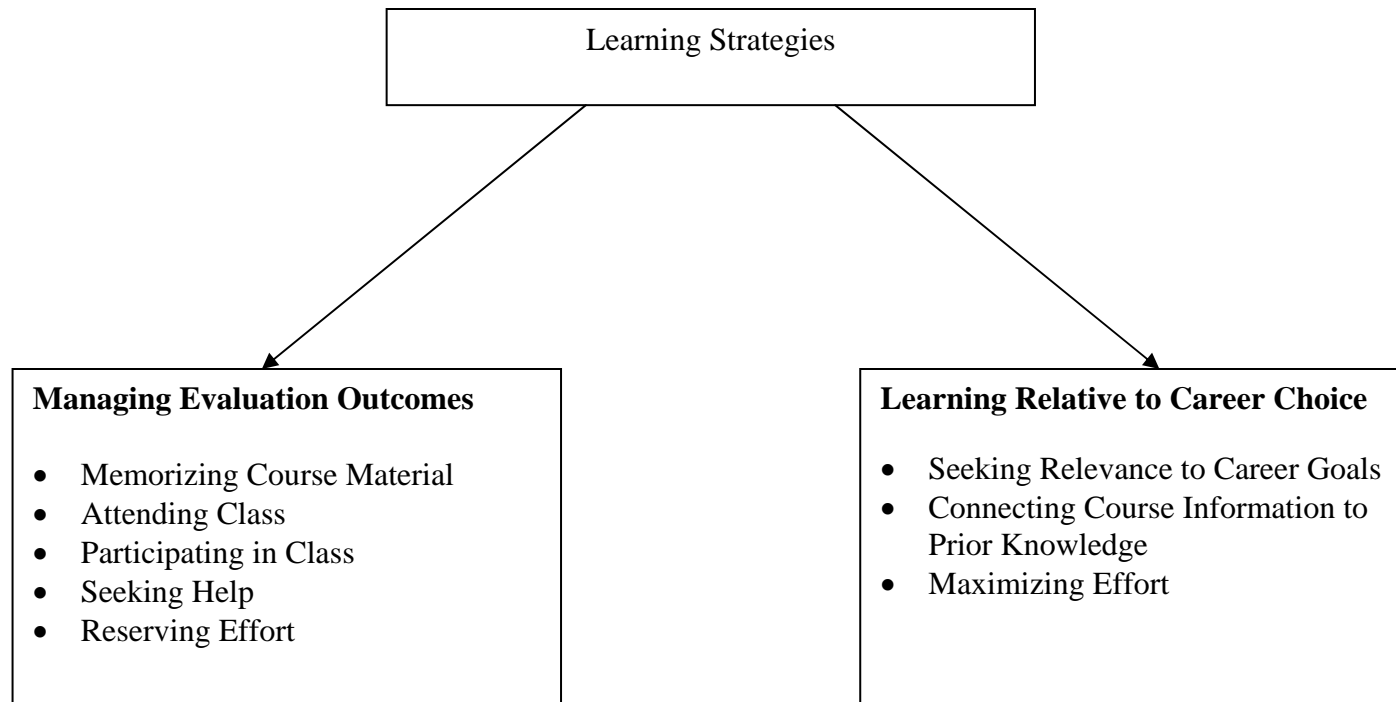


Figure 4. Learning strategies for managing evaluation outcomes and for career-relevant learning.

anything, and would withhold effort on things she thought would not result in an A, yet she wanted to be challenged in classes that she enjoyed, which were those within her program major, and reported withholding effort if a class was too easy. She would only participate in classes that she liked, which again were related to her major.

Jack differed in that he reported invoking distributed practice methods and described daily routines that included doing homework when he was not in class or working out. Jack recounted a time one day when his friends complained about school work so much that he decided they must not have had good study skills. He found out it was the reading they objected to, so he advised them to simply read 10 pages every time they sat down to eat, “because everyone has to eat...usually at least three times per day...and before you know it, you’re reading 30 pages or more every day without the stress.” He said he attended class regularly, except that he planned “two mental health days per class, per semester.” He reported identifying class days where he would miss the least from classes, and stay home to play video games and “pretty much spend the time the way I did in high school...It just helps you unwind, and you just kind of escape it for a little bit. It seems to be working fine; I’m getting straight As,” he explained. He said he went to his instructors outside of class to chat because he felt they would “be nicer to his grade.” When Jack worked on coursework he didn’t like or did not find meaningful, he described reserving effort by taking breaks in-between to watch TV or play video games. He participated in class by finding something that was “wrong” with a theory, explaining that it was not always easy for him--especially when he didn’t enjoy a class--because he found that instructors liked it when he did that.

The middle achievement group relied more on memorization and reported cramming for tests. Compared to the higher achievement group, these participants detailed the ways in which they worked at memorizing. For example, John said he made flash cards to help him memorize. He indicated that this was not what he considered to be the best way to learn. He said he preferred apprenticeship and hands-on learning which was how his friends back home learned on the farm, but “I’ve chosen to be at the University so I have ‘no choice’ but to read and memorize,” though he also stated that he didn’t read. He reported attending class always, and sought the instructor’s help without hesitation when he got stuck on assignments, “...that’s what I’m paying for.” He said he didn’t TRY to learn things except in a general sense, and that “you just learn as you go.” He described reserving effort in general education and educational psychology classes because he didn’t make the connections to their value for his plans to teach, “...They don’t really broaden my horizons,” but he also described them as “easy” and that was why he performed well in them. “I’m not the biggest fan of going to school to learn, I’d rather go to school to teach.” Attending school truly appeared to be a means to an end for him.

Ed pushed off any studying by mid-afternoon but expressed remorse about it. Where he used to play X-Box 8-10 hours at a time in high school, he claimed to now limit his play time to two to three hours in order to have time to study. He also described being a *hands-on* learner, and said he got more out of class discussions than reading. He indicated a preference for learning via role playing, “...I haven’t seen that done in college though, that might be a small town thing.” He reported studying every day after work “mostly,” because reading ahead of time helped him to be more engaged in class when he

knew what they were talking about. He also said he crammed for exams; despite daily studying, he only studied everything all together right before an exam. He described the importance of attending class the first day; he added that this was when he decided whether or not he was going to be engaged in the book, as well as whether or not he would like the instructor. (His perception from the first day reportedly would not change, despite any changes that may have occurred in the class.) As for attendance, he said he missed the “middle days sometimes.” He indicated that he tried to pay attention in class but found this difficult to do. He asked questions as much as he could in order to get clarification and to participate in class, but ended up disengaging in lecture classes that did not apply the concepts.

Sue also relied on repetition by writing everything down that she believed would be on the test, and reported studying for three hours the night before an exam. She said she attended every class (but had missed five at the time of the interview, two months into the semester) because she didn’t want to lose attendance points or any important information about test items. Sue described e-mailing her papers to her mother (a grade school teacher) for editing help, and if she didn’t know how to do an assignment, she would find classmates to befriend on Facebook (a social Internet site), and then ask them for help (but would not contact classmates through Blackboard, a University course Internet site used in many classes). She reported not wanting to risk having instructors “...think she’s not up there with all the other smart people...It’s not like high school, where all the teachers knew students had As in other classes, so every instructor’s perception of my abilities rests solely on my performance in their class!” This is also why she reported not participating in class beyond paying attention. She didn’t want to get

something wrong in front of the teacher, much less the rest of the class. She reported reserving effort to learn anything that was not going to be on the test, “If class covers material that I’m NOT gonna need to know, then there’s no need to pay attention.” She also reserved effort when content was repeated across courses, and reported covering the same content in one educational psychology, and two speech pathology classes.

David was clear about his rebellion against grades, and his distaste for anything that required memorization or *regurgitation* of detailed information. He characterized studying as memorizing. He said he reviewed for exams literally an hour before they began. He seemed to study more when grades were not an issue (e.g. when referring to a mastery-focused writing class; the primary feedback was in the form of instructor comments on his papers). He claimed to attend, and participate in class by discussing broader concepts with instructors and classmates, stating: “I learn all I need to from class discussion.” He sought guidance for major life decisions, such as from the Career Services office, when he found that the advice he took from a stranger two years ago was not working for him—majoring in finance. He answered personality inventories that indicated varied professions for which he might be suited. He reported being happier now with the plan to teach. David was generally “...finding it increasingly difficult to care about coursework.” He reported unmet expectations in that “...outside coursework just kind of, it doesn’t seem to do what uh, you would hope it would, at least for me. Generally outside coursework is just supposed to reinforce material, or help you have a heightened understanding of what’s going on and just for me, I get all that in class.”

Rick reported spending 30 minutes at a time studying, and didn’t keep up with reading assignments. However, reading demands had tapered off now, he said, so he had

almost no homework to do except for what was required in shop classes. He reported having difficulty attending classes he was not interested in, but attended all of his *hands-on* classes. He purposefully did not study for the first exam in any class; he explained his belief that experiencing the first exam helped him strategize how to prepare for the subsequent test by focusing on how the teacher thinks. He claimed to do better on the second test which he had prior to the interview, but only slightly. He relied on repeated exposure to material to learn. Due to his lack of reading efficacy, he said he listened intently to how peers in class thought and talked about course content, but did not look into joining study groups; he said he preferred studying alone. Rick did not describe seeking help as much as taking advice. His older sister convinced him to come to UNL (e.g. in order to broaden his horizons and get him out of the comfort zone of his hometown and lifetime friendships), and a flyer from his academic adviser alerted him to the Industrial Technology Program which he referred to as a “perfect fit.” Rick genuinely seemed excited to teach industrial technology. Becky reported cramming a lot and, much like those in the middle achievement group, memorizing material. She reported relying on attending class to learn, but “...a lot of times...some teachers are just kind of boring...you can’t get around it...sometimes I learn better when I teach myself, like going over notes by myself...I also would rather do hands-on stuff, rather than just sittin’ and listenin’.”

Learning Relative to Career Choice

The second core strategy focused on preparation for career choices. In addition to developing strategies to manage learning requirements for their respective classes, participants described different strategies for learning content they considered to be

useful for enhancing their skills as future teachers. All of the participants were students seeking a bachelor's degree in education, though some of them started out in different programs of study. Because their academic programs are career specific, it makes sense that they would be mindful of things that are related to these plans. The strategies that emerged when students described how they learn in relation to their career plans were: 1) seeking relevance to career goals, 2) connecting course information to prior knowledge, and 3) maximizing effort. (See Appendix 6, p. 165, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. The higher achievement group seemed to reflexively see relevance and to connect course material to their experiences. When Mary said she was interested in a topic, and was allowed to pursue ill-defined problems, her language reflected true engagement. Partly because she reported not being able to stand classes that are not authentic, she reported working to find relevance: "You don't learn from a textbook...you just need to understand (the learning disabled) and adjust yourself to how you work with somebody like that." She said she asked teachers to modify certain course requirements in order to tailor learning activities relevant to her career plans. She provided an example where the teacher in one class provided a list of books from which students were to choose for a writing assignment. Mary asked if she could read a specific book not on the list because it was a biographical account by someone with a learning disability, a topic more related to her career plans. It was also in her favorite classes that she reported connecting new information to things she knew; she said she excels in writing, synthesizing information, "working with it," and applying it to different circumstances, and finds ways to extend topics from previous classes into new ones, so that she may continue building her knowledge in an area. Mary conveyed that authentic

learning situations are what have induced perspective changes for her; hearing others' stories and spending time with people who have learning disabilities. She described a history of putting forth tremendous effort when she was interested in a topic, whether she was tackling a debate over the death penalty while in sixth grade or explored issues related to school reform as she did more recently, she tended to do much more work than was required because she got so enthralled about gathering and synthesizing information. Her learning goals were revealed when she described her preference for writing assignments, "...because you have to work with the information, not just *regurgitate* it."

Jane described a similar desire to learn content from the classes that were relevant to her major; these were the classes she cared about, as opposed to "having to work for the grade" in classes she did not care about. Once Jane realized the difference between the times she *cared* about courses compared to those she did not, she described starting to search for relevance, or "worthwhileness" in classes that seemed initially uninteresting as a way to get herself engaged. She both looked for content relevance, and at a minimum paid attention to teaching methods "not to do" because even that created relevance. She described efforts to also connect course information to prior experiences. She provided an example of a recent class discussion on the value of breaking down difficult concepts for students. During class, she described recalling a difficult high school statistics class where the teacher remained calm in the face of student stress, who retraced the concepts and broke them down, connecting the ideas to real life. In a different class, Jane reported "getting by" without reading the material because it was so easy; she described that in this class you had to WANT to increase your knowledge and put forth effort. She started out not putting effort into it until she saw the relevance for her career, so immediately

started to truly apply herself. Jack articulated searching for career relevance in his own classes, “I try to think of ways that it applies to like my life, and how I could use it...I’ll have students asking me everyday, ‘what’s the point of all this!’” Jack was so focused on building his math expertise that he described in detail how it all builds off of each other (formulas and the like). He explained how understanding one thing lets you derive how the NEXT thing works...so you can visualize how the NEXT thing works. While Jack seemed to put forth effort to master everything, for the classes not relevant to teaching, he said he really learned only what he needed to in the form of memorization for exams and then forgot things soon afterwards. But when he learned the things that were “important,” he said, “you DO have to do the memorizing, but you have to apply it somehow, such as by doing experiments with a research professor, or doing your own experiments to replicate things like equations in the real world.”

The middle achieving group did not ascribe seeking course relevance to career plans to the same extent as the high group, but they did respond to these connections when others pointed them out. John seemed, however, only to see connections between his biology classes and his career plans, and he also related the material to his experiences as a hunter and the time he spent outdoors. When asked if he made connections between his teaching practicum class and his future plans, he said he did not. Ed said he thought his interest in educational psychology classes would be peaked if someone would help him link his interests in history to the course content; he was not apparently doing this on his own. Sue didn’t report automatically making these connections either, but she interviewed some speech pathology professionals who literally made connections between the work they do and specific classes they also took

at the University, which not only seemed to “speak” to her, but prompted Sue to change her major to speech pathology. Courses where she reported to have made personal connections were those that did not have PowerPoints as an instructional tool, but did have students engaged in diagnostic role playing; they were given scenarios of children with varied issues and the University students were to plan methods for helping them. It was reportedly the *hands-on* activities, group projects, and doing presentations that added relevance for her because “...you’re practicing what you will be doing.” Course content that was connected to prior knowledge for this group of participants occurred mainly with the subject areas they planned to teach. The participants in this group reported putting “110% effort” (e.g. per John) into the content areas they planned to teach, they just needed help in having the relevance of other classes pointed out. “My favorite classes include things I want to learn, that are related to my career field; so I’m interested in it. If I don’t like the class, I’m not gonna try very hard,” explained Sue.

The lower achievement group also reported enjoying classes “that seem to be related to career choice,” and Rick seemed to be the most engaged of the group in his education. Similar to those in the middle achieving group, he only connected his shop classes to his career because those classes were about the procedures to use in making things, which is what he planned to teach. He would seek the instructor’s help “when he wants to remember something,” and sought additional information beyond class requirements. He said he readily made connections between new information and previously learned techniques, excelling in what appeared to be a mastery learning environment in his shop classes. He considered his shop classes to be distinct from general education and educational psychology courses; the latter involved a different type

of *classroom learning* where one is required to repeat factual information. He, as well as the others in this group, seemingly could benefit from help in making connections between specific program classes and their career goals. The other two participants appeared to be less clear in their career plans, which seemed to affect their ability to connect information and focus their efforts. David said he enjoyed classes related to his plans to teach, but his willingness to focus on them seemed to get pulled in various directions. He spoke of finding connections among various things that directed his efforts. “(Putting forth effort to learn something) depends on how that interacts with um, something that I might already know, or am seeking to learn in a different sense. Like uh maybe if I’m researching Immanuel Kant and I happen to, uh, come across some writings of Aristotle; then I’ll probably go looking for what Aristotle wrote uh but I wouldn’t go looking for Aristotle unless I had known that they’re related fields or something.”

Becky claimed she was no longer committed to a teaching career at this point in her studies, and she described her engagement in course content to be conditional on its relevance to daily life and interpersonal relationships. She described a course that did just that, focused on relationships: “They describe how to fight, if you’re gonna fight, but in a way that it’s productive and things tend to get resolved. Then the same fight doesn’t have to keep happening.” She expressed a great desire to learn things, and connected learning to effort rather than ability, but reported that she just didn’t have clarity in the area of career plans.

Consequences of Strategies for Learning

The core consequences of strategies for learning that emerged across all participants were: 1) self-discovery, 2) learning, 3) disconnect, and 4) grades. These are

illustrated in the last box in Figure 1. What differed across groupings is the form of each of the consequences. In every case, those strategies succeeded in having some type of impact on learning, whether it was to manage evaluation outcomes, to achieve a goal in the form of a grade, as well as to bolster participants' engagement in learning—or not. In sum, their academic strategies were successful in some cases, but were costly in others. (See Appendix 6, p. 168, for a larger sample of raw data.)

Group differences. Two women in the higher achievement group were so performative that they removed themselves from possible learning experiences. One reported that when she perceived no chance of achieving an A for a final grade, for example, she dropped the course in order to maintain a perfect CGPA. The other student changed her medical career aspirations to then pursue a teaching endorsement because it took her longer to grasp concepts in her science classes compared to her peers. They disconnected or disengaged from challenges that were foreign relative to their historical experiences of learning things quickly. The most performative participants seemed to avoid learning opportunities if there was a chance of receiving any evaluative outcomes below an A, or if they had to experience a state of uncertainty for more than a short period of time. In only one case, Jack's, we heard that the "...success in math classes have taught me to be patient with homework; now I don't mind spending time on it." He also had an "amazing math instructor" at the University who encouraged him early on that he could "do math." This discovery followed a history of low performance during his adolescence; he said he did not believe he could perform well until he achieved a 4.0 at ITT. He reported that he now routinely expected this of himself at UNL. He refused to consider himself to be intelligent, however, and described his on-going academic success

to date with a fair amount of awe. On the other hand, Jane described a revelation shared by all in higher achievement group, "...I thought the University would be harder; so far like I've been pleasantly surprised by my ABILITY to um just attend class and then um do the work and study and it pays off. It's just amazing how much better you do in class." Not only did these participants discover an ability to achieve high grades in college, they described a deeper process of self-discovery that emerged from authentic learning experiences, or community involvement that was connected to core course requirements. One participant discovered a calling to enter the field of education from her service-learning experience--working with learning disabled. She described plans to identify a career in which she might affect educational policy. Another decided to help a peer who was repeating a math class in which he was enrolled. The individual he helped achieved an A-. That experience reportedly led him to volunteer in a math lab on campus and eventually to a commitment to a teaching career. Another participant was deeply impacted after hearing a veteran teacher's worldview and witnessing her interactions in an educational setting, resulting in a value for the profession that was internalized in a meaningful way, turning her plans for a job into plans for a meaningful career.

In contrast, they all said they memorized course information in order to do well on tests; however, they also subsequently reported forgetting the information soon afterwards. Despite the disconnect from long-term learning that they said was missing from classes they did not enjoy, they achieved mostly As. They reported meaningful learning for course content that they said they spent time thinking about, when they could relate topics and concepts to experiences and phenomena outside of class.

The middle achievement group described significant reflection regarding the value of their interpersonal relationships. They described a need to put forth effort toward learning, and devoted just enough of their time learning in order to achieve As or Bs. This group described a study method referred to as the *grain truck* method of learning material that is anticipated to be on tests; information goes in, gets dumped during an exam, and is then gone from the mind. They report being coached by their families and teachers that effort in school is preparation for work, and they seemed to have internalized this view. However, they also described concerted efforts to balance time spent toward learning by focusing on the classes they felt would prepare them the most for their careers, and then making time for relationships or other activities they enjoyed. “I prefer putting effort into MEANINGFUL things like time with family, friends, or hunting.” They conveyed having discovered that even though they tended to achieve higher grades in their earlier formal education, they now accepted lower grades because “college is harder,” and because they described not wanting to sacrifice time with friends and family, relating this decision to having grown up with parents who worked significant hours. A form of disconnect emerged when these participants distinguished learning that occurs in school from learning that occurs outside of the classroom. For example, one of the students did not connect his practicum experiences to his career plans, in theory, because the practicum was an extension of his classroom education. Still, their work ethic and their career goals seemed to carry them through as they achieved grades that were satisfactory to them, and learned what they could in preparation for work.

The lower achievement group revealed self-discoveries in different ways. One individual reported, for instance, that a class on marriage and relationships had “...made

me learn how important it is, um, to HAVE close relationships with people,” Becky said, which was a theme that carried through to experiences involving a grandmother with dementia who was recently forced to move to a care facility. It was as though the discovery of valuing interpersonal relationships distracted her from reflections about her professional interests, or perhaps it became something she could focus on in the absence of perceiving more meaning in educational pursuits.

In general, participants in this achievement grouping seemed to be finding personal direction through a process of elimination, discovering what they were not successful at or not interested in after all. One participant had discovered a penchant for critical thinking skills to the degree that he revealed a decreasing interest in taking part in performative aspects of a formal educational curriculum. He said he believed evaluation was focused on memorization of material that could be easily found nowadays, thanks to emergent and available technology. The evaluation process in his experience was also too disconnected from authentic learning for him to feel engaged; he described efforts of seeking more personal connections, possibly teachers who could serve more closely as mentors, which related to the relationship he had with his mother. She was immobile during his formative years, and passed on when he was 10 years old. He described with relish, the conversations they had: “She HAD to listen to me,” which is a phrase that appeared again when he described the creative writing class he took, where the teacher “...HAD to read his work.” This was a class he referred to as “indulgent.” His seeming disconnect with performative interests appeared to be resulting in unstructured pursuits of interests that did not benefit from the feedback that an academic community could provide. He described learning activities that started by addressing class assignments, but

then he provided examples where he rather whimsically drifted off topic to related information, without attending to the structure of information an experienced teacher might be able to facilitate, or about which a teacher might have provided meaningful organization and/or connections. As a result, his critical thinking examples revealed important gaps in content knowledge that could signify a lack of integrated knowledge, despite the accessibility to a plethora of information afforded by technology nowadays. He said he did not “care that his CGPA is 2.20.” Because he said so little about his father (a military officer), it could be that David eschewed grading because he equated class evaluations with the structure and certainty associated with the parent who did not understand him (e.g. the comment that “grades are a way of categorizing you without knowing you”).

Another participant, Rick, identified a career path wherein the educational path allowed him to hone his skills and pursue his interests. Though he enrolled at the University with uncertainty about a career path, he also experienced some process of elimination in terms of classes he disliked, did not perform well in, but then had others in which he achieved success. Rick learned what did not appeal to him, but had landed on a career path that he embraced with some anticipation. He spoke only of wanting to learn how to perform the skills that he would be using when he teaches. He described learning distinctions as “being able to do something” versus “book learning.” He was clear about not being a “book learner,” and described feeling disconnected from that form of learning; this included classes that explored teaching, and motivational methods. The type of learning that occurred in classrooms was about an accumulation of facts, and was measured by paper-pencil tests. This type of learning also involved reading and thinking

abstractly, things he said he patently did not enjoy. But the classes that promised to help him achieve his goal of becoming a great industrial technology teacher involved *meaningful* learning, so he reportedly tried to remember the information in such classes and apply what he had learned. He defined success as being able to apply at a later date that which he had learned earlier, as well as by being able to help others learn the things he had. He achieved high grades in the classes he enjoyed (shop classes), and described feelings of endurance for all other classes. Getting through classes he didn't enjoy seemed to serve as motivation for enduring later difficult classes in kind.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Although the motivational literature is rich with descriptions of outcomes relative to study strategies, and motivational constructs relative to self-regulated learning, this study is distinctive in its systematic examination of learning motivation from the perspectives of university students who have achieved sophomore status in a teacher education program of study. As Turner and Patrick (2008) emphasized, it is important that motivation research takes on a situated view, treating the individual and the social and historical context holistically and dynamically, attending to how students develop goals and certain beliefs, as well as how they interact and fluctuate over time and across situations. It is in this spirit that a theoretical model of the learning and motivational strategies invoked by nine participants was constructed through qualitative data analysis, with measures taken to ensure that the model reflected consistent thematic elements.

Grounded theory methodology, used in this study, has as one of its purposes the development of new theories about a phenomenon. This study attempted to uncover thematic differences between students with higher, medium, and lower levels of achievement, as defined by cumulative grade point average, in terms of how they think about learning and why they engage in learning at some times but not others. By shedding light on the complexities surrounding students' lives, this study attempted to advance our understanding of how students learn, how they develop or conceptualize learning and how they ultimately achieve. This was done by re-examining these domains as students define and experience them in their own social and cultural contexts. The resulting model established, from a multitude of strategies and beliefs, a coherent,

construct-focused framework for understanding the often-confusing constellation of learning behavior patterns of university students. What follows are hypotheses that interrelate the categories in the theoretical model (see Figure 1) for what motivates students to learn in a university setting.

Higher Achievement Group

One of the more prevalent connections to higher academic achievement, as reported by the participants who had higher cumulative grade point averages, were accounts of a home environment in which participants could recall being read to as a child. In addition, the highest achieving participant in this study described formal educational environments beginning in middle school that fostered mastery goals by providing inquiry choices to students, mentoring students in research, and discussing with students the reasons why learning specific content would benefit them. This group tended to report achievement experiences throughout their earlier formal education years as being able to easily attain As without exerting significant effort, which may have fostered performance goal orientations. This group of higher achieving students also described significant parental involvement in talking through options when decisions had to be made, as well as support for the decisions that students described as their own. Students in this group offered that their parents were intelligent (whether or not they had formal education beyond high school). These students did not describe parents who would be considered to be authoritarian, but rather authoritative in parenting style. The higher achievement participants also described a network of friends who had similar values for educational achievement, and who supported their learning efforts by respecting the time they needed to study. Due likely to experiences at home and in school as youth, the

higher achievement study participants stood out among their peers in their perspective-taking ability, including an ability to maintain their own views in light of disagreements, while weighing the value of others' views.

Seemingly, these student participants experienced significant others in their lives who honored their thoughts, ideas, and opinions. Possibly, because of this, they collectively exhibited a sense of confidence in their academic pursuits, as well as their social lives. It may be that the combined experiences of a supportive home life, and early educational environments that fostered mastery and performance goals, cultivated the development of a pronounced perspective-taking ability. As a result, the higher achieving interview participants seemed to be able to "turn on" performative behaviors when they set a goal such as working toward a bachelor's degree, while exhibiting mastery skills and interests when educational material was important, or meaningful for them to learn. Course content that was perceived to help them achieve greater levels of competence for teaching was described as *meaningful* to this group of students.

Grades did serve to motivate the higher achievement group to perform. Perhaps because their home environments supported reading in their formative years as well as the value for learning that was supported in their earlier educational environments, these students did not have to exert as much effort in school compared to many of their counterparts throughout middle school and high school. Despite messages of what to expect from adults prior to attending the University, they reported surprise that achieving As was not as difficult as they had anticipated. Their earlier educational experiences seemed to have prepared them well in that regard, since they had achieved near 4.0 CGPAs.

Despite their performative learning goals, they also found course content that they wanted to master and into which they exerted more energy than a grade required because of their career-related interests. They also discovered things about themselves along the way. For example, two participants found service learning projects to be involved in, not because they simply wanted to be in them, but because they “had” to for a class assignment. One volunteered for a service learning experience. Those experiences, in part, guided the students’ present career paths, and were described often in their many reflections to interview questions, especially in the context of *meaningful learning*. In other words, in the course of their pursuit of attaining higher grades, these students seemed to find greater value in their career goals as an indirect function of their performance goals, and as a direct function of their mastery goals.

Middle Achievement Group

Though none of the middle achievement participant group explicitly described the reading experiences in their family backgrounds, they reported feeling supported by family. For example, they reported feeling as though family members believed in them and that they provided social guidance. Their formal educational experiences, while also supportive, seemed to be experienced as more performative than oriented toward mastery. They described support from adults in achieving good grades, but not as much in relation to the personal value of what they learned. Perhaps because reading experiences were less pronounced in their family culture, this participant group enjoyed and reported learning better when there was classroom interaction along with more *hands-on* experiences. Though this group reported strong negative feelings about lecture and PowerPoint as instructional methods and tools, they were more authority-oriented

and sought teacher approval to the extent that it seemed to overshadow their own related reflections. Because of their work ethic, they were able to *plow through difficult* classes that were not structured in a way with which they were comfortable, and focused the majority of their efforts on learning what they described as *meaningful*. Examples of meaningful learning were connected to classes that would better prepare them for their chosen occupation. It seems reasonable to consider a connection between this group's tendency to place value on career-related courses and their parents' reported hopes for their children. Some participants in this group reported views that their parents were hard workers, and that their parents made it clear that they wanted their offspring to earn a college degree in order to make their adult years less arduous. In the rest of the cases, the students simply noted the work hours their parents put in and vowed to themselves to find careers that did not demand the same. This group of participants may have more precisely identified what they needed to learn in order to get the degree, as a means of getting into their chosen career field. As a result, course material that didn't seem exactly pertinent to their career goals (was seemingly peripheral and consequently less *meaningful*), if they didn't perform as well in those classes, it may have been easier to set and accept slightly lower grade goals (relative to their earlier educational experiences) so that they could seek balance between work and social goals. Work and play seemed to be distinctly separate worlds for the middle achievement group, and social activities often were reported to be in conflict with academic demands.

This middle-level achievement group's mastery learning experiences more often were colored by the nature of their seeming lack of perspective-taking ability. This may have contributed to the reason they continued to use *memorization* as a study method,

despite knowing that other methods were supposed to be more productive. If they valued their own thoughts, opinions and perspectives regarding course content, they may have been more willing, or perhaps unwittingly, used methods of elaboration. Because they were seemingly more authority-oriented, they may have believed that if they learned the material presented to them, as is, then they would achieve competence. For example, if the experts have the knowledge, and you don't, then you would not likely consider what you know in light of their knowledge, because those sets of knowledge are separate, as depicted in Figure 3.

This separation of categories of knowledge is different from having a capacity to consider how others see things differently. For students who can maintain their own views, while also considering the views of others, it may mean that such students are more likely to reflexively *work with* information, incorporate new information into their own knowledge, and possibly modify what they previously thought about something in light of new information. These abilities could predispose students toward more consistently meaningful learning, and is something that the middle achieving group did not exhibit compared to their higher achieving counterparts. It is the seemingly hampered perspective-taking ability that perhaps made it so much more important for the students in this achievement group to experience educational methods that incorporated role play.

Role play, as a teaching method, supports making learning personally relevant (meaningful) because the student is actively involved, while affording the opportunity to hear how others may think and respond to a shared experience. These methods may provide opportunities to mimic, or practice what they hoped to do in the near future. Presumably, if they were unable to imagine something because they didn't embrace what

they already know about something (they aren't identifying features from their experiences that share similarities), it must have been more difficult to consider what one "would" do. In such cases, it was not until one experienced something, that the abstraction became real and tangible. When it was real and tangible, it was then *meaningful* and more personally relevant. So what was *meaningful* to participants in this student group, while related to their career goals, tended to be more peripheral to their experiences. Limited perspective-taking also seemed to have impacted the reasons why they invoked certain performance goal behaviors. For example, in courses not considered to be highly relevant to career choice, two students who did not ask the instructor for help when needed, explained that they did not want to look less intelligent. This is different from participants in the higher achievement group who described choosing not to ask for help if they didn't understand, because they simply didn't care to take the time, didn't care to know, because not only was it not going to be on an exam, it wasn't relevant to them either.

Grades were helpful, however, in motivating the middle achievement participant group to some degree—to the point that they believed their grades indicated that they *cared* about learning what others wanted them to learn (recall, they were authority-oriented). When the course content was perceived to be connected to their career plans, all group participants reported persisting through challenges and described actions that mirrored established mastery behaviors; they reported spending hours working on a task, feeling successful for putting forth effort, attributed grade achievements to effort, and embraced failure for the lessons provided by the experience. Mastery behaviors were also

described when the classrooms were portrayed as reflecting a mastery instructional environment.

Lower Achievement Group

Perhaps it was because the lower achievement group reported family lives that seemed rather separate from their experiences in school, their reported desire to work for higher grades was mostly absent, though all of them also reported expectations that they would attend a post-secondary institution. Similar to the middle achievement group, performance suffered in classes that were not considered to be enjoyable; *hands-on* instructional methods seemed to be the most productive means of engaging this group. It was likely due to an extremely low tolerance for reading demands that this participant group reported learning strategies that focused on observing and listening to others. Their friends, much like their families, were reported to be just as much on the periphery in relation to formal learning demands. However, because they were enrolled in a program that was designed to prepare them for a career, they did engage in learning things they perceived to build their competencies to that end.

Grades may not have served as rewards, but being able to perform, whether it was to construct an object, engage in critical dialogue, or exercise interpersonal skills, the ability to perform procedurally was what these students reported as *meaningful* learning. Descriptions of what learning meant in a formal educational setting was interestingly disconnected from their daily lives. As an example, the *book learning* meant one was expected to be able to accumulate and repeat factual information, as opposed to being able to *do things*. Another example was shown in the expressed disappointment that formal education was not furthering a participant's understanding of concepts. But self-

discovery for this group seemed to be more about determining a career path, as all of these participants entered into the University without having a clear idea of what they wanted to do. Purpose and joy were expressed at having identified a career path, along with reports of improving competencies in performing tasks that were not connected to paper-pencil assessments.

Core Findings and Recommendations

The most relevant finding of this study supports Dweck's (2002) construct relative to learning goals. Mastery orientation learning goals were elicited when course content was perceived to increase future career competency, as conveyed by descriptions and stories shared by participants. When participants did not make any connection between course content and increased career competence, performance oriented learning goals emerged from participants' descriptions. All study participants in all achievement groups exhibited both mastery and performance goal orientations. These findings extend Dweck's (2000) self-theories construct, by identifying learning contexts that elicit one or the other goal orientations in a specific sample of university students. These findings also support previous arguments that students exhibit both learning goal constructs. This study also supported earlier arguments that classroom environments may elicit specifically one, or the other learning goal orientation (Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck, 2000; Maehr & Midgley, 1996). When students behave in accord with the mastery goal learning concept, they use more effective strategies more often, express more positive attitudes in the class, and make stronger connections between their successes and their efforts (Dweck, 2000). Most teachers and educational administrators would seemingly hope to achieve such an end. Conversely, students did not tend to use effective learning strategies in classroom

environments that are performative, as evinced by the overwhelming study strategy used by participants in this study--memorization.

This study also extends Dweck's (2000) theory to include perspective-taking as a phenomenon that impacted participating students' ability to step into performance, or mastery goal behaviors, depending on what the situation calls for. Perhaps by the time students are in college, their beliefs about intelligence are more contextual in nature, as evinced by one of the high-mastery, high-performance students who declared that intelligence was 75% native ability, but that with effort, others could still achieve at the same levels. A high-mastery, low-performance student reported being able to spend hours trying to figure something out, and offered that intelligence was 75% effort, but that the ability to think critically was 75% native talent. He later stated that intelligence was defined by the ability to think critically. A high-mastery, high-performance student refused to use the term intelligence, and referred only to idiosyncratic abilities to be greatly competent in a content area.

Among the identified achievement tiers in this study, the high performance, high mastery group (all three higher achievers) seemed to be happiest overall with their university experience. The ability of the higher performance group to manage others' perspectives without minimizing those of their own, and to consider why others, including experts, may have arrived at the views they express, raises an important question for educators. Would it expand students' ability to find value in various learning contexts, if educational efforts were taken to enhance perspective-taking skills among students? Enhanced perspective-taking skills, along with improved reading proficiency,

would possibly improve both *meaningful* learning and performance outcomes for many students.

Another finding in the current study is that friends seemed to wield considerable power in distracting participants from attending to scholastic activities. In contrast, the finding that among study participants, friendship groups were highly correlated with both achievement and attitudes toward learning, bodes well for learning institutions that strive to orchestrate learning communities and/or cohorts, in order to support social networks that value learning, and support the efforts of others to that end.

Further, achievement scores—which were the basis for the three achievement groupings—clearly did not differentially identify mastery goal from performance goal student tendencies, confirming Elliot’s (2005) claim in that regard. Performance goal feelings and behaviors in the higher group, for example, did not adversely affect their achievement because their competencies allowed them to negotiate most instructional tasks more effectively. When performance goal behaviors more consistently came into play, however, it also seemed to constrain the range of high performers’ learning experiences. In contrast, the lower performing mastery goal group (lower achievers) constrained their ability to nurture foundational knowledge, as well as serendipitous learning because of their more prevalent behaviors to avoid learning about things not directly considered to be relevant to career goals, or to avoid learning information that seemed too difficult or uninteresting.

Of particular interest is that neither the higher achievement group nor the lower group reported studying beyond a minimal amount of effort when classes were not considered to impact their competence as future teachers. Though it is not difficult to

understand why the lower group might not have done so (given their reported aversion to reading and interests that diverged from much of the predominant academic practices), it also seems to reveal that some of the top-performing students are not being challenged throughout their academic training. Given that two of the three top performers reported either changed a major due to earning a B+ in a core class, or dropped a class that would have required effort to achieve an A, it would not necessarily be productive to simply find ways to insert challenge for these students without risking flight. If more challenge could be inserted in the context of material that is immediately relevant to them, however, then efforts to increase these students' willingness to exert effort could be successful.

Reasons for seeking to ignite students' motivation to put more effort into learning, reflect the belief that challenges eventually arise in one's life that are inescapable, and that one's willingness to put effort into approaching such challenges serves both the individual and society well. It could be argued that a cultural value is placed on individuality, including having the ability to problem-solve even in the midst of what seem to be daunting tasks or situations. In addition, the ability to approach challenge, to learn something completely new relative to students' experiences, reflects a cultural value that the capacity to learn is desirable. Further, students may not understand in any given moment, how they will be able to use the information they could be learning, into the future. Said another way, what we learn now informs both what we learn later, as well as improving our ability to respond productively to unanticipated problems. On the other hand, one could argue that the method of disengaging from educational opportunities when they are not grasped quickly, allows an individual to find other things that they may learn quickly, especially when they have a history of being able to do so. This could be

construed as an efficient way of allocating one's time. In other words, "why waste time trying to figure out how 'X' works, when I could quickly be furthering my knowledge on 'Y' and 'Z'? If I need to, I can find an expert on 'X' in the future."

Pintrich (2000) has acknowledged that students follow developmental trajectories over time that are fostered by different goal orientations. He also has indicated that students end up in the "same" place in terms of actual achievement. If we collectively accept that "...performance-orientation students may experience less interest, less positive affect, and perhaps more anxiety or negative affect along the way...and loss of interest over time" (p. 545), we are left in a state of status quo. Seeking alternative methods for working with students in ways that maximize their emotional and intellectual potential by nurturing positive meaning systems and a lifelong desire to learn seems to go further in eliciting *meaningful* learning and by extension, meaningful communities comprised by creative individuals who respond to challenges in useful ways.

The majority of the study participants reported having difficulty making connections between course content and the ways in which improved skills in those areas would translate into improved competencies in their career field or in their lives in general. A systemic approach to facilitating learning engagement in career-related educational programs would seem to underscore the value of connecting career plans to instructional content at the very least, and calls for finding ways to support idiosyncratic student connections to instructional content. At least for study participants, doing so would also more likely engage historically high performers in activities they might otherwise avoid, and engage students who historically have not done so. An example of this might include developing English courses where the content is saturated with stories

and varied lessons that revolve around the career of interest. This would help make relevant, a compulsory class that the middle and lower achievement groups in this study did not consider being relevant.

Enhancing perspective-taking skills may also enhance learning to the degree that students might approach learning in general and more systematically connect course content to their lives in meaningful ways, as did the higher achievers in this study. Such skills almost necessarily involve analytical thinking skills, supporting deeper processing, and learning beyond exams. The educational process may promote more *meaningful* learning by removing emphasis from instructional methods that rely on lecture, as well as instructional tools such as PowerPoint, unless they are used in different ways than what the typical student reports experiencing. For example, students could be provided with PowerPoints and lecture notes prior to class meetings. Class meetings could then incorporate more student participation and consideration of varied views and experiences. They will already have digested the desired content, freeing up time to manage the varied perspectives and strategies in class discussions, group activities, or projects. Such instructional formats may have a greater capacity to elicit more complex perspective-taking skills, and serve to ignite mastery-learning goals. Traditional summative assessments clearly invoked the *grain truck method* of learning from this group of study participants. Such is not the learning process most teachers would hope for their students.

Another seeming requirement for promoting student engagement would be to increase the opportunities for service learning, providing apprenticeship opportunities for students in order to bolster *meaningful* learning. Higher, medium, and lower achievers may, in the current classroom-focused learning system, benefit greatly from such

opportunities. More systematic help in bridging the connections between these experiences and traditional classroom content would also promote *meaningful* learning, especially for those students who do not make those connections on their own.

Examining learning motivation from the perspective of the students involved in this study provided a response to Zimmerman's (2008) query regarding why it is students do not generalize learning strategies. He manipulated varied self-regulatory learning strategies in authentic contexts. Students were taught to use strategies, such as imagery, during subsequent efforts to learn. The strategies were usually effective in producing superior learning, and reflect strategies used by learners that reflect mastery goal learning (e.g., as described by Dweck & Master, 2008). However, these students seldom used the strategies spontaneously in non-experimental learning contexts, such as when studying at home. The participants in the current study provide one response to Zimmerman's question: Learning objectives needs to be *meaningful* in the eyes of the students, and connected to personal goals and/or interests. For example, the higher mastery-goal oriented study participant describe learning as something "...you can do it in your head, and then you can visualize how the NEXT thing works." He further described learning his core subject area that he plans to teach as being able to "...instead of working out formulas, I actually visualize the derivations of 'em, and like the shapes, and how they're working in space, and I visualize that."

Future Research

To this researcher, it is encouraging that the top achievers among the participants in this study displayed both performance goals and mastery goals, rather than simply one or the other. A longitudinal study would be helpful to determine whether these students

maintain their mastery goal inclinations, as well as their achievement levels. Other researchers have identified a trajectory whereby college students exhibited an increased performance goal orientation (e.g., Lieberman & Remedios, 2007) and lower grades (e.g., Robins & Pals, 2002) over the course of their college careers.

Conducting qualitative studies with students in other disciplines (e.g., pre-med, pre-law, business, liberal arts) on the subject of learning motivation would be an important avenue for further research, in order to determine if similar findings appear in other content domains. Doing so with a larger sample size in a qualitative study could bolster the value of conducting a mixed method study with even larger samples, allowing for the ability to generalize findings. Developing instruments that could more quickly identify relevant themes in students could serve to then determine how generalizeable these results might be. Generalizeable results could then inform educational practice both within career-preparatory educational programs, and beyond. Research might then continue with the purpose of informing a responsive educational environment whereby student learning is maximized based on a manageable constellation of relevant student needs.

For example, if scholarship requirements are such that students will drop courses in order to maintain a CGPA that secures the funding at the expense of exposure to challenging learning venues, perhaps those who underwrite such funding could be lobbied to modify this type of constraint. Calls for change in this area would be supported by scholarly research. Generalizable studies (with similar findings) could also support efforts for elementary, middle, and high school environments to seek ways to ensure that students are being challenged, especially with students who seem to easily excel at most

of their learning tasks. This would support Dweck's (2002) efforts, who claims that children who easily complete most formal educational tasks are those who express the most singularly performative behaviors later in life. Such students end up lacking the patience to persist at learning tasks in the face of challenge.

Further research examining whether perspective-taking complexity impacts achievement (as it appeared to do in this study) in such a way that both mastery and performance learning goals are more likely to appear as a result, could further collective educational efforts. Beliefs about intelligence may be a productive phenomenon on which to focus with youth. As adolescence approaches, however, perspective-taking skills may be more evocatively tied to achievement in formal educational settings and meaningful learning than are beliefs about intelligence. If students 1) value their own thought processes, and 2) understand why others believe and behave the way they do, will their learning motivation more likely reflect both mastery and performance goals? Will they be able to "turn on" performative behaviors when needed, and take on mastery goals when they are interested in learning, much as the higher achievement group did in this study? Perhaps self-authorship (a concept that resulted from a longitudinal qualitative study, and is incorporated with more prevalence in college student affairs literature) explains the perspective-taking findings of the current study.

It may be that students who come from authoritarian family cultures would benefit from formal educational settings that offer choice and support student reflections in a safe, or more mastery-oriented environment that is both welcoming and challenging. Such environments could productively enhance perspective-taking skills while also supporting overall achievement and personal growth.

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APPENDIX 1

RECRUITING SCRIPT

Recruiting Script

The primary investigator will enter the Educational Psychology 251 classrooms five minutes prior to the end of class and read the following script:

I am conducting a research study that investigates multiple factors that motivate college students to learn. I will hand out a pre-survey to participate in the study. By completing and returning the pre-survey, which should take under three minutes, you will be indicating your interest in participating in this research. I will be selecting a small number of participants, and plan to contact people for participation within two weeks. Should any participants decline after initially indicating a desire to take part, I may revisit the pre-surveys to seek others who may be interested.

On the pre-survey you are asked to provide contact information so that I may reach you to schedule a time that is convenient for you, to conduct a phone interview. Prior to the interview you will be asked to sign a consent form. The interview may take approximately 40 minutes to an hour, and could extend a few minutes beyond an hour with your permission. I will e-mail the questions to you prior to the interview time. This is a completely voluntary project, and you are free to withdraw from this process at any time.

Students who participate in the interviews will receive a \$10.00 Target retail store gift certificate for completing the interview.

Any questions?

APPENDIX 2

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR QUESTIONNAIRE



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Educational Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# _____

Title: Exploring the complexities of learning motivation across college students: a grounded theory approach

You are invited to participate in a research project that is investigating how students learn. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate.

You are eligible to participate because you are an undergraduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. Again, the purpose of this study is to better understand how students learn.

Procedures:

Participation in completing the pre-survey questionnaire will require approximately 3 minutes. Responses will be used to determine potential participant selection for a subsequent 40-60 minute interview.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Benefits:

There are no known benefits to completing this pre-survey.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's home office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The audio recordings will be erased after transcription. The information obtained in this study may be published in a dissertation, scientific journals or presented at educational psychology conferences. No information will be connected to your name.

Compensation:

Research participants who complete and submit the pre-survey questionnaire will have their names entered in a drawing for a \$25.00 gift certificate to Target.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time, office phone, 402.472.2918, or after hours, 402.466.4599. You may also contact the secondary investigator, Dr. Bruning, at 402.472.2225. Please contact the investigators if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research or in the event of a research related injury. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at 402.472.6965 for the following reasons: you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant; to voice concerns or complaints about the research, or to provide input concerning the research process; or in the event the study staff could not be reached.

Freedom to Withdraw:

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or the investigators. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.



Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Kristin Grosskopf, M.A., Principal Investigator
Dr. Roger Bruning, Secondary Investigator

Office: 402.472.2918
Office: 402.472.2225

APPENDIX 3

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC AND BACKGROUND QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Demographic and Background Questionnaire

1. Do you plan on entering the field of education? Circle one: YES / NO / UNSURE
 - a. If you marked NO, what are your future career plans? _____

2. Do you work outside of your student responsibilities to earn money? Circle one: YES / NO
 - a. If you marked YES, how many hours per week do you work? _____

3. What is your dominant race / ethnicity / cultural identity? (Please circle all that apply)

a. American Indian / Native American / Alaskan Native	d. Asian
b. Black / African American	e. Hawaiian / Other Pacific Islander
c. Latino(a) / Hispanic	f. White / Caucasian

4. What is your gender identity?

a. Male	c. Female
b. Other _____	

5. What is your academic classification?

a. Freshman	c. Junior
b. Sophomore	d. Senior

6. Your current living situation is most similar to:

a. Live at home with parent(s)	c. Live off campus with roommates
b. Live on campus in residence hall	d. Live off campus alone

7. For each of the following, please indicate the level of support you have for your educational efforts:

a. Parents (greatly support, somewhat support, somewhat do not support, strongly do not support)	b. Significant other <i>if applicable</i> (greatly support, somewhat support, somewhat do not support, strongly do not support)
c. Close friends (greatly support, somewhat support, somewhat do not support, strongly do not support)	d. Instructors (greatly support, somewhat support, somewhat do not support, strongly do not support)

8. Which of the following best describes your primary course goals? (Circle only one)

a. to earn an "A" with little effort	d. to work hard for an "A"
b. to learn as much as I can	e. to be better prepared for my career
c. to pass	f. to complete a degree requirement

9. What best describes your family culture? Parent(s')/Family(s')

a. workdays involved manual labor	c. worked in professional/administrative roles
b. worked as office staff	d. worked in education

10. What best describes your parent(s')/family's hopes for you in relation to earning a Bachelor's degree?

a. to serve as an accomplishment	c. to increase income potential
b. to follow in their footsteps	d. other

11. How old are you? _____ (You must be 19 by February to participate in this study.)

12. What is your cumulative grade point average (CGPA)? _____ (If unsure, please approximate.)
13. In the event that you are selected to participate in a 40-55 minute telephone interview, what is your name, phone number and preferred e-mail address so that I may contact you to schedule an interview?

Name _____

(Please Print Clearly)

Phone number _____

Preferred e-mail address _____

(Please Print Clearly)

APPENDIX 4

INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR INTERVIEW



COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Educational Psychology

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB# _____

Title: Exploring the complexities of learning motivation across college students: a grounded theory approach

You are invited to participate in a research project that is investigating how students learn. The following information is provided in order to help you make an informed decision as to whether or not to participate.

You are eligible to participate because you are an undergraduate student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. Again, the purpose of this study is to better understand how students learn.

Procedures:

Participation in this study will require approximately 40 minutes to an hour in a semi-structured interview, or a few minutes beyond an hour with your permission, regarding how you learn. The questions for the interview are attached, but the actual questions may vary slightly in your interview, depending on the information you provide. The interview will be audio recorded with your permission. (_____ Initial here if you agree to be audio recorded during the interview.) The interview shall take place at a location that is comfortable for you, as it will be conducted via telephone. Your participation will have no impact on your course grade. Your participation is not a course requirement.

Risks and/or Discomforts:

There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Benefits:

The information gained from this study may help us to better understand how and/or why students learn. Your participation will help us to educate other students like yourself about learning motivation.

Confidentiality:

Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked file cabinet in the investigator's home office and will only be seen by the investigator during the study and for three years after the study is complete. The audio recordings will be erased after transcription. The information obtained in this study may be published in a dissertation, scientific journals or presented at educational psychology conferences. No information will be connected to your name.

Compensation:

Research participants will receive a \$10.00 Target gift certificate for completing the interview.

Opportunity to Ask Questions:

You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. Or you may call the investigator at any time, office phone, 402.472.2918, or after hours, 402.466.4599. You may also contact the secondary investigator, Dr. Bruning, at 402.472.2225. Please contact the investigators if you want to voice concerns or complaints about the research or in the event of a research related injury. Please contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board at 402.472.6965 for the following reasons: you wish to talk to someone other than the research staff to obtain answers to questions about your rights as a research participant; to voice concerns or complaints about the research, or to provide input concerning the research process; or in the event the study staff could not be reached.

**Freedom to Withdraw:**

You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln or the investigators. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Kristin Grosskopf, M.A., Principal Investigator
Dr. Roger Bruning, Secondary Investigator

Office: 402.472.2918
Office: 402.472.2225

APPENDIX 5

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol

Exploring the Complexities of Learning: A Grounded Theory

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. As you know from the informed consent form, this interview will take approximately an hour. Is it okay if I record our conversation? Thank you.

1. Why are you pursuing a bachelor's degree here at UN-L?
 - When did you first KNOW you would attend college?
2. Tell me about your learning experiences at UN-L.
3. Do you set goals?
 - (If so) Please describe
4. Describe your attendance.
5. When was the last time you learned something meaningful?
 - (If necessary) Please describe
 - When do you feel the most successful? (e.g. when you can show people you're good at something, or when you've had to work really hard to figure something out?)
6. Sometimes students feel smart in school, sometimes they don't; when do you feel smart?
7. How do(es) your parent(s) view learning?
 - Friends?
8. What have you learned from your parent(s)?
 - Friends?
9. How would you describe your peer groups over time?
 - How would you describe the community you're in now?
10. What inspires you?
 - Please describe moments throughout your life that you felt inspired.
11. What are your favorite classes and why?

Possible probes:

 - How do you think your experience in these classes predict your future success in college? In life?
 - How would you describe your level of success in these classes?
 - How would you describe what you learn in these classes?
 - To what extent did it measure your skill level? –your intelligence?
12. What are your least favorite classes and why?
 - How would you describe your level of success in these classes?
 - How would you describe what you learn in these classes?
 - To what extent did it measure your skill level? - your intelligence?
13. How do you participate in class? (teachers call on you or volunteer?)
 - How do you typically respond if you are incorrect?
 - Please tell me about some times when you felt the most encouraged by a teacher, parent, or friends.
14. How do you learn?
 - What helps you learn?
 - What prevents you from learning? (What do you do about it?)
 - How & when do you study?
 - How do you know when you've learned the material?
 - How do teachers help you learn? Family? Friends?
15. What do you do when someone disagrees with you?

16. What do grades mean to you? (Has this changed over time?)
 - Have you ever gotten a grade you didn't expect? (Why do you think it happened? How did it affect you? What did you do about it?)
 - When do you first remember getting a grade?
17. What do you do when someone criticizes you in some way?
18. Describe your favorite teacher.
 - Describe your least favorite teacher.
 - How would you describe your teachers' expectations of you throughout your school career?
19. Can you think of a time when you did not understand how to do an assignment? (explain)
 - (If necessary) What do you do?
 - How long will you work on figuring out the new situation or academic concepts?
20. What do you think about rules?
21. How do you define intelligence?
 - Please explain (Do you consider yourself to be intelligent? Why/why not?)
 - Intelligence is ____% effort + ____% ability?
22. How do you know when to trust or believe information?
 - What do you do when two trustworthy sources disagree?
23. When do you decide to try to learn something?
 - How do you proceed?
 - How do you define learning? (remembering factual info, being able to explain why things are...?)
24. Would you rather choose a classroom task that you felt you could easily do well, or a task that you would learn a lot from, but most likely fail at in the beginning?
 - How long will you try to figure something out when you're not sure how to do it?
25. Have you experienced being asked to do something that you weren't really interested in?
What do you do?
26. Can you describe any times that you changed your views on something? What changed your view?
27. Do you have any other thoughts you would like to share?

Thank you again for your time in participating in this interview.

APPENDIX 6**RAW DATA GROUPED BY PARADIGM MODEL CATEGORY**

RAW DATA GROUPED BY PARADIGM MODEL CATEGORY

Quotes followed by (L), (M) and (H) signify membership in either the lower, middle, or higher CGPA group.

Causal Conditions

Background/Experiences

- *I always was interested in woods classes, I would always ask the teacher what he was doing, why he was doing it, how to do it better and stuff, the things I was doing myself; when someone asked me for help I'd go back and help them and stuff.*(L)
- *We never really read at home. My parents didn't read to me.*(L)
- *In middle school I kinda knew I was going to college, I just didn't have a clue what I was going to do. I knew I would work with my hands, my shop teachers in high school encouraged me.*(L)
- *I wanted to go to college probably in middle school, maybe 5th-6th grade, mainly because they kind of just school was kind of structured to promote that for me, and be like well, you know, you'd better get good grades if you're going to go to college. I'm in 5th grade, that's so far off I don't even think about that, and come to find out when I AM applying to college they only look at your junior year, and your SAT score and your CGPA, and I'm like, well THAT was a waste. (L)*
- *I tried to make it through high school with a good GPA, and it happened, at least for me (L).*
- *I spent my childhood here, I grew up watching Husker football and all that stuff and just inundated in red and whatnot and so that stayed with me all throughout middle school and high school. I didn't apply anywhere else but Nebraska. (Moved to Maryland in 8th grade). (L)*
- *My dad was in the reserves, stationed formally in Pittsburgh but lived in Maryland. He stayed in that area and I lived out here with my mom. She passed away so I moved to live with him and uh, so that's what took me out there, and I just kind of shackled up and made the best of it. (L)*
- *For example, my dad, like just the conversation I've had in general, was right before I moved back here to Nebraska, he was telling me that he thought it was kind of crazy that I was just kind of tossing everything and moving back here without anything, and just kind of uh, going head-on into it, he told me, "Well, I don't know how you do it, but just when it seems like everything is absolutely wrong, it seems like somehow you find a way to make it right (laughs) and to work out for you. Now I don't know how that happens, it's blown my mind every time it does, but as scared as I am for you going off and doing this, I think it'll work out" (laughs). I'm like, "Well thank, dad." (laughs harder) (L)*
- *I think probably uh, the biggest reason that I don't plan things like my dad does, would be that my life has never been structured (laughs), I mean I've you know, I was flying back and forth between two different places with two different parents throughout my entire life. (L)*
- *My mom had MS, and at the point at which I can remember knowing her, basically all I had of her was her personality, like just talking to her, hanging out with her, and she didn't really have the ability to be kind of a... authoritarian parent or anything. She kind of just HAD to talk to me, I mean she couldn't, if I messed up or something, she couldn't come over and you know whack me or ground me or anything. (L)*
- *From the age of 12, from what I can gather, just from relatives and whatnot I and uh, I try to be as humble as possible when talking about myself (laughs). My aunt said that she felt like she was looking into the eyes of like a 80-year-old man or something (laughs) you know, and this 10-year-old child; uh that kind of blew my mind. (L)*
- *First off I didn't really know what I wanted to go to school for. I thought about a lot of different things, like when I was in high school, I thought about going to Cosmetology school cause my mom is that, a Cosmetologist, and then I figured, "Oh, I'll just go to a four year school and see how I like it," and then I ended up in an Education degree and so far like it a lot. I've always been taught that I can do, like I can be anything I want, I can learn anything I want so it frustrates me when I have a hard time learning something. I had a good family growing up, so they told me, they encouraged me a lot. (L)*
- *My dad's a lot quieter than my mom, but he, I can always tell that he, he believes in me no matter what I do, so I, it's like that silent, he doesn't have to say it, I just know it. (Chuckle) (L)*
- *Um, well, like, I don't know, I guess when I was in high school, I played a lot of sports. So like um, the way my dad would encourage me is he'd uh, first off say, "Oh, you played a really good game um, but if*

this, if that didn't work as well, like, "Why don't you try doing this instead?" So he'd explain to me how I could get better and do that, so I guess that was really encouraging. To a lot of people it might make them feel bad, but to me, it helped out a lot. (L)

- I can remember getting a grade in probably second grade. Yeah. It was Math, I'm pretty sure it was Math, and I hated Math so much, and I, like I had to stay in like for recess or something to get help, and I was like really proud of myself because I got a really good grade, cause I could understand it, so that's why I remember it, I think. (L)
- Changed my opinion? (Pause) Okay, yeah. When I was in high school, I like was really, really SUPER competitive. I'm still really competitive, and I LOVE to win, I love to compete, uh, but since I've been out of high school, and I've looked back on that, I've realized that none of it really mattered that much, like the winning, the losing, the um, competition like, yeah, it was fun, but it doesn't really matter now, like it doesn't affect me at all now...so I guess I've changed my opinion on how much, how important that is, and it's not anymore. (L)
- My mom and dad STRONGLY encouraged that I go to college. (M)
- In my household, DEDICATION was always pretty important, very encouraged. Not really like, "You're going to college or else!" But it was just like inferred, I guess. (M)
- What I learned from my parents is RESPECT. You get one last name, don't screw it up. Uh, don't take life for granted, I guess. Respect means you're polite to people, and help them when they need it. This has been the most meaningful thing I've learned. (M)
- I've learned from my friends to be humble and I suppose to have a good time. (M)
- Encouragement from teachers all my life is like, they're always encouraging you to do your homework and to do all that stuff. (M)
- I've been successful memorizing since my history teacher introduced the whole class the flash cards because history, you know, you can just throw down a bold faced word, memorize it and be done with it, and that's just the way, that maybe that's helped me learn because...I don't know how it helps me learn, but it does help me learn. (M)
- I never read as a child. I was encouraged to, but I just never, I just never, I hated it, I'd rather be doing other things, be outside. (M)
- My parents may encourage me to learn, but they don't help. Friends don't help me learn either. (M)
- My history teacher in high school was terrible. So I guess I just feel really dumb like when they're talking about some things, I really don't understand in history class now. (M)
- Neither of my parents went to college, so they definitely feel that it's very important. (M)
- I see how hard my parents work. My dad worked about 140 hours a week when I was a kid. So I definitely did not wanna do that, and so they stressed an education. (M)
- My folks coached me you know, saying, you know, "Don't end up like me." (relative to workload) That was always a good one when I was a lot younger. (M)
- I learned from my parents that hard work gets you out of, gets you along the way. (M)
- I came here because I'm a Husker fan, my uncle's an alumni, but everyone else in my family is a K-Stater. (M)
- I chose UNL over Wayne State because I wanted to try something bigger like enjoy college life, rather than sit around and do nothing in Wayne. (M)
- I knew since 3rd grade I'd be going to college, I was like, "I'm going to Wayne State cause that's where my mom went, so I always knew I'd go. Both my parents encouraged me. Well, see my dad didn't go to college, so he really wanted us to go to college, and my mom was always like, "You're going to college no matter what. It's not a choice." (M)
- My dad didn't go (to college) and so like he's stuck in his heating and air conditioning job like with no, he was talking about going back to school so he could do something else, but...so he wanted us to have options, I guess. (M)
- It's important to nowadays now to go to college to be able to do what you want and get paid well. You have to be able to go to college and know what you're doing. (M)
- I thought college was going to be SO HARD, like I'm gonna have to study SO MUCH, I'm never gonna have any fun or whatever, and then I came here and it's actually like I love it so much compared to high school, because they tell you, like you don't have tests all the time, you can learn through like studies and whatever. Like you do more um, like you, I don't know, in high school I was like you just don't even

pay attention to what you're doing, and then when it comes to test, you just study, and that's it. Like you don't learn anything, but here you have to pay attention in class and know what you're doing to be able to do well on the few tests that you DO have. (M)

- *I have always set goals for doing well. I've always wanted to get good grades, have people know who I am and know that I'm a good person or whatever, like I try hard. I want people to uh, KNOW that I try hard, I guess, so if I don't do well, I'm pretty upset. So I tend to want to do my best at everything. (M)*
- *My parents think of learning as really important. Like they, like the main, our main goal like ever is school comes first. "You have to learn, learn how to do things," like, I don't know, that's just like our top priority. (M)*
- *gonna do. (M)*
- *I learned from my father, probably more in the work aspect than the school. Like you have to get done, you have to go out and do chores, you have to do it, like I don't know, more of the learning, not so much school subjects, but learning like life lessons. (M)*
- *In high school since I knew everyone, we talked all the time like in classes, so I guess I didn't pay attention as much, because we talked. So I didn't...no one really valued learning in high school. We were just like, just something to do, that's what we're supposed to do, and in college, I don't know, most of the kids in my class, I barely know anyone, and so I know that it's college, I have to take it seriously. I can't talk to anyone, so I pay attention and I guess everyone's in college to learn, otherwise they wouldn't be here, cause you have to pay for it. So everyone's, I figure everyone values learning, so that's what you do. (M)*
- *I made friends with the right people, not people who were gonna get me in trouble, so I did everything I needed to do to get into college and studied. (M)*
- *I always felt encouraged when a we'd get our report cards back or if um I would ask my parents for help like on Algebra or something, and I would ask my dad and he would help me halfway, I guess, cause he'd forgotten everything, and then I would figure out the rest, or he'd see what I was doing, and I would be getting an A in the class, and he's like, "You're just so much smarter than me," like I called my mom the other day and I was like, "I'm gonna have such a hard workload next semester, I have all these classes." She's like, "You're a lot better at school than I was." "If I could do it, you can do it." Like, "You work harder than I did," so that makes me feel good, I guess. (M)*
- *Uh, um, I guess my favorite teacher had been my English teacher in high school, cause he was tough on the kids who wouldn't try. He wanted them to try, so he was tougher on them than he was on those of us who DID try, which to the other ones he was prejudiced I guess to those that tried. But he made you feel good if you did well, and if you didn't, he made sure to let you know you need to start doing things right, so, and I know it wasn't, he didn't care about names in the classroom, because me and my sister had always done well, and so he treated us well. But my brother came up and he didn't care at all, and he was like, "I don't care if you're a Sellentin, you're gonna do it," and so he gave him a bad grade when he needed to be, and my brother hated him, but I'm like, "He's a good teacher, you just have to listen to him, he knows what he's talking about." (M)*
- *He (favorite teacher) made himself available. I wasn't scared to ask him questions. I could go into his class before or after and just talk to him like a normal...like we used to hang out in his classroom before it, because we just knew we could talk to him like a regular person. So...he wasn't like, 'He's scary, I'm not gonna go up there.' Like he, he was really involved with the students, cause he was our basketball coach too. So I felt really comfortable with him. (M)*
- *Going to school, it's just kind of what you do...got a full ride, so no reason not to go.(H)*
- *I've never really learned how to study. Last semester I was in a Calc class. Because Calc was taught so differently in high school, where here it was just like rote skills, like okay, can you repeat these things over and over again? Whereas in high school when I took it it was, here are the concepts, can you apply them to different situations? Because it was taught so differently, I was having to memorize so much for this Calc class, so I just dropped it. (H)*
- *My mom's had a big role just because she always would take us to the library and stuff and she reads a lot and so it's just one of those things you know, it's weird like if you DON'T read, and so that and like through school you know, she was always, "You should try harder," you should, you know, "It's good to do well in school and stuff like that and then um..." (H)*

- *My mom never gave overt praise, it's just like, I've read some stuff by Alfie Cohn before, he talks about the importance of intrinsic vs extrinsic motivation and somehow I think my mom was really good like about that and somehow I know I'm really intrinsically motivated. The rare times mom does say "good job I'm really proud of you" it's awkward. (H)*
- *Being recommended by teachers for stuff was like praise. (H)*
- *My first recollection of being graded was in 6th grade, and it was just like, ok, I started getting As with minimal effort, you know, it's just like alright, I'm ok with that you know, and then I don't know going through high school then it was like talking with counselors and stuff it was like "ok well you need to get good grades so you can get into schools and scholarships. (H)*
- *I think people expect you to do well and I don't like to disappoint you know, teachers or myself, or like my parents. (H)*
- *My mom DOES encourage me to do what I want, like right now like changing my major and stuff, she was just like, "ok, if you really don't like the classes, you know then you should change it you know, it's totally fine, just you know, just explore your options and stuff," so she was really like good about that like with college stuff, she was like ok, "well realize you have this money for these different places and what it doesn't pay for, you'll pay for, and if you want to go into debt that's fine like I'll sign on your loans, just think about these things." (H)*
- *Degrees don't really matter, my mom as an associate's in accounting but works in IT; my dad has a bachelor's in accounting, but is a photographer, so it doesn't really matter. (H)*
- *I hated that in high school you were told what was taught wrong in middle school, or just rehashed what you already learned in middle school. It just would have been helpful to learn it correctly the first time. (H)*
- *At Pius, um, a lot of teachers would uh, you know, study their lessons, or not study their lessons, but refer to, 'Now you'll need this for when you go to college,' or 'You'll need this for the real world someday,' and um, kind of make those references, and so, and they do a lot of, and they did a lot or work to try and make sure we were prepared for certain things and um, so I guess just like constantly hearing that reinforcement from teachers and my parents, kind of just instilled that in me. (H)*
- *I kind of always wanted to be a teacher, and then I thought well, I don't know, maybe I should do something bigger, you know, I was kind of thinking I really was always interested in Science, so I was like, "Maybe I'll be a doctor," and then I was like, "Well, I don't wanna go to school for that long, so maybe, maybe I'll um do something like Occupational Therapy or Physical Therapy and I did a lot of job shadowing and I job shadowed nurses, and um, they were ALL like really interesting to me, but always in the back of my head was like, "You've always just kind of wanted to be a teacher," and um I think that comes back to my mom being a teacher and going to the school with her during the summer, and helping her set up her classroom and you know, hearing her tell like fun stories about her students and so I just always kind of loved that part of it, and so finally after like all last year debating about what to do, I was like, "Okay, you've known all along you just wanna be a teacher, so then at the beginning of this year I finally declared. (Chuckle) (H)*
- *My parents have always wanted me and my siblings to do our best and um, my parents uh, when...my brother and I both did very well in high school and so they always encouraged that, but they never um, pushed it where I felt pressure from them to get a 4.0. Any pressure I felt was what I put on myself. Um, I know my dad was an average student, and my mom was a smart student, but she wasn't a 4.0, and so I think that they were just impressed with my brother and I's ability to get really good grades in high school and so they just encouraged us to keep working hard. (H)*
- *I felt encouraged by my Stats teacher in my senior year of high school, it was a really frustrating class for me because I don't like Math, and I took the Stats so I didn't have to take Calculus, and um, it was hard material and I was just like really, I would get angry and stressed out a lot, and I wouldn't get mad at the teacher, but it would probably seem that way, because I hated the material and she was just really good about always just staying consistent, and you know, continuing to connect it to like real life examples, which since that class I found that Stats is really everywhere in reality. (H)*
- *I remember first getting a grade in, I think in Kindergarten and maybe even, maybe first? I feel like we started letter grades really soon at my school. Um, I can't remember the exact time I GOT a grade. I remember in fifth grade getting a 50% on my spelling test and like bawling. (CHUCKLE) But, so that's*

the first time I remember like doing POORLY on something. I was SO upset. She told me I couldn't re-take it, and I was just freaking out. (H)

- *My A.P. Biology teacher senior year was another one of my favorite teachers, and we, she lectured almost every day too, but it was just different. She was funny, and dynamic, and um, connected it to experiences that she had. (H)*
- *I planned on going to college years before graduating high school. It was pretty much the expectation in my home. They were like, "You're probably gonna go to college, it's just gonna happen." (H)*
- *My dad is a like a Maintenance Supervisor for Farmland, and then my mom's just a secretary at a law firm. My dad never went to college, he was in the military, and he wanted to go, like he was planning on going when he got out of the military. He was going to be a Civil Engineer. Then I was born, (Chuck) so he didn't end up going, and my mom STARTED business school, but she quit doing that. So they don't have degrees. (H)*
- *When I was in high school, I was a completely different person, and I didn't even wanna think about like wasting my time going on a bunch of college visits, so I went to ONE college because it had Video Game Design as a program, and it was ITT, and so I just went there to look at the place, and you know, they sound all promising and they were like, basically like Army recruiters. They loop you into it. (H)*
- *I didn't go to any other colleges anywhere, so I just went to ITT, it's very expensive, it's unaccredited. I didn't know that at the time, didn't look into it enough, and the program was worthless. So I decided to drop out of there, transfer here and actually get something. (H)*
- *It's amazing, I like it here, because it's more challenging, and I'm STILL getting amazing grades, so it's making me feel really good, and I'm in the best shape of my life, I just really am liking college right now. I don't wanna leave. (H)*
- *When I got OUT of high school and started going to ITT, I met this friend, and he got me to start playing this video game, it's called War Craft. So anyway, I got SUPER addicted and it got to the point, like when I left ITT, it uh, there was like a 6 month period that I didn't WORK, like in between, well, didn't go to school. I mean I worked part time, and what I would do on most days is wake up 7, 8 in the morning, get on my computer and play this game until midnight or 1AM in the morning. I mean seriously, 17, 18 hours a day. (H)*
- *My mother definitely drilled (Chuck) drilled me with the, "Don't do that, do this," type of stuff, like, "Don't do drugs," "Don't do this." I mean, you know, and she's always been there, always supported me, come to my, all my events I've ever had. I definitely learned a lot about myself, like I told you I was a completely different person in high school. I, my, my relationship with my parents is completely different too. I used to be probably one of the (Chuck) worst sons in the world. I made about every mistake a mother wouldn't want her son to make, (Chuck) and uh, didn't get along with 'em, yelled at 'em all the time, didn't do anything right. But now I'm starting to finally be able to look at things through their eyes, their perspective. (H)*
- *I definitely learned from my father how to put up with a busy schedule. Cause he sometimes works, his job's retarded. Sometimes he works sixteen hours a day. But he doesn't complain about it. I never hear him complain about it. So I just learned a lot of patience from him, I think. (H)*
- *Well, elementary school, it's always been, I mean it's always everybody's friends with everyone, and in 6th grade, my peer groups were, you know, Pokemon players. The, I mean they were the nerds at school, and I only had one really good friend in 6th grade. (H)*
- *My parents definitely pushed me to, I used to have a real bad tendency to give up on things. Like I'd start, and then I'd get sick of it, and I'd stop. But they really, really have been encouraging me to continue going and THEY were the ones that made me realize that I just always quit everything, and my mom wanted me to make commitments and stick with things and, I think that helped a lot, cause they made me realize that. I never THOUGHT about it before, but I DID always quit.*
- *Parents just make you feel good about yourself and what you're doing, and they make you feel like what you're doing is worthwhile and is gonna pay off. (H)*

Expectations from a degree

- *Because otherwise I can't get a job, or at least not one that is worth a whole lot. (L)*
- *It would be worth my time to get the master's or the doctorate because it would pay off later on, but the immediate goal's, bachelor's more'n okay. (L)*

- *I knew when I was in high school I was expected to go to college, just because my uh, well, my mom, since she went to Cosmetology school, she only went to school for a year, and then my dad took over the family business, so he only went to a 2-year school, community college. But I just, that's, I didn't really know what else I would do, so that's why I came to college. I just kind of wanted to go for the experience. (L)*
- *I never know, you never know what you wanna do with your life. So it's hard to, like I've talked to my dad and mom about this, and my dad's like, "Well, I still don't know what I wanna do with my life." So I guess, (Chuckle) you know. He's a well driller yeah. So...but he, he likes his job. He works very hard at it, but um, this is back in a time where he didn't have much choices. His dad kind of wanted him to come back and help, so...um, but I don't know, I'm not in too much of a hurry to get out of college, so I have plenty of time to figure it out. (L)*
- *My parents taught me how to be a good person, how to be a good friend, how to succeed, I don't know. (L)*
- *I think college is a lot harder. I have to study a lot more and it consumes more of my time, and it's like, I just think it's more important, because this is like you're training to get a JOB, like if you don't learn stuff now, when you get out of school, then you're gonna be like, "Oh, no, what did I, why did I learn that stuff?" (L)*
- *Teaching is the thing that always kind of interested me. I like kids and all that stuff. I like school. Well, to a certain degree, not the normal school stuff, but I like the school setting and stuff like that. (M)*
- *I'm inspired every time that I go hunting, when I can be with my friends, I'm always inspired. I can't say when I'm in school I'm inspired, cause just, I don't know. I'm not the biggest fan of going to school to learn, I'd rather go to school to teach. (M)*
- *Seeing that other people work hard, like my parents for one that definitely inspires me to continue to work really hard and hopefully go graduate obviously, get a good job. (M)*
- *You have to learn things to go out into the real world and know what...I don't know, know what you're doing. Learn what you're supposed to do, learn from your mistakes, like all of that. (M)*
- *I guess my mom is the one that brought me into the whole teaching thing, cause she's a teacher, so I learned like right away from her that teaching was my, what I was gonna end up doing. She'd bring me to school. So she brought me around to that. (M)*
- *I want a career and it's necessary, and I feel like um, for, for me coming to UNL was the best, because I got a good scholarship to come here, and it was in my hometown, so and I really loved the University anyways, so like all the things kind of fell into place, and um, I just, I guess I've never really seen any other option. Like it's always for me just been high school and then go to college, and at least get a four year degree. I've never really thought about post-grad yet, but um, but just, yeah, like it was never a question to me whether or not to get a college degree, it was just something that I would do.(H)*
- *I went to Pius High School in Lincoln, and uh, it's a bit of a college prep school, and so uh, they have a lot of like AP courses and things that can earn you college credit, and so I started thinking about that right away. Um, getting some college credits and um, yeah, and I've always um, this is gonna sound funny, but like just for me um, being a big Husker fan, like coming to football games ever since I was young, like that was always part of the like college experience to me, and I was just thinking, you know, like someday I'll come here and I'll, you know, get to participate in this. (H)*
- *I'm in a program that leads to a solid job. (H)*
- *My father just encourages me, you know, "It's okay." Like I got a "C" in my first class in college, like, "It's not the end of the world, you'll be okay," and also um, I think not in a direct way but in an indirect way just the importance of job security and he's had um, this same job, he's worked for the same company since he got out of college, which is like over twenty-five years now. , I'm not saying that I wanna teach in the same school my whole career, but uh, just the importance of um finding a secure job and um, finding stability and not just jumping from place to place, I guess. (H)*
- *From my mom I've learned um, I think hard work and just um, committing to something, and getting it done, and um, especially when it comes to study habits. I can remember in high school, she would always, you know, tell me, "No Facebook or computer until you've done your homework," and (CHUCKLE) I would get mad then, but now I realize (Chuckle) when I'm on my own, it's like, "Okay, I can waste two hours on the Internet and now it's 11:30 at night, and I haven't even done my homework*

- yet, and so I understand where she's coming from, and just um, so just the importance of, you know, do what's important first and get it done, and then you can do whatever. (H)*
- *When I first started out like from high school, I just went to college to avoid the real world a little longer. (H)*
 - *I think they (parents) realized that anymore you pretty much need a Bachelors degree to get a sufficient job. I mean you could get by without one, but a Bachelors degree really helps. They just wanted the best for me. (H)*
 - *One of my goals is...oh, yeah, one of my goals is to graduate with highest honors, you know, graduate with distinction, and so far, I think I'm down that route. Another one of my goals, I'm not sure how I'm gonna pull this one off. Between whatever sources of income I have when I'm older, I'm gonna be making 6 figures. I wanna have an awesome family, I wanna be able to support them, um, and make time for them. I always wanna cook dinners for my family. (Chuckle) Um, and I just wanna be comfortable, live life without too much stress. Obviously, everyone has stress. But I wanna make it as easy for myself as I can by working hard now. (H)*

Context

Course Enjoyment

- *My favorite classes are my shop classes because I like working with my hands. (L)*
- *My favorite professor taught Economics, he's a really fun guy and he, just the way that he uh really actively sought to get participation from the class really was a JOY to me because other professors are very eager to just TALK TO you (laughs) and that's OK, but I like that he was actively seeking uh participation from class and really based his own teaching style off of participation and that really was a JOY to me because he was EXCITED to hear answers from ANYONE. (L)*
- *Because of how amiable that instructor was towards his students, he made it easier for me to CARE about the course material, rather than just the kind of cold here it is, and now you get to tell me all about it. (L)*
- *It was just fun to have a professor who was fun, but then also um, just the broad spectrum of topics that economics can be applied to was really exciting to me because I'm real big into like philosophy and um just, discussing politics or I guess critical thought is a very big thing with me. (L)*
- *I took Writing Fiction one semester and I enjoyed that; and uh, all we really did was read some short stories, and uh then we wrote a couple of our own and, there really wasn't much to it, but I enjoyed then the subsequent discussion that would go along with it, you know, the teacher would collect our stories and he would read them and talk about them. I enjoyed the discussion. (L)*
- *The writing class was loosely graded, it was more of "did you follow these loose guidelines" and then if you did well, then hey, cause that's all that really mattered and he was more interested in developing your writing ability than maybe the content of it. (L)*
- *Discussion helps me learn. (L)*
- *I liked the Econ class because it certainly broadened my scope of um, of thinking; it helped me kind of be more analytical of everything. That's basically the nitty gritty of economics is having a collection of data and then deciphering what it could and couldn't mean and that's something I like to do. (L).*
- *My favorite classes? Uh, right now I'm taking a Family Science class, I think it's called CYF 280, and it's about marriages and relationships, and I think that is the most interesting class I've ever TAKEN since I've been here. It teaches you how to have a good marriage, how to fight well, like if you ARE having a fight. What matters in marriages and just how to be a good spouse, have good relationships with people, and I think that's just a VERY interesting class. I've also taken a Child Development class. It's CYF 160 I think. That's on East Campus and that's kind of interesting cause it's along their whole life span and it's how every, like everyone develops, and it's about like personality and uh, psychological and physical and I think that's pretty interesting to learn about too. Since I like them, I'm obviously going to attend them more and try harder in them (Chuckle) Well, I mean I enjoy doing, I'm the type of person that if I really enjoy doing something, then I'm gonna do really well at it. (L)*
- *What helps me learn is a lot more hands on stuff like I also learn better when I do just like get into an activity and actually do something instead of just sitting and listening, I learn better that way. (L)*
- *If I ever interact as an activity and just do something that would make me learn it better and, because I'd be more involved in it. (L)*

- *I like biology cause it's stuff that I like, animals and organisms and stuff, like when I went down to the creek when I was a little kid, you know, I do water beetles and all that stuff, and plants, and animals, and flowers and all that great, great stuff. It's about that, and how it grows, and how it is, and why it is the way it is. (M)*
- *When you care what you're learning about, and you just, you pick stuff up. You pick a lot more stuff up, and then you can apply it to, to my real life and stuff that I do. (M)*
- *Well, there are classes that you DON'T wanna study for, and there are classes you WANT TO study for, so you're gonna actually enjoy it, so I enjoy studying history and military science and not so much EdPsych or Teach 331, for example. But in military science, I'm learning about what I'm going to be doing in a few years in my life, and then history class, I'm learning about where we came from. (M)*
- *If they set goals where THEY like expect the class to be at for averages for like tests or something like that that you really wanna, especially if you like the teacher, you really wanna excel for 'em. (M)*
- *I like teachers, like their activities when they're up in front. Like if they're really active and they look like they wanna be there, and they wanna help teach you then. This hasn't happened much in college, like it did in high school, but I come from a smaller, really small high school, so everybody knew everybody and it's almost like it was more personable, so it was really difficult coming up here and teachers not really knowing who you are. (M)*
- *Being able to retain information I read definitely helps, but then teachers explaining things more, and definitely group discussions help a lot. I'm really a hands-on kind of person. So acting out helps a lot too. I haven't really seen that in college though. Probably another one of the small town kind of things. (M)*
- *The tone is set at the beginning of a class for me, I guess. The first week of class, I know whether the book is any good, and the teachers, on the first day, if they seem really into it, and really excited about it, usually I'll like it as well. (M)*
- *My favorite classes don't really do much with grading. I've had like two papers, that's it. (M)*
- *A teacher I really liked when I was thinking about being an English teacher, was really fun, and like he, we had to do a lot of creative writing, we never really did that before and like in high school you don't learn about like cheating, like how you know what plagiarism is, so he taught me like I went in and I talked to him for like an hour about it, so that influenced me on how to write my papers from now on. (M)*
- *I guess how a class is laid out for me, how the teacher teaches it, like if they put it on slides and I just sit there and I'm just like ungh... but like in my favorite classes, we get to do like little activities where one's the kid and one's the adult and you have to like diagnose them and try and help them get through their...so if it's more like hands-on, I guess it's more interesting to me, and information too is a big, if it's something that I wanna learn, then I'll probably pay attention more, but if it's, if it's something that I realize I'm NOT gonna need to know, then I'm like there's no need to pay attention. (M)*
- *I guess they (teachers) lay it out for me in a way I CAN understand it to help me learn it. So if I, if I really don't understand it, like if they, it can get complicated and they'll lay it out in like elementary terms. Like this is exactly how it's supposed to be is how you're...this is what it is, and I'll be like, "Oh, now I can understand, I can relate it to something that's a lot simpler than actually, than what it is," and then it's easier that way. (Chuckle) (M)*
- *My Normal Language Development Teacher, I like her a lot cause she, she's just really fun. She like brings in stories and, that go along with what we're talking about and she'll ask questions. But she's always like (sighs) like she's kind of crazy and so it's a lot more fun to be in there, whereas I had a History teacher that just went up, he lectured, like, "If you want help, you can come in," but like no one's gonna come in, because you're, you just seem like really...I was just, I never rose my hand in there, I was hoping he'd never call on me. I still thought he was a good teacher, just not to a student, like he laid the information out perfectly fine, but if I didn't understand it, I would've been too scared to ask him. (M)*
- *Honors seminar was fun, like I've really enjoyed classes that mainly I can um write papers for...it's more helpful to organize your thoughts rather than studying for tests and then doing that. (H)*
- *I'm in School and Society this semester, which has been really fun, I really like the instructor. (H)*
- *I draw the distinction between like hard work when it's enjoyable because then it doesn't really seem like hard work, but like if a project sucks, I hate it, I just need to like get it done now, you know, like this is really hard because it's tedious...I'd rather things be challenging but interesting. (H)*

- *I enjoy the classes that are less structured but like science classes tend to give you less choice (H)*
- *Teach 446, which is ALSO one of my favorite classes, I think, because it's so applicable to my uh, career field and um, we're practicing with lesson plans and things like that. Um, I also enjoy my History class a lot, just because my teacher is really dynamic and she is a really good lecturer and um, just brings the material, makes the material interesting. (H)*
- *Well, we've had the same groups all semester, which is nice, because then we've gotten to know each other and are comfortable with each other, and I've learned more from group discussions and sharing between groups than I have in most classes where I just sit and hear a lecture and so that's one of the reasons it's my favorite, um, is we just discuss issues and hear different opinions, um, and I think that's more beneficial. (H)*
- *It (enjoyable class) really doesn't measure what you know in terms of what you can memorize. What it measures is um, your ability to frame an argument and um, explain how you feel what you feel. So she really encourages us to like back up our statements. If we're gonna make a blanket statement, you know um, for example, I don't know, like, "All teachers should have incentive pay." If we're gonna say something like that, she wants us to back it up with reasoning, and so that's I think just beneficial um, more so than even just memorizing information, cause it's just teaching us to, you know, back up our opinions and research our beliefs and those sorts of things. (H)*
- *Then I really enjoyed my um, Organismic Biology class, which was a lecture hall of 200 last year and so I just enjoyed it because I was interested in the material and I just found it cool, like um, the, what we were talking about and then last semester I LOVED my Insect Biology class, I took it online and I loved it, but I, it was, it was just really INTERESTING to me and we got to, you know, the lab was really fun too. We learned a LOT about different bugs and identifying different bugs, and so it was cool to me, because then I would walk outside and see an insect, "Oh, I know what that is, that's an Orftracta(?) or you know? (Chuckle) They didn't make it so that we had to turn in these extensive lab reports and um, I don't know, I guess I was more motivated to learn without that like restriction because we could play with insects basically and it wasn't, like 101, Bio 101 Lab I hated, because um, the material was SO over our heads and we had to write these super long lab reports every time and I just felt like I wasn't LEARNING anything, I was just trying to survive. (H)*
- *The one thing I like about that class is that we can re-do our lesson plans, and so if we turn in a lesson plan that gets a poor grade because it doesn't meet the criteria, we can see his comments, see what we need to fix, and then change it, and so I think that's beneficial because it actually allows us to improve our grade and also learn from what we did wrong. (H)*
- *I found that I learn through uh, group discussion and um, sharing of ideas. But I also learn through teachers that can um, have this ability that I don't even know if I can put into words, but they just can somehow CONNECT with me in the class, and usually that's a pretty DYNAMIC teacher that uh, you know, keeps the lesson INTERESTING, whether that's, if it's a History class, connecting it to the present or um, you know, like telling, showing me, "This is WHY you need to know this." That is most beneficial for me, I think, seeing like the bigger picture when I'm learning something. (H)*
- *I love Math; you get to learn how the numbers work. You get to learn AMAZING things that describe the way the world around you is operating. I really like how it's all like formulated. If you learn, I mean you can, cause you can learn, it all builds off each other. You learn how one thing works, and then if you really figure that out, and you understand it, then you can easily derive how the NEXT thing works, and when you figure that out, and you can do it in your head, and then you can visualize how the NEXT thing works. And as long as you keep doing that, Math is never really difficult. (H)*
- *Um, cool teachers help a lot. You know, you get those professors that are monotone, and they just read off their lecture notes, don't really explain anything. They just dictate, that's not helpful. I can't learn, I may as well just be reading a book.. Oh, like I really like my Math professor right now. He sucks, he really does, but he's making darn sure we learn. You know what he does? Every day before class we go over a new section. But before we come to class, we had to have READ the material, and reading a math book before you KNOW what's going on isn't always the easiest thing, and after we read the section, we have to do the HOMEWORK for that section, and we have to do all of this BEFORE we go to class for that section, and then once we get there, he quizzes us on the material BEFORE he teaches us it. So we have all this experience, this is exactly how I like to learn, we've read the material, we've done homework on the material, we've done homework on the material. Then we get quizzed on the material, so we did*

all that memorizing, and then when we finally get through those three things, he lectures us on it, he explains, he shows us geometrically how it all works, how it fits together, and he explains what we did. So he doesn't tell us what to do, he saves that for the book and the homework, and then when we get there, he tells us *WHAT* we did, you know, how it worked, and then it just kind of *CLICKS*. I just say he sucks cause we have to teach ourselves the material and then he quizzes us on it. It's graded quizzes before he tells us anything about it. (H)

- Oh, yeah, cause all my other Math classes up till this one, I was used to going to class and being taught, and then go and do my homework. The problem with that was what I found myself getting into in the situation was I'd often forget like, cause he'd just show us like a few simple examples, and I'd never really be able to apply that to all my homework, cause it'd get increasing in complexity. Well, *THIS* teacher makes you do all the homework first. You struggle through it, but you eventually get it done, and then when you get to class, then he explains exactly how everything works, and it makes it so much easier. I understand Calculus III 10 times more efficiently than I did Calculus I. Because of his teaching method. Calc III is much easier than Calc I. This is how I will teach my students. They'll have graded quizzes before I teach them the material. (H)
- I mean, you know, having you do, like they'll take a little bit of time to explain the topic, and then having *YOU* work on a problem, give yourself some practice on it *IN* class, and then come back and discuss it *MORE* as a class, that helps you.
- Most of them, all about the same. Honestly, this math teacher is the only teacher that stands out from the rest of them. Like he's completely different. He expects us to really actually think, and not just remember things. He wants us to really know what's going on, and he expects us to really know what's going on, he doesn't just think if you know what's going on, that's good, that's a good student. If you don't, then he doesn't like it. (H)

Course Difficulty

- I figured out within the first three weeks of class that I was really just, I didn't want to do it (Construction Management class). It's just hard to follow along. (L)
- (Least favorite classes) Lecture classes where you just sit all the time and you just go over a presentation all the time, it's kind of hard after a half hour or so, my mind starts wandering more and more...wondered if I had ADD but I was told "no" after asking to be tested. (L)
- Although with my literature classes have been a lot more open ended, I can choose my own topic to write about, but again it's just the same thing where I'm not really interested in my own thoughts, I'm more interested in everyone else's thoughts. That's how I learn other than evaluation my own ideas. (L)
- Chemistry was my least favorite class because I thought it was really *HARD* and um, some, like some of it was kind of interesting, but it didn't really interest me like as much as my other classes, so that's probably why it was my least favorite. (L)
- What makes it hard for me to learn? Well, there are a couple of classes that are just lecture classes, so when they just stand up there and just talk and talk, and talk, and talk, that kind of makes it monotonous and a little boring, so that kind of help, makes it a little harder to learn. (L)
- Reading stuff out of a book; that pretty much just shuts down the whole learning process. I get so bored, but I don't think I've ever read a whole book in my whole, entire life. It's pathetic, it's sad, but... (M)
- Teachers who go up there and they just sit there and just yap the whole entire time, yeah, I don't really learn a whole lot from them. The ways that I don't, yeah, I guess ways I don't learn very well is a teacher just go up there, yack, yack, yack, yack, yack. (M)
- I just don't learn by myself. I really need someone to explain it to me. It really ticks me off when a teacher says, "Oh, just read the book, and figure it out that.." I'm like, "No, I learn, I'm a visual learner, I need it written out for me from someone that probably understands it a little bit more." (M)
- I get frustrated pretty easily, like reading this mastery chemistry crap, and hole smokes, geez, about eight o'clock on a Wednesday night is not the night to try and visit me. (chuckle) When I can't figure stuff out, it just it goes downhill pretty darn fast. I just do, get really mad. (M)
- If I can't get it within fifteen minutes and every single way that I know is not working, I end up saying screw it and I'll just like, "Show me the answer" and I'll get a zero on that part and whooptie do. I

can sit in a deer stand from 7AM till dark outside and not see a single thing and come away with a big smile on my face cause I learned something from it. But I can't take ten minutes of mastering chemistry cause I can't figure out the freaking problem. (M)

- *Classes I don't like to study for have instructors that are pretty much the same and like how it's structured is basically the same as well, I guess it's pretty much, "Read this chapter." It's just like the fact of getting through the chapter, like being able to stay totally awake and focused on it is another part of it. Well, I guess the textbook in history is interesting, and in Teach 331 we've had a lot of variables...various books that have been fairly interesting for the most part, and then EdPsych we just pretty much run off slides, which hasn't been a whole lot of fun. (M)*
- *The classes I don't like, it's hard to explain, something about psychology I guess, just doesn't interest me, or the way people think I guess. It's just too complex maybe. And right now, pretty much just going over slides and stuff really isn't that much fun. (M)*
- *I get distracted when I'm not interested in a class, but don't notice things when I'm totally into the discussion. (M)*
- *If I don't like the class, I'm not gonna try very hard. (M)*
- *Math classes are my least favorite, we couldn't use calculators and we had quizzes and tests all the time. We like, he went through it so fast and explaining things didn't really, I didn't do so hot in that class. I don't really like my 251 either, I like the teacher, but like I'm learning the same information in my Speech Path classes, so I kind of went in thinking if I pay attention to my Speech Path classes, then this one should be easy, but it's a little harder too, I kind of get bored with the information cause I learn it all kind of like all the same information in my two classes previously before that, so if it's boring, I don't pay attention as much. (M)*
- *I had to write a paper about William Jennings Bryan and his campaign thing, I was like, "This is NOT gonna interest me." Like I wrote my paper and I really didn't think I did very well on it, because it just was something I didn't wanna do. Like he had so many restrictions on that paper, and so many things that you HAD to have in there, and he gave us a site, you couldn't go to any other site except for this ONE site, and I couldn't find ANYTHING on that site and I was like, "Ah, this is gonna screw me over." (M)*
- *I expected to enjoy SpEd class because of my service learning experience, but the classes.. I can't stand them. There's so much stuff, like working with people with disabilities, you don't learn it from a textbook, it's like, you're around people with disabilities, you just need to like be able to understand and like you need to be able to adjust yourself to how you'd work with somebody like that, so it seems more experiential. (H)*
- *It's helpful to go through the legal things, but like having to go through that over, and over and over and over again, it's just like ok, we've heard that once, can we go on please? And another class is all about assessment and so far we've pretty much just gone through how you interpret these results, which is all stuff that if you took the ACT in high school, if you've ever had to take the ITEDS or ITBS, or any other test, when they give you your scores back, if you understand like, you know, the school would always tell you what those meant. (H)*
- *It just gets annoying classrooms having like rote little assignments, stuff like just worksheets all the time and stuff like that...filling out definitions of words and stuff. (H)*
- *Like with my Calc class last semester, like there was stuff that just like I understood it, but I couldn't just like actually going through wand with like all the little tricks and stuff, I couldn't do it and so that was like a lot of like just forget this. (H)*
- *I didn't get a good grade in the Econ class (that I really liked) because I didn't really study it, like, we would have these tests and they would be over really specific things in Econ, and it was again, just a lot of regurgitation and that I really didn't pay attention, I paid attention to the broad theories and how they're applicable to other things; I didn't care about the definitions of stuff (laughs). (L)*
- *My least favorite classes? Uh, right now Ecology has to be (Chuckle) the least favorite of mine. I don't feel like the material is RELEVANT to me, and um, it's, it's just kind of like getting lectured at every day and to my teacher's credit, she has made some changes to try and make it better, um, cause I think she knows that it's unappealing to a lot of students, but um, it's just kind of bland lecture that is, it, I just, I don't connect with it, I guess. I feel like I'm still gonna get an A in ecology (H)*

- *It's Ecology of The Great Plains, so you think it would be interesting because when I took it, I assumed we were gonna be learning about Nebraska Ecology and the surrounding states, but it hasn't really focused on The Great Plains at all, and um, we've talked about just like general ecology terms, and um, now we're kind of talking about Genetic Engineering, Genetic Modification, but there's just a lot of um, a lot of, okay, well the lectures, there's no tests. We have two quizzes though and we're already given the quiz questions, which, for me is really unmotivating then to pay attention in class when I've already got sixty quiz questions, of which thirty will be taken. So I can just look those up in the book and get an "A" on the test, and so I almost wish like it was one or the other, either we...taught the material that was relevant to these quizzes, or we didn't know what the quizzes were gonna be ahead of time, and then I would actually, you know, be motivated to listen in class, and so surprisingly like having those quiz questions, it was just like, "What's the point then, you know?" If you wanted to get an "A" in class, like what's...? And I should say, I'd just say I would be, I think my teacher is a very sweet lady. She kind of has a heavy accent though, and so, and her lecturing style is very monotone, and so those two things together make it disinteresting. If she was dynamic and um, you know, I guess louder or varied her voice a little more, I think it would be easier to be interested. I'd want to be interested, I guess. (H)*
- *Getting bogged down by busy work prevents my learning, because then I just do the b.s. and get through it. Um, prevented from learning by just in classes where the material's over my HEAD and isn't presented in a way that I'm connected to it. Uh, if it was a class where the teacher was really dynamic and it was a class say about Classroom Management but it was totally over my head, I would be motivated to learn that material STILL. But if it was say, you know, my Physics class that I have to take next semester, I hate Physics, and so if that class is totally over my head, and the teacher is really BORING, and not fun, like then I'll probably not be very motivated in that class. (H)*
- *I kind of just trek through difficult classes, and just DO it, but I have, but I DON'T CARE. (Chuckle) I mean I care about, and those are those other classes that I just care about the grade, and I just do the work to do the work and get the grade and uh, you know, the day the class ends is probably the last time I think about it. Um, and luckily there haven't been very many of those. Um, I've always had some level of involvement or BEING engaged somehow in the class. Um, in my Ecology class that I'm in, it's not a HARD class, but I just feel DISENGAGED in it, I guess, and so I feel like at this point, I'm just doing the work to do the work, and so I'll probably have that mentality for the rest of the semester, which sounds really terrible, but...(H)*
- *Biology Lab 101 in freshman year, first semester was frustrating, um, because I just didn't know. I like to know what the teacher wants. Some people love the freedom of, "Write a paper on this." I like to know their expectations and like what they're looking for. So and I'm just like yeah, with Chemistry or Math, my mind doesn't necessarily think that way very well, and so I have to like work a lot harder at it and it's frustrating when I like am working really hard and still can't make that connection. (H)*
- *I would probably spend, oh, it depends. If it's like a math problem say, I'd probably try and think it out for myself for like fifteen or twenty minutes, and then I'd probably call a friend and see can..."Do you know how to do this?" "Can you explain this to me?" (H)*
- *I have to be able to figure something out relatively quickly to stay interested, unless it's something that I care about, I guess. If it's something um, relevant to, you know, like Human Biology or something I can't figure out, then I'm gonna spend more time trying to figure that out, or research it on the Internet or do whatever, because that interests me, but if it's like a Math problem, then I'm gonna, "I don't care." (Chuckle) Give it up (Chuckle). (H)*
- *At the moment, definitely Ethics. Um, for one reason, it's just a lot of theoretical, "If this, then maybe this, and...But if this then "maybe" this. I don't like those MAYBES. And then it's a lot of discussion, and it's not really fun discussion. Like if it's philosophy, I might like Philosophy, cause you just get to go off on tangents and talk about deep, off the wall subjects. But not so much with Ethics, and then you write a lot of papers, and those aren't fun. (H)*
- *I'm far less successful than my other courses. English I'm doing okay, I suppose. But Ethics is my lowest grade so far. I don't think you learn in Ethics. Oh, we go there, we went for two weeks, and we discussed like we read a book. It's called "On Bullshit." We spent a week defining the word, "bullshit," and then the next week we discussed like how Ethics are never concrete. I mean in one given situation a decision could be wrong, and in another given situation, it might be right, or is there even a wrong or right? And then we just stopped. We're working, we've been working on a group project the rest of*

the semester, and we're not really learning from it, we're just trying to meet his requirements and get it done. (H)

- *I'll hear something in class, and honestly a lot of classes I don't care to actually LEARN the stuff. Like the stuff I hear in English and probably, and History classes, classes like that, I don't really care to LEARN the things I probably should, but I don't, and so I just memorize the stuff and then forget it. Get the grade and be done. (H)*

Intervening Conditions

Friendships

- *I just do things with friends to kind of get away from school and stuff. (L)*
- *My closest friends, um, they're willing to you know listen to me babble whenever I feel the need to, although generally I don't I'm more than willing just to listen to them babble because it's a lot more interesting to me to hear them talk (laughs) than for me to, but I have been known to ramble occasionally if I get on the right subject. (L)*
- *A lot of my friends think grades are important, and it's important to get like really good grades in school. But I don't think they're as positive and open-minded about stuff as I am. (L)*
- *I probably learned from my friends how to like be myself in any situation, I don't know. I guess I don't, I try not to act like when I'm around, it's everybody, it's human nature to just act differently when you're in different settings. Uh, but I've tried not to do that, I try to act the same in every setting that I'm in and I can be myself when I'm around my friends. (L)*
- *I have a really good guy friend that my brother lives with, and um, I was thinking about switching majors and he told me, you know, "If you're gonna switch your major, um, even if it gets hard, you're still gonna have to do it." So um, "Even if it gets hard, you might wanna quit, but you can do it no matter what." So I guess that made me feel encouraged, cause he just pretty much told me that I just gotta do it, I just can't complain about it. (Chuckle) (L)*
- *I come from a farming community. A lot of my friends, they go to, take say, go take a Voc Ag degree for a semester, half semester, and end up dropping out and going back to the family farm, cause their families have big old freaking, all the farming, you know, in the world, so they don't really encourage it. Basically, if I just carry less, well, getting their education, they're like learning. I mean they always learn something new, but they don't really care if they go learn anything I guess. (M)*
- *My friends learning is hands-on, it's like an apprenticeship. You know, it's not like this learning, they have to go pick up a dang book and read it, and learn it, and memorize it and all that stuff. I don't like learning like that, but I have no choice, so... (M)*
- *My friends are always encouraging me to do stuff, but it's not always for the best stuff. (M)*
- *My friends view education about the same way I do. Pretty lacksadaisy. Definitely what you shouldn't. I don't know if "lazy" is the right word for it either, but like usually in the middle of the day we get kind of tired usually, and then kind of just push off studies, and definitely should not, and so I guess that's part of where the goals come in at. Next semester I'll set more goals and hopefully achieve 'em next semester. (M)*
- *Friends call up to come play basketball or football or something like that, or sometimes it's a nap or something like that where a lot of black holes get in the way of studying. (M)*
- *My friends always ask me to come play the X-box (chuckle). So I definitely have a problem with that. But like, for instance, our ROTC program we kind of try to push each other along, and try to encourage each other to do better in grades and so, and then we have awards that are given out every semester for getting good grades and stuff. In high school I'd play for 10-12 hours probably, but now in college, it's a lot different. I won't stay on it for more than two, maybe three hours... If my parents were still here, I would definitely study more and stuff like that, like I wouldn't be allowed to go on the X-Box and stuff all the time, so rules are definitely an important part. (M)*
- *I learn from friends, I guess you watch others and if it works, go with it and learn from it. (M)*
- *A lot of my friends from my hometown came here, so that was a kind of push for me to come here. I'm not a big getter, or going out meeting a whole bunch of new people type person. (M)*

- *My friends view learning the same way I do, like their parents consider it a lot. But like themselves, or like, I'd rather go out and have fun than go learn something I guess. That's what most people, most college people are like. (M)*
- *I think I've had the same friends forever, but I've added now like, friends with more of the Speech Path people in my classes, so my peer groups have always been pretty much the same as me, like we expect the same things. We all wanna graduate from college and I don't know, we don't want people to think badly of us, I guess, so we don't do anything that's like trashy or, you know, we care about what people think, so we're more, we grew up with like the same type of families. So all of our families are kind of connected. (M)*
- *Friends. They'll call me up, like, "Hey, wanna do something?" And I'm like, "Oh, I really have to study," and they're like, "Ah, you don't need to study, you'll do fine on it, you're smart by yourself." I'm like, "Yeah, but not about this stuff." So sometimes I'm like, "Yeah, you're right, I can go out." (M)*
- *Friends know when you need to study, so they like, they leave you alone because like, they really want to help you so they, so they don't bother you. (H)*
- *We read each others' work, and you know, like, edit them for each other. (H)*
- *I have three really close best friends and um, we all did very well in high school and uh, we almost kind of pushed each other to do well. Um, in college, I think, I think they still feel the same way, like they still wanna do their best. Uh, two of them go to a school in Kansas, and one is here, and uh, none of us have 4.0s in college, but we all do the best that we can, and um, still do well. Um, and as far as learning goes, it was also just, for them and for me it was never something that was uh, a question of whether or not we would go to college and get a degree, it was something that we were gonna do. Um one of my friends, she um, like when I was picking a career, I wanted to do something that, or picking a major, I wanted to do something I knew could be a career, and so that was one reason I went into Education, cause I knew I could be a teacher after that. Um, and actually two of my other friends are in Education also, and then um, my one friend wanted to just do something that she LOVED, and so she's a Philosophy major, which um, is interesting, because she doesn't KNOW what she's going to do when she graduates. And like for ME that would be really frustrating, and I would not want to do that, but for HER, it's what she LOVES and so that's what she wants to do. So I guess that's the difference. (H)*
- *I've learned from one of my friends, just having a laidback but hardworking attitude. She never gets too stressed out over a test or a final or something, um, whereas my other two close friends and I would always be the ones freaking out and would spend the majority of the time stressing over the test and a minority of the time actually studying, for it, you know? (Chuckle) And then my other friend is just sitting there like, "You guys, just calm down, just open your book and start studying." So from her, definitely just, you know, calmly uh, working on things and not getting too stressed out, and from my other two friends um, probably uh, well, from my one friend, Sue, it would be to find something that you love, because that's what she's doing. She's doing Philosophy because she loves it. Um, and so from Patti, who's actually her twin sister, um, probably just the importance of um, asking questions, like figuring things out. She's very analytical, and in the classroom she is not afraid to um, clarify things and raise her hand and contribute a lot, and so um, just I think like that example has kind of helped me um, work through things in my head, and rather than just skipping over something I don't understand, you know, figure out why I don't understand it. (H)*
- *I've learned a lot from my current girlfriend, like just about relationships and this is the first one I ever had where I'm actually satisfied and happy with the relationship, and I think it's amazing and I've learned a lot from her, like how to care for people, put their needs before yours I guess. I used to be a really selfish person, like if you didn't wanna do what I wanted to do, forget it, and I didn't wanna ever talk to anybody. I'm just really learning, well recently I've really learned how to talk to people. That's meaningful to me. I used to be really shy too. (H)*
- *Well, most of my friends just always complain about school, not wanting to ever do it, not wanting to study, and their study habits are very insufficient. Sometimes they say I motivate 'em, and (Chuckle) it helps them study. But, well we don't compare notes, cause we're not in the same classes. I don't even really take notes. Well, we talk about...like...well, recently, we just, we had a discussion about how to read, cause they had to do a lot of reading and they were complaining how it really sucks and it takes so much time, and I'm like, "It's not that bad." Just read, every time you eat a meal, cause usually when you*

eat meals you have a little bit of time in your day. So every time you eat a meal, sit down, read ten pages and put the book down. You'll get 30 pages done every day, and it's not gonna stress you out. (H)

- *I learned from friends just how to be, just how to act socially more. Cause I really, I used to be so withdrawn, I would not wanna talk to anyone. I was just by myself, and there was, this was also probably cause of that video game. (H)*
- *My friendship group is very varied; I mean it's very mixed. I have friends that are spikers, nearly failing school, I have friends that are just as studious, just as athletically involved as I am, I have a couple of friends running the marathon with me. Um, my girlfriend, who's, she's also very into exercising, very health, health-minded. (H)*

Perspective-Taking

- *Teachers determine what you are supposed to learn...if a teacher says this is how it is, then most of the time it actually IS how it IS.(L)*
- *If I don't agree with someone, I'll kind of argue my opinion and state "this is probably a better way to do it" and if they kind of keep it up, kind of debate a little bit and let them do it their way if they don't want to give up.(L)*
- *My learning is all in the classroom, just through interaction with my classmates and also with the professor and just drilling both parties for all they know and I can remember. I don't care about writing a long paper about why, you know, Hamlet didn't like his dad or something...What matters are the overarching themes of Hamlet and what do other people think about it. That THAT matters more to me than what my own personal feelings about the text are. (L)*
- *I'm not really interested in my own thoughts, I'm more interested in everyone else's thoughts. That's how I learn other than evaluating my own ideas. (L)*
- *If others in class start getting really emotional, I know that they uh don't really actually care about what we're talking about, it's more of they want to validate their own opinion on the subject, and whereas I try to ask leading questions for a more objective answer; something that's more uh, more of an evaluation rather than a reflection, I guess (L)*
- *If I'm told I'm wrong, I'll probe for the right answer, or at least try to get a general idea of where I need to take my thoughts to discover the right answer, or if there IS a right answer. (L)*
- *Obviously I'm not correct about everything, so I've gotta be incorrect sometimes. Um, but I guess if I'm incorrect, I absolutely wanna learn the right thing, or the right way to do it so I'll just probably sit and uh, try to figure out how to do it right the next time. (L)*
- *Pretty much it's okay if you disagree with me um, you can think what you want. I might try to, I'll probably try and tell you MY side of the story or tell you what I believe in, but you can't change what people believe, so you might as well accept it. (L)*
- *What do I do when someone criticizes me? I guess I'm the type person that I can take criticism pretty well. Um, I first figure out why they criticize me in the first place and if um, they have a point, then I'll probably see how I can get better at why they did it, I guess, I don't know. I guess sports helped me out a lot that way when I was in high school, because it helped me to learn to work with people that I necessarily don't get along with. (L)*
- *I'm the type of person who, I like to please everybody, so if somebody expects something of me, I want to reach that expectation. (L)*
- *When I was growing up, I was taught you should be able to trust all your teachers. (Chuckle) I still do trust all my teachers, so I guess I put my trust in them to lead me with good information that's correct and real, so... Online, you have to, well, you have to look at, like if you're on a Web site, to look at if it's published by somebody at, you can usually tell if it's a Web site if it's a crock or if it's actually good information. (L)*
- *When someone disagrees with me I argue with 'm. Cause my way, it's of COURSE it's the right way. (Chuckle) But I, you know, you have to take everything with a grain of salt it seems like, but just get my viewpoint; they'll give you their viewpoint. You know, mine, I'm always right, but you know. Leave it there. (M)*
- *If I'm wrong, I listen to what the other person says, then I guess I just go on and learn, I guess, learn from it. Other times I just smile and say whoops, I guess (chuckle). I mean to me there isn't a whole lot you CAN do. (M)*

- *If someone disagrees with me, I listen to their side usually and then I either get really stubborn or I accept what they say. It depends on how valid what they said sounds, I guess. Honestly, it's probably a lot about their confidence level and how like comfortable they are with what they say, and how confident I am in what I said. Cause sometimes I'll say things off the wing that I really don't know a whole lot about, and so if I correct it, I can accept it. (M)*
- *If someone criticizes me I usually take it to heart and whatever they say, I try to fix about me, I guess. (M)*
I get really embarrassed if I'm wrong, and I'm like, ahh! I'm not going to answer another question, because I'll be wrong again, and I think everyone's looking at me, and they're like, "She's stupid." (chuckle) (M)
- *Mostly if someone disagrees with me about something I KNOW is right, I'll try and fight with them. Be like, "No, this is how it's supposed to be." But if it's an opinion thing I'm like, okay, that's your opinion, "You can stick with that if you want, but I'm gonna believe what I wanna believe." (M)*
- *I guess I believe something to be true if I hear it from other people, if I hear it from my parents first and then if I talk about it and my friends also agree, then I'm like, "Well, then that's, that's what it is." (Chuckle) (M)*
- *If someone criticized me I guess I try and fix whatever they criticize, if it's something that CAN be fixed, or I KNOW that it shouldn't be that way, then I try and fix it. But if they criticize me for something that I know isn't like my fault or something, I'm just like, "You can think what you want, but that's how I am." (M)*
- *I like rules cause it outlines what I can and cannot do. It sets, like if they give me a paper and they're like, "Oh, just write," and I'm like, "What?" "There's no rules?" Like I have to know what I'm supposed to be doing, what I can't put in there, and what I can, and it just makes me feel a lot better to know that I have restrictions and you can't go, I can't do that, and what, what I can do. Otherwise, if there's no rules, I don't, won't know, if I'll get in trouble for doing something. (M)*
- *I guess in school I learn, I believe a lot of things, because it's coming from a teacher, and I trust teachers a lot with the information they give me. If my parents say it, I'll believe it, and, but if it's something, I'm just like, "No way," like I don't know, I have to, I have to look it up and find out for myself before I'll believe it if it's out there. Like I guess it's different in friends, cause there's a lot of rumors and stuff. So at first when I hear it, I may be like, "Oh, really?" Like...but I won't believe it right away. (M)*
- *Well, I've LEARNED in college to go, not to go to, not to believe anything with a dot.com after it, like web sites with dot.com. Like to go to dot.gov, dot.edu, dot.org, and those are more trustworthy sites. (M)*
- *Learning is putting effort into finding things out and to keep it. Like you have to understand that you can't just hear it and I guess you don't learn by just hearing it, you have to KNOW, you have to be able to I guess present it to somebody else and make them understand it. Then you know you know it. (M)*
- *When I changed views on something? I guess religiously when I...I was brought up Catholic, which I still am now. But I was like a STRICT Catholic, like I didn't know anything about anything else. So when other people would tell me about their religion, I'd be like "that's not right, like Catholic's the only way to go," and then in high school, I learned more about other things. I went to a Lutheran Church, and learn more, now I accept like if you wanna be any other religion, that's perfectly fine. Like I'm not even sure if I wanna be Catholic. Like I don't know what I wanna be. I believe what I believe and that's how it is. Buddhism? I would have my own opinions. I would argue if they wanted to argue about it, but if they wanna preach to me about it and say that theirs is the only way, then I'm like OKAY, then that's, then you do what you wanna do, I guess. Like I seem to question that, because although I may think there's one God, and they think whatever they want, they could be right, and I could be wrong. So I don't wanna judge them and say, "You guys are wrong," when it actually COULD be the other way around, cause you never know. (M)*
- *You could try to go back to data because so much of that is, they try to scientifically test like tests, or different teaching methods and so you could look at data and yeah, statistics can be skewed like, in which ever way people want to skew them but I guess you just have to go back and find the information, look at like their information, and look at your information and just like judge what which one like fits better with your experiences and your just like what you KNOW, what you think would work.(H)*

- *If it like affects other people, you know like you want to be able to make like the best decision for like those other people because you're not just making the decision for yourself. (H)*
- *(When two credible sources disagree) It's a matter of opinion, or whoever has the power will win. You have to look at their opinions and see if they're getting it from their experience because people have conflicting experiences and then you can understand (H)*
- *I would have to draw on my experience and pick for me what I think is right...There's only so much objectivity in the world. (H)*
- *I was taking general education classes...I would never imagine myself volunteering for Special Olympic stuff...I guess it's just like different experiences or opportunities that you have can like change your like views of the world or like your goals or whatnot (H)*
- *It just irritates me when people are WRONG and they don't see like the shades of meaning, like in different, like how things are different in different countries and they just like take like our viewpoint and apply it to other situations. (H)*
- *I DON'T like criticism, not gonna lie, I don't like, well I like it to include suggestions in some way that I can clearly see to fix it but I don't like being wrong...Otherwise I try to make sure nobody knows I'm wrong and then like do to it right the next time. (H)*
- *Um, it's funny, I'm really a NON-confrontational person and I HATE like arguing in class over things that like um affect me or like things that I AM like passionate about, and so I have no problem having like a good debate with someone where it stays logical and level-headed, but I found that in like college classes, especially the classes that are like, that deal with political issues and things like that, they get SO heated SO fast, and then people just get SO, you know, tensions are just going, and they get so angry and it's like personal attacks and I just don't understand that, and like I, I don't know, I am NOT good in that situation, I'll be honest, like I get really FLUSTERED and that affects my ability to like say my point of view, but I have no problem like having discussion about why we have different points of view, but I just don't understand it when people just ESCALATE right away and just get so, and just say, you know, really broad things or really generalized statements or things like that, like so if that happens, then I get really frustrated. But for the most part, I avoid confrontation all together. (CHUCKLE) I'll be totally honest. (H)*
- *My initial reaction to criticism is to get defensive and you know, stick up for myself, but THEN usually what'll happen is I will think about it LATER and try and figure out like what they, what they were criticizing and why, and you know, maybe it's something that I DO need to change that I WAS doing wrong, and uh, and so if it's constructive criticism, I don't necessarily get defensive right away. But if it's someone just like CRITICIZING me, then my first reaction is defensive, but then, but I'll still probably think about it and just see, you know, like were they coming from, a justified position or what not. (H)*
- *I'll trust something academically from a reliable source, or something that has, like if it's a study or something I'm using as a source for a paper, you know, I will look at something that has also been cited by other works, that has been supported by other studies that um, is believed to be true by a greater community. If it's something that is um, say not, I guess I put a lot of trust in my faith too, I guess for something that's like not school related. Um, just like uh, I'll put...I trust that what I'm told, like through my church is true, and if I don't know why, then I will like, or if I don't necessarily understand that, then I'll disagree...I won't disagree. Then I'll look into it, and I'll study it, and try and figure out, you know, like WHERE is this coming from, or how did they come to this idea, this notion, and um, that usually ends up reaffirming what I believe to be true. (H)*
- *You can be influenced by outside things, but every person is different, and so you can't like force someone to think something's right if they don't necessarily and so I guess I just have to rely on like my internal moral compass.(H)*
- *If they say just disagree and say "no," you know, say, "Well, why?" "Could you explain it to me?" "I really wanna know." But if they give me an explanation and it makes sense, then I'll accept it. If they give me an explanation and it DOESN'T make sense, or I don't think it makes sense, then I try to ask them, "Well, how DOES that make sense? I don't understand, this doesn't sound like a good reasoning... I'll always try. Cause say for example they're right, then I really wanna keep going over it until I understand it. But if they're wrong, then I wanna keep going over it till they know they're wrong. (H)*
- *It depends on what they're disagreeing with me on, but usually, you know, if they don't sound like they're open to discussion, I'll just be like, ok, whatever, and just go on. But if someone's open to discussion, I*

like to argue with people. (Chuck) Not a "I'm right, you're wrong kind of argument, but you know, try to get a common ground there. (H)

- When I'm criticized, just at first, I like, I have a tendency right at first, just an impulse, to take it personally. But then I'll think about it, and I actually, usually see that the person has a point for saying it, and then while I'm not happy about it, I try to find a way to correct it, you know, change whatever the problem was. (H)
- How do I know when to trust information? Well, I mean take what YOU know, first see which one you think makes more sense to yourself, and then, you know, listen to both sides, maybe research both those sides, if you really want to, or else look at the validity of experts, like where they're coming from, their organizations. Whichever one's looked into it more, I guess. It's hard to, it's hard to answer. But you obviously don't want to listen necessarily to just any average Joe telling you this stuff. But if it's BOTH experts, it's hard to decide.

Rewards

- The thing I like most would be my project itself, because then I can actually do, like build things I'm going to use because that's what my main thing is. (L)
- Being able to pay rent is rewarding, and then graduating will be an accomplishment. Otherwise, I just like being available (laughs) for whatever happens. (L)
- If I can talk to someone, or uh, you know, or whatever, um, and that person leaves maybe cheerful or maybe feeling good about something they came to me with or um or whatever, as long as I can do that it's perfectly fine for me. (L)
- I do have to say it feels pretty good when I can uh show someone that I'm pretty awesome at something (laughs) and then they recognize that. That's a good feeling, I won't deny that. (L)
- I feel smart when I can help someone else understand what's going on. I could care less whether or not I actually know what's going on, it's more of, I really want someone else to know what's going on. (L)
- I've had a blast here at UNL. I think teachers are pretty good. I've had SO much fun. I loved living in the dorms. (L)
- When I do good on a test or a paper, when I actually study hard and do good, I always feel pretty good. (M)
- When I'm done at the end of every semester it feels really...I reel really successful...Working really hard feels good. (M)
- I feel smart when we're talking about stuff in class that I know of. Obviously it's just like Military Science, I'm pretty good at. But other classes I most of the time feel pretty dumb in class. (M)
- I do well, like so far here I've gotten all As, I still have all As this semester. (H)
- I feel successful when I have completed something that I really like wanted to do...enjoyment because the topics I chose were interesting to me...prepare me for what I'll be doing (H).
- Like my professor last semester recommended me for the um fellowship class that I'm in now, so they were apparently looking for like the top of the honors program for that. (H)
- I think that college is not as HARD as I thought it was gonna be coming in. Like uh, a lot of times in high school we were told, you know, "You're gonna have to study for three hours or four hours every night and be on top of this or on top of that," um, and always be working ahead, (Chuck) and I found that it definitely requires responsibility, but um, in terms of actual COURSEwork, it's not as hard as I expected it to be. Um, now granted I never had to take classes like Chemistry and uh, Organic Chemistry, the classes that seemed to hurt everyone. But so far like I've been pleasantly surprised by my, you know, ability to um, just attend class and then um do the work and study and it pays off, and so I think um, if you do those three simple things like stay on top of the coursework and go to class, like I mean it's just amazing how much better you do in class. (H)

Strategies

Strategies Managing Evaluation Outcomes

Memorizing Course Material

- *You're actually learning if you repetitively see it and stuff. (L)*
- *My effort really shines through when I'm doing something that is very subjective or, doesn't have a right or wrong answer; that's where I really like to interact um, but when I'm required to spew information that is relevant, but increasingly available in other means (laughs) I find it less useful to memorize and regurgitate than to know the core uh, theories I guess. (L)*
- *Memorization is not a learned skill, it's kind of an instinctual skill, and uh, but then the uh contrast is um, critical thought and I think critical thought is something that you need to learn and be taught and that's something that DOESN'T come naturally to people and so that's what I enjoy more is, you know, because I'm GONNA memorize stuff as I'm critically analyzing it. (L)*
- *I study in sort of a last minute sense. When I have to review for a test it's literally an hour beforehand and I skim over whatever information I can plug into my head at the time and as soon as the test is over, I forget anything that I crammed in there, you know. (L)*
- *I don't study, it goes to how I feel about memorization, like when I go to class and I'm actively engaged with my instructor and they're explaining things to me, I gather a lot more information through discussion than I do just sitting down and reading through a book or something. (L)*
- *I learn the BEST when I like, like when I have notes in front of me or something. Um, if I write down all my notes, that helps it in my head a little bit, and then if I memorize them or make note cards helps me learn the best...which isn't the best way to study. You know, I don't know what the best way to study is. There's a lot of different methods of studying, but, I guess if um, usually making note cards and notes, and memorization has been working for me, so I guess if it works, then I might as well stick with it (L)*
- *I usually study a lot more when it comes to an exam. I usually, this is bad, but I cram a lot. I probably shouldn't. It's just the night before when you cram, and um, you just read over and try and memorize as much as you can. (L)*
- *For this test right now I use flash cards cause they just help me out. I just memorize stuff better and learn stuff better that way it seems like. I do a lot better than like if I use flash cards I learn a lot better than I do like if I write on a piece of paper or cover up the answer and all of that crap. (M)*
- *My friends learning is hands-on, it's like an apprenticeship. You know, it's not like this learning, they have to go pick up a dang book and read it, and learn it, and memorize it and all that stuff. I don't like learning like that, but I have no choice, so...(M)*
- *I'm more the cram and memorize type person. (Chuckles) That's not good, but you know, it gets me by, I guess. (M)*
- *PowerPoints help me learn because you take notes a lot easier with them, and then I kind of review my notes and make flash cards based on my notes, and I can like highlight stuff like a hint. They'll say this probably very strongly will be on the test. (M)*
- *Flash cards and just repetition type stuff, so I can like frame and memorize. I don't study very long, usually the test, and the day after whew! It's gone. (M)*
- *I usually study when I get off work about 3:15 if I don't go to workout first, then I usually will read the chapters, take notes. If I can follow along, good enough. Sometimes I don't do it, so... We're supposed to read the material and then talk about it the next class period. For exams, I usually cram (chuckles) I guess. I study a little bit every day for the reading assignments, and cram everything together on the last day for the exams. (M)*
- *I think I learn the basics of what I'm supposed to be learning, but I don't. I'll probably keep it for the time that I'm supposed to, like the grain truck method. I just put it in and then I feed it back on the test and then it's gone. (M)*
- *Mostly the day, the night before, like I just had a test yesterday, I studied for three hours that night, and then I got up an hour before the test and I went over everything again. So...yeah, I'll write everything I need down, and try and do it by memorization. I try to memorize everything, so...I put it all down on my paper and then I'm like it's gone the next day, I'll be like I don't know, I guess. (Chuckles) If somebody can ask me about it like later on like, "How did you do on the test?" And I'm like, "Oh, yeah,*

- I did well," and then we'll talk about it. I'm like, "Yeah, well the answer to that was this," like if I can remember it. (M)*
- *I have a poor habit of procrastinating til late at night. I study WELL under pressure, believe it or not, uh, and I actually do a lot of studying in the morning before class. M-W-Fs, I have class at 11:30 and so pretty much if I have a test that day, it's, I'll get up at like 7, and study for 3 1/2 hours. (H)*
 - *A lot of times in classes they just expect you to memorize a big long list of stuff, and what happens to me is I'm really good at it, I can memorize that big list for you, and I can ace the exam, but two weeks later, I forget all that stuff. I mean I never really learned it. I didn't see how any of it worked, I didn't...I was just focusing so much on remembering at the time, you don't actually learn it, from it. (H)*
 - *I'll hear something in class, and honestly a lot of classes I don't care to actually LEARN the stuff. Like the stuff I hear in English and probably, and History classes, classes like that, I don't really care to LEARN the things I probably should, but I don't, and so I just memorize the stuff and then forget it. Get the grade and be done. (H)*

Attending Class

- *I don't get the reading done, I'm not a good reader, so I make sure I go to class, try to participate in class more, listen to what other people say. (L)*
- *If I really don't like a class, I tend not to go. If it's required, it gives me a little more push I guess. (L)*
- *I'm perfectly ok with going to class every day and participating and you know asking questions of the instructor and my classmates to learn more about the subject but like outside coursework (L).*
- *I make sure to show up for the first day, it's the middle days that I miss sometimes, when classes are not fun, or don't grab my interest. If my EdPsych classes could connect information to wars or something, that might be different. (M)*
- *College is definitely an accountability thing though too, because you have the ability to not go to class if you don't want to, and so it's kind of tempting NOT to sometimes, but uh, I've always kind of had like a guilt factor within me, which is good, because that helps me to uh, get myself motivated to go to class or something, cause I know if I don't, then I'll just feel guilty about it, and worry about what I missed or something. This year it's been really good. I've only skipped um a few classes when I was out of town and I told my professors about it ahead of time, um, and I can't even remember any time this year just skipping just to skip or sleep in. Last year I had a really early morning History of Rock class, it was at eight, and so that was really hard to get out of bed for, because I figured out really fast that (Chuck) everything, it was a lecture hall, no attendance, and everything that we heard in class was in the textbook and so (Chuck) I definitely slept in a few times last year. (Chuck) But uh, so overall I, I feel like I have pretty good attendance. (H)*
- *If you're not there, then you're not gonna learn it. But a lot of times, um, sometimes I'll go to class and I'm not saying this to be mean, but some teachers are just kind of boring, (Chuck) um which is the truth, you can't get around it. But sometimes I learn better when I teach myself, like when I go over notes a lot by myself, I sometimes, it's in my memory more than when I just sit and listen. (L)*
- *I take two mental health days per semester. So I go to class every day, and then two days out of the semester I just skip. Not two days in a row, two skips each class. Like one, like I took one about two weeks before Spring Break. And then I took one week after Spring Break. I pick days when uh, and they're far and few between, but I pick days when ALL of my classes on that day have nothing important to do, or relatively speaking. So I just don't go. It just helps you unwind, and you just kind of escape it for a little bit. It seems to be working fine, I'm getting straight A's, so...I stay at home and play video-games. You know, just get a day to yourself to do nothing and just relax and be like you were in high school. (H)*

Participating in Class

- *I still try and participate in class and kind of learn from it because I mean, I'm sure things like that will always better me in a way. (L)*
- *I volunteer in class, teachers call on me once they realize that I'm willing to interact with the class and be an active participant and um and engage other people in the course as well. I try to participate as much as possible, at least in terms of like discussion and stuff like that.(L)*

- *I'll generally throw topics out to a class because I think it will get discussion going, but not necessarily because I actually believe it or not. (L)*
- *Classroom discussion definitely increases the likelihood that I'll learn something. (L)*
- *Um, I guess I'm not um, as vocal as a lot of other students. I kind of sit back and listen is my participation. I like to, I guess, I don't like to talk as much. I like to listen a lot, so I guess that's kind of my participation in the class. (L)*
- *If I ever interact as an activity and just do something that would make me learn it better and, because I'd be more involved in it. (L)*
- *I probably study a couple of hours a night, like whenever I have time. But I'm really busy, so I probably will get up at eight in the morning and I won't be back home till six thirty. So then I'll try and study at night, which is probably better to study in, when it's daylight out. (L)*
- *In smaller classrooms, I'm more vocal and stuff. (M)*
- *I participate in classes I really like, so like in EdPsych I don't really participate a whole lot. (M)*
- *I go to every class. But I think I've missed like 5 classes total this semester. It's important because they take attendance points, so you want those extra points. But a lot of classes don't even take attendance but I don't want to MISS out on something important. If they give us a little hint for a test or something, or if they give out homework, I don't wanna miss anything, so I just feel it's better just to go. (M)*
- *In high school, I participated more because I, we were in a class of twenty and I knew everyone, so everyone knew what to expect of me, where in college, I'm scared to, I don't answer questions, I don't raise my hand because I COULD be wrong, and I'd be wrong in front of a hundred people. So I'd rather let somebody else answer it, and just, just, I don't know, I want the professor to know me, but not as somebody who doesn't know what they're talking about. (CHUCKLE) I'd rather not just say anything. (M)*
- *I had a teacher who paired those of us who got it up with those who didn't. at a certain point, it's like ok, YOU can teach them yourself, like I'm sorry. That doesn't give you the right to obligate ME to teach other people, you know? It's just kind of selfish I guess. (H)*
- *I do speak up a lot, I guess I tend to have a dominant personality and it DOES come across in classrooms like especially when they are like opinion based. (H)*
- *Usually I'm pretty active. I'll raise my hand and contribute my thoughts or questions. Um, it's interesting, because I have always considered myself someone who participates in class, and then like in my Ecology class, I don't feel motivated to participate, which is, I don't even know if I know why. I think I just am disinterested and like disconnected from the material, and as much as I try to like motivate myself to care to ask the question, it's like I don't, I don't know, I don't really want to (Chuckle). (H)*
- *I'm afraid to get anything but A's, so if the teacher, you know, asks you to discuss things, even if I don't want to talk about it, like I really usually don't. I'll usually be the first one to raise my hand and say something, and uh, I always try my BEST to find a way to make something wrong. Cause I think teachers like you to point things like that out. I'll do my darndest, give it my best effort to explain to him why a DIFFERENT one would be better, and yeah, not only does that make me FEEL better about myself, because if I'm successful, but I think it really helps your participation points. (CHUCKLE). (H)*
- *I always go in and talk to my teachers, and he was just real encouraging, and real supportive of everything, and he always gave me the time of day, he always talked to me. There's some professors that won't even TALK to you. They just wanna get you out of their hair. Honestly the hidden motive is probably because I feel that it's gonna help me be on their good side, and they're gonna be nicer to my grades. (H)*

Seeking Help

- *I went to Career Services for help with declaring a major, and they sent me online and I took all sorts of career surveys and whatnot. Almost all of them had me at guidance counselor, that was kind of weird, and then further down the list was like elementary to secondary school teacher and these things and I went, "well, I don't know about being a guidance counselor, maybe later when you know, I'm a little more experienced in life and can give that kind of advice, but I think for now just being a teacher would suffice. (L)*
- ***The way I would approach a task I didn't know how to do is to approach , to just figure out what other people have done in similar situations and base my actions on that. I wouldn't blindly go in***

there and try to figure it out for myself out of nothing mainly because I don't think I'm that creative (laughs) but um, I can be creative based off of OTHER peoples' creativity and that's kind of terrible because that's a little bit of plagiarism I know (laughs). (L)

- *When I don't understand an assignment, I just go and ask for help. (L)*
- *In chemistry, I make flash cards, but when I have questions, I go in to the professor and I ask him how in the world I need to do this. He teaches me how. He shows me maybe a different method than they taught in class, and then I just...repetition for those type of things helps. (M)*
- *Whenever I have problems, I don't hesitate to go to the teacher. That's what I'm paying them for, to teach me (M)*
- *I ask questions as much as I can, when I can't follow in class. (M)*
- *When I don't understand how to do something, first I start like asking friends, and if they don't know, then I'll ask higher ups or eventually go to the teacher if I have to. (M)*
- *If I don't understand like a big project, I'll try for a couple of days, and I don't necessarily give up, I just kind of wing it from there and hope it's right. Otherwise I'll probably skip it within 15 minutes if I don't understand. (M)*
- *I guess when my first paper we had to do for a class, I didn't know what he wanted. Like I knew I had to write a paper, but there was like all these parts to it that you had to do, like an author's note and I was like, "Well, how am I supposed to do that?" And I didn't want to go in and ask him, because it was like at the beginning of the semester and I didn't KNOW him, so I just, I found out who people were in my class. I added them on Face book, and I asked them how to do it. (CHUCKLE) (M)*
- *I usually ask somebody in my class. I, like in my Speech Path class, I know five girls in my class, and I also, I can just ask them how to do it, or how they did it, and then I can base it off of that. I usually don't normally go in and talk to the teacher about it. I usually find a student and ask. (M)*
- *Like with my Calc class last semester, like there was stuff that just like I understood it, but I couldn't just like actually going through wand with like all the little tricks and stuff, I couldn't do it and so that was like a lot of like just forget this. Like I'm sure I could've gone to the math resource center or like talked to my professor and learned it but I didn't. (H)*
- *When I don't know the terms in class? I mean like today I asked her to explain one, because we were talking about it for ten minutes, and I'm like, 'I don't know what the seed-saving procedure means,' (Chuckle) like what are you telling me? And like the rest of the class, or not the rest, but you know, the more outgoing people in the class are um, talking about it, and so sometimes I'll ask, sometimes though I'm just like... "Whatever." It's not gonna be on the quiz anyway, cause I've already got the quiz questions. (CHUCKLE) So...it sounds so terrible, but... (H)*

Reserving Effort

- *I try not to study overly excessive for a first test because then I kinda get an actually true idea for what test will be like for the rest of the year, so I kind of see the pattern and stuff. (L)*
- *(Before a recent test) I just kinda looked over stuff, he gave us a thing to look over so I went back and looked through the book, the notes, and actually looked further into it than what he suggested, so maybe a half hour at a time, maybe. (L)*
- *In terms of fulfilling the class requirements and whatnot, it hasn't been too much of an issue actually, um making it through the course, but you know, hush hush, (laughs) but I uh find it increasingly difficult uh to actually care about the coursework. I just doesn't seem to do what uh, you would hope it would. Generally outside coursework is just supposed to reinforce material, or help you have the heightened understanding of what's going on and just for me, I get all that in class. (L)*
- *Outside coursework just doesn't seem to do what you would hope it would, at least for me; generally outside coursework is just supposed to reinforce material, or hlep you have the heightened understanding of what'd going on and just for me, I get all that in class. (L)*
- *Like writing a paper about maybe a sectin of the text or something, 9 times out of 10 it's all just regurgitation you know, just displaying to the instructor in a concrete way that I understand what's going on and I understand the logic behind it but it's still really tedious. (L)*
- *I guess the Fiction class probably more accurately reflected my skill level, whereas the Econ class definitely did not (laughs) like if I really wanted to put in the effort, um, I'm almost positive I would have*

- straight As. Right now I'm sitting with like a 2.2 or something, not even close to a 4.0 (laughs) I know, but and I admit it's largely choice, it's because I don't care. (L)
- Courses I don't do good in like my GenEds, I mean they're just boring. I could care less. I don't give a crap about the dang things. (Chuck) They're stupid, waste my time, so I'm not gonna (chuckle) put forth the effort, you know? They're not going to help me at all. (M)
 - I read through my notes once, and that's about it...kinda flipped through them right before, like during class, but before the test. (H)
 - At the beginning of class I tried to follow, like keep up with the book and read it, but I kindof got a couple of chapters behind and so I kinda quit that, but I pay attention in class. (H)
 - If I have to read, I'll read, like I said, 10 pages, like say I had 3 books to read, I'd read 10 pages out of every book every meal. Um, if it's writing a paper, what I do for writing papers is I'll type 500 words, and then I'll go watch some TV. Then I'll type 500 more words (chuckle) and watch some TV. Um, and if I just have to study, like if I'm studying for a test, I'll just, you know, divide it into sections of what I need to learn, and I'll do one section and then I'll play video games. (Chuck) And I'll do another section and play video games. Like the day before...I'll study for a full week before a test comes, but then the day before a test, that studying is a little different. I won't play video games between that studying. I'll just sit down, study probably 3 or 4 hours a day, make sure I can cover as much as I can, and get ready. (H)

Learning Relative to Career Choice

Seeking Relevance to Career Goals

- Being an education major, so far I've enjoyed all the classes and they seem to be pointing towards what I really want to do. (L)
- It seems like you take a lot of courses that don't really mean a whole heckuva lot like the prerequisites. Or not saying prerequisites, but like uh the GenEds I mean it seems like it's pretty much pointless, a waste of my time, a waste of my money, it seems like, but you know... (M)
- Well, there are classes that you DON'T wanna study for, and there are classes you WANT TO study for, so you're gonna actually enjoy it, so I enjoy studying history and military science and not so much EdPsych or Teach 331, for example. But in military science, I'm learning about what I'm going to be doing in a few years in my life, and then history class, I'm learning about where we came from. (M)
- Since I planned or I figured out what my major is this last semester, my classes that are more towards that major I'm learning a lot of things I know I'm gonna need to know, and so I had to interview somebody who's in that field. She showed me a lot. It made me excited to go out and do it. So like it meant a lot for me to see what a real Speech Path does. (M)
- If I have a history class, I'm like, "I don't really care; I don't need to know this later on." But like Communication Disorders and Normal Language Development, those classes are, I guess, this is my first semester in Speech Path, so it's kind of hitting me like, I'm gonna have to know all this stuff, so I have to pay attention, like and it's interesting to me how much I'm gonna have to KNOW to be able to do it. (M)
- I guess with my Speech Path classes, if I know I'm gonna be learning, or I'm gonna be helping little kids, then I know when we talk about like a year old person compared to a fifteen year old, then like I try to remember more of the what I'm gonna need to know for little kids, then I guess if I know, if I know I'm not gonna need like any Audiology stuff, cause that's part of my major too, but I know I'm not gonna go into that, then I'll learn it for the test, but I'm like I don't really need to know that. So I'm just not gonna keep it, I guess, so... (M)
- When I had a class assignment I wasn't interested in, like for my SpEd class, we had to pick a book from a list. They were mostly children's books. There was this book I had been wanting to read about a man with Asperger's, it was written by Augustine Burroughs, his brother...so then I wanted to read his brother's book and it just kind of fit with what I was interested in, so I just talked to her and she said ok. So I can find ways of tweaking, so. (H)
- It's harder for me to see the meaning in, you know, an Ecology class or uh, um, a World Civilization History class, where I feel like this isn't material that I'll be teaching to middle school students. Um, but whenever it has to do with ACTUAL teaching, then I find it more meaningful. (H)
- When I'm in a class where I'm NOT enjoying it as much, I can remember the class that I DID enjoy and um, (Chuck) it's gonna sound funny, but just like thinking about things in that particular class

that I, that I DID enjoy and things that I did in that class to make it more relevant to me, more interesting to me um will, you know, I'll remember those things, and so for a class that doesn't seem as WORTHWHILE, um, I guess I can know that like, you know, this may not seem WORTHWHILE to me, but there's, in some way, shape, or form it is, and there's other things that I can, you know, other classes that I can take that will be more worthwhile and um, and also just as far as a teacher, like I can pick up on a lot of things like, "Okay, I'll never do that in my classroom." (Chuck) Um, "I really like how she does that." "I hated this." You know, (Chuck) just little things like that. (H)

- It's also easy to get by in that class without doing much, because there's no homework or tests and um, no accountability that you've done the reading or that sort of thing. So it's one of those classes that if you WANT to increase your knowledge, you have to put the effort into it on your own, I think. I'm starting to put more effort into it now. I think at like the beginning of the semester I was like, okay, I'm just going to coast through this class, and not care, and (Chuck) and now I'm thinking, 'Okay, this is like, these textbooks are gonna be really beneficial for you as a teacher,' and so um, that, like I definitely realized that throughout the semester and started doing that. (H)
- I would say all the stuff that I learn is meaningful if you apply it to your career. (H)
- I think it's (the work I've put into college) gonna help me like workload wise. I'm never, ever gonna complain about a workload again. I used to not even wanna go to work part time, like 4 hours a day. I thought THAT was too much. So it's gonna help me there. But then also, cause I'm gonna be a Math teacher, it's gonna help me be a successful teacher as long as I'm not a jerk to my students. (H)
- To what extent does the difficult Ethics class measure my skill level? I would say very poorly, because to me my success, my skill level is more, it's gonna be more how good of a family member can I be to my family? How good of a teacher can I be? Um, and how athletic can I be? Those are probably gonna be my 3 main areas that I'm looking for success in, and so writing papers for this guy, who loves to take points away in an Ethics course just seems like it's not accurately measuring my success for further endeavors. (H)
- Well, like for myself, I've decided to really learn Math. Like I'm gonna, every day I'm gonna wholeheartedly know EXACTLY what's going on, because I need to, I need to be able to explain these things to my own students and so if I don't learn it, then I won't be able to DO that. Um, I try to pay as much attention, and try to apply some of the psychology as much as I can, and because that's obviously can go over to a lot of areas of your life, um, then there's other classes I will never decide to learn, and then when I'm hanging out with people, I mean I just try to learn like from my social contacts obviously.

Connecting Course Information to Prior Knowledge

- I didn't know how to plane, and so I asked one of the kids in my class and the instructor kinda to teach me. (Skipped an intro class due to high school equivalencies, but noticed a peer doing something they learned in one of those classes he didn't take.) (L)
- It's always easier to learn something that's either interesting, or um if you can relate it to something that is interesting to you. (H)
- I've always liked science classes just because it's interesting how everything fits together and they build upon each other, and like once you, the more you learn about biology you see, "Oh, there's a bunch of chemistry in here" you know, or like the same with the more you learn about chemistry, you're like "Oh, there's a bunch of physics in here" and so it's just kind of like all like ties together and like once you get into like higher math, it's like "Oh hey, this is like physics stuff!" you know, so it's just interesting how things overlap. (H)

Maximizing Effort

- If I really want to know something, I'll ask others and work on it until I get it done. (L)
- I will try to learn more about things connected to something I might already be aware of, like maybe if I'm researching Immanuel Kant and I happen to uh, come across some writings of Aristotle and then I'll probably go looking for what Aristotle. (L)
- I try to find out as much as possible I go, I visit websites, I read books, read magazine articles, read newspaper articles, anything and everything I can find on the topic, I'll talk to somebody ask if they

- know anything, um drill them for everything they know, if they know maybe history or maybe they just have something else to offer.(L)
- I'll work for hours to through a challenging task. (L)
 - I wouldn't necessarily say that I'm really book smart, um, I, I don't know, I'd have to try a lot harder in school to GET things. (L)
 - I'll try and work like on a problem until I get it, but if I absolutely can't get it, then I'll probably just ask for help the next day or something. I'll try for probably an hour or two. (L)
 - I'm a big archery, bow hunter, and there is always a number in my head of how many I want to catch and what my success should be in that. When I go out I'll get up five o'clock in the morning dead tired and go out there and I'll sit in this stand for as long as I possibly can. I may be out there for six hours. (M)
 - I am more of the grain truck method in tests and whatever. But I learn more throughout the week of classes, where we do things and I retain that information. But if it's like, if I have to learn a lot of information at once, then I probably won't remember it as well. So if I learn, if we go through it slowly and step by step, then I'll most likely remember it. So I try and pay attention and figure out what's the stuff that I'm gonna need to know forever, and try and keep that with me. (M)
 - I will work on something until I know how to do it, cause I know I need to know how to do it, so I've gotta ask somebody. Like I'm not one of the people that's like, "Angh, I don't need..." If I... "I'll be fine without knowing how to do it," cause I'm like, I've always been like I HAVE to know how to do it. (M)
 - You learn stuff in the classroom but then you have to go an apply them to like, synthesize and like work with information you get more to, like, apply it to different circumstances. Once I get into a topic, I have a hard time stopping, I just keep finding material and relating it to the other material, so... (H)
 - You have to have a well-informed opinion if you can really argue your side, I mean you have to you know, understand the facts about but if not you need to be able to go back and find things that DO support your opinion or stance. (H) (Does not speak of seeking disconfirming evidence)
 - There was SO, SO much that I could've wrote about, so trying to narrow it down, that was, that was challenging; once I actually picked, like ok, I'm gonna go with education then it was just like, it was good and then it was like, it was kinda hard to stop writing, because you can just keep going and going and going. (H)
 - Having teachers that give you like writing assignments because they would expect you to you now, work with this information and not just simply regurgitate it and so if people are going to take the time to like read your writing, you know, and expect you to do this then it's gotta be kind of important you know. (H)
 - Oh, man, I'm pretty, pretty patient. My Math homework sometimes will be a concept that I just can't understand, and one day I spent six and a half hours doing Math homework on one assignment...It worked, I got it. (H)
 - I think to LEARN things, you have to DO that memorizing. You have to figure out like what the book's telling you or what the professor's telling you. You have to hear that material and get it in your head, but then you also have to take it and apply it to a situation like your Psychology. Maybe what you're learning in class, and then you have to go and maybe do experiments with a research professor or something, or in Math...If you learn something in Math, find a way in the real world that it APPLIES and view it, and think about it in that context, or set up your own little thing. We, okay I know this about Math, let's see if I can somehow replicate these equations in the real world, like make them happen. I don't know. And then you see it and you're like, "Oh, wow!" And then you learn it. (H)
 - I actually honestly think like every time I learn something, I try to think of ways that it applies to like my life, and how I could use it, and I need to. Because when I'm a teacher, I'm gonna be a Math teacher, kids are gonna be asking me, "Well, what's the point of all of this?" And I have to be able to tell them. But then you also have to be able to, they also have to understand though that Math is just a problem solving tool and it teaches them to, well, to do exactly that, to apply what they learn. Like you teach 'em something, and they have to see if they can put it to different types of problems. (H)
 - Like the only thing I've been making an EFFORT to do in English is how I think about my reading. Like I'll read the book and I try to think more DEEPLY about what the author's saying, like what are they really doing in this book? Cause I notice a lot of authors, the GOOD authors, use a lot of symbolism. I have to think about, because they're scenes, like a book we just recently read of this guy who loses his horse and he's chasing him and trying to catch him and he never catches him, and then when I started

thinking about it later, that was just one example, I realized that that was symbolism for the whole plot of the book. (H)

- *But for other classes that I DO care about learning, I mean I'll do the same thing, I'll memorize the stuff, but then I go out and I try to apply it or I'll try to find OTHER people who've applied it and look at what THEY have done. Try to see it work, that's how I HAVE to learn. (H)*
- *When do I study? Um, well, I get out of school except for Tuesdays and Thursdays. But every other day I get out of school and then I exercise, and then I spend the rest of the day doing homework. Well, if it's Math, I just sit down and read my book and then I do the problems until I'm done. (H)*
- *There's a lot of times on Math homework, I don't know how to do, um, and I just have to sit there and struggle through it for many hours. Eventually it's gonna come to me. For other classes, it's not really homework that you don't KNOW how to do. It's just read the books, figure it out. (H)*

Consequences

Self discovery

- *Last semester wasn't a very good semester because halfway through it I found out what I'm gonna do, which is Industrial Education, so at the time I didn't know when I signed up what I wanted to do. (L)*
- *I first started out just in generals or whatever, um, I was in, I thought I would want to do something in the medical field, because both my sisters, my youngest sister is a nurse, the other sister is a radiologist, so I figured I would like that. But then I didn't really like Sciences that much. I took a lot of Science my freshman year, and then I probably, I just changed it this year to Education. (L)*
- *I always had a lot harder time in Science classes. I noticed I didn't get it like as fast as a lot of people, so I had to do a lot, I had to study a lot more, and, I don't know, I just guess I was more interested in English and like Home Ecy stuff, I guess. (L)*
- *I think I'm intelligent because I like to learn new things, and I'm not afraid to like make a mistake and learn from it, so I think that makes me intelligent because I'm open to learning new things and not being afraid to...making mistakes. (L)*
- *I was originally a biology major, and then I figured that I'd take Spanish. I didn't want to take Spanish, cause I'm not very good at the whole language deal. So then changed my major, and I always kind of thought about going into teaching. It's always been kind of the back of my mind. It's been between that and nursing. I figure I really love teaching, so...(M)*
- *Since I planned or I figured out what my major is this last semester, my classes that are more towards that major I'm learning a lot of things I know I'm gonna need to know, and so I had to interview somebody who's in that field. She showed me a lot. It made me excited to go out and do it. So like it meant a lot for me to see what a real Speech Path does. So I'm switching my major from secondary ed to speech pathology. (M)*
- *My special education classes are definitely my least favorite, like I prefer like if I have my Political Science class, I'm actually, well I'm dropping special education and picking up a psychology major.(H)*
- *All my friends were like the relative state of intelligence, and so it's really easy to get jaded towards things and so like once I started working with people with disabilities it just helped me really not underestimate people. Like I was at a conference once and just like this thing with an autistic boy, and I guess I never realized that he could be aware of some of the stuff that he was. Then another kid with Downs Syndrome asked if they could, asked the professor to slow down or repeat stuff, and it was like he knows what he needs. I guess I never really realized that you could be aware of how things need to be adapted for him, and so, like even that was, helped me be more patient with you know, typical people. (H)*
- *Like working with people with disabilities I just got started in school and so and then I took it outside the school but I still go back within the school and work with that stuff too. (H)*
- *I came to college to avoid the real world a little longer. Now I'm majoring in something I never saw myself doing, but now I'm pursuing Math Education. I don't know, you go to school and you just think, 'I just wanna get out of here, I don't think I could EVER be a teacher,' and then I guess you just end up wanting to do it. I took uh, well, the first math class I took here was Calculus and uh, a kid that I met, sat beside me all the time, and he had problems. It was his second time taking the class. But uh, yeah, so he asked me to tutor him like with all our homework, and so I always helped him out, and that, I just, he ended up getting like a B+ or something, and it made ME feel really good. I was all excited that I helped*

- him, and that was an awesome feeling. I wouldn't mind doing that all the time. So I started thinking about teaching. That's how I got my job too, so now I'm tutoring at Math Resource Center. (H)
- I think it's (the work I've put into college) gonna help me like workload wise. I'm never, ever gonna complain about a workload again. I used to not even wanna go to work part time, like 4 hours a day. I thought THAT was too much. So it's gonna help me there. (H)
 - I don't FEEL myself as being incredibly intelligent, but I keep, but I just know that I keep getting really good grades, and I'm not sure if I just really understand like how the school system works, and I'm just really good at studying and getting good grades, or if I'm actually knowledgeable in the material. I'm not sure yet. (H)
 - I was most encouraged probably my last year's Math class, Calc II my professor's Steve Cone, and he was the first one to ever ask me like what I was gonna do for a career, and I told him high school Math, and he really, he was like, "Oh, my hat's off to you, and it's a really hard thing to do, but it's really great if people...", "like he was trying to tell me that, and I still disbelieve him, but he was trying to tell me that being a high school teacher is more difficult than being a college teacher. Not sure how that works. I guess he just likes to be able to make his own curriculum or something. But no, he just really encouraged me, and he was the first one to get me to ACTUALLY for the first time believe that I could actually continue passing math courses. (H)

Learning

- Hands-on classes stress more learning actually on the thing instead of in paper. (L)
- In actual life or class or discussion if I can actually bring something up and shed my knowledge on other people then it show that I HAVE learned it that way. (L)
- In the movie, "The Wrestler," I learned to keep in mind that it doesn't, NOT that it doesn't matter, but it matters less what uh, other people think of you than what you think of yourself kind of thing, and how you persevere through hard times and how you want to react to um, difficult life situations and whatnot. (L)
- When I'm able to tell someone else something they don't know, I know I've learned. (L)
- I guess something meaningful is I've always, like I just learned that my family is like super important and they're always gonna be there for you. So no matter what, you can go to 'em. I guess that's really meaningful to me because uh, my grandma just got put in a nursing home, and my mom's having a hard time with that, because she's just kind of getting dementia and stuff like that. So I've learned that it's always good to spend as MUCH time with your family as possible. So that's meaningful to me. (L)
- I feel the most successful when I learn something, and like I really, really understand it good and I can just, I don't know how to explain it, but uh, you know, when you just GET something, and it just makes you feel really good. (L)
- I'd rather learn something, because you learn from your mistakes and you learn, so that's what I think. (L)
- I will work at something as long as it takes me. (Chuckle) Yeah. I might get frustrated, but I don't like, I don't like failing, so I'm gonna try as hard as I can to get it (L)
- Last year when I took Chem 110 and my lab TA was a very good TA cause he helped me out a lot. Um, if I'd ask him any question, he'd come over and show, he would like, he wouldn't SHOW me how to do it, he'd EXPLAIN it and then he'd make me do it. Cause sometimes when you ask for help, uh, teachers will just go there and do it for you instead of um, explaining how to do it and then having you do it. So I guess that was, helped out a lot, cause then I learn it even better. (L)
- What prevents me from learning? Uh, let's see, Facebook, text messaging, all the technology today. when I'm studying, I try to turn off my phone, try to stay off of the Internet, just no TV, none of that, because there's so many outside um, distractions, that it always makes people, it always makes it harder to learn. (L)
- How do I know when I've learned the material? Well, I always, I NEVER think that I prepare enough for an exam, so I usually don't ever think that I know all the material, because sometimes it's impossible to know everything. I think if you've learned the majority of it, and um, if you do fairly decent on a test, then you've learned. (L)
- Some teachers just kind of give you the material and say, "Here you go, learn it." Um, but usually, I don't know, I don't think they, like some teachers help you learn it, like they'll explain it to you why it's

this way, or they'll explain it to you like why you need to learn it. But it's all on me to actually learn it. (L)

- *I learn by doing, I don't learn by books and all that crap. I learn by...by doing. That's what makes me a successful outdoorsman too, because I'm constantly DOING it, makes me more successful, makes it more PERFECT, it makes it more ENJOYABLE for me. Cause I've always got that wanna learn something, I'm always striving to learn something new, and a new way, a new strategy. I don't learn by, "Read the following pages and we're gonna be tested on it on Monday." (M)*
- *I learn by repetition. (M)*
- *You learn by doing, I mean well I don't know, that's how you DO it. (M)*
- *I've learned to stay on top of things in Comm 109...definitely stay on top of things because you can get behind easily, which is just about where I'm at right now (chuckle). (M)*
- *When I was in boot camp...our drill sergeants always told us that live life every day like it's your last day, cause you obviously, it may be your last day and so that was pretty inspirational to me. (M)*
- *Learning advances your intelligence. Intelligence means you know stuff. (M)*
- *I would rather work on a challenging task over an easy one because that's when you learn. (M)*
- *I always like learning something new and I usually fail at it a couple of times I guess, if it's hard to do. (M)*
- *If something comes easy to me, then I feel that I knew it already. (M)*
- *I think understanding what your students are going through, like I realize that now in college more than high school teachers I guess, because in college they're like, "I understand that you have finals," and, "I understand what you're going through." But high school they're like, "You're just gonna do it anyway," like, "I don't care if you have a basketball game tonight," you know? Like you have to get it done, and I think I like having a professor who knows, who understands like you have three tests this week, we'll just put your test off till next week, so. (M)*
- *It helps me learn if we go over it a lot, knowing that we're gonna have to...need to know it, and being hands-on, and having little group projects and we have to do like presentations and stuff, so that...on one subject, so that helps me learn it a lot more, I guess. (M)*
- *If I can go through it and be like, "Oh, I remember this, I remember this," then without having to look over anything, I know that I learned it if I can remember it without going over. (M)*
- *I guess more than just helping me with my homework, my mom checks over my papers. I'll e-mail 'em to her and she'll look 'em over for me and tell me what I need to fix, and I guess just repetitiveness, like if not schoolwork, they'll just keep doing it until I KNOW how to do it, I guess. Like, "How many times have I told you, you should know this by now?" I'm like, "Yeah, I know." (M)*
- *I learn most when I can choose my topic and relate it to what I want to do later. I'm just really good at like talking and talking, and I got downgraded once because my paper was too long. (H)*
- *When topics come up like if it comes up in conversation and you can actually relate it to somebody else or about something else and it makes you think of that, or just somehow it comes back up in your consciousness like related to, like something completely not just in the class you know, it's different if you're just like remembering it for a test but if it just, when you have to actually use it a couple times in your life, it's part of your vocabulary (Describing when she's learned something.) (H)*
- *It's kind of bad but the things I remember most about the teachers have been like the awful ones, or just like the awful experiences I've had with ones and it's like okay, never, ever repeat that if you're going to teach. (H)*
- *In my Teach 446 class, um, we're learning a lot about just the importance of connecting with students and building a community in the classroom, and so I feel like that's meaningful for me um, as a teacher, soon to be teacher, um, just needing to understand those things and also we're starting to talk now about classroom management. So I feel like that's really applicable to what I'm gonna be doing, and also this semester being in a practicum at Irving Middle School, um, has just taught me a lot about classroom management, and things that I would do or wouldn't do in a classroom. (H)*
- *I would pick a challenging task over an easy one because I'd rather learn, but if there's a grade attached to it, I'd take the easy task. (H)*
- *I feel smart when I'm like studying for a test and I understand what I'm studying, because I can do well on a test, and not have a clue or not remember anything, you know. I'll just be regurgitating information*

- that I've memorized. But I actually feel smart when I'm studying and thinking, "Oh, yeah, like this makes sense, and putting pieces together." (H)*
- *I'm inspired by, well, as someone who's going to be a teacher, I guess I'm just inspired by teachers that have the ability to connect so well with their students that there's just a MUTUAL respect there, and um, we just had a thirty-five year veteran teacher come speak to our practicum class last week and um, just like hearing her talk about the way she um, talks to students and interacts with them was inspiring to me, because um, it just, it was a genuine, it was beyond her job, it was like she genuinely CARES for all of her students, like she wants the best for them, and so that was just inspiring for me, um, instead of looking at it so much a job, uh, but also as, you know, like you're influencing their lives and you could have an impact on these people's lives, lives and never even know it, so that was really cool. (H)*
 - *I really enjoy my School in Society Class. Um, we talk about modern issues with school and um, self-explanatory schools in society, so (CHUCKLE) like the kinds of issues like Education is going through in today's world, and the types of things um that teachers go through in a classroom, and um you know, what students are going through outside of the classroom. So that's just really interesting to me, cause it's bringing in a lot of things I've never thought about. (H)*
 - *I know I've learned the material when I can uh, like make connections between the material, when it's not just separate pieces of information. Um, it's looking at how it all fits together. I guess I'm thinking of my History class, and uh how it, you know, we talked about civilizations and then we looked at each civilization in particular, but then we connected, you know, what do they have in common, what make them unique, and so for me, that's, I learn better thinking about those sorts of bigger picture things, um, and I think that that's one way that I learn, is looking at bigger, the bigger picture and not getting bogged down in the details. (H)*
 - *Like if it was Math, for example, and you just put two problems up and said, "Do one of these," I would probably try my best to solve the really hard one, because solving the easy one that I already know how to do wouldn't help me much. Um, but if it was, say for example, uh, well say like I'm in band. Say I've gotta play a solo or something, they may offer me an easy one or they told me I could practice for a couple of days and try to play a really hard one. I'd still probably try to do the really hard one, even if I knew I couldn't because still for the same motivation though. Because if I did succeed at it, then I'd just look that much better. (H)*
 - *In Math I feel smart. When I go to English and Ethics, I don't feel smart cause you have to write papers and they grade them on...Like I think of things logically, and you know, with formulas. When I look at a question, I try to think of a way that it, like a universal rule that applies to that question. But then there's classes like Ethics that kill me, because nothing is universal in there. Everything is never set in stone, and writing those papers I miss a lot of points. Got like an 87 in there, and it's bugging the crap out of me. It was a horrible grade. (H)*
 - *Well, it's Math. But I think a lot of it, well I know a lot of it is kind of useless, because I'm not gonna use it ever again. I'm not gonna be an engineer. If I was gonna be an engineer, then I would need it, but...and I'm never gonna teach anything beyond maybe Calc I or II, cause I'm gonna be a high school...So most high school students aren't taking Calc III. (H)*
 - *I know I've learned the material when I don't have to, you know, like I'll tell you a couple of different examples. If we're in Math classes, I know I've learned the material when I don't have to sit, like I look at a problem and I don't have to think, "Okay, what's the formula I use for that? Instead, I end up finally starting to think...instead of out of formulas, I actually visualize the derivations of 'em, and like the shapes, and how they're working in space, and I visualize that. That's when I know I've learned the Math, and then like if say Psychology, you know you've learned that kind of stuff when you don't sit there, "Okay, well that term, what did that mean?" Instead, when you hear a term, like situations will pop in your mind. You'll think of, you'll just start visualizing stories and like what would be going on, and I know I've learned. (H)*
 - *Thankfully I haven't HAD any of these teachers, but I've SEEN a lot of kids come into the MRC who have these teachers. Instead of giving them homework out of the book, they give them homework on a sheet, like extremely difficult, retarded problems that these kids aren't ready to do yet. Like they're the problems you'd wanna give the students AFTER they've learned it, like, "Okay, you've learned this, now apply it to this hard problem," instead of just giving them the hard problems, and that's (Chuckle) not a good way to do things. Cause they come in, they're asking for help on EVERY problem. They never understand what's going on. (H)*

Disconnect

- *I think they're (grades) a good step to kind of see that I've kind of learned what I should...like dates like this was Hitler's birthday or something, which was like April 12th or something, or 25th, no 20th...20th or 30th because I found that interesting at the time is Hitler's birthday was April 20th and he died April 30th or something, or it was vice versa; I know those two dates, but other dates I don't remember. (L)*
- *Learning in book study classes is defined as written tests. (L)*
- *I don't like GenEd classes because they don't apply to me and what I'm gonna do..I honestly couldn't tell you one thing that I learned in all my GenEds I've taken. (M)*
- *I try to take my experiences and learn something, and learn that way instead of through the book I guess more or less. Like at practicum, I just help tutor kids. I always try, when I help 'em to try, I always try to help 'em not by looking at the definition in the book but like my way of learning, kind of, you know, finding, you know, helping this little girl with math, there's the conventional way, and I was teaching her here's other methods that helped me when I was a child that I remember so...nothing related to anything we read or talk about in class. (M)*
- *There's "book smart," and "people smart." I think being people smart is a lot more useful than being book smart. (M)*
- *I don't really TRY to learn things, you just learn as you go. (M)*
- *If I'm not forced to learn it, I guess I usually don't. When I mess up probably, when I do something wrong, and then I'm forced to figure how to do it right, I guess, and learn from that. (M)*
- *Classes never measure your intelligence, only whether you can master the information presented long enough to get through the test. (H)*
- *When I'm not interested in a course, I just do what I have to to get it in, to get a decent grade. (H)*

Grades

- *My goal is to get a good grades...with grades comes knowledge, if I learn more and retain more information then I'm actually expanding my memory and stuff. (L)*
- *My dad and I went and talked to air force recruiters here on campus about ROTC and whatnot and um, and it would have been a great deal except, me knowing myself uh, told him that I would never be able to live up to their academic standards, not because I didn't have the ABILITY to, it was that I didn't CARE enough to. I cared about paying for college, but not enough to join ROTC. (L)*
- *Grades are a way of categorizing me without knowing me in my opinion. (L)*
- *When I was in high school, I always thought, well, if I got below a B, that was just horrible. Like, "Oh, no, what am I gonna do?" But now since I got in college, I'm more laid back and figured that it's HARD and if you don't get it, it's a learning process. It doesn't matter, like it still MATTERS if I get good grades, but I don't emphasize so much on the, on the letter. I emphasize more on what I LEARN (L)*
- *I did pretty good in Chemistry. But like I think I'm fairly well-rounded in it, but I don't think my skill level in Chemistry is as high as my other classes. (L)*
- *I've had to figure out how to work through it (difficult classes), and um learn it, and pass my tests. Like in life, you're not always gonna like the things you do, but you gotta do 'em anyways. (L)*
- *Certain high school grades meant a lot to me. I felt like I'd disappoint my parents if I would get below a "B." But that was I wouldn't necessarily disappoint THEM, I'd disappoint myself. I just kind of made THEM the excuse. I guess when I got my freshman year and I took my first Chemistry test and I got like a fifty on it. I was like, "Oh, no!" And my mom's like, "Well, did you try?" "Did you study?" I'm like, "Yeah, I tried really hard." She's like, "Well, then it's just hard." "As long as you try your best, it's okay." So I guess then after that, I didn't feel as bad about it. (L)*
- *I've gotten lots of grades (Chuckle) I didn't expect. Um, most of the time I just chalk it up to is I wasn't as prepared...wasn't as prepared as I should be. (L)*
- *I don't set goals for academic stuff. It's more just get a B, be happy (laughs), I guess. But I know for other stuff I set goals, like my hunting and my fishing stuff. (M)*
- *It seems like, you know, you read the book, memorize some stuff, and write it down on a piece of paper. You know, I can probably be the smartest person in the world when it comes to hunting, fishing, and*

trapping, but the dumbest person in the world when it comes to like GenEds, and stuff like that 'cause I don't care about 'em. (M)

- *Grades don't mean a whole lot. I mean I try to get good grades cause everyone's you know, "Oh, you wanna get good grades, show you care," but I don't think that, especially, you know, I just, being a teacher, you probably need to get good grades. But I don't think good grades you know mean a whole heck of a lot, because it's not really how sm... well, it's how smart you are, but you know your stuff. Like being a teacher, you can be the smartest teacher in the world and you can just suck. You just, you can go out there and just yack, yack, yack the whole entire time. No one's gonna listen. You're gonna bore everyone to death, or you can be a teacher that, you know, not the smartest person in the world, but they understand the main concepts and got one heckuva way of teaching it, and kids are gonna learn, they're gonna have a lot more fun. I've had those teachers, I mean they're absolutely just brilliant, I mean they could probably one of the smartest people like in the state, U.S. or whatever the heck, and then they just, they can't teach very good, and then you have the teachers that, you know, they're not the SMARTEST people in eh world. They're not, you know, they're just an average person, but they just have away of putting things, and they have a way of communicating with other people that you learn a lot, you have fun, you keep people involved and, yeah (M)*
- *Grades show that someone has gotten the information, but because you got an "A" doesn't mean you know a hundred percent of it. It means like maybe you crammed to memorize and you got the hundred percent. (M)*
- *I've set a lot of goals trying to reach a certain GPA and everything, and so far I've met some of them and others I've missed. (M)*
- *Military science and history classes measure my skill level.. Where I am in most of the classes is in the middle of the pack. (M)*
- *My least favorite classes measure my inability to pay attention. I've always thought I had ADD. My mom just told me I didn't have ADD, but I always thought I did. (M)*
- *Anything above a C is passing, I guess. (chuckle) Uh, I guess, I guess for me A is almost over-excelling and I feel like extremely satisfied after I get that. But like Bs and Cs are kind of, you know, definitely I'll take it. And Ds and Fs are almost unacceptable...I've had those a couple of times. (M)*
- *I've always been middle of the pack like grades-wise and everything. So I guess I've kind of accepted that niche. (M)*
- *When I get a good grade on a test, I call my mom. I'm like, "I got a hundred," (chuckle) and that makes me feel good, I guess. (M)*
- *My Speech Path classes are more, if I don't do well on exams, then obviously I don't know what I'm talking about. What I should be learning I'm not grasping. So if I do well in it, then hopefully it's affecting my intelligence. (M)*
- *You're supposed to treat every class the same way, so even if it is boring, you should do well in it, even if it is boring. You should try your hardest, so I guess it shows that my...my, I should be trying, but I'm not. So it shows my skills in that way, I guess. (M)*
- *I guess in the classes I don't like, it doesn't measure my intelligence, because if I would try, it would probably be better and it, but I don't, I guess I don't try as hard as I should, so I guess it measures it in intelligence of, "You should be trying, but you're not." So you're kind of stupid that way. (M)*
- *They mean a LOT to me. Uh, like it really upsets me if I get a bad grade. I realize now in college, not to expect as much as I did in high school. Because high school is easier. I mean you can get A's like THAT in high school. In college, you have to try a lot harder. So I know some classes are hard for the smartest people, so I guess I was happy to get a "C" in my Math class. That was a good grade for me. I just didn't want to FAIL because I knew it was hard. So if I KNOW I can do really well in it, then I expect higher. But if I know it's impossible, I just hope for the best that I can. If a "C" is the best I can do, then I'm happy with that. (M)*
- *If your teachers in high school know you, then they talk to all the other teachers about you, so they all, if you did good in one class, they expect you to be good in all the classes, because you're SMART enough to do that, where in college, they don't know what you, what you're like and if you do bad, then they just, you did bad. They don't know that you did good in any other classes. So like that's kind of what I don't like, because I like them to, I like everyone to know I try. So if I do bad in a class, then I feel like they're, 'She's just below average.' "She's not up there with all the other smart people. (M)*

- *Good grades are praise. (H)*
- *Grades are mainly a means of getting money. (H)*
- *(re: unexpected grades) Like I have like my Calc class last semester, I was getting a D when I dropped it. (H)*
- *I have to maintain a three five for my scholarship, and so like for me I don't, even if I didn't have that scholarship, I don't think I would wanna go below that. I got all A's in high school and so that was my original goal coming into college, but I also lowered it a little bit. In high school it was like I'm gonna have a 4.0. In college, I was like, "I'm gonna try and get a 4.0, but I'm not gonna freak out if I don't, and then first semester freshman year I had Bio101 and that took care of that for me. (Chuck) But it was good though, cause then I didn't have to worry about it, and it was like, "Well, you know, now there's no sense stressing, just do your best. It was just a B+. (CHUCK) It wasn't TERRIBLE. It was good. I mean I'm not complaining. (Chuck) It was, I think it was a GOOD thing that I got it, because I was like, you know what? You got a B; it's not the end of the world. You're gonna live, and uh, it's funny, I think I've gotten a B+ in every, like Biology class I've taken. But that's okay, like I'm fine with that, and um, and yeah, so I guess my goal is just to keep my grades as high as I can, and have, you know, the best that I can do, um, get my work done. I've never really had a problem NOT doing my homework. Well, I have a procrastination problem, but it always seems to get done. (H)*
- *Grades in uninteresting classes just measure how well we can MEMORIZE. (H)*
- *Um, (chuck) grades mean a lot to me. I guess. I just, I wanna keep my scholarship and it's a personal satisfaction thing. I wanna know that I've, you know, done my best and, and like I guess my grades reflect that. Well, not ALWAYS though. I can say that some classes I've gotten an "A," where I haven't put a hundred percent effort into it, and then vice versa, I've put a lot of effort into a class and gotten a "B" in it. (H)*
- *When I get good grades, like today we got out Calc 3 exams back, and I got a 94 on this one, and it was supposed to be one of the harder tests of the year, so I felt pretty good about that. I just I'm a competitive person and I need to see good scores. (H)*
- *What do grades mean to me? Everything. (Chuck) Like seriously, they mean everything. Because in high school I got horrible grades, and then ITT kind of set me up for this too, because it was such an easy college, I got a 4.0 there, and so I kind of got that in my head that I just always wanted to get "A's," which is kind of dangerous, because that's really EASY to do there, a little more difficult here, and that's still my goal. So I'm trying to get at least a 3.9 cumulative for graduation. (H)*
- *I did get a B+ once. I did a lot of studying for that class. I wasn't ready for it, for the, for the grade. Um-hm. I got over it, I guess. I'm fearful that I might get my second B this semester, and so I'm like going to talk to my teachers extra and be like, "I'm really scared how I'm doing in this class," and they're trying to console me and be like, "Oh, don't give up hope yet." I'm like, "Ah..."(Chuck). (H)*