ASSESSING SOCIAL SUPPORT AT THE UNIVERSITY LEVEL: THE

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN A SUPPORTIVE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

AND STUDENT SUCCESS/SATISFACTION

by

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A THESIS

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
in the Department of Communication Studies
in the Graduate School of
The University of Alabama

TUSCALOOSA, ALABAMA

2009

ABSTRACT

Social support is a widely studied topic among communication scholars, and one environment in which it deems even more attention is the classroom. In this study, I aim to uncover how prevalent perceived available social support is among university instructors (as perceived by students) as well as factors that affect a student's willingness to seek support from a given instructor. Also, I will uncover whether or not a student's perception (or lack thereof) of available social support from an instructor indicates his or her success in the classroom and/or overall satisfaction with his or her college experience. Moreover, I will explore the relationships among variables such as teacher caring, teacher support, teacher credibility, willingness of students to seek support, students' success in the classroom, and students' satisfaction with their university experience.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who have always been a source of encouragement to me, who have instilled in me the value of education from a very young age, and who have, through their support, helped me to develop this idea into a reality.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS

ANOVA   Analysis of variance

df Degree of freedom

F Fisher's F ratio

M Mean (Arithmetic average)

N Number in the total sample

n Number in a subsample

p Probability associated with the occurrence under the null hypothesis of a value

as extreme as or more extreme than the observed value

SD Standard Deviation

r Pearson product-moment correlation

R^2 Proportion of variability

RQ Research Question

t Computed value of t-test

α Alpha; probability of a type 1 error; Cronbach's index of internal consistency

β Beta weight (standardized slope)

$<$ Less than

$=$ Equal to

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I will be forever indebted to those who have guided me along the way in the process of creating this project. First, I would like to thank the Lord, who has given me a passion for learning. Also, I would like to thank my family who has listened to my ideas and always encouraged me to pursue my endeavors. I would like to especially thank my wonderful fiancé for the endless support he has provided along the way.

And finally, I would like to offer sincere gratitude to the faculty members, colleagues, and friends who have supported me throughout this process. I am so grateful for Dr. Carol Mills who has not only served as my advisor, but as a mentor and guide as well. She has poured so many hours into my graduate career and especially this project, and this thesis would not have been at all possible without her. A huge thank you also goes to my committee members, Dr. Carol Mills, Dr. Jason Black, Dr. Nance Riffe, Dr. Gary Copeland and Dr. Sherry Nichols who have invested their expertise and time into helping me to make this project complete.

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INTRODUCTION

Going to college can be a very stressful transition for many students. In fact, D'Zurilla and Sheedy (1991) explained that the first year of college can be particularly stressful "because it is a life change experience that involves many new academic, social, and emotional demands that may severely test a student's coping resources" (p. 842). There are several factors that can be involved in this level of stress. Ross, Niebling, and Heckert explained that college students undergo a great deal of stress related to the transition to college, because they are adjusting to being away from home, maintaining their academics, and adjusting socially. Plus, they pointed out that many of them are also dealing with stress as it relates to potentially finding a life partner and/or starting a career (1999). Towbes and Cohen examined these adjustments and transitions and suggest that people who are in a transitional period of their lives are especially prone to stress (Cohen et al., 1987). There are at least four major developmental tasks that confront late adolescent college students: (a) achieving emotional independence from family, (b) choosing and preparing for a career, (c) preparing for relationship commitment and family life, and (d) developing an ethical system (Chickering and Havighurst, 1988). These tasks require the college student to develop new social roles and modify old ones, changes that can result in role strain, a major aspect of chronic stress (Pearlin, 1989, p. 200). For many students, the beginning of their college career marks the first time that they have ever lived away from their parents, and for those students who do not find

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leaving their parents to be difficult, it can still mean leaving one's hometown, or everything that is comfortable to him or her. These factors, and many more, can lead to stressful situations.

So, where does the university fit into this stressful equation? Does the university have an obligation to help students find balance in their lives? Turman and Schrodt stated, "Most college students are reflecting on, and further developing, their adult identities, and one small, but influential part of this process is the interpersonal feedback they receive from their instructors" (2006, p. 265). According to this research, we know that teachers can have a role in this transition. Scholars seem to agree that instructors have a huge influence on students' success in college, and the importance of teacher support is extremely prominent. While a student may find support from several different sources during their college experience, as Turman and Schrodt pointed out, we cannot overlook the fact that support from their instructors is incredibly influential as they develop during their college experience.

In this paper, I discuss social support as experienced in the relationships among university instructors and students. I discuss current research on social support, the benefits of it, its role in the instructional context, and I present a study on the relationships among social support in the context of instructor/student relationships and a student's success in the classroom, as well as a student's overall satisfaction with his or her college experience.

DISCUSSION OF LITERATURE[i]

Social Support

When defining social support, scholars typically include several key components. Rittenour and Martin (2008) explained several ways to identify social support: "social support, as it is labeled in the field of communication, involves empathy, sympathy, concern, compassion, validation of feelings, and encouragement towards another" (p. 235). In fact, Edwards et al. (2008) pointed to both social support and loneliness as key components to the social well-being of an individual (p. 447). They alluded to the fact that these elements' relationship with one another make up a big part of who we are as well as our overall social development. They even referred to other studies that have suggested that health and social functioning are positively impacted by increased amounts of social support (Edwards et al., p. 447). Furthermore, Eisenberg et. al (2007) explained that supportive communication is highly effective in organizations and companies, even more effective for organizational leaders than openness can be (p. 288).

As Wills (2000) pointed out, there exist four different dimensions of social support: emotional support, informational support, instrumental support, and companionship support (p. 88). Wills (2000) described emotional support as "the availability of one or more persons who can listen sympathetically when an individual is having problems and can provide indications of caring and acceptance" (p. 88). Instrumental support is described as support that incorporates practical help when it is

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needed, involving such things as helping with chores and child care, providing transportation, lending money, etc. (p. 88). Furthermore, informational support "is defined as providing knowledge that is useful for solving problems, such as providing information about community resources and services or providing advice and guidance about alternative courses of action," while Wills explained that companionship support involves people making themselves available to an individual to participate in leisure and social activities. This could involve things such as parties, recreational activities (such as sports), trips, or cultural activities (p. 88). Wills also explained, "A dimension variously termed *feedback, validation,* or *social comparison* is based on the concept that social relationships can provide information about the appropriateness or normativeness of behavior" (2000, p. 88). In this study, I specifically focus on two dimensions of social support (emotional and informational support), as those hold the most value for the present study.

Wethington and Kessler (1986) explained one of the controversies among scientists who study social support. They described the controversy in terms of availability versus actuality. In essence, they argued that some believe social support should be defined as a person perceiving that social support is available to him or her if he or she were to need it, while some believe that it should be defined as the actual transfer of supportive behavior (p. 78). Furthermore, Aquino et. al asserted that social support can be considered quantitatively (by the number and type of social contacts) or qualitatively (to what extent one feels that social support is available to him or her) (1996, p. 480). Essentially, they were outlining the question that exists among scholars as to whether social support should be defined as one's perception that social support is

available to an individual or the actual support that takes place. This question seems to be a popular one. Some have suggested that perceived social support can actually be more beneficial to an individual than actual, mobilized social support (Taylor et. al 2004). In fact, Taylor et. al (2004) asserted, "Considerable literature has implied…that social support need not be activated to be helpful" (p. 355). Wethington and Kessler (1986) explained that whether or not a person perceived social support was available was in fact a stronger predictor of how someone was able to cope with life's stressful events than received support was (p. 85). In this study, I highlight the impact that simply perceiving that social support is available from an instructor can have on a student's experience in the classroom and on their college experience as a whole.

Social support has been reported as important in many different areas of life. In fact, it has even been proven to be exceedingly beneficial in one's overall quality of life and/or health. Sherbourne, Meredith, Rogers, and Ware (1992) suggested that it may play a large role in a person maintaining his or her health and that it could be related to decreasing impacts of illness (p. 235). Furthermore, a study conducted by these researchers (1992) supported this notion. They explained that their findings supported the notion that social support carried with it health-related benefits that positively impacted the quality of life (p. 241). They also reported that patients who experienced high levels of support experienced higher levels of physical functioning as well as their emotional well-being. Also, they noted that these levels of physical functioning were *significantly* better (p. 241).

Emotional Support

Emotional support is a pivotal aspect of social support. It is a widely studied topic in the field of communication and is almost universally applicable to a wide variety of settings. Rittenour and Martin (2008) expounded upon the fact that emotional support crosses disciplinary boundaries and explained that researchers from many different disciplines have studied emotional support and the role it plays in humans' interactions (p. 235). MacGeorge, Samter, and Gilliahn (2005) maintained that communication-based emotional support is being both supportive and an outcome of communication networks. Rittenour and Martin also validated the importance of emotional support because of its role in the development of interpersonal relationships (p. 235). In a study performed by Xu and Burleson (2004), they found that when studying support within the context of marriages, emotional support was the strongest predictor of marital satisfaction than any other type of support (p.140).

Display of Emotional Support and its Benefits

Burleson (2003) defined the primary feature of emotional support as "the internal effort by a helper to assist a target in coping with a perceived state of affective distress" (p. 552). He asserted, "it is useful to view emotional support as *specific lines of communicative behavior enacted by one party with the intent of helping another cope effectively with emotional distress*" (Burleson 2003, p. 552). In addition, according to Burleson (2003), the availability of adequate emotional support has positive psychological, physical, and relational outcomes for individuals (p. 554). Jones and Wirtz (2007) pointed out that there are many advantages to emotional support that is displayed adequately. They explained that when people display positive emotional support to

another individual, it can in fact improve that individual's coping skills as well as improve that individual's overall physical and mental health (Jones and Wirtz, 2007, p.72). It is important to note, however, that because social and emotional support can be such significant factors in social development, they need to be a part of our lives on a regular basis. Burleson (2003) explained that this support is necessary not just in times of crisis, but also in everyday minor events. These minor events, as opposed to life-changing events such as the death of a parent or diagnosis of a chronic illness, are, according to Burleson (2003), the major determinates for an individual's psychological well-being (p. 554).

It is also important to note that the manner in which an individual displays emotional support can have significant effects on how that support is received and whether that support is seen as effective. Jones and Wirtz (2007) reference a study performed by Miczo and Burgoon (2004) in which they investigated the emotional support process and conversational involvement of the process (p. 72). They reported that those who interacted with high levels of involvement behaviors were able to see better outcomes regarding their conversational partner's satisfaction. Those who were engaged in a conversation in which there were higher levels of involvement behaviors were more satisfied overall with the interaction (Jones and Wirtz, p. 72). This would certainly lead one to believe that the manner in which emotional support is presented has a great deal to do with the effectiveness of the supportive interaction and satisfaction of the individual with the supportive behaviors.

Informational Support

There are many times during a person's life when he or she is in need of advice about which steps to take next, his or her future career path, or when he or she is simply information-seeking. During those times (and many others), he or she will potentially seek someone for informational support. As mentioned previously, Wills (2000) explained that informational support "is defined as providing knowledge that is useful for solving problems, such as providing information about community resources and services or providing advice and guidance about alternative courses of action," (p. 88). MacGeorge et. al (2005) added, "informational support (e.g., information, advice) appears to assist with problem-solving efforts" (p. 366). Thus, this type of supportive behavior can be identified as beneficial to people in countless types of circumstances.

Informational support also seems to be a very helpful tool in the university setting, particularly as it relates to relationships among teachers and students. In fact, MacGeorge et. al (2005) conducted a study that measured the relationship between academic stress and supportive communication, and they found that while academic stress may encourage symptoms such as depression, informational support such as advice-seeking may deter such symptoms (p. 369). For this reason, it is important to identify what types of support are available in academic contexts. Furthermore, it is important to uncover whether or not a student's perception of this type of support being available relates to a student's success and/or satisfaction during their college career.

Instructional Implications/Role in the Educational Context

Given the research that social support is vital to people's quality of life, health, and organizational functioning, we know that it must be of the utmost importance in the place where children, adolescents, and young adults spend a vast amount of time learning and developing: the classroom. One context in which social support (and particularly emotional support) research is particularly useful is education. There is a wide range of supporting literature that shows not only the importance of social support in general, but also the importance of emotional support to the well-being of students. Given that going to college can be a very stressful situation for students, particularly the first year, (D'Zurilla and Sheedy, 1991), being away from home for the first time is probably a major factor in this stress. It may be that students experience stress, because they do not know how to create boundaries for themselves away from home. It could also be that some students feel that many aspects of their transition to college are not as they expected, and thus, they have a difficult time adjusting during this transition. Whatever it is that catalyzes stress for individual students, we know that simply experiencing a transitional period in life can cause a great deal of stressors for individuals (Cohen et. al., 1987), and we certainly know that college students are typically facing a very influential transitional period in their lives. During this period, social support, and particularly emotional support, can be pivotal in helping them to make it through these transitional periods successfully. Burleson (2003) noted that emotional support contributes to psychological adjustment, self-esteem, and a sense of social inclusion (p. 554), all of which can be important aspects of a student's experience in the classroom, regardless of age. Burleson (2003) also stated that emotional support is not a given; it is a skill that

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must be learned (p. 55). However, despite the research showing the importance of emotional support, it appears that this skill is largely absent in the classroom, and in particular, in the classrooms of older students. The benefits of emotional support point to the notion that the classroom is a place where this type of support should be prioritized.

Michael Fielding (2000) argued that "[Education] is about becoming more fully human, [and] must be linked to a view of human being and becoming; it must rest upon a view about how we become persons" (p. 52). If education is indeed about "becoming more fully human," then it follows that schools would have a vested interest in honing one of our human aspects: emotions (as well as the ability to seek, receive, and provide support for processing them). However, Fielding (2000) contended that schools have become impersonal, and are focused more on teaching subjects, not students (p. 52). In addition, Fielding (2000) argued that "the means and ends [to education] need to be mutually reinforcing" (p. 54). In other words, we cannot achieve a "person-centered school" where the environment is such that students feel they are cared for and can disclose emotions without changing the way we view schools and education. If we become too focused on academic outcomes, then it is possible that we will neglect some very important social aspects of education. The present research aims to tap into some of those social aspects, particularly regarding the dynamic among teacher and student relationships.

In a study conducted by Samdal, Nutbeam, Wold and Kannas (1998), data showed that older students (age 15 and up) reported greater dissatisfaction with school (p. 383). In the instances where older students reported being satisfied with school, the most important predictors of satisfaction were feeling that they were treated fairly, feeling safe,

and the belief that teachers were supportive (p. 383). Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (2000) also found that students' self-perceptions of themselves and their abilities were predictors of success (p. 450), that students need to feel competent and value school (p. 453), and they need to feel safe, cared for, and be provided with emotional support and encouragement to be successful in school (p. 459-460). These examples illustrate the importance of emotional support in the classroom by addressing the need that students have to feel that support is available. Furthermore, these examples address the apparent lack of implementation of emotional support in the classrooms of secondary students.

The characteristics that make a "good school" (in relation to the emotional well-being of students) are outlined by several authors. For instance, Greenberg et al. (2003) stated that a good school enhances social and emotional competence (p. 466) and that a good education should teach good social skills (p. 467). Concerning the relationships between students and their teachers, Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that "teacher-child relationships are important components of children's success in school" (p. 636). Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (2000) argued similarly that students need to feel cared about by their teachers and classmates (p. 464), and that they need to feel emotional support is available even if they never use it (p. 467). Given these assertions, we can conclude that an integral part of fostering an environment where students feel cared about and that support is available would include encouraging emotional support in the classroom.

Emotions in the classroom: Beyond the Elementary Level

One of the most important areas of research concerning emotional support in schools is research that details the nature of teacher-student interactions at the secondary level and the implications of those interactions. Largely, research in this area has found

three premises on which to base these findings. First, close teacher-student interactions concerning emotion are not welcome at the secondary level. Second, emotions are unwelcome or neglected in secondary level classrooms because they are seen as a distraction or a threat to the stability of the classroom environment. Third, students who have close interactions with their teachers and believe a support system is available at school learn better. The first and second premises show that an investigation into whether students feel that emotions are indeed unwelcome in the classroom and that they cannot have close relationships with their teachers is necessary. If this is this is the case, the third premise shows that educators might have a vested interest in refining their system to be more open to the provision of emotional support in the classroom.

First, one of the most striking differences between emotions in the classroom at the elementary and secondary level is that close teacher-student interactions appear to be unwelcome at the secondary level. Roeser, Eccles, and Sameroff (2000) found that the school environment becomes less supportive when students move from elementary to middle school (p. 465). In addition, Hargreaves (2000) found that secondary schools are not places where teachers "develop shared emotional goals with students or have close emotional bonds" (p. 820).

Hargreaves (2000) contended that "secondary teaching is characterized by greater professional and physical distance leading teachers to treat emotions as intrusions in the classroom" (p. 811). Also, Hargreaves (2000) found that secondary teachers often feel they don't get acknowledgement from students (p. 819). This lack of acknowledgment (or perceived lack of interest in close interactions from students) might be one reason why teachers at the secondary level are less inclined to reach out to

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students and offer emotional support. He found that when teachers described having positive relationships with students, they did not describe giving emotional support, but only that the students acknowledged and respected them (p. 820). Hargreaves (2000) also noted that the geography of secondary schools makes emotional closeness between teachers and students more difficult (p. 821) and that secondary schools need to emphasize emotion more (p. 824). If the amount of emotional support available decreases as students advance in school, we might also conclude that this pattern of decline continues into post-secondary education. Some reasons for this could include larger classroom environments and larger teacher-student ratios as students move from high school to college (as typically experienced by most college students). Since students typically experience larger class sizes when they enter college, one could assert that students' opportunities to seek instructors for personal support decreases, thus following the pattern of decline.

Hargreaves (2000) further explored this contention in his research. He found that there is "not an emphasis on how organizing education shapes emotional experience" (p. 813) and that education policy pays little attention to emotion (p. 812). Hargreaves (2000) further explained that teachers feel over-indulging in emotion is distracting (p. 811). He stated that teachers are only aware of emotions if they think it might interfere with learning (p. 821), that they think emotions should be dealt with outside the classroom setting (p. 822), and that they feel emotions should be neutralized and attended to only when they are perceived as a threat to classroom procedure (p. 827). In essence, the bulk of this (2000) research found that emotion is simply not wanted in the secondary level classroom (p. 823), and it is dealt with only if teachers feel it might disrupt their

classroom stability. Hargreaves warned that too much attention to academic outcomes, while neglecting emotional learning outcomes, is dangerous.

He stated:

> If secondary school reformers really care about quality, they would do well to turn their attention away from curriculum consistency, testing processes, accountability measures, and other technologies of control, towards developing structures, purposes, and programs of secondary schooling that will help teacher and students build a more solid base of emotional understanding with each other, on which successful teaching can be built. (p. 824).

Robinson (1995) found that teachers generally are not perceived to offer a large amount of emotional support (p. 261). This would suggest that perhaps students do not feel that they can disclose their emotions to teachers at school, and perhaps, once again, secondary teachers would be well-served by taking more interest in their students' emotional well being.

The implications for taking a greater interest in the emotional well-being of students are very positive. Research in this area has shown that students who have close interactions with their teachers and believe that a support system is available at school, learn better. This is an optimum scenario for both teachers and students: A school where close interactions between teachers and students are encouraged (this would include encouraging emotional support), which allows better emotional development and better academic achievement (which coincides with the goals of teachers and administrators).

Lasting Effects

Petrides, Frederickson, and Furnham (2002) found that high emotional intelligence will lead to greater success later on in a student's school career (p. 277). It could be argued that emotional intelligence is partially fostered by encouraging emotional support and close interactions between teachers and students. Similarly, Hamre and

Pianta found that good teacher-student relationships lead to greater success later on (p. 625), and that once children enter school, "relationships with non-parental adults become increasingly important" (p. 625). This highlights the importance of secondary students' need for the ability to emotionally disclose and have close interactions with their teachers.

It follows from this research that all of these needs might be met by encouraging emotional support in the classroom. Roeser, Eccles and Sameroff (2000) stated that students need to perceive the school's staff as helping them develop (p. 458), and that without a supportive environment, students are less motivated to learn (p. 459). It is easy to see, therefore, that students would benefit greatly from being encouraged to disclose emotions (as they feel necessary) to teachers at school.

Research in this area has shown that close teacher-student interactions are not easily attained, and seem to be neglected at the secondary level. In addition, emotions in classrooms are generally unwelcome and seen as distracting. However, research has also shown that high emotional intelligence, and positive teacher-student interactions lead to greater student success. Also, students need to feel valued and cared about at school, and they also need to felt that they are competent and value school. Therefore, whether or not students feel that they can disclose emotion to their teachers and whether or not an emotional support system is available might be a predictor of their success in school. Emotional support at school is important not just for students' emotional well-being, but also for their academic well-being and overall satisfaction in school.

Teacher Training: Creating an Emotionally Supportive Environment

Because it is so important that an emotional support system be available to students, it is important to consider the training that teachers receive before they ever enter the classroom. If the classroom is going to be a potentially emotionally supportive environment, some scholars argue that teachers need to be prepared to deal with emotions in the classroom. This draws attention to the fact that in order to be fully successful in their jobs and to be satisfied by their level of work, a teacher needs to be competent in areas beyond just content instruction. He or she should be prepared as much as possible for the tasks required at an emotional as well as intellectual level. Madeline Justice and Sue Espinoza (2007) suggested the notion of being considerate of needs beyond content instruction in hopes of being a quality teacher. They explained that if one examines the needs of students, in order for someone to be a quality teacher, other aspects of education (beyond the instruction of the subject material) should be addressed in teachers' preparation programs (p. 457).

While Justice and Espinoza seemed to be confident that many students have passed the necessary tests and internship responsibilities in order to be certified to teach, they also seemed to be concerned that the teacher candidates are not prepared in all areas of consideration. In fact, they pose very important questions in this regard. In reference to the candidates, Justice and Espinoza (2007) remarked, "They know some of the challenges they will face. Are they emotionally prepared?" (p. 457). Creating these opportunities for those entering the teaching profession can help prepare instructors to create an emotionally supportive environment in the classroom. MacGeorge, Samter, and Gillihan (2005) expounded on this idea. They felt that there has not been enough focus on

emotional support in instructional communication (MacGeorge et al., 2005). They also noted that support from instructors is something that is very important to students and should therefore be given priority in instructor preparation (MacGeorge et al., 2005).

Teacher Caring

Research done in the area of teacher caring has shown that college students do perceive whether or not a faculty member cares about them and that whether or not they do is important to them. In fact, Teven (2007) pointed out that when one considers the attributes ascribed to teachers, caring is a fundamental one (p. 383). Teven and Gorham (1998) explained that one is typically able to predict how well a student will do in a particular class based on how the teacher is perceived by the students (p. 288). They asserted, "teaching is a personal relationship involving the interaction of teacher and student personalities," and they also explain that the best most successful results in a classroom come out of teachers having positive relationships with their students (p. 288).

There are three main factors that contribute to whether or not a student perceives a teacher as caring: understanding, empathy, and responsiveness (McCroskey, 1992**).** Teven (2007) described understanding as "the ability to comprehend another person's ideas, feelings, and needs," empathy as "one's ability to identify with another's situation or feelings," and responsiveness as "the third factor of perceived caring (that) involves being other-oriented and having sensitivity toward others" (p. 383). Furthermore, Teven and Gorham emphasized the fact that a major component of effective teaching is for the teacher to create a classroom environment that is full of understanding, warmth, and care and that "teachers play a key role in creating a caring classroom climate" (Teven &

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Gorham, 1998, p. 289). Not only did they emphasize that students notice whether or not an instructor is caring, but they pointed out that an instructor's behaviors are under "constant scrutiny by students" in his or her classroom (p. 289).

Teven also explained another factor that affects the dynamic among teachers and students. He explained that the perceived credibility of the instructor has a great effect on the relationship among teachers and students (2007, p. 434). Teven noted, "teacher credibility is a critical perception students make regarding teacher behavior that ultimately plays a supporting role in student learning" (2007, p. 434). Since perceived credibility has a great deal to do with how a student views his or her relationship with an instructor, that in turn can affect whether or not that particular student would seek him or her for social support. After establishing that teachers who are perceived as caring have an overall better rapport with their students, Teven explained that teachers who care about their students need to be able to communicate that care adequately and that those who relates to his or her students well will be seen as a credible source (2007, p. 435). Thus, all of the factors begin to have a very causal relationship as it relates to the teacher-student relationship.

However, not all teachers are adept at sensing when a student is having difficulties, either with the material or with issues outside of class. Some instructors are much better at perceiving these issues than others (Teven, 2007, p. 383). Teven (2007) also pointed out that overall retention rates at universities are greatly increased by a high amount of "face-time with students" (p. 433). This assessment leads one to believe that a student's sense that his or her instructors care about him or her has a causal relationship with whether or not they stay in school.

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While we have established that teacher caring is not only important but is vital to a student's learning process, we cannot stop there. The literature addresses that teachers play a huge role in creating the "classroom climate," and we know that providing warmth and care in the classroom is crucial to a student's success. However, this study aims to provide an exploration about what it is that makes a student feel that social support is available to them *outside* of the classroom, some factors that affect their perception of that support, whether or not they are willing to seek that support from their instructors if they feel that it is available, and how the availability of the support (or lack thereof) correlates with their overall satisfaction and success in school. I aim to evaluate how an instructor's behaviors inside the classroom can affect a student's perception of their availability for support outside of the classroom as well as the relationship between a supportive environment (as made available by instructors) outside the class and student satisfaction in college.

Research Questions

With the goals of the study in mind, the following research questions were identified:

RQ1: Of the traits that were established from the prestudy that signify socially supportive behavior of an instructor, how present are these traits among instructors?

RQ2: What is the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and students' willingness to seek support?

RQ3: Does a student's perception of having social support available to him or her from his or her instructor outside the classroom relate to his or her success in the classroom (as defined by grade in the specified class)?

RQ4: Does a student's perception of having social support available to him or her from his or her instructor outside the classroom relate to his or her overall satisfaction with his or her university experience?

RQ5: Does a student's perception of his or her instructor's credibility affect his or her willingness to seek that instructor for social support?

The present research aims to provide insight to the aforementioned questions and adding to the discussion of literature on the subject of social support in the classroom. By addressing these questions, an outline might be established as to how variables such as perceived availability of social support, the presence of socially supportive behaviors in the classroom, students' willingness to seek support, academic success, and university satisfaction are related (if indeed they are). A report on this research follows.

METHOD

Prestudy

       Goals of the Prestudy

A preliminary study was conducted in order to evaluate students' perceptions of social support in the college classroom and to highlight some areas of focus for the later research. This preliminary study's aim was to create a typology that organized some categories for which to order factors that affect students' perception of the availability of social support from their instructors. The preliminary study was conducted by Joiner and Rizor (2009). We wanted to begin to uncover what characteristics of their instructors made students more or less likely to seek them for social support. This study served as a basis for the rest of my thesis research.

      Surveys were distributed among students in undergraduate public speaking courses that presented questions having to do with traits that they look for in an instructor when they have a problem outside of class. These were used to evaluate what it is that college students prioritize when in need of social support outside of class.

      Methods (of prestudy)

A brief questionnaire was developed that asked the participants to compile a mental list of all of the instructors they had during that semester. Then, the participants were asked to think about which instructors (from that list) they would be willing to seek for social support. Next, they were instructed to list factors that would make them more

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likely to seek social support from an instructor as well as factors that would make them less likely to seek social support from an instructor. Finally, the participants were asked to list any more information/comments they wished.

   Results of prestudy

The responses of the questionnaire were gathered, and 11 categories emerged. These categories were: *friendliness and approachability, connection with students, competency, enthusiasm in the classroom, self-disclosure, empathy, trustworthiness, helpfulness, availability, age, and sex.* All categories were coded independently by two researchers. A basic summary of categories derived from the survey data, as well as examples of typical responses in these categories, are listed in tables 1.2-1.4 (See appendix).

Present Study

   Participants

Building upon previous research, this aim of the present study was to evaluate how the traits that were established in the prestudy (traits displayed by instructors that would make students more likely to seek them for support) relate to a students' willingness to seek that instructor for support. A second goal in mind was to determine how variables such as perceived availability of support from instructors, willingness of students to seek support, university satisfaction, teacher credibility, and academic success are linked. The number of participants for this study was 146 (*N*=146). This population was a convenient sample and comprised of undergraduate students at a large, southeastern university who were enrolled in an introductory level public speaking course. The sample included males and females and was extended to all ethnicities. There was no privilege or penalty given

to these students for their participation. Participation was voluntary, and all participants were free to withdraw at any time.

Methodology (of present study)

The participants were administered a survey with five measures with approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). All tests were conducted using an online survey tool, and the duration of the survey was approximately 10-15 minutes. Two of the measures were gathered from extant sources, and three were created by the principal investigator. The instruments that were gathered from other sources had been previously tested for reliability and validity. Further reliability tests were conducted using Cronbach's alpha.

After solicitation of participants through an announcement in class, some participants were given class time in which to complete the survey, while some chose to complete it outside of class. Participants were informed of their rights as participants in the class announcement, and they were given contact information of the principal investigator if they were to have any questions regarding the procedure and/or content of the survey tool. Also, upon entering the online survey tool, participants were informed that they were under no obligation whatsoever to participate and that they were free to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, all surveys were kept completely anonymous.

First, they had specific instructions for completing the survey, as well as space for them to provide their demographic information, including their sex, race, age, college. The students were also asked to provide the race and sex of the instructor that they had for the class right before the one in which they are completing the survey (the same one that will be the focus of the rest of their responses), as well as their current estimated

grade for the same class. Completing the survey based on the instructor they had for the class right before the one in which they were taking the survey allowed for responses based on many different instructors.

The first measure is the "Teacher Caring" measure, created by Teven and McCroskey (1997). For this measure (as with each of the measures), the students were instructed to think about the instructor that they had right before the one in which they are completing the survey and base their responses according to their thoughts about the aforementioned instructor. This measure included 10 questions including items regarding their instructor's concern for them, levels of understanding and sensitivity toward them, etc. and required participants to respond based on a scale from one to seven. This measure tested the perceived caring of instructors. All of the questions were in a 7-point Likert scale format, in which the participants responded based on the specified instructor. For example, a participant would respond as to whether or not they felt that their instructor "cares about them" and circle the appropriate number ranging from 1 to 7 (where 1=Doesn't care about me and 7=Cares about me) or "has their interests at heart" (where 1=doesn't have my interests at heart and 7=has my interests at heart) or "is self-centered" (where 1=self-centered and 7=not self-centered). For this scale, $\alpha = .921$.

The second measure is the "Credibility measure," created by J. McCroskey and J. Teven (1999). This measure is divided into 3 sections: competence, goodwill and trustworthiness. The participants circled the number that they felt was closest to the adjective that best describes their instructor. The distance the number is from the adjective indicates how certain they are of their response (the closer the number is to the adjective, the more confident they were of that response). While this measure includes 3

sections, only the results from the competence category are reported in the results, as it is the only category relevant to the research questions. These questions were in semantic differentiation format (and using bipolar opposites), also with scales from 1 to 7 with descriptors such as intelligent/unintelligent, untrained/trained, and inexpert/expert.

The third measure is the "Teacher Support" measure. Traits were established in the prestudy that outlined characteristics of instructors that make students more likely to seek them for social support than other instructors. Based on these established traits from the results of the prestudy, this measure tested whether or not the participants felt that their instructor exhibited these traits. The participants rated their instructors on a Likert scale from 1 to 7 in each area, 1 being "He or she NEVER exhibits this trait" to 7 being "He or she ALWAYS exhibits this trait." Three example traits that were assessed are "friendly," "shows a desire for students to learn," and "shows vulnerability." For this measure, $\alpha = .940$

The fourth measure is the "Willingness to Seek Support" measure. This measure tested the participants' willingness to seek social support from this instructor. The questions were based on three components: social support, emotional support, and informational support (3 questions based on each category). The questions present scenarios in which a student might need social, emotional, or informational support and asks the participant to respond as to whether or not they would seek this particular instructor for support in these categories if they were faced with the given situation. They were asked to respond to these questions based on the 1 to 7 scale (one being "definitely not" and 7 being "very likely") regarding how likely they would be to seek support from this instructor based on the circumstance given. Three example scenarios involve how

likely a participant would be to feel like he or she go to this instructor for support if he or she were struggling academically, how likely a participant would be to seek out this instructor for advice about changing his or her major, and how likely a participant would be to consider this person a good person to talk to if he or she were having a bad day in regard to his or her personal life. In reference to this scale's reliability, $\alpha = .914$

The final measure is the "University Satisfaction" measure. This measure tested the participant's overall satisfaction with his or her college experience using a 7-point Likert scale (1=srongly disagree and 7=strongly agree). The participants were instructed to think about their feelings about their university experience as a whole and respond to the questions accordingly. They were instructed to choose the response that they felt best reflects their experience and whether they agree or disagree with the statements. Three example statements to which participants are instructed to respond from this measure deal with whether or not they are satisfied overall with their university experience, whether or not they plan to return next semester to the university that they attend (if they plan to graduate during the current semester, they are instructed to respond as to whether or not they would return next semester if they were not graduating), and whether or not they agree that their university experience has met and/or exceeded their expectations.

In addition, there were three questions at the end of the survey that were not included in a specific measure but addressed whether or not they felt that there was a faculty member they could go to for academic issues, whether not they felt that there was faculty member they could go to if they needed to talk about personal issues, and whether or not they believe that students *should* be able to go to faculty members for social

support if needed. These questions were also presented using a 7-point Likert scale

(1=srongly disagree and 7=strongly agree).

RESULTS

Analysis

All of the data was analyzed using the SPSS 17.0 program. Specifically, this data

was analyzed using a regression analysis. It allows researchers to analyze relationships

among data. When analyzing data and direct relationships/correlations among the

variables, regression analysis is used to guide interpretation. Researchers will use this by

"add(ing) a line of 'best fit' through the data" (Reinard 2008, p. 473). The independent

variables are teacher caring, perceived teacher credibility, perceived teacher support, and

willingness to seek support. The dependent variables are retention/university satisfaction

and success in the classroom (as determined by grade in specified class).

Descriptive Statistics

There were 146 participants who completed the survey ($N = 146$). The sample

included 49 males and 97 females. The mean age was 19.94 years old with a range

between 18 and 25 ($SD = 1.41$). There was a wide range of ethnic groups represented in

the population; however, the sample was predominantly Caucasian ($n = 122$), followed in

number by those who identified as African American/Black (n=15), those who identified

as Other/Multicultural ($n = 7$), American Indian ($n = 1$), and Hispanic ($n = 1$). Also,

participants were asked to list their major, and the responses were divided into 8

categories: Communication ($n = 46$), Education ($n = 43$), Engineering ($n = 6$), Nursing

($n = 5$), Business ($n = 7$), Arts and Sciences ($n = 28$), Human Environmental Sciences

(n = 10), and Undecided (n = 1). Participants were also asked to respond as to whether or not they were an international visiting student, and no students reported that they were (n = 0).

Also, the mean perceived age of teachers was relatively young (M = 36.22), with a minimum age of 21 and a maximum age of 70 (SD = 12.15). Thus, most of the faculty members and/or instructors that students were reporting on were between the ages of 24 and 48.

As mentioned previously, a Likert-type scale (with responses ranging from 1 to 7) was used for all of the instruments. For the "Teacher Caring" scale, there were 10 items, and these items were averaged to find the mean. There was a raw score possibility of 70, but for analyses, scores were averaged with a maximum possibility of 7. For purposes of analysis, each participant's responses were averaged with a maximum possibility of 7, (7 would indicate "not caring at all"). For this scale, the mean was 2.70, with a minimum of 1.0 and a maximum of 6.40 and a standard deviation of 1.25. For this scale, lower numbers indicated that students felt strongly that their instructor did in fact display traits that would indicate he or she was a caring instructor. The results for this scale indicate that overall, participants feel that the faculty and instructors are caring.

For the "Credibility" scale, the mean was 2.10, with a range of responses represented by a minimum of 1.0 and a maximum of 6.17 and a standard deviation of 1.16. For this scale, lower numbers indicate higher levels of teacher competency. Thus, overall, perceived credibility is high.

For the "Teacher Support" scale, the mean was reported as 5.68 with a range of responses represented by a minimum of 2.21 and a maximum of 7.0 and a standard

deviation of .90. For this scale, higher numbers indicate higher levels of supportive

behaviors. Thus, overall, participants reported relatively high levels of supportive

behaviors for their instructors.

For the "Willingness to Seek Support" scale, the mean was 3.76 with a range of

responses represented by a minimum of 1.0 and a maximum of 7.0. For this measure,

higher numbers indicate that participants would be more likely to seek the given

instructor for support. For reporting purposes, this measure was also broken down into 3

sections in order to explore for which issues students might be more willing to seek

support: willingness to seek academic support, willingness to seek support about a career

plans, and willingness to seek support about personal issues. (In the "Willingness to Seek

Support" measure, 3 questions were presented to represent each category.) For the

"willingness to seek academic support" section, the mean was 4.90 with a minimum of

1.0 and a maximum of 7.0 and a standard deviation of 1.49. For the "willingness to seek

support about career plans" section, the reported mean was 4.02 with a minimum of 1.0

and a maximum of 7.0 and a standard deviation of 1.85. For the "willingness to seek

support about personal issues" category, the reported mean was 2.35 with a minimum of

1.0 and a maximum of 7.0 and a standard deviation of 1.58. One can clearly see that the

reports for this measure overall indicate that students are much more willing to seek

instructors for academic issues or issues about career choices than they are to go to them

about things involving their personal life. Finally, for the "University Satisfaction"

measure, the reported mean was 6.11 with a minimum of 1.60 and a maximum of 7.0 and

a standard deviation of 1.09. Higher numbers for this measure indicate higher levels of

satisfaction at their university. Moreover, the results indicate that this sample reported very high levels of university satisfaction.

Research Question Analysis

For the first research question (of the traits that were established from the prestudy that signify socially supportive behavior of an instructor, how present are these traits among instructors?), the following analysis was conducted: As stated previously, for the "Teacher Support" scale, the mean was reported as 5.68. Thus, while a "6" indicates "almost always," students perceive faculty and instructors as being around a 5.5. Some examples of specific items are as follows: friendly ($M = 6.10$), trustworthy ($M = 6.10$), helpful ($M = 6.11$). However, for "does not censor him/herself," reports were a bit lower ($M = 4.44$), and the lowest reported trait was "shows vulnerability ($M = 3.43$). Similarly, reports for the item "open about his/her personal life" were lower than for others ($M = 4.10$). While the means overall were high for this measure, the reported means that were lower were generally for items such as "open about his/her personal life" and items related to it. Thus, while students seemed to view their instructors as talkative, upbeat, etc., they also reported that they did not perceive them as being extremely open with them.

For the second research question, (what is the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and students' willingness to seek support?), the following analysis was conducted: Using simple, linear regression analysis, the reports indicated that overall, the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and willingness of students to seek support is a significant one ($\beta = .62$, $t(142) = -3.14$, $p < .001$). Teacher support also explained a significant proportion of variance in willingness to seek support scores,

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$R^2 = .39$, $F(1, 142) = 89.74$, $p < .001$). Also, still using simple, linear regression analysis, the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and willingness of students to seek personal support is significant ($\beta = .33$, $t(142) = -1.15$, $p < .001$) Also, teacher support explained a significant proportion of variance in willingness to seek personal support scores ($R^2 = .11$, $F(1,142) = 17.05$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and willingness of students to seek academic support was analyzed, and the relationship is significant ($\beta = .73$, $t(142) = -3.67$, $p < .001$). Also, teacher support explained a significant proportion of variance in willingness to seek academic support scores ($R^2 = .54$, $F(1,142) = 164.78$, $p < .001$). Finally, the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and willingness of students to seek career support was analyzed, and the relationship is also significant ($\beta = .58$, $t(142) = -3.44$, $p < .001$). Teacher support also explained a significant proportion of variance in willingness to seek career support scores ($R^2 = .34$, $F(1,142) = 72.62$, $p < .001$). The results of part of the regression analyses are presented below in table 1.

Table 1

		Age instr	Teach Support	Wiling to seek support	Willing to seek acad	Willing to seek career	Willing to seek pers
Willing to seek support	Pearson Correlation	-.052	.622**	1	.885**	.909**	.832**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.535	.000		.000	.000	.000
	N	143	144	144	144	144	144
Willing to seek acad	Pearson Correlation	-.113	.733**	.885**	1	.748**	.599**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.180	.000	.000		.000	.000
	N	143	144	144	144	144	144
Willing to seek career	Pearson Correlation	.017	.582**	.909**	.748**	1	.605**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.840	.000	.000	.000		.000
	N	143	144	144	144	144	144
Willing to seek pers	Pearson Correlation	-.056	.327**	.832**	.599**	.605**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.509	.000	.000	.000	.000	
	N	143	144	144	144	144	144

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Further analyses were conducted, and the reported means show a striking difference between students' willingness to seek support from female faculty members or instructors versus male faculty members or instructors. Overall, participants reported that they were more willing to go to a female faculty member for support in all categories (willingness to seek support overall, willingness to seek personal support, willingness to seek academic support, and willingness to seek career support). Table 2 below shows the mean for all of the categories.

Table 2

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
willingnesperssupport	male	61	1.8415	1.15727
	female	83	2.7229	1.74361
	Total	144	2.3495	1.57995
willingnesstoseeksupport	male	61	3.3934	1.36197
	female	83	4.0254	1.44239
	Total	144	3.7577	1.43858
willingnessacadsupport	male	61	4.5738	1.62290
	female	83	5.1406	1.34257
	Total	144	4.9005	1.48919
willingnesscareersupport	male	61	3.7650	1.95253
	female	83	4.2129	1.76120
	Total	144	4.0231	1.85137

The reports of the ANOVA analysis that was conducted on the same variables is shown below in table 3 as well, in order to show the reports of the significance values. The results shown in this table tell us that a significant difference was found in students' willingness to seek support from female faculty members or instructors versus male faculty members or instructors.

Table 3

ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Willing to seek pers support	Between Groups	27.312	1	27.312	11.765	.001
	Within Groups	329.650	142	2.321		
	Total	356.962	143			
Willing to seek support	Between Groups	14.043	1	14.043	7.074	.009
	Within Groups	281.899	142	1.985		
	Total	295.942	143			
Willing to seek acad support	Between Groups	11.295	1	11.295	5.244	.023
	Within Groups	305.834	142	2.154		
	Total	317.129	143			
Wiilling to seek career support	Between Groups	7.051	1	7.051	2.073	.152
	Within Groups	483.094	142	3.402		
	Total	490.145	143			

However, when sex variables were considered in regards to the sex of the participants, sex did not seem to be as much of a factor. Using a One-way ANOVA as a tool to analyze the reports, females reported the same amount of willingness to seek support from instructors overall as did males, as well as in each category individually (academic, personal, and career). In fact, there were almost identical means in each category, which was not consistent with the original hypotheses. In the general category

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of "willingness to seek support," females reported a mean of 3.74, whereas males reported a mean of 3.80. Also, in the category of "willingness to seek career support," females reported a mean of 4.03, whereas males reported a mean of 4.00. In the category of "willingness to seek academic support," females reported a mean of 4.89, whereas males reported a mean of 4.92. Finally, in the category of "willingness to seek personal support," females reported a mean of 2.29, and males reported a mean of 2.47. Overall, female and male students reported the comparable levels of willingness to seek support in every category.

Also, it is important to note that after using simple, linear regression analysis, there was not a significant difference found between age and willingness to seek personal support ($\beta = -.06$, $t(141) = 6.27$, $p < .509$). Also age did not explain a significant proportion of variance in willingness to seek personal support scores ($R^2 = .003$, $F(1,141) = .44$, $p < .509$). In fact, correlations were conducted, and there was not a significant difference found between age and willingness to seek any kind of support.

In order to answer the third research question (does a student's perception of having social support available to him or her from his or her instructor outside the classroom relate to his or her success in the classroom (as defined by grade in the specified class), results were analyzed, and the reports is as follows: In order to select a response based on their estimation of their current grade in the specified class, participants were instructed to select a number (1 through 11) that would identify their estimated letter grade. The number 1 represented an A+, where 2 represented an A, 3 represented an A-, 4 represented a B+, 5 represented a B, 6 represented a B-, 7 represented C+, 8 represented a C, 9 represented a C-, 10 represented a D, and 11

represented an F. Thus, the higher the estimated grade, the lower the number. Overall, students reported a relatively high estimation of their grades for the specified class ($M = 3.67$), which would indicate that overall, the average estimated grade was between an A- and a B+. The mode was 2, meaning that most students reported their estimated grade for that class as an A. In fact, a high majority of the students (90%) reported an estimated grade of a B- or higher.

Using linear regression analysis to examine the relationship between student's expected grade and perceptions of available teacher support, there is a high level of significance ($\beta = -.37$, $t(142) = 7.89$, $p < .001$) Also, teacher support explained a significant proportion of variance in estimated current grade scores ($R^2 = .14$, $F(1,142) = 22.79$, $p < .001$). To further explore this, the relationship between their GPA (both as a covariate and a regression) was examined, and the reports showed that there was no significant correlation between grade in this course and university satisfaction.

For the fourth research question (does a student's perception of having social support available to him or her from his or her instructor outside the classroom positively correlate with his or her overall satisfaction with his or her university experience?), the following analysis was conducted. Simple, linear regression analysis was conducted, and there was not a significant relationship found between university satisfaction and available teacher support ($\beta = .08$, $t(142) = 9.44$, $p < .320$). Also teacher support did not explain a significant proportion of variance in university satisfaction scores ($R^2 = .01$, $F(1,142) = 1.00$, $p < .320$). Also, teacher credibility did not have a significant relationship with university satisfaction ($\beta = -.10$, $t(140) = 28.11$, $p < .29$). Teacher credibility did not explain a significant proportion of variance in university satisfaction

scores either ($R^2 = .02$, $F(2,140) = 1.26$, $p < .29$). In fact, teacher caring did not have a significant relationship with university satisfaction either ($\beta = -.04$, $t(140) = 28.11$, $p < .29$). Furthermore, teacher caring did not explain a significant proportion of variance in university satisfaction scores ($R^2 = .02$, $F(2,140) = 1.26$, $p < .29$).

There were three questions at the end of the survey that were not included in a specific measure but addressed whether or not they felt that there was a faculty member they could go to for academic issues, whether not they felt that there was faculty member they could go to if they needed to talk about personal issues, and whether or not they believe that students *should* be able to go to faculty members for social support if needed. Overall, participants were fairly evenly divided about whether or not there is a faculty member they can go to for academic issues and/or personal issues, though they seemed to have higher reports of having someone to talk to about academic issues than ones of a personal nature. Approximately 10% of participants reported that they sometimes disagree to strongly disagree that there is a faculty member they can go to about academic issues, while about 10% reported that they were unsure, and 80% reported that they sometimes agreed to strongly agreed. Furthermore, regarding whether or not there is a faculty member that they can go to if they need to talk about personal issues, approximately 40% of participants reported that they sometimes disagree to strongly disagree, approximately 20% reported that they were unsure, and approximately 40% reported that they sometimes agree to strongly agree. Only 20% said that they sometimes disagree to strongly disagree that they should be able to go to faculty members if needed, and 80% say that they are unsure or that they should be able to go to faculty members if needed

For the fifth research question (does a student's perception of his or her instructor's credibility affect his or her willingness to seek that instructor for social support?), the following analysis was conducted: The reports show that a teacher's credibility does in fact impact a student's willingness to seek support overall. Moreover, if a student finds his or her instructor to be credible, he or she is more likely to seek that instructor for support ($\beta = -.37$, $t(141) = 20.20$, $p < .001$). Also, teacher credibility explained a significant proportion of variance in willingness to seek support scores ($R^2 = .14$, $F(1,141) = 22.12$, $p < .001$).

General Findings

Using a Bivariate Pearson Correlation, there appears to be a correlation between teacher caring and teacher support ($r = .82$), which supports the validity of the "Teacher Support" scale.

DISCUSSION

Discussion of Research Questions

The following is a discussion in response to the first research question (Of the traits that were established from the prestudy that signify socially supportive behavior of an instructor, how present are these traits among instructors?). As indicated by the reports of the results of the "Teacher Support" scale, students seem to feel that their instructors portray many of the traits that signify socially supportive behavior (those traits established by the prestudy). However, several of the traits regarding openness and/or vulnerability did not seem as evident. While many students in the prestudy indicated that these traits would be ones that would make them more likely to seek an instructor for social support, the participants in the present study reported that these traits are not ones that they feel their instructors display. Thus, these traits have been deemed as important but not as present. This disconnect could exist for many reasons. It may be that some faculty members and/or instructors feel that being open about their personal life with their students is inappropriate. It could also be that instructors feel that that if they allow themselves to be vulnerable with their students, they will lose their students' respect or that it could even decrease their credibility with those students. This could be especially true for young instructors such as Teaching Assistants, who feel that they have to work extra hard to earn their students' respect. However, even with these lower means in such categories as "openness" or "shows vulnerability," overall, the reports for the "Teacher

Support" scale were very high. This indicates a very strong presence of the traits that the students (who were involved in the prestudy) indicated as important when evaluating whether or not to seek a particular instructor for support.

The following is a discussion in response to the results based on the second research question (What is the relationship between teacher supportive behaviors and students' willingness to seek support?). This particular finding (that teachers' socially supportive behaviors inside the classroom has a relationship with students' willingness to seek them *outside* the classroom) is one of the most pivotal ones because it affirms the research that emphasizes how important it is to display traits such as care and understanding inside the classroom. Also, it allows for conclusions to be drawn regarding the ways in which these behaviors affect students. It addresses the fact that these behaviors can either increase or decrease a student's willingness to seek help or advice when needed. However, it is important to note that the results were not exactly the same for every category of willingness to seek support (willingness to seek support overall, willingness to seek academic support, willingness to seek career support, and willingness to seek personal support). The F values were noticeably different in each of the categories. The highest reported category was "willingness to seek academic support" ($F = 164.78$), next was "willingness to seek support overall ($F = 89.73$), followed by "willingness to seek career support" ($F = 76.62$), and finally "willingness to seek personal support" ($F = 17.05$). The F value is certainly strikingly smaller for the category involving a willingness to seek personal support (i.e. seek that instructor for issues regarding one's personal life, relationships, family life, etc.). This further supports the notion that students are, in general, less likely to seek an instructor for support about

personal issues. Again, the decline in this category could be for many reasons. Some students may find it to be inappropriate to discuss personal issues with instructors; some may feel that an instructor would be unwilling to be discuss such issues. However, others may simply feel that those types of disclosures should be made only to close friends and/or family.

In addition, sex variables were considered. As mentioned previously, a one-way ANOVA was used as a tool to analyze the reports, and females reported the same amount of willingness to seek support from instructors overall as did males, as well as in each category (academic, personal, and career). In fact, there were almost identical means in each category, which was not consistent with the original hypotheses. However, students did report that they would be more willing to seek out a female instructor rather than a male instructor. These reports tell us that the sex is still a factor, just in a different way than anticipated. It also tells us that neither males nor females have any less of a need for support, yet both groups are more willing to seek females for that support. It does seem that the sex of the instructor has a great deal to do with whether or not a student would be willing to seek that instructor for support. These findings are consistent with research that has indicated that women are seen as more nurturing and provide more of a caregiving role; however, these reports still lead to questions about the implications of what this lending of support might mean in terms of female instructors' job responsibilities and/or workload. It leads one to question whether or not this difference in the perception of roles indicates that female faculty instructors are carrying more of burden in their teaching positions than are male instructors. Providing support takes time, and if females are carrying the majority of this burden, that could have implications for the increase in

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workloads, stress, and possibly even teacher burnout. This is certainly an area of interest for future research.

It is also important to note that there was not a significant difference found between age and willingness to seek personal support or between age and willingness to seek any kind of support (whether general, personal, academic, or career support). This finding tells us that age is not as much of a factor as originally suspected. This report could also tell us that the behaviors that an instructor displays in the classroom are much more important than age when a student is determining his or her willingness to seek support. However, an instructor's sex is seen as a more important factor to students than age when determining whether or not to seek that instructor for support. A more in-depth analysis of social support as it relates to these factors would be a key area of future research.

The following is a discussion in response to the results for research question 3 [Does a student's perception of having social support available to him or her from his or her instructor outside the classroom relate to his or her success in the classroom (as defined by grade in the specified class)?]. Overall, students reported relatively high estimated grades for the specified class (90% reported an estimated grade of a B- or higher). Also, the participants reported very high levels of teacher supportive behavior presented by the same instructor's class for which they were presenting an estimated grade. This finding leads one to conclude that teacher support does in fact relate positively to students' success in the classroom. However, since the students' actual grades were not available (only there estimated grades were), it could be that there is a relationship with the perception that one is going to earn a high grade and supportive

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behavior in the classroom. Moreover, students might assume that they are going to be given a higher grade if the instructor is seen as supportive. They might assume that because that instructor displays traits such as friendliness and/or approachability, that they are a more lenient grader. This assumption could be a product of student's perceptions.

The following is a discussion in response to research question 4 (Does a student's perception of having social support available to him or her from his or her instructor outside the classroom relate to his or her overall satisfaction with his or her university experience?). As stated previously, three questions at the end of the survey addressed whether or not they felt that there was a faculty member they could go to for academic or personal issues, and whether or not they believe that students *should* be able to go to faculty members for social support if needed. Also, as mentioned previously, participants were fairly evenly divided overall about whether or not there is a faculty member they can go to for academic issues and/or personal issues. Only 20% say that they sometimes disagree to strongly disagree that they should be able to go to faculty members if needed, and 80% say that they are unsure or that they should be able to go to faculty members if needed. We can conclude here that even though students reported that they feel they should have a faculty member to go to about certain issues but do not report as strongly that they do in fact have someone they feel comfortable going to, students' overall satisfaction is not affected by this fact.

Also, it could be that while students do value being able to go to faculty members for social support if needed, it may not be a strong factor for them when assessing their university satisfaction. It could be that while it is important, other factors, such as social

behaviors and acceptance (i.e. involvement in sororities/fraternities, athletic events/environments, social networks of friends, feelings of acceptance by peers, etc.) would be stronger indicators of overall satisfaction. Moreover, so few students are seeking support that we do not really know how exactly that has the potential to affect overall satisfaction.

The following is a discussion in response to the results found for the fifth research question (Does a student's perception of his or her instructor's credibility affect his or her willingness to seek that instructor for social support?): The reports showed that a student is in fact more willing to seek an instructor for support if the student finds that instructor to be a credible source. This is consistent with reports of the prestudy in which numerous participants gave responses that would indicate they value credibility when assessing whether or not to seek a particular instructor for support.

General Discussion/Implications

With the preliminary research and goals in mind for this study, particular findings and conclusions emerged. As stated previously, this study's aim was to uncover the relationships among several variables such as teacher caring, teacher credibility, teacher support, willingness of students to seek support, success in the classroom, and overall university satisfaction. Based on previous research in the areas of social support and of classroom instruction, participants reported that they would be more willing to seek an instructor for support if they find that instructor to be credible and caring. These results were reported using linear regression. Also, success in the classroom (as determined by estimated grade) did relate to the perception that social support is available from an instructor.

Also, contrary to the initial hypothesis, a significant relationship was not reported between a participant's perception that social support was available to him or her and the participants' overall university satisfaction. This could be for many reasons. While students did indicate that they felt strongly that their instructors displayed socially supportive behavior, the means were not as high for their willingness to seek support from them, particularly in regards to personal issues. Even though there was a relationship found between the two variables, students still reported higher means in the area of "teacher support" than they did in "willingness to seek support." Thus, while the traits that have been established by students as ones which indicate that an instructor is supportive were reported as being present, there seems to be a disconnect with some students—possibly external reasons why they would choose not to seek out an instructor for support. It may not be that the teachers are not supportive, but instead that students do not feel comfortable seeking out an instructor in general, no matter their behaviors. Again, there could be many reasons for this fact, which would be a valuable area of future research.

The present research has many implications and holds importance for several reasons. Based on research evidence that states that students are dealing with a huge transitional strain when they enter college (D'Zurilla and Sheedy 1991) (thus, the importance of the college student sample), it is important to identify the role that their instructors can have in this transition. First, it is important to identify whether or not students perceive that social support is available to them from their instructors. Next, it is important to uncover how important that availability is to them and how it is impacting their success in the classroom as well as their satisfaction with their college experience.

Uncovering these relationships will hopefully lead to an understanding of the ways in which these variables interact to embody a large aspect of students' college experience.

As stated previously, Michael Fielding (2000) argues that "[Education] is about becoming more fully human, [and] must be linked to a view of human being and becoming; it must rest upon a view about how we become persons" (p.52). If we stand by this statement and contend that education should be centered on the social aspects of the process as well as the academic outcomes, then prioritizing a students' perception that social support is available to him or her from his or her faculty members and/or instructors could be highly beneficial to students as they transition to college. While the reports did not show that the availability of support was directly related to a students' satisfaction, there was a relationship to success in the classroom, and students were certainly more willing to seek instructors for support who they felt displayed supportive behavior in the classroom. These findings give us reason enough to know that supportive behaviors can have an impact on students' college experiences.

Limitations

There were many limitations involved in this study. First, the sample was not representative of a wide range of regional demographics. The sample was a Southern one; therefore, it may be that the conclusions drawn would not be relevant in other regional areas across the country or internationally. Also, the sample did not represent a very wide range of academic divisions. Most of the participants reported that they were either Education or Communications majors; thus, it is difficult to predict whether or not these findings would be replicated across other disciplinary studies. Thirdly, there was not a wide range of ethnicities represented. The sample was primarily Caucasian (which is

consistent with the population of the university). Therefore, it would be difficult to know whether or not these results would emerge from samples that included a wider range of racial populations.

The study was conducted at a large, 4-year public, state university. It is possible that there would be different reports drawn from 2-year colleges, private universities, and/or a smaller school in general. At a smaller school, students may have more opportunities to develop personal relationships with instructors (due to smaller class sizes and more classes with the same instructors), which might lend itself to more of a willingness to seek those instructors for support, whether it be social support in general, academic support, career support, or support regarding personal issues. Also, at smaller teaching institutions, faculty members and/or instructors may have more time to devote to office hours or meetings with students who are in need of support, since they do not have the pressing deadlines of research that faculty members at larger state institutions typically experience. Finally, while the sample size was large enough to find significant results, I feel that the results could have been enhanced with a larger sample of participants.

Directions for Future Research

In the future, I hope to continue this research at a smaller institution to test these results with a different sample in a different context. I am interested in exploring the ways in which students' interactions with instructors at smaller universities relates to their success in the classroom as well as their overall university satisfaction. I am also interested in exploring whether or not students at smaller schools are more likely to be willing to seek their faculty members for support when needed. I feel that a population at

a school of a smaller size would be an interesting sample to research due to the smaller teacher to student ratios, as well as the fact that most students at smaller universities will not have as many (if any) experiences with Teaching Assistants. Thus, I am interested to see how taking Teaching Assistants out of the equations would affect the results of that research.

Also, I would like to investigate the perceptions that students have of instructors in regard to whether or not they view them as more or less rigorous based on whether they see them as more or less supportive. I would be interested to research how an instructor displaying socially supportive behaviors (such as friendliness, availability, and helpfulness) affects the ways that a student perceives that instructor's grading style and classroom expectations. I would like to pursue some additional research questions that emerged after conducting this study that deal with whether or not a teacher's supportive behaviors influences students to perceive them as more lenient in their grading and/or standards.

Finally, a direction for future research could be to include factors such as identification with instructor and how this relates to perceived availability for support as well as students' willingness to seek support (i.e. if a student identifies with a faculty member based on political leaning, religious affiliation, etc, does that make him or her more likely to seek that instructor for support?). Also, attractiveness could be included in the analysis as to how it affects an instructor's likeability and thus, whether or not it in turn affects a students' perception that the instructor is available for social support and/or that students' willingness to seek out that support.

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Appendix A

Survey Instrument for Prestudy:

Dear Participant,
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Our goal for conducting this study is to gather information concerning how and from whom we seek social support on an important issue, particularly any stressful event in our own lives. Your participation will help us to understand and define social support guidelines in college classrooms. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. Please respond to the following questions as accurately and completely as possible. Thank you again for your assistance.

Age:_____   **Sex**: M   F

College:
Arts and Sciences

Commerce and Business Administration

 Communication and Information Sciences

Community Health Sciences

Continuing Studies

Education

Engineering

Graduate

Honors

Human Environmental Sciences

Law

Nursing

Social work

Race (check all that apply): American Indian   Asian   African American/Black

Hispanic   White   Other (please specify): _____

<u>Instructions</u>:
1)   Compile a mental list of all the instructors (including professors, teaching assistants, lab instructors, etc) that you have had for a class in the past year.
2)   Now, think about which of those instructors you would have been willing to seek social support from if you had been experiencing a problem that was unrelated to class.
<u>Questions:</u>
3)   From your list, write down the top five qualities about any instructor that made them someone from which you would be **<u>likely </u>** to seek social support, and why.

1._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2._____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3._____

_____

_____

_____

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4._____

_____

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_____

_____

_____

_____

5._____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

4) Next, write down the top five qualities about any instructor that made them someone from which you **would not** be likely to seek social support, and why.

1._____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

2._____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

3._____
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_____
_____
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4._____
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_____
_____
_____

5._____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

5) Please tell us about anything else that you would like to share regarding your experience with social support in the classroom during the past year.

Appendix B

Prestudy Results/Typology

Likelihood of seeking support			
	Trait	Friendliness/Approachability	Connection with Students
Would be likely to seek social support	Friendly Nice Seemed cool Approachable Warm Down-to-earth Genuine Personable Easy-going		
Would not be likely to seek social support	Closed Rude Harsh Cold Stern Intimidating Unkind Arrogant Unfriendly Distant		
		Competency	Enthusiasm in the classroom
Would be likely to seek social support	Knowledgeable Hardworking Intelligent Confident Good teacher Logical		
Would not be likely to seek social support	Careless Unorganized Incompetent Do not teach well Lazy Non-professional	Monotone Too quiet Too serious Not funny Never smiles Doesn't look happy Boring	

Likelihood of seeking support			
	Trait	Self-Disclosure	Empathy
Would be likely to seek social support	Open about their personal life Shows vulnerability Does not censor himself/herself	Understanding Caring Supportive Sympathetic Good listener	
Would not be likely to seek social support	Not open about their personal life		Insensitive Not understanding Does not display a caring attitude
		Trustworthiness	Helpfulness
Would be likely to seek social support	Trustworthy Honest Realistic Truthful Loyal	Helpful Gives good feedback Ability to think critically	
Would not be likely to seek social support	Gossiper Untrustworthy Would not keep discussions confidential	Unwilling to help Unrealistic Sheltered Impractical Critical	

Likelihood of seeking support			

	Trait	Availability	Age
Would be likely to seek social support	Has open office hours Always available for help Makes time for students Always available outside of class	Young Close to my age Around college age	
Would not be likely to seek social support	Not available Office hours by appointment only Always busy Never respond to emails	Old Not in my age group	
		Sex	
Would be likely to seek social support	Same sex (speaking of a female) Female	===============	
Would not be likely to seek social support	Male Opposite sex (speaking of a male)	===============	

Appendix C

Survey Instrument for Present Study:

Dear Participant,
Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. My goal for conducting this study is to gather information concerning social support in the university setting. Your participation will help me to understand how social support functions in college classrooms. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time. Please respond to the following questions as accurately and completely as possible. Thank you again for your assistance.

Age:_____   **Sex**: M   F

College:
Arts and Sciences

Commerce and Business Administration

 Communication and Information Sciences

Community Health Sciences

Continuing Studies

Education

Engineering

Graduate

Honors

Human Environmental Sciences

Law

Nursing

Social work

Race (circle all that apply): American Indian   Asian   Hispanic

 African American/Black   White   Other (please specify): _____

Now, think about the instructor that you had for the **class right before this one**. If this is the first class that you have had today, think about the instructor of the **last class that you had yesterday**.

Approximate the number of students in that class: _____

What is the sex of the instructor? (Circle one)   M   F

What is the race of the instructor? (Circle all that apply)

American Indian   Asian   Hispanic

 African American/Black   White   Other (please specify): _____

Estimate your current grade for that class (circle one):

A+   A   A-   B+   B   B-   C+   C   C-   D   F

 A.) Teacher Caring Measure

Now, Rate that instructor (the one who teaches the last class you had right before this one) on these scales from one to seven. Circle the number that you feel best describes him or her.

1. The instructor...

Doesn't care about me   Cares About Me

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

2. The instructor…

Doesn't have my interests at heart   Has my interests at heart

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

3. The instructor is…

Self-Centered   Not Self-Centered

       1   2   3   4   5   6   7

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4. The instructor is…

Unconcerned with me   Concerned With Me

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

5. The instructor is…

Insensitive   Sensitive

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

6.) The instructor is…

Empathetic   Apathetic

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

7. The instructor is…

Not understanding   Understanding

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

8. The instructor is…

Unresponsive   Responsive

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

9. The instructor…

Doesn't understand how I feel   Understands how I feel

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

10. The instructor…

Doesn't understand how I think   Understands how I think

      1   2   3   4   5   6   7

Teven, J., & McCroskey, J. (1997, January). The relationship of perceived teacher caring with student learning and teacher evaluation. Communication Education, 46(1).

B.) Credibility Measure

Instructions: Again, considering the instructor that you had for the class **right before this one**, or if this is your first class today, the instructor for the **last class you had yesterday**, please indicate your impression of the instructor by circling the appropriate number between the pairs of adjectives below that you feel best describes him or her. The closer the number is to an adjective, the more certain you are of your evaluation.

Competence

        Intelligent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unintelligent
        Untrained 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Trained
        Inexpert 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Expert
        Informed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Uninformed
    Incompetent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Competent
        Bright 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Stupid

Goodwill

        Cares about me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't care about me
    Has my interests at heart 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Doesn't have my interests at heart
        Self-centered 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Not self-centered
    Concerned with me 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unconcerned with me
        Insensitive 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Sensitive
    Not understanding 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Understanding

Trustworthiness

        Honest 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Dishonest
    Untrustwothy 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Trustworthy
        Honorable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Dishonorable
        Moral 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Immoral
        Unethical 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Ethical
        Phoney 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Genuine

McCroskey, J., & Teven, J. (1999, March). Goodwill: A Reexamination of the Construct and its Measurement. Communication Monographs, 66(1), 90.

C.) Teacher Support Measure:

Instructions: Still basing your responses on the instructor you had **right before this class**, list whether or not you think that instructor exhibits the following traits. Rate them on a scale from 1 to 7 in each area, 1 being "He or she NEVER exhibits this trait" to 7 being "He or she ALWAYS exhibits this trait."

1.) Friendly

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

2.) Easy-Going

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

3.) Approachable

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

4.) Treats Students With Respect

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

5.) Shows a Desire for Students to Learn

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

6.) Treats Students as Friends, Not Subordinates

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

7.) Talkative

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

8.) Upbeat

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

9.) Outgoing

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

10.) Open about his/her Personal Life

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

11.) Shows Vulnerability

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

12.) Does Not Censor him/herself

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

13.) Understanding

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

14.) Caring

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

15.) Sympathetic

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

16.) Trustworthy

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

17.) Honest

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

18.) Loyal

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

19.) Helpful

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

20.) Gives Good Feedback

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

21.) Ability to Think Critically

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

22.) Has Open Office Hours

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

23.) Always Available for Help

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

24.) Makes time for Students

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Never	Almost Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Almost Always	Always

D.) Willingness to Seek Support Measure

Instructions: Still based on the instructor you had **right before this class**, respond to these questions based on the 1 to 7 scale (one being "definitely not" and 7 being "very likely") regarding how likely you would be to seek support from this instructor based on the circumstance given.

1.) If I were struggling academically, I feel like I could go to this instructor for support.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

2.) If I were feeling overwhelmed with my schoolwork, I would seek this instructor for help.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

3.) If I had questions about an assignment, I would feel comfortable asking this instructor for help.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

4.) If I were debating about whether or not to change my major, I would seek out this instructor for advice about the situation.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

5.) If I were struggling with which career path to choose, I would consider seeking out help from this instructor regarding this decision.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

6.) If I were trying to prepare for a job interview, I would feel comfortable seeking advice from this instructor.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

7.) If I were having a bad day in regards to my personal life, I would consider this instructor a good person to talk to.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

8.) If I had just broken up with my significant other, I would seek support from this instructor.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

9.) If I were going through a hard time with my family, this instructor is someone from whom I would seek support.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Definitely not	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Not Sure	Possibly	Probably	Very likely

E.) University Satisfaction Measure

Now, think about your feelings about your university experience as a whole. Respond to these questions accordingly. Circle the response that you feel best reflects your experience and whether you agree or disagree with the statements.

1.) Overall, I am satisfied with my university experience.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

2.) I plan to return next semester to the university which I attend (if you plan to graduate this semester, respond as to whether or not you would return next semester if you were not graduating).

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

3.) My university experience has met and/or exceeded my expectations.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

4.) I would recommend the university which I attend to someone who was applying to schools.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

5.) I am glad that I chose the university that I did.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

6.) I feel that there is a faculty member that I can go to if I need to talk about academic issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

7.) I feel that there is a faculty member that I can go to if I need to talk about personal issues.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

8.) I believe that students should be able to go to faculty members for social support if needed.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Sometimes Disagree	Unsure	Sometimes Agree	Agree	Stronlgy Agree

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[i] Excerpts from the discussion of literature from Rizor, D. & Joiner, A. (2009). Too young? Too old? Too friendly? Too rude? : Exploring emotional support at the university level and what it takes to find an emotionally supportive educational environment. Unpublished Manuscript.