To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Adam Mendel Tanzer entitled "An Examination of Doctoral Training from the Students' Perspective." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Education.

Schuyler Huck, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:

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Accepted for the Council:

Interim Vice Provost and
Dean of The Graduate School

AN EXAMINATION OF DOCTORAL TRAINING FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVE

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Adam Mendel Tanzer
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents

Michael Tanzer

and

Judith Tanzer.

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I would like to express my appreciation to the eight doctoral students who were interviewed for this study. They spoke openly about a variety of experiences and provided very interesting information. This dissertation would not have been possible without their time and effort.

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Dr. Cheryl Travis has played many important roles in my Ph.D. experience, including teacher, committee member, mentor and friend. My education, and life, have been enriched through my relationship with her.

This dissertation delineated the many important aspects of the mentor-mentee relationship. The chairperson of my committee, Dr. Huck, has provided for me first hand the importance of having an excellent mentor. He always encouraged me to take ownership of my dissertation, be creative and be true to myself. I am very fortunate to have had him as my mentor; he is a wonderful advisor, and person.

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Finally, I was thrilled to have my wife Wendy by my side throughout all of my graduate school years. Having her there was wonderful at some points, essential at others. There is much discussion in the dissertation of relationships. This relationship, though it was not the only close one I had during my Ph.D. training, was the only one I needed.

ABSTRACT

This study examined doctoral training from the students' perspective. Several different aspects of the involved experience of doctoral training were investigated, including higher education, political and psychological concerns. Eight Ph.D. students enrolled in the social sciences were interviewed. A qualitative methodological approach was used for the data gathering and analysis. A variety of findings were reported. Two of the main findings were (1) the importance of social relationships (with mentors and colleagues) for the students; and (2) the bi-directional aspect of the mentor relationship. Several changes were suggested for the improvement of the Ph.D. training. One conclusion emphasized the importance of departments and universities having established policies to increase the likelihood that mentor-mentee and peer relationships will be formed. An additional suggestion for the improvement of Ph.D. training includes providing training for professors and students involved in mentor relationships.

PREFACE

I begin with remarks made to me by two doctoral students. They were at the same place in their training and they had completed all of their requirements leading up to their dissertations. Yet, they describe two very different experiences.

> *It is not just a simple hurdle I have to jump through to get where I want to be. I have to throw myself into this. It is the only way it will be bearable. You sacrifice your entire life. Any social life is gone. Any hope of decent social relations with people disappears, because your focused mostly on you're studies…As you get into the first and second year of grad school …I listen to them saying "I am working my butt off. I am working so hard, but it's fun." I realized that I am convincing myself that it is fun because it's the only way you can tolerate it. I say, ultimately, when you look back on it, it's the most miserable experience you have had, but you convince yourself it's fun or you won't survive.*

> *When I got here, at the end of the first semester, there was so much to do and people were going to let me do it. And I could be curious and I could follow those questions I am curious about. And I met people who said, "here read this book." My curiosity really got unleashed and there were people to feed it. People said "yes, that's a good thing to ask" instead of saying "don't ask that." My excitement and my curiosity caused the professors to get excited. They encouraged me and saw it as a good thing. They would open doors and say "why don't you go do this" or "I've got this project if you want to work on that with me." I could recognize that I had more abilities and strengths than I realized in the first place. It was just pushing the boundaries further all the time.*

Why did one student experience misery and one liberation? What can doctoral programs do to increase the prospect of students experiencing the latter instead of the former? What should new students know so that they can experience an expansion of their boundaries, as opposed to being bound up in an unbearable experience?

These contrasting quotes illustrate that the process of getting a Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) does not have the same effect on candidates. Different people have much different experiences. Wouldn't it enrich the students, the faculty and our society if all doctoral students benefited to the degree that the second student did? The aim of this dissertation is to explore the many issues that bring about these differences. My hope is that a solid understanding of the problems will be a guide toward positive change.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
II.	OVERVIEW	10
III.	EXPECTATIONS	16
IV.	EVALUATION	28
V.	FACULTY, STUDENTS AND GENDER	46
VI.	PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS	62
VII.	DEPARTMENT SUPPORT	75
VIII.	ACADEMIC FREEDOM VERSUS CONFORMITY	85
IX.	CHANGES AND CONCLUSIONS	94
BIBLIOGRAPHY		101
APPENDIX		115
VITA		126

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The value that the people of the United States place on education is demonstrated in many ways. Attending school is mandatory for all children; tax incentives encourage people to take part in higher education; and every state in the nation has a complex educational infrastructure of public and private grammar schools, high schools, community colleges, four-year colleges and universities.

The apex of our higher education system is the doctoral program (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992), and it serves an important function for the country. Those who earn the Ph.D. are society's future researchers, and the generators of new ideas for dealing with society's difficulties (Mandelbaum, 1980). Doctoral work is also the training ground for future college teachers (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). One doctoral-trained teacher can affect the education of hundreds of future students.

An example of the importance the US society places on doctoral education is the immense financial cost to society for training doctoral students (Kerlin, 1995). An even more dramatic statement about the significance placed on graduate education is found in the report of The National Commission on Student Financial Assistance. The report's conclusion is that "a strong national security program, a healthy, growing economy, and prospects for improvement in the quality of life all depend on a system of vigorous high-quality graduate

education" (Pelczar, 1985, p.169). With the large investment of time and resources required of the students, one can assume that individuals entering doctoral training also place a considerable value on it. In summary, doctoral education has a great impact on the US and that is why we value and invest in it.

Because of its importance to society, there are sound reasons for examining and evaluating the state of Ph.D. training. This chapter will introduce several aspects of the training that are important for consideration. First, the academy's goals for Ph.D. programs will be explored. Some writers have raised the possibility that higher education's real intentions are different than their stated aims; this issue will be looked at further. Following this, there will be a discussion of students' expectations for their training; this may or may not concur with those of the academy. Additionally, this chapter will examine whether these expectations are being fulfilled.

Academia's Goals for Doctoral Training

The Council of Graduate Schools' (CGS) booklet, The Doctor of Philosophy Degree: A Policy Statement, was written in part "to give prospective and current Ph.D. degree students a reasonably clear picture of the purposes of the Ph.D...." (CGS, 1990, p.9). This document reports the aim of the doctoral degree as follows:

> The Doctor of Philosophy program is designed to prepare a student to become a scholar, that is, to discover, integrate, and apply knowledge, as well as communicate and disseminate it. Such skills may lead to careers in social, governmental, business, and industrial organizations as well as in university and college teaching, research and administration. The program emphasizes the development of the student's capacity to make significant original

> contributions to knowledge in a context of freedom of inquiry and expression. A well-prepared doctoral student will have developed the ability to understand and evaluate critically the literature of the field and to apply appropriate principles and procedures to the recognition, evaluation, interpretation, and understanding of issues at the frontiers of knowledge. The student will also have an appropriate awareness of and commitment to the ethical practices appropriate to the field. All of this is accomplished in apprenticeship to and close association with faculty members who are experienced in research and teaching. (1990, p.10)

The German university model of the 19th century greatly influenced the Ph.D. programs in the United States (Hartnett & Katz, 1976). This is illustrated by the critical element in CGS' stated aim for doctoral education, "the development of the student's capacity to make significant original contributions to knowledge in a context of freedom of inquiry and expression." This is similar to a goal of the German university model, reported by one researcher as the "emphasis on freedom of teaching and learning...it meant that teacher and student were seekers after the truth without regard for the consequences, whatever they might be" (Walters, 1965, p.7). Clearly, the official aims of the Ph.D., the acquisition of the accepted knowledge base, and the contribution of original research in a "free" atmosphere, have changed very little from their original influence. In theory, the generation of new knowledge in a field by a doctoral student need not be the creation of new knowledge. It can also be a critique of past generalizations. Eugen Pusic (1980, p.130) emphasizes this latter feature:

> To subvert existing truth is the highest aim in science. This is highly exceptional, and it is in-built in the activity. If we are true to our profession, we simply have to do this, whatever our political or ideological preconceptions may be. On the other hand, the institutions of graduate education in which we pursue science, the universities, are some of the most conservative institutions that exist, and are so necessarily and independently of the intentions of the radicals or conservatives who teach in them.

Noam Chomsky has explained that the conservative nature of social institutions, including higher education, stems from their purpose of ensuring that members of a society perceive the world in a way that is supportive of their existing authority. Chomsky (1997) says: "in any society, the respectable intellectuals, those who will be recognized as serious intellectuals, will overwhelmingly tend to be those who are subordinated to power" (p.189). Thus, according to Pusic and Chomsky, higher education is inherently conservative and may not provide the "free" atmosphere espoused by the German tradition and the CGS. Doctoral students may then feel a pressure to conform, "subordinate to power," and thereby become disempowered by systemic and programmatic demands.

Bernard Berelson (1965) disagrees with the position that graduate training leads to rigidity and conformity. He argues that "those fields that have a method that can be articulated and taught do well in the graduate school and, in such cases, graduate training does lead directly to creativity" (p.219). In effect, Berelson disagrees with Pusic and Chomsky when they describe graduate training, on the institutional level, as consisting of a set of goals diametrically opposed to the CGS statement. The question remains, which set of objectives have students experienced in their doctoral training?

The previously stated CGS perspective and the German tradition underline the importance of the relationships between the student and his or her faculty members for the fulfillment of the goals for doctoral education. These involvements hold the potential for support and empowerment of the student,

such as encouraging his/her research free from any pressures to conform. For example, one doctoral student stated in an interview:

> I started coming up with my own ideas and my own thoughts about what I wanted to do...I think by that stage (his third year) Dale (a full professor) and I were interacting in a fairly even-handed way...I think that while I was doing that study and afterwards I began to feel even more independent and much more willing to rely on my own interests as being valid and reasonable... (Hartshorn, 1976, p.180)

A student's connections with professors may also lead the student to sense that he or she needs to bow to the professor's need to control, and thus feel disempowered. Hence, both the institution's policies and procedures, and the student's interpersonal relationships can affect his/her feeling of power and control of the training process.

These conditions raise many important questions. Are the official goals--as Pusic expresses them, the learning and creating of new knowledge through "subverting the existing truth"--being encouraged and supported on systemic and interpersonal levels in doctoral programs? Or is the contrary true; that higher education's policies and faculty-student relationships discourage free investigation of "established wisdom."

Students Stated Goals for their Doctoral Training

The previous section discussed the academy's stated goals for Ph.D. training and raised the possibility that a different, covert set of objectives may be encouraged on an institutional and/or interpersonal level. Students bring their own set of expectations to their doctoral experience, which may or may not agree with either of the previously mentioned aims of higher education's expectations.

A literature review using the databases of ERIC (a database for educational issues) and PSYCH Info (a database for issues relating to psychology) indicated that there was practically no research from the previous twenty years examining what doctoral students' aims are for their training.

One study of college seniors in 1976 concluded that the students' expectations of graduate school were the following: "excellent teaching, friendly professors, and more studying than undergraduate (school)...the course work ...is stimulating and that they would like it...they did not believe the work emphasizes practical training...long hours of work are required" (Baird, 1976, p.26). It is important to examine current student expectations and whether they are being met. This consideration is significant because doctoral training requires a large time and resource commitment from students, the faculty, and others affiliated with the university. Hence, it would be valuable for individuals considering doctoral training to be aware of what to expect from the experience. For example, in one study of female graduate students, some women described the Ph.D. as being extremely different than what they had anticipated. A doctoral candidate said,

> I had originally thought the process was set up to help me learn as much as possible, but now I realize that the process is mostly political and has very little to do with helping students learn. I feel pretty disillusioned. (Kerlin, 1997, p.1)

Knowing what the students' expectations are also benefits the school. If departments have a clear understanding of what their students hope to receive in their training, they can either accommodate those interests or discuss with the

students why their expectations are not going to be met by the department. In either case, student satisfaction will increase (Cooke, Sims, & Peyrefitte, 1995).

Emotional Aspect of Doctoral Training

Doctoral training can be investigated and understood by examining a tangible criteria like the length of time taken to acquire the degree, attrition rate, and job placement after graduation. These surface-level measures are instructive, but they most assuredly do not explain the entire story. For instance, in the first half of 1999, the US' economy was soaring and people may have assumed after reading the stock market pages of the newspaper that this was a golden era for our country. But, the economic indicators, though illustrative, only described part of the state of the nation. As billions were being earned, this country also experienced two major shootings in public schools, a murder rampage in an affluent neighborhood in Atlanta, and rape and destruction at the peace-and-love-inspired musical concert "Woodstock '99." Just as the Dow Jones and the NASDAQ do not indicate all of the US's current conditions, neither do the tangible Ph.D. criteria tell all of what that experience is about.

Graduate school "often contributes to the development of emotional difficulties for many students" (Winston, 1990, p.1). The emotional difficulties raise the question about the negative psychological effects of the doctoral experience. Specifically, what is the psychological context for students who are involved in the doctoral program? What are the motivations and needs of the students during this trying period? What factors contribute to more positive

experiences on a psychological level? What is the psychological impact for doctoral students of their expectations being met or not met?

One can assume that whether students' expectations are satisfied and whether they feel empowered would have a significant psychological impact. If students' expectations of such a major experience are fulfilled, their outlook on career potential and the soundness of societal institutions may well be more positive. However, if the students feel disempowered by departmental policies and personnel, it could lead to a general skepticism about institutions, as well as self-dought. Thus, the impact of entering such a major experience with many expectations and the degree of their fulfillment will have a strong impact on the individual. Therefore, examination of the experience on a psychological level is essential.

Purpose of this Study

Despite its importance for doctoral candidates and for society, there is little research on graduate education (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). Katz and Hartnett (1976) state, "the student has rarely been the focus of systematic attention in over one hundred years of graduate and professional training in the United States" (p.xiii). Tinto (1993) echoes this view and calls for more research in the field, and especially research based on the students' perspective and the impact of institutional behavior.

Many different factors affect the pursuit of the doctorate, including the structure of higher education, and psychological and political concerns. This study has several purposes. One is to explore different levels of the experience.

This will (1) introduce the reader to the many variables involved in the doctoral program and its students, and (2) highlight the importance of understanding how each variable impacts the pursuit of the Ph.D.

A second purpose is to give the students a voice in the research on these issues. The data that were analyzed and will be presented in future chapters derive from discussions with eight doctoral students (see appendix for further delineation of the research methodology). It is critical that the people who are receiving the education have a presence in the literature, rather than their current status on the sidelines of the program.

A third purpose is not only to delineate the current situation to departments and future students, but also to recommend ways to enhance their experience. Doctoral education requires a large time and economic investment on the part of the students. Additionally, Americans are enrolling in US Ph.D. programs in greater numbers than ever before, and US programs have become a mecca for students from foreign countries (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992). Departments and universities invest such a large amount of resources in the doctorate that they would be well served by considering new ways of enriching their programs.

The Ph.D. is the highest degree our vast educational system offers. The more information we can acquire about this experience, the better society and students can benefit from their investments.

CHAPTER II

OVERVIEW

Introduction

In the chapters that follow, I elaborate on my thesis that there are many factors that enhance or diminish the doctoral education process, and among these are psychological and political elements. At this point I will preview the upcoming chapters and, in the course of their explanation, I will offer my reasons for identifying these as topics.

Overview of the Chapters

Every student enters the doctoral program with expectations. These hopes help to shape the learning process. The next chapter looks at what doctoral students' recalled about their expectations prior to matriculation. This is an important starting point because it helps to set the stage for the subsequent student comments on such issues as their evaluation of the Ph.D. and what changes they would suggest for the training.

Chapter Four considers how students evaluate their education. This topic provides information about what pursuing the doctorate is like for the students. That is one of the main purposes of this dissertation. Future students will benefit from understanding what the process involves prior to deciding whether to enter doctoral programs. Based on students' evaluations, departments will be able to determine what currently in place is useful and what aspects need to be changed.

The society in which one is educated affects the instruction provided to students. Understanding in what way societal factors shape the students' training is examined in two chapters. Chapter Five focuses on how the major social construct of gender may impact their educational experience. Another chapter examines if higher education has an agenda that influences greatly a student's research. A major contention in these chapters is that students do not operate in a vacuum and that societal factors shape the training that takes place.

In addition to looking at how some issues in the external world impact on students, I turn to students' internal world. Chapter Six examines several psychological issues. I contend that Harry Stack Sullivan's interpersonal theory of personality helps to understand student expectations, evaluations and experiences.

Sullivan's theory is based on the view that life is experienced on a relational level. What we need, how we act, and even who we are, can be understood by our fundamental drive to form relationships. In this dissertation I argue that this approach is a way not only for understanding human behavior generally, but also for making sense out of the Ph.D. experience. We will see how the students' interests and high points are situated within a relational frame.

There are several reasons why it is important to understand the psychological factors. First, a focus on tangible factors of the education is too limited. I have known many students in doctoral programs who appear to be having an excellent experience; they are fully funded, have high grades and are involved in research. Yet, they are dissatisfied and anxious to finish their Ph.D.

as quickly as possible. Why is this the case? It is clear that there are psychological forces and needs at play that must be considered in order to fully understand this.

Another reason for applying Sullivan's theory is that it integrates and makes coherent several important pieces of results that the students spoke about, including the importance of having a mentor and friends during their education. To simply state that social support is important during a stressful experience does not explain its importance. Psychological analysis tells us that interpersonal relations are paramount in feeling safe and free from anxiety. Students want to be involved and feel connected with their professors and colleagues. They want and need a sense of community. The psychological analysis greatly contributes to the understanding of the two quotes presented earlier in the preface.

Picking up on two important themes, the importance of research in the doctoral training and the value of relationships, Chapter Seven looks at the level of research help and guidance provided to the students from professors other than their mentors. There is a description of the practical benefits of this, beyond the psychological ones mentioned in the previous chapter, and suggestions for improving this situation.

The final chapter brings together ways of improving doctoral education. These are gathered from two main sources: others' scholarly writing and the interviews I conducted with several doctoral students. If we want the Ph.D. to be as worthwhile as possible, the first step is understanding.

My Journey

One initial question I often have when I begin to read a book is, "What drew the writer to his or her subject?" That question can be asked of me since I am part of the Ph.D. program. One might ask whether I am a disgruntled doctoral student with an axe to grind. Were frustration and anger the energy fueling this project?

Some books have been written for those cathartic reasons. In this case, though, my interest in the subject derives from a deep interest in the experience of the Ph.D. Glaser (1978) stated,

> The most fun comes in studying a personal life-cycle interest. It is automatically consummatory, since the analyst's vitality is consumed by what he (sic) might find out that informs and helps him (sic) personally. As the study proceeds, the analyst personally grows from what he is learning in general that applies to his personal life with some variation. Such energy assures, as much as possible, the completion of research, since its source springs eternal until the life-cycle changes and the life plan progresses. (p.28)

I thoroughly enjoyed my doctoral work and have few regrets about the undertaking. The reason for my strong interest in the subject derives from the impact it had on me. I never have been involved in an experience that was as challenging and intense as the pursuit of the Ph.D. I needed to push myself intellectually in ways that I had never been asked to do, including reading a tremendous amount of books and articles, writing and thinking--all at a very complex level. These tasks were intensified due to the length of the experience. Writing difficult papers and learning intricate theories year after year was a journey that I had never taken, and, at times, I was unsure if I would be able to reach my destination.

The challenging aspects of the experience led to a transformation in my life. I felt anxiety and uncertainty that I had never experienced and I have accomplished things that I did not know I was capable of doing. I feel stronger and more competent than I ever have. I am also more aware of my limitations and weaknesses. With the Ph.D. being such an important part of my life, I naturally became interested in other people's doctoral experiences. Through discussions with others, I was certain that it would ultimately help me evaluate what I have learned in my journey.

When I entered the Ph.D. program, my expectations were that I would work hard, learn a great deal about my field, and really enjoy the process. I did not have well-developed views about what the Ph.D. would be like. It was something that I wanted; I thought it would be prestigious and provide a certain level of economic and personal stability in my life.

I was also interested in this goal because of my family influence. My parents, sibling, and other relatives have always valued education greatly. Several immediate family members earned higher education degrees and taught in universities. Throughout my childhood my family encouraged me to determine my own future and to attend graduate school. After receiving my bachelor's degree, I immediately started thinking about the next educational level. I complete the Ph.D. as a different person, in many ways, than when I started. I feel that I have gained more knowledge and wisdom, both about myself and relationships with others.

All subsequent chapters follow the same form. First, an aspect of the doctoral experience will be introduced. Next, there will be a summary of the results from my conversations with other students about that topic. Finally, each chapter will end with analysis and suggestions for change.

CHAPTER III

EXPECTATIONS

Introduction

In this chapter I will discuss the issue of student expectations for their Ph.D. training. The topics that I will cover are as follows: why it is important to probe expectations; the expectations recalled about the doctoral program held by students prior to matriculation; the factors which contributed to their expectations; and suggestions for departments and future students, based on the study's findings.

Understanding Expectations

In my interviews I placed great stress on learning student expectations, prior to their matriculation, for their doctoral programs. I think this information is important for the following reasons: first, if departments and professors obtain this information directly from the students, they will not have to speculate about what students are hoping to get out of their experience. As previously noted, there is very little research that covers student perspectives on Ph.D. education. Perhaps, departments have assumed they knew what their incoming students wanted to get from the doctoral experience.

The nature of higher education has changed rapidly. The traditional trajectory of obtaining a Ph.D. and then working full-time as a professor is no longer the norm. Kirp (2000, p.25) reports that "Nearly half of all higher-education faculty, twice as many as in 1970, are part-timers." This change and many other

societal developments may have likely altered student's motivations for a doctorate, and how they want to use the degree in their career. Even if departments knew at one point what their students wanted out of their degree, the dynamic nature of higher education and the economy in the 21st century calls into question the applicability of old assumptions. Are universities exclusively grooming students to become professors, while more and more students look forward to working in industry or in government? It is essential to take this measure of current students.

A second reason for understanding student expectations is that the student is more greatly to gain satisfaction from an experience when expectations are met. To achieve what one has counted on is gratifying. If departments value student satisfaction, the first step is to understand what they are hoping to get out of the experience.

One reason for appreciating student satisfaction is its link to attrition. Nerad and Cerny (1993, p.31) comment in their study of one university that "...students who left graduate school after one or two years often reported that their expectations about the general field of study, graduate student life, or the focus of the program had not been met." Researchers at another university found that "...students with higher levels of school satisfaction and affective commitment, and those whose expectations had been met were more likely to continue with their degree program..." (Cooke et al., 1995, p.685). A third report found that "...three reasons for attrition in the first year of graduate school were common in the accounts of the ten humanities students I interviewed: intellectual

difficulty, practice of the discipline did not meet expectations, and the faculty life did not meet expectations" (Golde, 1998, p.59).

A third reason for understanding expectations is to gauge whether these are realistic. If they are not, the students are setting themselves up for disappointment, and may either drop out or delay their completion. If their expectations are understood and discussed at the outset, however, departments and students both benefit. As Cooke et al. (1995, p.686) noted, "If new students are forewarned that some expectations are unrealistic (certainly possible for any graduate program), they might be less disappointed with their graduate experience."

For these reasons, it is clear that one way to improve the experience of doctoral education is for departments to discuss expectations with their applicants during the interview process, and again in student orientation into the program. This discussion will enable the students to increase their awareness of the educational process they are about to enter, and possibly lower the attrition rate. Additionally, if applicants know in the interview stage what the department offers, and departments know what applicants' desire, there is a greater likelihood that a good fit between the student and the department will result.

Students' Expectations

Mentor Relationship

The great majority of the students I talked to said they expected to have a mentor during the doctoral experience. The initial questions I asked of the

students were open-ended, as for example, "What were the expectations you had for the Ph.D. experience?," and "How would you evaluate the experience compared to your expectations?" What needs to be highlighted is that the students repeatedly brought up the issue of mentor relationships. Reading isolated quotes from the students may lead one to interpret this on a practical level, that mentors provide specific information that enables the student to complete his or her requirements. I will argue in Chapter Six, however, that the students' repeated references to wanting and then benefiting from interpersonal relationships, and the language that they use, demonstrate that this should also be analyzed at the psychological level. There are certain needs and motivations in wanting a mentor that can only be understood through examining subjective emotional factors.

Research states that there is ambiguity about how the role and function of mentor is defined (Lyons, Scroggins, & Rule, 1990). Similarly, different students told of a desire for guidance in different areas. For instance, Barbara was very focused on improving her teaching:

> *When I started teaching at the university where I got my Master's, the first semester that I taught they literally put me into a classroom, gave me a textbook, and said "go teach." What I was hoping I would get here was an opportunity to work closely with one or two professors. And actually sit down with them and have them say "this is how to write a syllabus, this is how to decide what to talk about during a lecture." I wanted to get a lot of hands-on information in order to become a better teacher. That was one of the main pieces in terms of career aspirations that I was hoping to get...And literally very basic things like how to create a good and fair test. It took me hours and hours and hours to construct my very first test because I did not know what to do. I was trying to throw in questions from everything we had covered. It was an extraordinarily difficult test, it turned out. So very practical things. Basically, I wanted to learn by example, instead of jumping in and either sinking or swimming.*

Mary stated some specifics pertaining to developing as a researcher:

> *They would give me support in helping to formulate ideas. Support in how to pursue research. Maybe, when things would go wrong in the (research methodology) I would have the opportunity to talk to these people.*

Stan wanted a mentor to provide socialization into the profession:

> *My only expectations were that I would develop relationships, more relationships with faculty which would involve working on articles, books and things of that nature… I had some ties with the faculty as a Master's student. I TAed for a professor for two years and got to know him fairly well, personally…I was hoping to develop relationships with others and learn about presenting papers at conferences, the publication process, drafting a curriculum vita and then applying for jobs.*

Hard Work

The majority of the students with whom I conversed also said that they expected the doctoral experience would involve hard work. This opinion is illustrated by Mark: "I knew that it would be a lot of hard work and that I would have to discipline myself to study like I've never done before."

Other Expectations

Additionally students reported a wide variety of other expectations that did not lend themselves to any broad grouping. For example, William said,

> *I thought it would be something fairly rewarding, particularly in terms of the kinds of people that I would be associated with, expanding my network of people and participating in this type of career development. I thought it would provide me with skills and knowledge to meet people that I probably would not have known if I had not been going through this process...I also had expectations of having the opportunity to pursue certain intellectual interests, lines of thought and research interests…I expected to continue to improve my verbal and written communication skills and further my ability to consolidate information and synthesize information in order to present it to different groups. And just perhaps personal skills, gaining more of a sense of personal efficacy.*

Kelly reported some of her expectations, "I basically thought I would have to write a lot of papers, but not take a lot of tests. I thought I would do more hands-on work, which is exactly what I have done."

In the interviews with students, then, their anticipation of having a mentor and needing to work hard were the most common expectations. Developing relationships with other faculty, learning different skills, and pursuing research interests were other expectations. Interestingly, only one of the students said what she expected was related to information gathered at her application interview. What factors, then, influenced the formulation of these students' expectations?

Factors Influencing the Expectations

The Gender Factor

In our country's history, gender has significantly affected people's lives, such as women not having the right to vote, and today's more subtle, though still damaging, forms of sexism, such as women earning approximately 74 cents to every dollar a man earns (Crawford & Unger, 2000). Gender has also long impacted higher education, with programs initially not admitting any women into doctoral education, and then overt oppression evolving into covert forms, such as admitting fewer women into programs or funding them at lower levels. Crawford and Unger (2000) report that "Although some things have changed for the better, equality has not yet been achieved. A worldwide wage gap, underepresentation

of women in positions of status and power, and significant problems of violence against girls and women persist" (p.2).

Issues of gender still are a major influence on society and its institutions. Students were asked if gender affected the expectations they had for their doctoral experience. Half of the women said that these issues did not enter into their thinking about the experience. For instance, Kelly stated:

> *I sometimes tend to leap into things, and say I will clear up the mess when I figure out what I have got here...And I really thought going into a Ph.D. program that gender would not be a big issue. Sometimes I am just very naïve about these things and just figure that these things are going to work out and don't spend energy on them until I run into a problem with them.*

Barbara said: "I don't know specifically that gender has really (made a difference). I cannot say that it had any influence on what I was expecting."

Other women believed that it did matter. Mary explained that she thought her gender would have a minor effect:

> *I am sure people go into the program not expecting any kind of community. They expect to study on their own and get through it. I am lucky I found an advisor who does help me build that kind of community. So I guess that was part of my expectations as well. I felt I must be able to have somebody I could work closely with and a lot of people do not necessarily expect that. And I do think that is related gender.*

The one woman who stated that she did anticipate that her gender would negatively effect her doctoral experience, Susan, described it as follows:

> *Gender has been an issue probably more in my doctoral studies, more than ever. I didn't expect it so much to be but…I'm very straightforward. I have had some problems. I definitely have observed people being shocked at my straightforwardness. And I suspect, though I may be wrong, that it is not expected for me to talk in a straightforward manner as a female in the South. So as far as gender, I've encountered some issues, nothing really that I expected before...I always knew that most professors in this experience would be male. When I envisioned a professor, Dr. So and So, and there was no first name, I'm sure I always envisioned a male...So I expected that there*

would be a lot more female graduate students, but still a lot of left over old boys network faculty members...I didn't really give it much thought. I think now I sort of know in hindsight. I have been here for a few years, I can easily say that I thought it would be this and this and it has been. I don't know if I really had any expectations beyond just come in and don't get too personal. When gender issues come up you're generally talking about positions of power and sexuality. I have no problem asserting myself if the latter... if anyone would propose anything inappropriate. But as far as power, I think I expected that males in general would have more power in the more experienced part of the science, but I guess I expected it to even out...I don't think I expected any difference among the students...The area that I'm studying has been a male dominated researcher area. Females really do not research it. Now there are a few who have become very famous because they have stuck with it and done some good research. I expected to come in here and do that and meet with some resistance. I expected resistance and I actually probably expected more resistance than I have experienced, specifically tied to that research. So I guess I was sort of ready for a fight before I got here.

None of the men thought their gender would have any impact on their experience. Half of the men did not address the direct questions and instead discussed unrelated issues of gender. This left me with the impression that the men were dismissing the issue, that their gender simply did not concern them.

Some men did address the issue of gender, by saying that it had no effect. Stan said, "I gave no thought to whether I would be a good fit or anything like that. I did not expect to have any problems or anything like that. Fortunately, there are more females entering into the field all of the time. It is not something I thought about at all." Some different implications and meanings of these gender points will be explored in Chapter Five.

Master's Degree Experience

The only factor that was uniformly cited by the students as affecting expectations was their Master's program. The students said this was often discussed among students in their Master's program. There were two points of

view, some who held that the doctoral program would be similar to the Masters, while others hoped that the Ph.D. would be different. Barbara explained this comparing and contrasting approach:

> *One of the big things was comparing what my undergraduate program was like compared to my Master's program. I got a lot out of it. I went to a much smaller undergraduate university than the school I went to for my Master's. So it was a bit of a culture shock for me when I first got there. And I was struck by the loss of any close personal relationships with the faculty members. So that was one of the big things I was looking for. I wanted to come in and hook up with somebody or a couple of people who, who had gone through it and could teach me what I needed to know. In terms of what I wanted to get intellectually out of the program. It also goes back to the comparison of the bachelors and Master's. I felt that the work that I had done as an undergrad was much more intellectually challenging than what I did as a Master's student. So when I got here I was trying to seek out professors who would be more like my undergrad professors than my graduate professors. The first professor I ever worked with in my Master's program described to me what her doctoral experience was like. So I had that to go by.*

Stan described the information he gathered from fellow students. "Fortunately I got to know a few people at the Master's level...and they told me what to expect."

Other Factors

The students described a myriad of other factors that influenced their expectations, but it is hard to categorize them. Susan provided this colorful explanation:

> *I am sure that societal presentations of what a doctoral student does had something to do with what I expected. Also, experiences that other people had, that they shared with me, and from papers that I had read ...I sort of imagined what the experimenters were doing. I didn't have a lot of exposure to graduate students...So, I didn't have a lot to go on except maybe those geeky portrayals in the movies of a lab-coat-wearing-24-year-old-woman, who has a killer body underneath,*

and rips her coat off...and never really works, just looks disturbed. And I guess just experiences friends have shared with me.

William explained the role that observing played for him.

Well, looking around at the world, this is one of the few places I have seen that would provide me and others with those kinds of opportunities; particularly the time and the space to develop a little bit of the creative thought processes.

One explanation of why students pursue a Ph.D., and make large investments for this experience without having specific expectations, may be the Ph.D.'s prestige factor. In many informal conversations people have told me that they sought the Ph.D. because "...it was something I always wanted, it is the gold standard." Another student said, "I always wanted to be Dr. So and So." I expected that the students would have a precise list of factors that influenced their decision, such as, after reading a certain guidebook, talking to a current professional in the field, reading the program's information or talking to a professor in the program. Instead, the motivations are less clear, and the specific information is less important to gather.

Kolman, Gallagher, Hosssler and Catania (1987) found at one university that 67% of social science doctoral students stated that "credentialing" was their "primary reason for pursuing a doctoral education" (p.113). Another possible reason why these students could not list specific factors, other than their Master's degree experience, was that for many their main interest in obtaining the Ph.D. was for its credential. Though this is possible, and many of students mentioned that they did want to teach at the university or college level, they did not state it specifically as a reason.

Suggestions

I stress again that it is important for departments to know students' expectations and for students to have realistic expectations. The students I talked with offered a variety of factors that led to the development of their expectations. However, these were mostly an informal knowledge-gathering process during their Master's program. Only one person cited information she received through the Ph.D. application process. A change from the informal to the direct and explicit would benefit both parties.

Departments should state in their brochures, and during their interviews, what can be expected from the doctoral experience in their department. If students anticipate that their Ph.D. will be similar to their Master's, or hope that it will be different, but are not provided with clear information, then entering the Ph.D. is a "leap of faith." It is preferable of the department to have a clear statement in their brochure, and then expand on this during the in-person interview. Some specifics might help, such as telling them that students generally teach two classes per year under the direct supervision of a major professor, or have consulted with private industry starting in their second year. The candidate would have a clearer picture as to whether his or her needs will be met. This would benefit the department by attracting applicants interested in the primary focus and needs of the department.

Similarly, if during the interview and orientation phases, applicants are asked about specific hopes for their education, departments can clear up possible misconceptions (Cooke et al., 1995) or make changes in department

procedures. Each side knowing what the other is bringing to the table would enhance the students' experience and help create an environment of enthusiasm and interest, a factor which would certainly contribute to the success of the program.

Conclusion

This chapter examined what expectations the students had for their experience, what factors influenced these views and recommendations for departments and students in this area. The results indicate that the students primarily expected that the program would involve hard work, having a mentor, and that gender would not have an influence on their experience. We now turn to student evaluation of their experience. We will learn whether their expectations were satisfied and what were other highpoints or disappointments of their education. In Chapter Five the impact of gender on their education will be explored.

CHAPTER IV

EVALUATION

Introduction

In the previous chapter I reported students' expectations for their doctoral education. Their emphasis was on having a mentor and working hard. This chapter addresses whether the students' expectations were met. The chapter also will describe two other aspects of the training that the students' discussed, the importance of having social support, and whether the experience was satisfying over all. Since the students' described mentoring and friendships as being important aspects of their training, this chapter also includes suggestions for enriching each of these aspects of the doctoral training.

Mentor Relationship

Benefits of Mentoring

The importance of the mentor relationship for a neophyte in any field cannot be overstated.

> One unifying theme of these life and career development models is clear: the acknowledgement of the central importance of helping relationships, such as mentors and role models. The sustained, loving involvement of various support persons in the life and career journey of every human being is a necessity. (Vance & Olson, 1998, p.12)

The mentor-protégé relationship has existed since antiquity (Lyons et al., 1990) and is found in all fields. As mentioned earlier, the US doctoral program is based on the apprentice-master model derived from the German university heritage.

Hence, from the inception of the Ph.D. in this country, the primacy of the mentor relationship has been recognized.

Many researchers have examined the mentor relationship in the graduate school experience. In fact, "mentoring may be the most important variable related to academic and career success for graduate students" (Boyle & Boice, 1998, p.90). Cesa and Fraser (1989) have made it clear that in their departments, "We devised this system because we thought successful mentor-protégé relationships were the key to a rewarding graduate career" (p.125).

Research has revealed the many specific benefits the mentoring relationship has for graduate students. These benefits include an increase in: scholarly productivity (Cronan-Hillix, Gensheimer, Cronan-Hillix, & Davidson, 1986; Lyons et al., 1990), protégé self-confidence (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986), and satisfaction with their doctoral experience (Ellis, 1997). Mentoring also shortens the time for completion (LaPidus, 1998) and is important for socialization (Dolan, Kropf, O'Connor, & Ezra, 1997).

Students' Mentor Experiences

As noted in the previous chapter, the majority of the students I talked to described an interest in having a mentor in their doctoral program. Half of them had a mentor throughout their educational experience. They described the multitude of benefits they gained because of having a mentor from the beginning. For example, Stan said:

> *He has introduced me to a lot of people and we have worked on some publications and have more in the offing...He has introduced me to a lot of people in the field. We are working now, I am very pleased, on a paper with a guy who is one of the best known scholars in his field...He has helped me to*

get into a lot of networks… I am pleased with the socialization…It is always good to have somebody sort of looking out for you…I really do not feel all that close to him on a friendship level. But I think we are pretty close on a professional level. We usually talk daily. So, he has been very helpful. I have had a couple of situations that have come, minor things, where I asked him to help me out and he did. You need an advocate, at least one, so he has been that...I feel a lot more comfortable and as I continue to develop relationships with faculty, and especially (this) one, it tends to alleviate a lot of my fears and helps to develop my confidence. It is easy to get lost in the shuffle and either drop out or do nothing, have no publications and very little experience, and graduate. I was happy about that…It certainly increased my amount of confidence. He seems to see a lot of potential in me, which I think is good…

Though this quote illustrates the many positives, such as professional socialization, skill training, having a supporter, networking, increased productivity and confidence, it should be noted that this doctoral student developed his mentor relationship initially as a Master's student and he does say that one drawback has been less opportunity to work with other faculty members.

Barbara met her mentor in the beginning of her doctoral experience and described similar advantages, among them an increase in confidence, skill training, a role model and a supporter.

The key, or at least one of the major keys, is that my first semester here I hooked up with a professor who is the kind who pushes me and tries to get the absolute best out of me. So without the interaction with that professor, I don't know. I don't think my expectations would have been fulfilled without that interaction. That has added a lot to my program...I had a class with him my first semester. About halfway through he graded our mid-term exams and I had done very well. It was obvious to him that I had put a lot of time and effort into it. And so he approached me after class and said "I usually never turn down the opportunity to work with a student, but I rarely make the offer to a student to work with me. But, if you ever want to co-author a paper or do any sort of research with me you know where to come." And so I took him up on it and he has been my adviser ever since. And for the last two and a half years any time that I've had any problem, whether it was some minor thing, some paperwork problem, whatever, I knew that there were somebody I could go to. And there were times when I would ask him "How would you approach this particular situation in a class?" Or "Do you think this sort of strategy, in terms of focusing a class throughout a semester, would work?" That has

been an absolute lifesaver to me. Just an absolute lifesaver too many times than I can remember...Well this professor that I am speaking of, he is an excellent teacher. I mean he has tons of research and that sort of thing, but his chief concern is being a good teacher, about his students leaving the classroom having learned the material. Having a solid understanding of it. Being able to use it out in the real world. So, that piece of it is something that I very much wanted to get out of it. So, he has been a very, very good role model for me. That has sort of helped me visualize where I want to go. From time to time I have sat in on his classes, seeing how his students are interacting with him and how far he pushes them. And when he knows when to pull back and not push any further, he has pushed as far as he can go. That is helpful for me in the classroom. It is not anything he has specifically sat down and said "This is what you need to do," but just sort of by example...So that is just, it is probably the most important thing from this relationship that I have developed with him is that it has given me a lot of confidence. My confidence level in the classroom has just skyrocketed in the last year or so. But especially this last semester he did a departmental evaluation of my teaching and when I read it I was like "wow!" I think this guy is so incredible and he says here I am good and I'm going to be good at what I want to do. And so the confidence boost has been a major piece of it. Because when I came into this program I had the idea that I am going to do the best I can do. I am going to see what happens and ...it is sort of the approach that I take to most everything that I take on in life. But, always in the back of my mind there is this thought that this might not work, but I will at least try it. And so having somebody, especially somebody I respected so much, say to me "Yes, this is working, you are doing fine, you are doing exactly what you need to do" that has given me...He has not specifically said it, or at least has not said it in a very long time. But I have felt at least in the last year or so my confidence just shoot up, and that has made the biggest difference in my teachings. I am not afraid of admitting I do not know something. I just say, "I don't know. I will go find the answer." But, it does not make me feel like, "Oh my god, what do they think of me?"

Mary had a mentor from the beginning of the experience, and she also started that relationship at the Master's level. She described the importance of having a mentor when she had some conflict with her department.

It was great because of a lot of people in the department felt very strongly about her. She was a good professor. She was a good researcher. And so that really helped a lot. Because she was saying, "Hey, I do this kind of work, why can't graduate students do this kind of work? It should work both ways."

Of the four students who had mentors the entire time, three were women. Many researchers have reported that there is not a gender bias regarding women finding mentors in graduate school (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986; Kelly & Schweitzer, 1999; Lyons et al., 1990). Further implications of this point will be discussed in the chapter on gender.

It should be noted that almost all of the students with mentors throughout mentioned that having a mentor was "lucky." Stan said:

> *In some ways I am lucky because not many people have had some of the same opportunities...There are many students within our department that have not had those chances. Usually you are fortunate if you can develop one and so I have that. Probably could with a couple of others, but I am just trying to focus on completing the dissertation and not really trying to work on a lot of other stuff.*

With authorities stating that mentoring is very important for the doctoral experience, and the students reporting that they are very interested in having this, it is curious that students thought themselves "lucky." This implies that having a mentor is not a given in their department and these students have witnessed fellow students without mentors. In fact, several researchers claim that only approximately 50% of students have mentors (Busch, 1985; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986; Kirchner, 1969). However, the PhDs.Org Graduate School Survey reported on data collected in 1999, "most are satisfied with the quantity (74%) and quality (76%) of the time they spend with their advisors" (Davis & Fiske, 2000).

Again, it should be said that of the students who had mentor relationships throughout the entire Ph.D. experience, two of them developed the relationships as Master's students in the department.

Two of the students did not have mentors in most of their Ph.D. experience, but did have that support at the dissertation stage. They felt they gained many benefits as a result. For example, Susan offered the following comments about the chair of her dissertation committee:

> *Beyond feeling appreciative, I think I have found a mentor relationship with her. Meaning I can tell her big things that are going on in my life, that may influence...next year, or how long it will take for me to write up my dissertation. I have felt appreciative. I have sort of felt a friendship there...I have felt an anchor, sort of something there tying me down. Someone knows where I am. Someone knows what I'm doing. I guess I have felt security in that somebody knows the times that I am working. And also I'm not that very self-disciplined. She and I have worked out a deal where I sort of hint at a date where I have to get her something and she enforces it. She doesn't care, but I just need to say "I will get you something on the 16th" and then I have to do it on the 16th.*

Tom said:

> *So I went to him and I said I would like to get on your calendar or maybe we could go for a walk, and we can talk about some of my ideas. And maybe we can reach an agreement. So I took those ideas to him. He worked with them, made a counter proposal over a period of six weeks or so, we agreed, and we had a handshake deal. And now we are off and running. If it had not been for him I would not be in school. I mean I would have been totally stopped. I would have gotten through my exams without having a clue as to what to do for my dissertation... And once you hook up with a professor you are going to get the encouragement you want or you won't be here. You will be gone.*

Mark discussed never having had a mentor relationship. As a result his committee was leaderless. William said he had mentor relationships but they were intermittent. The group which did not have a mentor initially, or only intermittently, or not at all, described problems that arose from this situation. This included feeling disconnected from the program, having a feeling of "floating," not

knowing the norms, not having research guidance, and not having an ally when needed. Mark described his experience:

> *I never felt there was an effort to help me develop a research agenda, but then again I came in and was more independent than others. I had an agenda developed before I got here. Mostly they helped me flesh out theories, to pin down specific questions, but when it came to pursuing the research it was "you are on your own, you have to figure it out." They would never offer advice…I haven't been given any opportunities to do research with professors. I forced myself into one project with my adviser. He had just been batting around the idea and so I said "let's go ahead and do this." He said okay, and quickly afterwards he handed the idea to me to deal with it.*

These results complement the rich research that underscores the importance of mentors to doctoral students, especially for the entire time. The students who had mentoring relationships described these relationships in very positive ways, including increasing their skills in research, teaching, socialization into the profession, their confidence and decreasing their fears. Some of the students described not feeling anchored during periods when they were not involved in a mentor relationship.

These more abstract and emotional aspects of the mentor relationship indicate there may be more than a transfer of information between mentor and student. Perhaps through the relationship the student gains a sense of security, a feeling of being well-grounded. Without the relationship there is a greater sense of uncertainty, disconnection and floating. In Chapter Six, I will discuss how a psychological analysis of the students' interpersonal relationships enables a better understanding of the Ph.D. experience.

While psychological aspects of having a mentor are important to consider, it should be emphasized that academic work is the core aspect of the relationship

between mentor and student. This is illustrated by one student staying that she hoped her mentor would help her to create syllabi; another student expected that the mentor and he might work together in writing professional articles. Significant emotional benefits for the student did develop from shared scholarly endeavors.

Of all of the students discussed above, Mark, who never had a mentor, was in the same department as Barbara who had a mentor the entire time. In a different department, William received mentoring intermittently while Stan had a mentor the entire time. This raises the possibility that one reason why that some students receive mentoring, and others do not, may lie with the student. Thus, when examining mentor-mentee relationships, each side may bring characteristics to the situation that promote the relationship in one way or another. Researchers at the University of Michigan's Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies wrote two handbooks, one for faculty and a second for graduate students (2000a,2000b). The books included suggestions for improving mentoring. Two of the students who did not have a mentor the entire time raised the possibility that certain characteristics they brought to the doctoral program, such as an already established research agenda, may have been in the way of a mentoring relationship.

Why Not Everyone?

Why doesn't every doctoral student receive an involved, mentoring relationship from the beginning? This is an important question considering that a majority of students said it was a primary expectation of their doctoral education.

Research also documents the importance of this educational component (Busch, 1985), and departments and universities invest a considerable amount of resources into each doctoral student.

One derived both from my own observations and stated elsewhere (Leatherman, 2000) is that faculty are too busy to provide the kind of mentoring that the students want and that professors would like to give. Faculty are involved in an enormous amount of activities, including publishing, teaching, and other professional obligations. A couple of the students I talked with described their professors as having large demands on their time. William, who received intermittent mentoring, suggested that his department should limit the amount of students a teacher advises. Professors may understand and value the true importance of mentoring, but not have the time or energy to do it. This is a much different way of understanding the absence of mentoring, than to hold the critical view that professors do not care.

A second reason may be as follows: "there are substantial consequences to faculty for good research and teaching, such as promotions, pay raises, and fame. However, for good mentorship, the benefits to faculty are less clear" (Cesa & Fraser, 1989, p.127). Higher education, and our society in general, offer rewards and punishments for behavior. If professors get salary increases and job offers based on their research, but the effort and quality of mentoring goes uncompensated, then perhaps the structure of the system is encouraging a lack of investment in mentoring. If doctoral departments are designed where professors have many responsibilities and some of the responsibilities, such as

publishing, are rewarded, while mentoring offers no concrete rewards, the result is predictable. Departments cannot realistically expect that professors will take on such tasks.

A third possible reason why more of the students did not have high quality mentoring is that faculty are not trained how to be good advisers (Lipschultz, 1993). There is an assumption that a Ph.D. understands what mentoring encompasses, and how to provide it presumably from a mixture of modeling and osmosis. It clearly is important for professors to perform well in the areas of teaching, research and providing guidance to students. My experience at three research universities is that junior faculty will be able to advise students immediately without any training. Is this possible when the professors will have only learned this skill through observation? If training in mentoring is not part of the department structure it is not surprising that students fail to receive the quality of mentoring they need.

Another cause for the lack of mentoring, found both in the research and with the students I talked to, is that some professors "...thought that there is nothing special about a mentoring relationship" (Busch, 1985, p.263). I have commented about the merits of mentoring, but some professors may not agree; their failure to become mentors may arise from a decision that their time would be better spent in what they consider more useful activities. A department cannot expect a professor to provide mentoring if he or she dos not value it.

A final possibility is that students did not seek out a prospective mentor in an engaging manner. Statistics may suggest that the mentoring relationship is

unidirectional, and that professors are expected to seek out and develop a meaningful connection with a doctoral student, while the actions of the student are of secondary importance. However, in understanding the mentoring phenomenon, and how to improve the way it works, it is important to see it as a joint student–faculty undertaking. "We believe both students and their mentors must assume responsibility for taking steps to increase the amount and quality of such support" (Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 2000a, p.1).

Ways to Increase Mentoring

Researchers have discussed the impact of a department's structural design as a foundation for high–quality mentoring (Seagram, Gould, & Pyke, 1998). One structural change is to provide training to faculty members on how to effectively mentor students. (The handbook prepared by the University of Michigan was a good example of a positive contribution.) In this way proven methods can be incorporated into mentoring, as opposed to each faculty member developing his or her ability in a trial-and-error fashion.

Secondly, picking up from the University of Michigan's handbook, departments should explain to new doctoral students' what actions they can take to promote positive mentoring relationships. They should not assume that students will know how to locate a mentor; guidance should be provided. The handbook suggests, for instance, "graduate students should therefore not take it personally if they find that faculty are not approaching them. Instead, students

need...to initiate contact..." (Horace H. Rackham School of Graduate Studies, 2000a, p.16).

Boyle and Boice (1998) recommend having many social gatherings for faculty and new students in order for "the students and faculty to converse in an informal setting and become acquainted before the choices for research advisors and advisees had to be made" (p.91). Social gatherings create an atmosphere conducive to starting relationships. Schools should not rely solely on the initiative of students and professors.

Two additional actions departments can take, as suggested by Ellis (1997), include asking faculty applicants about their mentoring philosophy and look at their previous involvement in this area and adjusting teaching loads to leave time for mentoring. A final way that the practice can be promoted in a department is to provide an award to those who excel in this area. One department surveys graduate students about their faculty advisors and mentors and "the information is also used to reward excellence in mentorship through an award to the outstanding mentor" (Cesa & Fraser, 1989, p.125).

None of these suggestions are a guarantee that doctoral students will then receive excellent mentoring throughout their education. The issue is, however, important, and since it is a clear problem departments should build into their structure ways of encouraging effective mentoring.

Satisfaction

When evaluating their doctoral experience, the majority of the students said they were satisfied with the experience. This agrees with several research studies. Brown (1966) surveyed doctoral graduates in education and found "the respondents evaluation of all aspects of their programs suggested highly positive feelings towards their program, their institutions, and themselves" (p.233). Ellis (1997) found among currently enrolled white doctoral students that men rated their satisfaction with doctoral study a 3.42 and women a 3.0, where 1 equals very dissatisfied and 4 equals very satisfied. The PhDs.Org Graduate School Survey reported, based on data collected in 1999, "85% of respondents are satisfied with their overall education" (Davis & Fiske, 2000).

Considering the high attrition rate, and, that half of the students with whom I conversed did not receive the mentoring that they had hoped for, it is surprising that such a large percentage of students said they were satisfied with their program. One reason may be that the students with whom I talked had already completed all of their requirements and the research shows that students at the All But Dissertation stage have a 80% chance of finishing their degree (Leatherman, 2000). Perhaps the students who agreed to discuss the question of satisfaction were people who felt satisfied. Voluntary participation in this evaluation may select for those students who are satisfied.

Another possibility for student satisfaction may be that having put an enormous investment into their education, students may not want to admit feeling dissatisfied, either to themselves or to me.

Every student I talked with had been in graduate school for several years. This amount of time in the program enabled them to speak about a variety of experiences and develop different views. It also, however, increases their identification as doctoral student and their hopes that the experience will be beneficial in the long run. Seeing themselves as part of the system, and hoping to benefit from it, makes it difficult to be critical of this system (Persell, 1977). To believe that their experience was disappointing, and still required great sacrifices, could leave a person angry and regretful. To avoid such unpleasant thoughts it would be tempting to tell me, and themselves, that the training was satisfying and that they are very happy that they pursued it.

Although the mentoring situation was not ideal for all of the students, some student satisfaction may have come from parts of their education which were enriching, and not expected to be so. For instance, Tom, an older student who did not have a mentor initially, described "one of the real pleasures of being here, is being able to interact, not only with young people, but with young women." Susan, also disappointed with the lack of initial mentoring, stated: "I did not expect to get so much experience and pleasure out of teaching. I did get that. I had been offered a lot of opportunities here, not research, that have afforded me a chance to grow."

Although the students described that they were satisfied with their Ph.D. education, the feelings they experienced throughout the process are telling. Tom said: "I always felt a little confused, off balance as to where I fit in the department, but for the most part I was happy. I liked coming to class. I really

didn't mind writing papers." Susan stated: "I felt disconnected. I felt discouraged. I guess the primary emotion that I felt, looking back, is inadequate. Those are negative things. I have also felt empowered, I don't know how I could say both that and inadequate at the same time. When I look back I felt empowered. I felt efficacious." Barbara said: "It has been very much a case of intense highs and intense lows, and lots of areas there in the middle. Some minor ups and downs, but, man, those extremes have been wicked."

It is for this reason I say that although the students I talked with, and others, have found students satisfied, I think the emotional reactions reinforce the sense that their judgment of being "satisfied" does not reflect their emotional ambivalence It is such an involved and intense experience that there are a variety of emotions experienced throughout, from elation to disappointment.

Social Support

In evaluating their educational experience, the majority of the participants described the many benefits that they received, as, for example, friendships with co-students, emotional support, scholarly help and professional collaboration. This agrees with research findings (Boyle & Boice, 1998; Goplerud, 1980; Lange 1980). A noted researcher on higher education, Leonard Baird, summed up the importance of the peer group as follows:

> It may simply provide the emotional support of friendship, fulfilling needs of students that are frequently not met in classes...providing an emotional basis for coping with the demands of advanced study...may support and reinforce the academic values of the faculty and the informal nonacademic values of the profession...have a powerful stimulating effect on students' intellectual development. (Baird, 1990, p.367)

Barbara described this positive aspect of her experience:

> *Hooking up with other people in the program, fellow students, has brought so much to the experience for me. In fact, I would have thrown up my hands and packed up my bags and gone home if it had not been for my friends. Having developed relationships with folks who are going through exactly the same thing, either at the same time or had been through it. The mentor relationship and the friendships I have made up here have been the high points in terms of the personal side of it.*

Stan explained the importance of friends for him:

> *I have developed some of those that will continue once we get out and get jobs. In fact we had three (subject area) graduates last year who all got really good jobs and we met this past weekend at a conference. I and a Ph.D. student here met the other three and it was in (city). So we didn't attend a lot of conference. We did a lot of site seeing, so that was nice to continue those relationships. There is definitely a possibility for collaboration. In fact, four of the five of us are working on an article that we are about finished with actually. Presented a paper on it at that conference. We will send it out soon for publication. That has been a good experience. I have developed a couple of friendships.*

Some students described gaining support and enjoying friendships in addition to faculty support, while others said they turned to friendships because of the unavailability of faculty. Chapter Six's analysis will explain a way of understanding the psychological motivations and benefits of the relationships with both mentors and co-students.

It is clear that friendships among doctoral students are a beneficial component of the process, and thus, departments should take an active role in encouraging them. For example, faculty members could "encourage doctoral students to spend more time working together on research projects, class assignments..." (Ellis, 1997, p.185) in order to bring students together. After working together students may then spend time together socially, which could ultimately lead to more professional collaborations.

Assigning a student with more seniority to a new student would provide both some student mentoring and possible friendship (Boyle & Boice, 1998). Researchers found that a group of mid-life women in doctoral programs who participated in "dialogic and process-oriented" workshops and reunions, "...helped participants recover their voices. These women developed scholarly voices through reconnecting with their inner feminine aspects and participating in a community of scholarly caring" (Heinrich, Rogers, Haley & Taylor, 1997, p.359). Perhaps similar kinds of weekend workshops could be beneficial for all students.

Lastly, it has been suggested that assigning first-year doctoral students' offices together encourages a group camaraderie and cohesion (Boyle & Boice, 1998). The previous research and the students' emphasis on the benefits of peer group support suggest that departments should seek ways of initiating such activity.

Hard Work

Tom's statement below sums up a general student reaction to their tasks:

> *This Ph.D. program is extraordinarily demanding. I really worked hard. And I do not know of any graduate students who stays around who doesn't work very hard. Everybody works hard, if you don't, your gone. There aren't any geniuses in the program. Everybody gets to where they get because they work hard. They pay attention to detail and they have all those skills that good graduate students have...I found if I ever was sitting around and not doing anything, I was getting behind. There were not enough hours in the day for me to get caught up.*

This is why friends and mentors are needed.

Additionally, one researcher makes an interesting point about the benefits of the doctoral experience being difficult.

> A good first-year graduate school experience might well be one in which a student is deliberately exposed to the practice of the life they are being prepared to enter (as in the long research paper requirement in the history department)...while these experiences might result in some attrition...'good' beginnings...help students to make informed, early decisions...(Golde, 1998, pp.63-64)

If a career as a scholar is difficult, in terms of the long hours of research, writing and teaching, then doctoral students who experience this early on will be able to make an early decision whether this career path matches their interests.

Conclusion

This chapter covered the areas that students talked about when asked to evaluate their doctoral experiences. It is clear that mentoring, the hard work involved, and the social support needed were primary concerns. I have also examined the ambiguities around a general conclusion that the experience was satisfactory. In the next chapter I turn to the role that student gender played in this experience, as seen by the students themselves.

CHAPTER V

FACULTY, STUDENTS AND GENDER

Introduction

The previous chapter described how the students with whom I spoke evaluated their experience. It did not include, however, their comments about the role that gender played in their education. This chapter will report the gender aspects of their doctoral experience, offer analysis of these comments and suggest alternative methods for conducting research in this area as well as other areas for departments to examine. Gender is the focus for this chapter both because it remains a powerful social construct within our culture, and because higher education has historically discriminated against women.

Experiences with Gender

I have noted that despite our society's positive strides toward equality, gender remains a critical diagnostic of our society. Gilbert and Rossman (1992, p.234) have written that "the reasons for this continued occupational segregation are related to how gender structures relationships, social organizations, and institutions, which in turn shapes women's and men's lives." Research on the effect of gender on the doctoral experience has produced a variety of results. One study concluded that for doctoral students in psychology: "although the results indicate that the majority of students did not experience their graduate training as sex-biased, an alarming number of students reported sexual harassment during graduate training" (Mintz, Rideout, & Bartels, 1994, p.225).

A study of doctoral graduates at a Canadian university found: "these results provide some support for the chilly climate construct – i.e., that inequities exist at least in the perceptions of the treatment received by male and female graduate students" (Seagram et al., 1998, p.332). A third study reported: "data from this research indicate that women in all fields of study at the doctoral level perceived less support from faculty than did their male peers" (Hite, 1985, p.21).

As noted in the previous chapter, researchers did not find gender bias in the treatment and support given by a mentor (Cronan-Hillix et al., 1996; Kelly & Schweitzer, 1999; Lyons et al., 1990). Hartnett (1981, p.225) supports this finding:

> The notion that the nature of the graduate student experience differs dramatically for male and female students is not completely supported by this research. Sex differences between the student experiences were found for students in history departments, but were not found for students in psychology departments...

While there is research support for the view that gender discrimination is found in the doctoral experience, there is also documentation that disagrees with this. During the conversations about the Ph.D. experience, women and men discussed how gender impacted on their experience. Half of the women described their gender as not having any adverse effects on their experience as doctoral students. Barbara explained why she generally did not find gender to be an issue, except for one situation:

> *I personally have not found that to be a problem. The first time I applied for funding I got it and have been renewed every time that I applied. So that has not specifically been an issue for me. In terms of other folks having a mentoring relationship, I also do not see that as having negatively affected anyone. Or at least anybody that I know of. I have two female friends in the department and both of them have developed mentoring relationships. Maybe*

not quite as intense as the one that my adviser and I have developed. One of them is actually, probably, at least as intense....And the other female students have had the opportunity to work with other mentors and that sort of thing, mostly in the GA sort of relationship...I at least have not witnessed in my department professors reluctant to work with somebody because of gender. I also do not know particularly if anybody has bent over backward to work with somebody because of gender. Nor has any mentor bent over backwards out of fear they are going to be perceived as discriminatory or anything like that. The one thing I have picked up on happened a year and a half ago. It started right after I started working more closely with my adviser. He has a policy that if you have done a paper with him or presented any sort of research with him, he will give you a key to his office when you need to have an office for your office hours. And I remember within the first two or three months of my using the office, there was a male student doing that same type of thing. I remember a month or maybe two months after I got the key to the office and I started holding office hours in there I heard where he male student sort of made some kind of sarcastic comment about me being in his office. And he didn't come out and insinuate anything, but I sort of felt like there was something there in the back of his mind. And I had one female friend who didn't actually say anything specifically about me, but made the statement (a similar allusion to a relationship)...Since then those are the only two comments I have heard anybody make. And as I say my friend made that comment in my presence. I was like "Excuse me. I am here. Don't you think I would be offended by that?" But since that time it hasn't really been an issue for me...So that is the only piece of the gender thing that I have been able to perceive as being slightly negative. And I mean I just try to let that roll off my back. As I say it only happened a couple of times... In terms of affecting our relationships or our expectations with our professors, I can't think of any instances where we expected different things from the faculty members or they expected different things from us or anything.

Mary said that she did not want to talk about her situation in terms of gender because she has not "processed" it yet. Susan did believe that gender played a role in parts of her experience. She described a conversation with a fellow student prior to presenting her research at a conference.

She said in a real round about way, and I'm going to just put it straight, "when you're presenting data on (subject area) you need to tone down your figure and you may want to pull your hair back and keep in mind that as your presenting this some people are thinking dirty things." This bothered me, of course, because I view it and I talk about it and can investigate it with a straight face. I view what we do as a science. An aspect of science we haven't

really looked at all that much. But I did what she said and I noticed, whether I was just looking for it or not, I thought I noticed the people were a little bit more comfortable with me presenting when I was really sort of dulled-down. Another experience that I've had, I found that as an instructor here, I have had many more, I shouldn't say many more, maybe three times its happened, where my authority has been questioned. Not by students, not by the faculty that oversee me...I have a lot of difficulty proving I am an instructor here. There's no way to do it, really. For example, I don't know if this is just because I am female, but I feel like it's associated with me being a small woman. If I go to get a video out for my class at the library, wanting to use faculty borrowing privileges, I have to wrestle with them to get them to check to see if I'm even an instructor. If I wanted to drop something off at my department and I drive through the parking gates I have to wrestle with them for that. I don't know if that's related to gender, I think that's related to being a puny woman or something. I don't know. So, I have seen several issues that could be attributed to gender, but I might just be hyper-sensitive...The other issue that I forgot to mention, that I attribute to gender, is I was presenting some data of the same nature in a class consisting of a male professor, one other male in the class, and 13 or 14 females. I was very excited about what I was presenting. It was really scientific, there were some great numbers, it was (subject area) oriented, it was as formulated and empirical as you can get. As I was explaining it the professor moved his chair and sat next to the one male student and they snickered throughout the entire presentation. That was just bizarre to me. Not one of the females in the class has stopped mentioning it to this day. We all remember that it happened. I have never forgotten that. I would never expect that a faculty member of his esteem, his experience, and his research would ever have acted in that sort of childish way as I was presenting straight faced something I really thought was scientific. It was done by great researchers, it wasn't my work, so there is no reason for him to snicker about me conducting it. So that was weird, we all remember, we all talk about that.

A couple of the men believed that their gender did not affect their experience. William mentioned that he thought it was very positive to have a good gender mix among the students. Mark felt that being a man might have helped to a degree, because the male faculty and students are involved in a sporting activity together. However, he was the student who said he never received the mentoring he expected. Tom said that he thought there might have been some stereotypes about him initially, but he ignored them and they did not

appear to negatively affect his experience; he stated that being around female students has been very positive for him.

Although the men and women mentioned very few instances of where they were personally affected, the majority of students recalled hearing that gender had negatively affected other people or observed the influence of gender. For example, William said:

> *I think some of the female graduate students have had some of those complaints, but I can't say for sure. They do identify a handful of faculty with whom who they do not work well, or do not like, because they tend to display traditional patriarchal roles in their demeanor.*

Barbara, who said that gender had not had a negative influence on her experience, stated:

> *I should say right now that I am funded. There has been a lot of talk within my department, over the last two or three years in particular, that females are not funded at the same level or the equivalent level as the male students in the department, regardless of how well the women have performed. From the first semester that I was here I was picking up on that in little student conversations around our department. That was just one of those things that I picked up on. I personally have not found that to be a problem.*

Though these men and women believe that gender impacted minimally on their educational experience, the above remarks are significant for two reasons. Dr. Travis (personal communication, April 27, 2000) says that "the perception that progress and standing can be affected by arbitrary, threatening, or unethical factors constitutes part of what is legally termed a Hostile Environment when it is relevant to gender, e.g. sexual harassment, or sexual favoritism of others." Observing others' experiences with gender bias then may have had an impact on their experiences, though they did not report this.

Secondly, these observations indicate that something may be occurring, even if the students stated otherwise. This speculation is fortified by the fact that several of the students (from two separate departments) discussed how the women and men socialize separately. Stan describes this:

> *We were usually divided along gender lines. Most of the time we went out it would be just five or six guys or five or six of the females hanging out. There were times when there was integration and people got to know each other. I always thought that was interesting, since ours is a (subject area) department, considering what we do and our general orientation, outlook, you would think there would be more mixing. There would be less anxiety associated with the opposite sex, the development of friendships and relationships. By the time you get to the Ph.D. level and (subject area) department you should be able to go out to dinner and hang out with some of the opposite sex without everyone thinking that you are dating and thus prompting others to gossip. And that was not the case. There have been times when feelings have been hurt and people have gotten upset because male and female students have gone out and suddenly the gossip starts. Are they dating? Are they doing this and that or are they just hanging out? There was one incident where that happened. Everyone started talking about it and the guy became really upset. So we moved back into separate camps again. It looks like a male cannot hang out with a female now without thinking something is going on. So that was kind of a problem…One female told me, I think jokingly, that there was actually a group of five females who got together regularly and bashed males. Sort of a feminist, more of a radical feminist, more than a mainstream feminist thing…I do not know if that was accurate or not. I know that there were a few who would get together and complain, some of them thought they were probably being treated unfairly in the department.*

Understanding the Role of Gender

There are several different pieces of information to consider when trying to understand the impact of gender on these students, these include expectations, personal experience, and perceived experience of others. Regarding expectations, the men and a few of the women did not think about how gender would affect their work. Mary did consider gender's impact but did not think it would be harmful (she thought it may have influenced her to want a mentor); and

Susan did anticipate that gender would provide some difficulty during the Ph.D., "but I guess I expected it to even out." In summary, only one woman said that gender created some problems for her. Additionally, there was not a gender bias pertaining to having a mentor, and several people reported that there was gender segregation in their department. Almost all of the students thought that gender might have affected some other students.

Integration of all of this information may suggest that gender issues no longer pose a significant concern for doctoral students. The students I talked to did not anticipate it would create a problem (though they all had Master's degrees and thus were familiar with graduate education) and found, during the course of their studies that their anticipation was correct. Their comments about other students could be dismissed as gossip or hearsay. The conclusion may be that as our society's laws and norms have changed, doctoral education has changed, and there may be a high degree of gender equality for all, or at least for the group of students to whom I talked.

One factor that supports this conclusion is that the number of women receiving the Ph.D. has increased dramatically. Wyatt (1999) reports that "the 17,322 Ph.D.'s awarded to women in 1997 were more than half again as many as the 11,432 given them in 1987. The rate of growth far surpassed that of men, who received 24,999 research doctorates in 1997, as against 20,938 10 years earlier." This increase has been credited, in part, to universities actively recruiting women (Wyatt, 1999).

Possible Alternative Explanations

Perhaps gender still has an influential role in the doctoral experience for both men and women, though it was not described in my discussions with them. One reason why the men I talked with may not have considered gender prior to their studies, or been affected by it during their studies, may be because of "men's unwillingness to grant that they are over-privileged in the curriculum, even though they may grant that women are disadvantaged...These denials protect male privilege from being fully recognized, acknowledged, lessened, or ended" (McIntosh, 1988, p.1). The men may have benefited from being male, but did not want to acknowledge it to me, or perhaps themselves. For instance, one man pointed out that he entered the doctoral program unfunded and then was given funding after a tremendous amount of hard work. It may be difficult for the men to credit some of their achievements to their gender, instead of their individual qualities.

A reason why women students may not have discussed how gender influenced their experience is that they were conscious of the gender dynamics at work that affected them personally, but did not want to tell me about it. A reason for this may have been that there is a backlash in our country about gender bias issues. Whelehan (1995, p.222) states that "in the current of a swing against anything associated with 'political correctness' in the '90s the 'freedom' to express feminist ideas as legitimate contestations of dominant mainstream political views becomes increasingly problematic." In Faludi's (1991) ground-breaking work, Backlash, she explains her view of the term backlash: "the truth is

that the last decade has seen a powerful counter-assault on women's rights, a backlash, an attempt to retract the handful of small and hard-won victories that the feminist movement did manage to win for women" (p.xviii).

The students may have therefore been concerned about a backlash if they reported some actions they felt exemplified gender discrimination. They may have felt that a complaint would be interpreted as "whining," and I would not think the complaint valid.

The myth of meritocracy is that: "we may infer that to those for whom the system has worked, the belief system must seem credible. Such individuals have *experiential validation* of the societal belief. Therefore, these individuals are often ardent champions of the meritocracy" (Persell, 1977, p.30). All of the students had Master's degrees, and had completed all of their requirements except the dissertation. In many ways, the system worked well for them, and they have not, and do not, perceive higher education as sexist. It would be difficult to see gender inequality in a system in which they have prospered, and which they anticipate will bring them benefits. The above thesis is supported by a researcher who found:

> The Black and White women, as a group, did not attribute the difficulties they had in their departments to their gender; however, their lower satisfaction scores indicate that there may be a relationship between gender and the nature of doctoral experiences. While some women felt that they did not have the same opportunities...as did some of the men in their departments, they would not, generally, state that they were discriminated against because they were women. (Ellis, 1997, p.162)

Another possible reason that the women did not describe any gender disadvantages may be because of an optimism that our country has moved past

gender discrimination (Serena Makofsky, personal communication, April 15, 2000). As the options for women have continued to expand, we are entering a period in which gender bias considerations are no longer warranted. One can find female judges, doctors and CEOs. In this modern era, we do not have to look for gender issues, since we are in post-feminism (Bryson, 1999).

To situate one's experience within a gender context is no longer necessary. What it amounts to is "playing the gender card," that is, applying a social construct to explain one's individual's situation. The women described very few issues relating to their being female. This view may not mean that gender is unimportant; rather, their way of understanding their personal situation is to assess the experience free of gender consideration. Faludi (1991) describes how a backlash "is most powerful when it goes private, when it lodges inside a woman's mind and turns her vision inward, until she imagines the pressure is all in her head, until she begins to enforce the backlash, too – on herself" (p.xxii).

The phenomenon of women turning inward, instead of looking at the context they are shaped in, may not just be specific to gender. When I asked all of the students how their families or backgrounds impacted their expectations, half of the students dismissed the question, saying that these factors had no effect on what they were expecting to get out of the Ph.D. The other half of the students referenced fairly minor impacts, such as Barbara who wants to be an excellent teacher, and is less interested in research because her mother is a teacher. Mark said that his father taught him to be very independent, and not to

rely on other people. Kelly came from a "rule-based" family, and she internalized what she was taught. Still, four of the students said that they were the first ones in their family to enter graduate school.

These examples of family and background reinforce the notion that these students did not reflect on how their gender, class, or family contexts may have impacted them on a political level. For instance, with higher education's history of sexism, one question a woman might ask is, what will it mean for me as a woman to be entering these programs? Higher education for many years was a place for the sons of the upper class. A student from a working class background might ask how will he or she fit in. The conclusion I was left with was that the students with whom I talked did not discuss the broader contexts in which their experiences occurred.

The female students may not have wanted to accept that they were victims of gender discrimination because that could feel like a loss of control. To be discriminated against, and not to be able to stop it can lead one to feel powerless in the present, and unsure how much control one has in the future. In order to retain a sense of control over one's experience, and to feel that one is capable of avoiding harmful interactions, the students may not have wanted to admit that gender affected their educational experience (Dr. Travis, personal communication, November 7, 2000).

Crosby (1984) found that a group of women "...were discriminated against, they showed a keen awareness of sex discrimination in general, and yet they showed few signs of feeling personally discriminated against" (p.376). She

suggests one reason for this is that the women experienced a "difficulty of inferring discrimination from individual cases" (p.377). Perhaps, the students I talked with experienced discrimination but believed that there was not enough evidence to conclude that it was gender discrimination.

Writing about some popular authors of the 1990's, Whelehan (1995) noted, "the radical feminist notion that all women are potential victims of male power because of the tenacity of patriarchy, is supplanted by a notion of victimhood as a form of unconscious abdication of responsibility" (p.141). Perhaps for the students I talked with explaining one's experience within any context would be an "abdication of responsibility." The slogan of the women's movement, "the personal is political," seems replaced by "it's all individual." The economy has been very strong; many forms of overt oppression have been removed. It appears more so than ever that our society is conveying the notion that if you work hard, play by the rules, and take responsibility for your life, you will succeed.

Other Research Methods

In these times the issue may be that gender currently affects people in a more subtle fashion than in the past. My direct questions may not have been enough to elicit this possibly covert phenomenon. Two issues for future gender researchers to consider when collecting information are the comfort of the people who are sharing their story, and the means by which the information is gathered. Regarding the former, women may be more forthcoming and expressive

regarding gender discrimination talking to another woman. Men may also alter what they say to a female researcher.

In terms of means for getting at the subtlety of the impact of gender, future researchers may want to consider trying other methods than I did, such as providing students questions in written form and allowing them time to consider these issues prior to answering. Mary said she had not "processed" the issue yet. Perhaps other women had not either, but instead of so stating, they said they did not have any problems. If gender inequity takes more subtle forms today, expecting the students to consider their expectations without time for consideration may not be realistic.

If women are describing their experiences without a context, one reason may be they believe that considering gender issues in this era is invalid. Or perhaps they think that the interviewer may be critical. It might help to have students first watch an informative film that describes the current facts in higher education. One illustration is given in a comment by Goldberg (1999) that, "in an extraordinary admission, top officials at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the most prestigious science and engineering university in the country, have issued a report acknowledging that female professors here suffer from pervasive, if unintentional, discrimination." This may help participants feel more comfortable discussing sexism they may have encountered, even if they were not initially conscious of it.

Female Mentors

As has been stated elsewhere, mentoring was not seen by the students as gender biased. In fact, one of the women who had a mentor the entire time said that she was lucky because mentoring was not a common practice in her department. Another woman who had a mentor throughout her experience, stated that this was also the case for two of her female friends. Of the women who had mentors, three of them had them the entire time and another student had one for her dissertation. Like male students, the women felt they had gleaned many benefits, including guidance in research and teaching, emotional support, and being plugged into professional networks.

While the students I talked with did not find gender bias in their mentoring process, and this replicates several other studies, there are researchers who believe that women may benefit more from having women mentors (Moyer, Salovey, & Casey-Cannon, 1999; Vance & Olson, 1998). This point of view is offered by Gilbert and Rossman (1992, p.235):

> Women's increased status in our society, together with the increased understanding and valuing of female experiences, may make female mentors particularly able to assist female proteges in creating new images of themselves as psychologists. They may provide unique role modeling for their proteges by demonstrating that women are competent in many areas and aspects of psychology as a field and that women can be leaders in their field.

Barbara, who described having an excellent experience with a male mentor at the doctoral level, illustrated the benefits she derived from having a female mentor at the undergraduate level:

> *At the time when I was in college she was the only female in an otherwise all male department. So I looked to her then and continue to this day, in*

> *fact I saw her this morning. I still continue to look to her and say "okay, this is how you become a college professor, get married, have a family. It is possible to do it all because (woman's name) is doing it all." So I suppose in that sense I have maybe tried to bend over backwards to see how other females sort of juggle everything that they have to juggle.*

Thus, though all four women in my study had mentors, one possible problem might be that only half had female mentors.

Holmstrom and Holmstrom found that male and female graduate students had almost equal availability to professors, but there remained a problem:

> The correlates suggested that women may need something extra, such as being truly outstanding academically, or having been in the department for a long time, to gain the attention of faculty, or may need to make an extra effort to obtain access to faculty. (as cited in Baird, 1990, p.379)

It remains possible, following this view, that the women in my study all had mentors with the aforementioned characteristics. Within the same department, however, Barbara described working very hard her first year, and being subsequently invited to work with a professor who became her mentor. However, Mark said that he worked very hard his first year and finished his education without ever having a mentor relationship.

Gender Segregation

Regarding the previously cited research showing that social support is important, my speculation is that it may hurt students' chances of obtaining the support they need, if they are limited to their own gender. This may happen where there is gender segregation within their departments. In addition, one of the positives of doctoral education is exposure to a variety of ideas and

perspectives, gender segregation decreases the chance of the valuable informal learning that can occur in co-ed settings. Additionally,

> Many of these doctoral candidates will become faculty members at another college or university. If they are not accustomed to working closely with their doctoral peers, regardless of their race or gender, it is likely that they will have difficulty working closely with their peers as faculty members. (Ellis, 1997, p.188)

For these reasons, departments should address the issue of gender segregation. If it is occurring in a department, the faculty should address the issue. One possible way of doing this is to hold workshops discussing problems of gender, and thus bring the issue into the open.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to examine the role of gender in the doctoral experience. Further research that will utilize other approaches than this study has followed, would help improve the understanding of women's experiences in earning the Ph.D. More can be learned about solutions to the problem. In earlier chapters it was noted that research results can be best understood through the inclusion of a psychological perspective. The next chapter will describe a theory of personality that I believe is relevant to this issue.

CHAPTER VI

PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Introduction

As stated earlier, different parts of the doctoral experience, such as having ones expectations fulfilled or not, can psychologically impact one in dramatic ways. As described in Chapter Four, most of the students with whom I talked indicated they were satisfied with their doctoral experience. On a psychological level, however, many of the students described this "satisfactory" experience as involving a range of emotions, from disappointment to elation. Thus, understanding it psychologically is more involved than simply labeling it as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

The issue of mentoring also brought up psychological ramifications that I had not anticipated. It had seemed to me that if a student had a productive master-apprentice relationship, it would have a wider impact, such as leading to a strong belief in the power of higher education, or a renewed faith in the way science and research are conducted in this country. Instead, students discussed this training experience in much more personal dimensions. They reported feeling more confident, less fearful.

This chapter will examine these personal changes, from the perspective of a specific psychological theory. I will first explain the theory. Following that, I will comment on the needs and motivations underlying certain points the students made.

The Interpersonal Nature of the Experience

Students talked with me about a variety of topics, including what they wanted out of their education and highpoints and disappointments of their student years. Throughout the interviews, and in most of the issues covered, I was struck by the references to interpersonal aspects. Relationships with others were brought up repeatedly. The students described wanting a mentor. Two people described the positives of relationships with other faculty. Many students cited the importance of friends in their experience. Certainly, these relationships had practical advantages. For instance, their mentors invited them to work on research articles and they presented research at conferences with friends. The descriptions go beyond this, however, and rise to an emotional level. Barbara said that her mentor's help was a "lifesaver." Tom stated that one of the best parts of the experience was interacting with other students. Susan said that her feeling of "floating" only ended when she began to spend more time with other students. Stan stated that his mentor was an ally and that they talked daily.

As Okun (1992) noted in her feminist critique of object relations and self psychology theory, "We need to attend carefully to androgynous needs of both males and females--how men sense themselves as relational and how women sense themselves as separate or individuated, how males and females share the same aspirations for relation and mastery" (p.43). Similar to that view of gender, I believe that both the men and women in this study sought and benefited from interpersonal relationships in their doctoral education. For instance, Mark said:

> *What is needed the most in terms of classes, if they re-structure, is they have to develop a cohort mentality for the students. There is no doubt there would*

> *have been times when it would have been extremely helpful for me to have people I knew, people I could rely on who had gone through the same misery I had been through at the same time. And I could sit down and talk to them…There was no mentality to bring us together. They need to do that.*

Tom also described relating to fellow students as one of the pleasures of the experience.

Since my discussions did not cover the participants' life histories, or delve into their psyches in a clinical manner, my analysis of what they said from a psychological approach is an initial and speculative attempt to understand the students' experiences. The goal of this chapter is to raise the possibility that, in addition to understanding the Ph.D. experience at the level of gender and political dynamics, there are also psychological needs and motivations at work. Incorporating a psychological understanding of higher education issues is important because typically this is either overlooked or highly specific (such as looking at the levels of stress or depression experienced). In this chapter I would like to introduce the idea that people pursue certain elements in a Ph.D., and benefit from them, for human needs pertaining to anxiety, security, and how people perceive the world.

Sullivanian Theory

Considering the points pertaining to relationships, I believe one way to understand students' experience is through the interpersonal theory of Harry Stack Sullivan. The classic analytical position developed by Sigmund Freud was based on a drive model of relating to the world. Humans have certain instinctual

drives that crave satisfaction, and at best the drives can receive some gratification. This is where the importance of other people, objects, enter in. Others are a means for the drive reduction to take place and this is then the foundation for humans to relate to others, to have their drives reduced (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). "The Freudian focus is on the instinctual roots of object relations rather than on the object relations themselves" (Okun, 1992, p.21).

Sullivan differed from this perspective. His thesis, interpersonal theory, was that, from the very beginning of life, humans are tremendously dependent on other people. All of their needs are satisfied through interactions with other people. These interactions, which lead to behavioral patterns, are critically important. The human's instinctual drives then are for interpersonal connections. This way of relating, starting with the beginning of life, is what it means to be a human. "Human beings are inseparable, always and inevitably, from their interpersonal field...The personality or self is not something that resides 'inside' the individual, but rather something that appears in interactions with others" (Mitchell & Black, 1995, p.62). The feelings with which students discussed the importance of their interpersonal relationships at the doctoral level supports the concept that their experience can be better understood through a psychological theory that emphasize the role of interpersonal relations.

Sullivan wrote that humans operate in the world out of two main needs: the need for satisfaction and the need for security. The need for satisfaction is the gratification of survival needs, including the need for such items as food,

oxygen, and originally, interpersonal contact. Eventually the latter grows into a need for intimate relationships. The search for security highlights the need to avoid anxiety, which Sullivan believed is the most profound and least desirable of emotions.

"Because the infant cannot satisfy his (sic) own needs, the satisfaction of the infant's needs requires another person" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p.92). Thus, all of a child's needs are met through interpersonal relationships. This starts the process of associating the satisfaction of needs through interaction with others.

Sullivan says that the source of anxiety in humans begins with the caregiver's anxiety. The caregiver reacts with a range of emotions, depending on how the child is acting. One of these emotions is anxiety, which is then passed from the parent to the child through the child's empathetic abilities. The infant understands the situation by assuming that whatever action he or she had performed preceding the feeling of anxiety, must have then caused the anxiety; "Sullivan defines security as freedom from anxiety...the need for security becomes the dominant concern in the infant's developing capabilities and continues to be so throughout life" (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, pp.95-96). To satisfy their need for security, humans try to do whatever is in their power in order to prevent anxiety in others. This will then lead to the absence of anxiety in themselves.

To avoid anxiety the child creates a "self-system." This is a system where behaviors that are correlated with prompting anxiety in the caregiver, and then in

one's self, are categorized as the "bad me," and actions that are not connected to anxiety are understood as the "good me." People live their lives anticipating that anxiety will follow the "bad me" repertoire of behaviors, and thus, try to act in a "good me" fashion as much as possible. As the person matures and lives through "developmental epochs," the actions that constitute "good me" and "bad me" behaviors are altered. "The self-system is thus a cluster of 'security operations'...Personality is thus composed of a series of interpersonal dynamisms; of, therefore, *habitual patterns of relating to others*" (Monte, 1995, pp.410-411).

This interpersonal perspective shares many of the basic tenets of object relations and self-psychology theory, including "studying the relationships between an individual and real, observable, external people...and the relationship between internalized residues of an individual's early significant relationships and his or her later interpersonal relationships" (Okun,1992, p.22). An important feminist critique of the object relations and self-psychology theory, and, by extension, of interpersonal theory, has criticized their lack of appreciation of the sociocultural context for humans (Okun, 1992). I agree with this and see the theories as reductionistic, which is why my study includes chapters on the gender context and the political climate. I do believe, however, that the interpersonal perspective is an important position to include in any area where interrelationships are a basic element. All of these perspectives are essential for understanding the many levels of the doctoral experience for the student. Additionally, as will be discussed later in the chapter, Sullivan believes that

human development does not take place in a vacuum; it is his thesis that societal norms and mores play an important role.

Sullivan's Theory Applied

It is clear that undertaking a doctoral program is a major event for any student. They typically move to a different part of the country and the new programs requires a lot of work. Consequently, it is not surprising that almost all doctoral students want to have a mentor. "At every point in development, needs for satisfaction draw the individual into relations with others" (Greenberg and Mitchell, 1983, p.102). The new doctoral student has many needs, including learning the norms of the department, university and their field of study. They need to be educated about conducting research, and how to teach and how to act professionally. Additionally, students have a variety of emotional needs such as wanting to feel safe, and to have a sense of controlling what is affecting their lives. With all of these needs, the individual falls back on and repeats their long-standing pattern of looking to others for help in having their needs met.

Secondly, the doctoral experience replicates many aspects of childhood in that the student has very little power and autonomy, and is dependent on others for opportunities and approval. The participants' desire to have a mentor to guide and advise them through the difficult waters of the doctoral experience is a repetition of their childhood needs of looking to their parents to fulfill a similar role. Looking to a powerful person for direction, guidance and security does not

end in childhood; during the overwhelming experience of starting the doctoral experience, this pattern is repeated.

Many of my interviewed students spoke highly of the importance of their friends. These peers could be helpful when mentors were not available and even when mentors were available. These students described their interpersonal desires as both professional and emotional. Looking to co-students for help, and greatly benefiting from this, can be understood through Sullivan's emphasis on the idea that so much of our experience as humans is influenced by our interpersonal relationships. "The most important aspect of Sullivan's view of personality may be summarized by pointing out that this is a people world, and feelings--painful and joyful--are wisely or unwisely tied up with our relations to significant others" (Monte, 1995, p.422).

When students searched for satisfaction, or then security, but found their needs were not met by a mentor (or not fully being met), they turned to other significant people, their co-students, to fill this gap. The important point is that these students would look to interpersonal relationships, as they had done since childhood. As stated by Greenberg and Mitchell (1983, p.99):

> The self operates solely on the need for security, based on the principle that anxiety is to be avoided at all costs and that power, status, and prestige in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others is the broadest and surest route to safety.

Certainly the students I talked to were motivated to relate to others for a variety of practical needs. It can be argued, however, that Sullivan's views explain additional motivations for interpersonal connections. These students wanted, and some received, very meaningful and important relationships with

peers and mentors. When they felt a connection, and received positive feedback from these groups, they described experiencing an increase in confidence, in feeling anchored, in having an ally on their side. Positive feedback from others, which led to positive feelings, can be understood as "power, prestige and status...in the eyes of others," and then eventually "in one's own eyes." For instance, Kelly stated:

> *My curiosity really got unleashed and there were people to feed it. People said "yes, that's a good thing to ask" instead of saying "don't ask that." My excitement and my curiosity caused the professors to get excited. They encouraged me and saw it as a good thing. They would open doors and say "why don't you go do this" or "I've got this project if you want to work on that with me." I could recognize that I had more abilities and strengths than I realized in the first place. It was just pushing the boundaries further all the time.*

The Ph.D. has many elements that produce fear (including a continual evaluation from those with significantly more power) that demand work at a high level, and that call for one to perform successfully at a variety of new roles. The Ph.D., as observed in my informal conversations, also involved a tremendous amount of anticipatory stress: What if I fail that test...Do not receive funding... Step on the wrong toes? Perhaps, then, to "avoid anxiety at all costs" and to feel powerful and be seen by others as powerful, doctoral students gravitate toward wanting relationships with others which involve positive reinforcement. As Susan commented:

> *Without the social support, everything, every sickness takes longer, every stress stresses more. And I think if we are going to be this involved in a profession, as it involves the doctoral student, part of the community needs to be where you work. That is here. I think I would definitely encourage more community.*

Some of the students I talked with also described the harmful emotions engendered when they did not have interpersonal relationships, when they did not have "power, prestige and status...in the eyes of others." For instance Mark said this about the lack of a peer group and his courseload:

> *That was a bit frustrating, but that made me realize I needed to do more and more on my own. There was no one in my program to rely on to help me out in the process. That probably made the expectation, that probably made me a bit more terrified knowing that I couldn't turn to anyone else in class.*

Susan echoed this sentiment:

> *I don't know if my experience is all that common, but it definitely was not the mentoring relationship I had hoped for. And I even addressed that with two faculty members, shortly after being here. And both of them said "you just have to remember the time for mentoring relationships and encouraging you are over, you're on your own." That is what the two faculty members said to me when I expressed to them, in tears, that I did not receive any guidance or contact from anyone. I just sort of felt floating. I think I only stopped feeling like I was floating when I started getting together with students in my department and joining some other organizations outside my department.*

The students talked about their relationships with great force. Some students described mentors as allies and lifesavers, Barbara said she wouldn't have stayed in the Ph.D. without her friends and mentor. Other people felt frustrated, terrified, and floating during periods when they were alone. It might be assumed that happiness and pleasure in the Ph.D. derive from academic rewards, high grades, and graduate assistantships received. Yet, Mark who said he was terrified, earned a 4.0 grade point average his first two semesters, and then received funding for the first time. He referred to the experience as miserable. The terror and misery may have been in part due to the large amount of work and having to do it without interpersonal relationships. On the doctoral

level, as in life, feelings of security and the concurrent decrease in anxiety, have less to do with external accolades than with relationships.

Acting in "good me" ways may be related to the issue of academic freedom as well. If students seek out their professors' approval, and then receive it, they should feel less anxiety. This lack of anxiety creates a space for the students to pursue knowledge wherever it will lead, because they feel less restricted by the fear that their actions are going to engender anxiety in their mentor. A safe and emotionally supportive mentor relationship may lead to an atmosphere conducive to academic freedom for the students.

Sullivan believed anxiety is the most noxious of all emotions, and that people try to avoid it all costs. Yet doctoral students enter into advanced programs that they assume will be fraught with anxiety. Why do they choose an anxiety-provoking activity?

> Hence the self is a product of interpersonal relations. It is experienced in terms of suiting the requirements of other people, who include imaginary others, so that one may avoid or minimize anxiety and maintain the gradually evolved experience of 'self-satisfaction' or self-esteem. (Mullahy, 1952, p.39)

The way to avoid anxiety is to act in the "good me" repertoire, that is, to behave in such a way as to "minimize anxiety" and "maintain...self esteem." The students who enter a Ph.D. may have derived very positive emotions from their caretakers as children by acting in ways that were intellectually skillful. These children exhibited cognitive adroitness. Their parents were pleased and rewarding, and these then became actions which constitute the "good me."

In addition, Sullivan discussed the influence of cultural context. "As one progresses into childhood, the parents carry on deliberate training in the folkways

in the hope that their offspring will grow to be the sort of person considered desirable, admirable if possible, in their society..."(Mullahy, 1952, p.41). Intelligent and cognitive dexterity is currently valued in our society, whereas other cultures, at other times, have placed more importance on physical strength and agility. Students who enter doctoral programs know on a conscious level that the Ph.D. will involve anxiety and difficulty. On an unconscious level, however, they may seek to avoid these emotions through "good me" actions via intellectual pursuits. Based on society's impact on their parents, and then their parents' effect on them, they may enter a Ph.D. because this is the type of behavior that engendered emotional, non-anxious support in childhood.

Conclusion

A psychodynamic analysis of the individual is an involved and complicated process. My discussions with students were in no sense a series of deep clinical interviews. I cannot claim that the analysis presented in this chapter provides definitive psychological conclusions. Rather, I find it interesting that interpersonal connections were a significant component of everyone's discussion, even when my questions were as open ended as "What did you expect from the experience?" and "How would you evaluate the experience based on these expectations?" It is clear that doctoral education elicits an enormous range of emotions. There are many skills and much knowledge to be learned—with so many difficult challenges encountered—that the analysis of this experience must

assess the social and cultural context, and also the psychodynamics, that are involved.

In the next chapter, which examines students' involvement with faculty who are not their mentors, I again will focus on the importance of interpersonal relationships.

CHAPTER VII

DEPARTMENT SUPPORT

Introduction

The previous chapter examined the psychological importance of relationships for doctoral students. Other chapters described the practical aspects of friendships and mentors for students. I have noted the advantages associated with the student-mentor relationship, such as becoming socialized to the profession, skill training and emotional support. All of these can be achieved both with the student's major professor and in relationships with other faculty members.

Since the Ph.D. is a research degree, and since most of the activities in the educational process are geared towards developing doctoral candidates into independent researchers, I talked with the students about the level of support they received from their departments for their scholarly activities. This chapter will explore the benefits of faculty involvement, the kinds of contact that the students had with professors in their department, and ideas about overcoming typical difficulties. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the importance of students' professional involvements with teachers other than their mentors.

Reasons Why Departmental Support is Important

There are many reasons for a student's department to take an active role in his or her education, including the large investment that is made in doctoral

students, the difficulty of the doctoral program requirements, and the benefits students receive from professors' guidance and support.

> The quality of the training graduate students receive cannot be overstated. The costs of educating a doctoral student and preparing him or her for a postdoctoral career are very high. Every student who quits graduate school or otherwise fails to realize the benefits of graduate education productivity -- whether as a result of experiences that should never have happened or that should have been much better -- represents a significant loss to the enterprise. (Anderson & Swazey, 1998, p.12)

Additionally, the task at hand for those pursuing a doctorate are daunting. The doctoral student needs to function effectively in a number of different roles, such as teacher, researcher and classroom student. Not only are some of these roles new for many doctoral students, but the most important activity in the Ph.D., the dissertation, is by far the largest academic project that these students have ever undertaken.

> To paraphrase Dr. Indira Nair...Throughout the pre-college and undergraduate years, students are primarily "consumers" of knowledge; however, during their graduate training, individuals are expected gradually to assume the role of "creators" of new knowledge....They must go beyond what is known, asking questions, seeking answers, and disseminating their results. (Fischer & Zigmond, 1998, p.31)

Doctoral students benefit not only from good mentoring from a major professor and from the support and help given by a peer group, they also gain important insights from classes and other associations with faculty members in their major department. Having a relationship with several faculty members exposes a student to a variety of perspectives and skills; some may be adroit in statistical analysis, others in providing stimulating lectures to 150 undergraduate students.

> Students need to realize that no one person can satisfy all of their educational needs. For this reason, faculty should encourage and students should seek to build a group of mentors who can cumulatively address the needs of the trainee. (Fischer & Zigmond, 1998, p.32)

Beyond these more practical aspects, faculty support also helps students on an emotional level. Professors are in a unique position to reassure a student when they feel anxious and convey belief in them when they feel insecure. Goplerud (1980) states "the more often students interacted with faculty outside of classes during the first weeks of school, the less likely they were to report intense or prolonged life disruptions during the first six months of graduate study" (p.288). This is especially important when one considers that almost 30% of all doctoral student attrition occurs in the first year of study (Golde, 1998). Ellis (1997) reported that doctoral students who found faculty members expressing an interest in their professional activities felt more valued.

Student's Experiences

A major goal of all doctoral programs is the creation of new research by the students through their dissertations. Many of their classes and other experiences are geared toward training for this significant undertaking. That is the case because the Ph.D. is primarily a research degree. With this in mind, I talked with students about the amount of departmental support they received in their research and scholarly endeavors. Half of the participants described their departments as indifferent to their efforts. Susan talked about this:

> *It's funny because it's hard to even get them looked at. It's hard to get disapproval or approval of an idea. It's such a difficult process to even get them looked at and it doesn't seem like the majority of the problems*

come from people disapproving, or even approving, of the corrections or whatever is the topic area. It is just such a lethargic process to even get it looked at. I tend to listen to my colleagues and bounce things off colleagues. And it is such a shared experience with us in that department. I mean the horror stories just never end. So at the departmental level, it is not that I perceived disapproval, critiquing in a scary way or anything. It is this ambivalence of even working on research ideas. That is really, really shocking to me.

Several students described the experience of studying in indifferent departments as "really frustrating and really hurtful," "aggravating," and "disappointing." These reactions are akin to the comments of the previously stated research that concluded departmental support has practical and *emotional* benefits.

Some students described receiving guidance and support from faculty members in addition to their mentors. They saw the benefits of these relationships as offering multiple perspectives on their work, as conductive to learning different skills, and as providing emotional support. An example of different professors having different skills to offer is demonstrated in the following quote from Stan:

There are a few faculty members who are willing to help and read over drafts of articles and things like that....We had one professor who was really good at statistics and he was always very helpful to me, at the thesis level and a couple of articles that I was working on. In the last year he would actually volunteer help. He would come by and say, "Hey, what are you working on." I had to learn how to do (statistical procedure) so I went by his office. Actually I wasn't asking for help. I was just chatting with him and I brought that up. He said "Oh, yes. I wrote an article on that, read this and this, and this person." Then I went and received some help at the computing center and he checked back later with me. And any time he sees me using (computer package) he will come in and say "Hey, what are you doing, have you tried this." So he is very helpful. If I was about to send something out and wanted some comments, to read over it, most of our faculty, as long as they knew anything about the area, would do that.

As was noted in the chapter about mentoring, some students found that their departments were supportive of them while other students in the same departments did not report helpful relationships. This raises two possibilities. In mentoring, students' specific characteristics affect engagement with the faculty. Thus, the issue of faculty involvement involves not just professors prioritizing this, but also what the students are doing to help promote such relationships. When conducting my interviews, I was struck with how bright, interesting and committed to their field all of the students were. Thinking about the students who had support, versus the ones that did not, I was not able to speculate what qualities differentiated the students that were the "star students" of the department from the others.

Another possibility pertains to perceptions and expectations. Some students may report their departments as indifferent because they expected an unrealistic amount of involvement or, for other reasons, they received their faculty in a critical light.

Some students described their faculties as being, at times, negative and unsupportive, while at other times they were supportive, on both emotional and research levels. Mary described her positive experience:

> *In the beginning it wasn't there. I guess they were not used to having people do (research methodology) or, I was confused how they actually did things. But in the beginning it was like, "No, we don't want to have you do that kind of work. We would prefer you to just be in classes, period. And that you do not go and do that." And I thought that part of the reason why I am here is so that I can do (research methodology)...and take classes as well. So I think there was a structural barrier which said, "Hey, wait a second, why do you want to do that. You should be doing class work instead." I was saying "Wait a second, I can do both of those things." Finally, I guess when I proved I was*

> *capable of doing those things, finally it was like, "Oh, okay you can do that, that's fine…"*

She went on to state that her department was "autonomous," yet she mentioned more faculty involvement than several other students.

> *There is only the one woman who works with me. She encourages me and gives me support if I am having any problems. She helps give me ideas. She helps me direct research ideas. And then there are a couple of other people in the department who will read and edit my work. So that is great too. But for the most part, everybody is fairly autonomous there. Everybody kind of does their own thing and whether grad students work with them or not does not seem to matter either way. So, it is not like they are going to take an interest in me if they have another graduate student working with them. And I do not expect them to.*

A conclusion about this group's experience of departmental support is that it was a mixed experience, which included periods of resistance and of encouragement and help.

Reasons for Departmental Indifference

Doctoral students need help and support from the faculty members in their department. A significant number of them experience indifference. Students would benefit from a change in this policy. An examination of the reasons why some faculty members are unresponsive may clarify the situation.

As mentioned in the mentor chapter, professors are quite busy with a variety of professional responsibilities, including teaching, conducting research, participating in "governance" meetings, preparing accreditation reports, and mentoring a few individual students. The issue of departmental indifference then may not be related solely to an uncaring attitude on the part of the faculty members, but also to simply being overburdened. For instance:

> Ms. Radway (a literature professor at Duke University) encourages her students to form dissertation groups, informal gatherings where they nudge each other along. She suspects more extreme versions, like the boot camps, have sprung up because professors have less time for advising. "Many of us have way too many students," she says, noting that at one point she was trying to advise 10 Ph.D. students at once. She now limits herself to five. (Leatherman, A18, 2000)

If professors are finding it difficult to find the time to advise their own proteges, it would be that much more difficult to provide guidance for another professor's students. (This was mentioned by one of the students I interviewed.)

Another reason for faculty indifference may be that faculty are more interested in satisfying their own professional interests. Two researchers state that in their survey of doctoral students in the hard sciences, engineering and sociology, they found: "over 70 percent said that faculty were more concerned with their career than with the good of the department and that people in their department had to compete for resources" (Anderson & Swazey, 1998, p.8). (It should be noted that their data were collected in 1989).

Another researcher found:

> Professors in the social sciences were described by some respondents as distant, inaccessible, and often out of touch with student problems. While some excused this behavior on the grounds that there were many outside needs for the professor's expertise, others referred to the faculty as "part-time employees"...(Heiss, 1970, p.194)

This could be a result of the previously mentioned pressures on faculty to be everything to everyone. A professor is expected to be a good teacher to the classroom students, a prolific publisher in prestigious journals, a contributor to university governance, and someone who can procure grant money for the department.

A third reason may be that students do not actively engage professors. Perhaps students' perception of indifference may be countered by faculty members' perceptions of student passivity. A fourth possible reason for faculty indifference may be the lack of collegial enterprise. If faculty felt a connection to each other, that they were all on the same "team" working toward common goals, perhaps a professor would feel more motivated to want to help other professors' students.

Ways to Change the Situation

There are several possible ways to increase faculty members' support of and involvement with other professors' students. One is to have students periodically present to the entire faculty the research they are interested in pursuing (unknown reference). If professors know what students are working on, they may be more interested in helping the student. As mentioned earlier, one student received statistical help not because either he or the faculty member pursued a connection, but because the student's need came up in a casual conversation. Similarly, a professor may be intrigued by a part of a student's research _if_ he or she is made aware of the research. During the course of this project I talked to a number of professors in informal conversations about my own research. They suggested articles that I would find interesting and I gave them information in which they were interested. Faculty involvement, though, is important enough not to be left to chance hallway conversations.

Another way to increase professors' involvement would be to cut back the demands on their time. The faculty with whom I have worked over the years are constantly asked to undertake tasks by the university, the department and outside organizations. If departments believe that mentoring and faculty involvement are valuable, time should be set aside for the faculty to carry this out (Ellis, 1997).

> A third way to solve the problem is to educate the faculty that students benefit greatly from their input. Though these benefits may seem obvious, why not, as a department, act proactively and point out to professors the gains for the students? "Developing faculty awareness of their critical influence on graduate students' health and emotional well-being [is a] prevention strateg[y] to reduce graduate students' risk for stress-related problems" (Goplerud, 1980, pp.288-289).

Finally, as in the mentor situation, doctoral students should be educated about the benefits of working with a group of faculty and help them to develop the skills to engage the faculty (Fischer & Zigmond, 1998). When I pursued the Master's degree and the doctorate, no one discussed with me the importance of forming as many different relationships with faculty as I could. It is a subject that both faculty and students should act upon. "When departments are welcoming, nurturing, and supportive, students appear to enjoy their doctoral study. Students working in a supportive environment might also complete their degrees at their present institution at a higher rate, and in a shorter time-frame" (Ellis, 1997, p.185).

Conclusion

Earning a Ph.D. is a demanding and intense pursuit. This chapter has demonstrated that departments need to actively guide a student's development,

rather than to depend solely on his or her major professor. The current condition indicates that more emphasis needs to be placed on this issue by doctoral faculty.

I have discussed the importance of the professor's involvement in sharpening the focus of student's research. The next chapter will examine the kinds of involvement students' experience and whether it supports research ideas.

CHAPTER VIII

ACADEMIC FREEDOM VERSUS CONFORMITY

Introduction

As mentioned in previous chapters, certain contexts are important to consider when trying to understand the doctoral experience. One overarching issue to consider is the nature of social institutions in our country. I propose in this chapter to examine the degree of academic freedom experienced by doctoral students. I see the term "academic freedom" as meaning the pursuit of research ideas in an atmosphere free from external pressures to limit what is to be investigated and to arrive at conclusions "acceptable" to those in authority. Among the issues thereby involved are how one views the values of social institutions and what kind of experiences students have with their major professors.

Political Nature of Social Institutions

Our country consists of many social institutions, such as the legal infrastructure, the media, the government and the educational system. One view of these interlocking institutions' *modus operandi* is that they all strive to promote democracy. This country's chief principle is that every individual has equal rights. No one is guaranteed success in the US, but each is assured of equal opportunity to strive for success. These are powerful messages. The country's institutions serve to enforce and maintain this equality and opportunity for all. Everyone, for instance, regardless of race, religion, class or gender is

guaranteed a trial by a jury consisting of his or her peers, a free education until High School graduation, and the right to vote.

Some question the true intentions of this system. It has been argued that our country has a "neoliberal democracy" (Chomsky, 1999). This is a society where big business works with the government to run this country in a manner beneficial to corporations. The priority of equal rights is overshadowed by the importance of supporting businesses' needs.

The electoral system in our country creates a situation where politicians need to collect an enormous amount of money in order to run competitively for public office. Some argue, consequently, that the elected officials are indebted to their contributors. Those who give large sums of money, in either direct donations or unregulated "soft money," are invariably the wealthy and the leaders of large corporations. When elected officials enact laws and regulations, they frequently seem motivated to meet large corporations' needs, not the needs of American populace.

Critics of our government believe that all of the other social institutions in our country are affected by the aforementioned collusion, because they are greatly influenced by business and the government. One example of the interrelated nature of the social institutions is that the media is owned by big business, which then gives money to politicians, who legislate regulations affecting the media. General Electric (GE) owns the NBC television network. NBC news is then not going to report information that undermines GE's business interests, or the political issues that GE supports (see The Chomsky Reader

[Chomsky, 1987], Manufacturing consent: the political economy of the mass media [Herman & Chomsky, 1988] and The Zinn Reader: Writings on Disobedience and Democracy [Zinn, 1997]).

This critique of our country highlights the idea that social institutions are conservative. They are controlled and influenced by those in power and function to keep them in power.

This critique is applied to the social institution of education, including its colleges and universities.

> Radical critics within the new sociology of education provided a variety of useful models of analysis to challenge traditional educational ideology. Against the conservative insistence that schools transmit objective knowledge, radical critics developed theories of the hidden curriculum as well as theories of ideology that identified the interests underlying specific forms of knowledge. Rather than viewing school knowledge as objective, as something to be merely transmitted to students, proponents of the new sociology of education argued that school knowledge was a particular representation of the dominant culture, one that was conducted through a selective process of emphasis and exclusion...Finally, against the assertion made by traditional educators that schools were relatively neutral institutions, radical critics illuminated the way in which the state, through its selective grants, certification policies, and legal powers, shaped school practice in the interest of capitalist rationality. (Freire, 1985, p.xv)

Howard Zinn (1997) also places great emphasis on how our university system is affected.

> Higher education, while enjoying some special privilege, is still part of the American system, which is an ingenious, sophisticated system of control. It is not totalitarian; what permits it to be called a democracy is that it allows apertures of liberty on the supposition that this will not endanger the basic contours of wealth and power in the society. (p.567)

The research conducted for a dissertation by doctoral students is intended to be original research that will contribute to knowledge. Ideally, this information would be read, disseminated and then would contribute to what scholars know

about their field. In many ways, scholars help shape the way the entire society views their world. Thus, a doctoral student's research can contribute to a broader audience that might affect the entire country.

Following this view of how society works, one could argue that the "aperture of liberty" is the scholarly activity of doctoral students creating research in an "academic free" atmosphere, but, in a way that will not "endanger the basic contours of wealth and power." That is, the research is supported if it does not question or condemn the status quo. The quotation below of students' research notes how this affects doctoral programs in psychology:

> Although faculty ostensibly favor open and unreserved expression, students fare best when they follow the mainstream. It is indeed ironic that a science oriented largely to the study of individual differences has such little tolerance of them. Moreover, although doctoral pursuits are supposed to encourage a quest for new knowledge, creative explorations are often restricted to the seeds of well-sewn crops. (Millon, Millon, & Antoni, 1986, p.122)

The students' research thus supports, frequently, the powers that be and it is shaped by those who are part of the system, as, for example, professors.

> The experts in legitimation, the ones who labor to make what people in power do seem legitimate, are mainly the privileged educated élites. The journalists, the academics, the teachers, the public relations specialists, this whole category of people has a kind of an institutional task, and that is to create the system of belief which will ensure the effective engineering of consent. (Chomsky, 1992, pp.66-67)

The creation of this "system of belief" perhaps includes the research that doctoral students are conducting. A well-known researcher in higher education, Leonard Baird (1992a), argues that the economic situation in universities is changing:

> In many departments the message is conveyed to graduate students fairly early in their career that obtaining external support is integral to academic

> research. Thus, in some departments there may be as much or more emphasis on getting funded as on doing the research in the best way. (p.4)

This perspective of our society, and higher education in particular, is a fairly radical and strong condemnation of our system. It would take a monumental effort to determine if this view is currently true, assuming that it is possible to come to a conclusion about it. The goal here, in this work, is to start the process of looking into the issues of academic freedom versus conformity within doctoral education.

Student's Experiences

I talked to students from several different disciplines about the level of support they perceived receiving for their research ideas by their major professors. I was interested in determining if they were pursuing research that their professor had deemed valuable, which might simply be research lines that support the status quo, or if they were looking at the research ideas in which they were interested. The results I found were that the great majority of students were pursuing their own interests, not ones imposed on them.

Barbara's description is an illustration of this:

> *We were just talking very, very casually about my dissertation and he [her major professor] said "I have got a box full of projects that I haven't had time to finish and have not gotten back to in years. If you ever want to look through this and see if there's something that you find interesting, that you might want to pursue on your own, you are welcome to anything I have started. We will take care of how you will cite what you've gotten from someplace else. Whatever is of interest to you." Last summer, right after my comps, I was at my undergrad university and I was talking to a friend of mine who is chair of his department there. In this conversation he asked me if I had decided on a dissertation topic. And I told him generally about two of the areas I was thinking about. In the course of the conversation he came up*

with this potential dissertation topic, that possibly could lead to a job opportunity there. And I was like "wow!" And we both got very excited about it. I came back and mentioned it to my adviser. We sat down and talked about some of the logistics of it. I typed up a proposal for him and, even though it was different than any of the stuff that he had ever worked on, or we worked on together, he was very supportive…I had to go out of town once a week to start the work on it. Every time I came back in town he would ask me how things went…He has given me some sources to go to, and recommended some books, even though it is not his area of specialty.

Mary described some initial difficulty with her department pertaining to the research she wanted to pursue:

Basically the faculty questioned the relevance of my research. "Why do you want to do that? Well what's the purpose? What's the point?"…I think that it was a combination of both (her research ideas and her research methodology). Now we have more (research methodology) researchers coming in. So I think that played a major role in the shift. It may have had something to do with the ideas, but I think it was mostly going outside of the lines of what was considered typical. That is what I think the problem was.…She was super [her major professor]. She was like "go out when you need to. We will try to do it so we can have some independent studies. You can go (do research methodology), have some transcripts, have some papers…"….She was very supportive from the beginning. She was supportive not only to me, but to the other faculty as well. I think that was part of the reason that it eventually became more accepted, because she was saying, "hey, wait a second, look at what is going on, you know. You cannot go on just what has happened in the past or by the norms that you have. You have to look and see what is going on with this individual person."

These two quotes illustrate that, when the students were excited and interested in a specific line of research, their major professors were very supportive, even when it was not their research interest or other professors had some questions about it. Similar to the majority of students I talked to, these two students' research interests were what they valued and were not ones imposed on them by their major professors.

Alternative explanations

Based on this information, one may decide that regardless of whether the media and the judicial system uphold the tenets of democracy, these students' statements do lead one to believe that doctoral students are pursuing the research ideas they deem valuable and are getting active support from mentors. A different line of reasoning also seems possible. Perhaps there is a lack of academic freedom that did not come out in my interviews. This may be have been the case, because all of the people I talked with had Master's degrees prior to pursuing their Ph.D. Radical students who question those in power may have been weeded out at the Master's level. At the point of the dissertation, which was true of all of the students with whom I talked, students may have already conformed to society's power structures.

> Thus, without extraordinary measures, in the natural course of its operation, the academy weeds out undesirable faculty, students, courses, by a panoply of political devices masquerading as lofty academic standards. Through a process of almost natural selection, a structure of quiet coercion is created...(Zinn, 1982, p.14)

To test this theory, it might be useful to ask about academic freedom with Master's level students, or even undergraduate students. However, "radical sociologists" might argue that this form of socialization begins very early, with what is or is not taught in grade school.

Another possible reason that the students I talked to said that they received research support may be that the pressure to conform is quite subtle, and students may not be aware of it.

> External control is then replaced by a whispering in the inner ear, with the single message: play it safe. In this way, behind a façade of academic

> freedom, the university, with the cooperation of the faculty, will turn out able and docile students, who will dutifully, efficiently ply their trades to keep the wheels of the economic system turning... (Zinn, 1982, p.14)

Perhaps this kind of indirect persuasion may have influenced some of the students. To clarify the issue I asked Tom if what he was saying was that the dissertation consists of his ideas, but his mentor's standards. He responded "Yes, yes. If I have an idea, and he thinks it is a good one, we will do it. If I have an idea and he does not, we don't." Stan, another student, said:

> *I think if we are just talking about ideas, people are usually supportive. With my adviser, it came down to two dissertation topics and he asked me--or he suggested to me--that I do the one that coincided more with his research interests. And, in some ways, I think I wanted to do the other one a little bit more. But I think now, at this point, given the recent development, I am happy that I chose the one he said. And some faculty are really bad about that. My colleague works with a faculty member who pretty much will tell him not to work on anything in which he isn't interested, he will say, "No, I do not want to work on this." Then it can become a problem for the student. I just presented my ideas for the dissertation without giving my opinion either way... He seemed to like the one more, which, as it turns out, I think is the best choice.*

These students may have been under some pressure to conform, or these may simply be mentors providing guidance. The professors may have influenced the students' research direction because the professors know more about the field than the students. It is difficult to determine where a professor is helping a student to pursue a quality research plan or forcing a student to conform to some agenda.

It should be noted that throughout my four years of doctoral education every student I have talked to informally has echoed the above statements. Students have always told me of the same sequence of events: they decided on a research topic they were interested in, chose faculty members who shared this

interest or had skills they felt would be important to their project and they put it into action. I have never heard a friend tell me that he/she wanted to investigate an idea and could not find faculty members to support it. However, in these informal conversations, it may not have come out how they were indirectly influenced. In addition, my friends tend to be people who already had Master's degrees. In general, the anecdotal evidence of the students to whom I talked depicted an atmosphere of academic freedom.

Conclusion

Whether the students I talked to, or students in general, experience academic freedom or pressures to conform is open to debate. It is a highly complex issue that would need to take into account many influences, among them external rewards, internal pressures, and socialization since childhood. The first step of asking students about this issue is a necessary starting point. There is much merit to further exploration of this issue. True academic freedom in higher education means:

> That the university, because of its special claim to be a place for the pursuit of truth, be a place where we can challenge not only the ideas but the institutions, the practices of society, measuring them against millennia-old ideals of equality and justice. (Zinn, 1982, p.6)

This dissertation has described students' views on important aspects of their education, as well as perceived voids. Next, I will explain what changes to the Ph.D. program the students suggested to fill in some of the gaps.

CHAPTER IX

CHANGES AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Throughout this dissertation different problems with Ph.D. education have been described. This chapter will propose a number of possible changes that are aimed at improving the current situation. This will include changes that were presented in past research, ones suggested by the students with whom I talked, and a compilation of suggestions I mentioned in previous chapters.

Proposals Made in Previous Studies

The literature shows that university administrators and faculty have suggested a variety of changes for doctoral education. One frequently seen proposal concerns financial assistance for doctoral students (Anderson, 1996; Beeler, 1993; Bowen & Rudenstein, 1992). In 1976 Katz and Hartnett wrote:

> We can imagine a graduate dean who has been scrambling for scarce funds to support graduate students thinking that the idea of increased stipends is unrealistic...But we also believe that more adequate funding has been held up not only by lack of money but by failure to recognize the consequences for graduate students of poverty living and prolonged dependence on parents. (pp. 268-269)

Kerlin echoed this sentiment in 1995:

> As institutional finances have stagnated and the labor market for new Ph.D.'s has deteriorated, contemporary doctoral students...have found themselves facing...debt burdens growing at alarming rates...Most important at the present time is a renewed public interest...(in) seeking measurable improvements in rates of...financial assistance... (p. 24)

Hodgson and Simoni (1995) discussed the relationship of financial support and psychological concerns and concluded with the following suggestion:

> Many departments and professional schools are now adopting a policy according to which only the number of students who can be financially supported throughout graduate school will be accepted into a program. If students have fewer concerns about finances, one factor contributing to psychological distress could be minimized. (253)

A second suggestion is to shorten the amount of time it takes to earn the degree (Anderson, 1996; Beeler, 1993; Bowen & Rudenstein, 1992, suggest experimenting with this; Geiger, 1997; Menand, 1996). Peter Brooks (1996), however, persuasively argues that a necessary change is to require not less, but more time to pursue the doctoral degree. A longer period of doctoral study would better prepare the student's for a professional role. He states:

> We should think about taking fewer students, keeping them longer, supporting them better, mentoring them more fully, and giving them more time to develop truly original research agendas. Then we should make their entry into the profession more gradual: more postdoctoral fellowships to ease the transition from studentdom to full faculty status, with time to publish before taking on full-time teaching.

A third proposition is to restructure the dissertation requirement (Anderson, 1996; Berelson, 1960, Lipschutz, 1993; Menand, 1996). Because the dissertation is a large part of a student's experience, it stands to reason that a reexamination of its current form is in order. For instance "One idea gaining popularity is that the dissertation may be awarded on the basis of combining a number of published journal articles, whether they are completed alone by the candidate or in association with a team of researchers" (Beeler, 1993, p.10).

In addition to developing skills as a researcher, it is also an important aspect of doctoral training to learn how to teach. Yet, some researchers have concluded that teacher training is insufficient and needs to be improved (Atwell, 1996; Dolan, Kropf, O'Connor & Ezra, 1997). As Dolan, Kropf, O'Connor and Ezra state: "If an overwhelming majority of graduate students envision themselves pursuing a career in university teaching, it is surprising that more students are not receiving hands-on preparation for their prospective jobs."

Suggestions Made by this Study's Students

The students I talked to suggested a variety of changes for the doctoral degree. For example, several people (from the same department) see the current comprehensive exam system as "antiquated." One student described a need for more variety in the classes offered, and another student felt the stipends should be higher. The two most frequently mentioned areas for change were to increase both the level of structure and the sense of community in the program.

Improving Structure

The students who suggested increasing the amount of structure in the doctoral program described this as entailing more formal and concrete guidelines. Their area of concern varied from research instruction to where financial support for research might be available. Mark had the following suggestion:

> *Have one of the faculty members develop a list of funding sources available for students to go to for doing (research method) research. Provide some kind*

of guidance to students, whether it's a once-a-year seminar or a brown bag lunch and say "if you want to do (research method) research this is what you need to go through."...That is the biggest thing, encouraging people to do this and then offering them resources so they can go do this. Because it is difficult finding out where the funding sources are. It is difficult figuring out how to structure an application, so that you get money to do this. What do you do in terms of maneuvering through human subjects...? There was just no guidance through the process, such as these are the steps you have to go through. Guide them through. Show them the format, step by step.

The view that graduate education lacks structure (Baird, 1990) and that structure should be brought into the experience is echoed in the research. Boyle and Boice (1998) found when examining exemplary departments, "when program structure was provided for graduate students -- that is, short-term goals, structured assignments, and timely feed-back -- the graduate students completed degree requirements sooner and at higher rates than without such support" (p.91). Perhaps it is assumed that at the doctoral level students want more freedom and less formal procedures, since many of the students have already obtained the Master's degree. Sigafus (1998), however, found that for twenty-five doctoral students (though it was an unusual program, involving interactive video instruction):

> In my study no one spoke about wanting learning situations that required more self-planned efforts. Instead, everyone spoke of wanting more structure, more resources, and more guidepost along the way. Participants wanted faculty members "to tell us what to do" and they rebelled in the two courses that "had no clear direction," saying that "[the instructor] didn't know what he was doing" or "he couldn't teach." (pp.16-17)

One way of acting on these suggestions is to follow a "Jazz model," where there is both structure and adequate flexibility that allows for individual student "improvisation" within the system. An example of this may be to require that first year students attend two-hour seminars each week on professional issues, such

as what research grants are available through the department and university; and also to leave open a number of dates for students to select the topics and speakers for the seminars. In this situation, students would be better able to guide the course of their studies.

Increase in the Sense of Community

Throughout this paper the benefits of social support and relationships with fellow students, mentors and other faculty members have been discussed. Some of the students described feeling disappointed with the lack of a sense of community within the department, both among the students and/or between the students and the faculty. Mary's comment summarizes these feelings well.

> *Maybe something that would improve…the interaction between the two groups (faculty and students). I know I have tried to get graduate students to talk to each other. For some reason they won't. I do not know why. (laughs) And maybe get faculty and students working together so it is not an "us-versus-them" kind of atmosphere… I think it would have been more pleasant, first of all. There wouldn't have been any of that "break you down, build you up kind" of thing. Because you would have had people that were working together, so I think that is a big factor. If you have people who want to work together you avoid the negative stuff, ideally…*

Conclusion

One of the main purposes of this paper is to provide more information about the doctoral experience to departments and to prospective students. Hopefully, part of what will be helpful for each of these groups is that much of the information presented here is from students themselves, something that is not commonly found in the literature. Though suggestions for departments and

students have been stated throughout the chapters, I will now restate them in summary fashion.

Suggestions for Departments and Students

Departments should state explicitly in the doctoral brochures and interviews what students can expect from their doctoral education. In the interviews, it would be wise to explore what the applicants are hoping to get from the Ph.D. education. Thus, the department can help the applicants understand what they can realistically expect if they matriculate into that department. Students would be well served to take the responsibility of obtaining specific information about what the education will entail from the departments they hope to enter.

If departments make faculty mentoring a high priority, they should provide training and information to professors and students about how to forge and maintain a productive mentoring relationship. In addition, departments should make mentoring an issue when hiring faculty, adjust faculty teaching loads, and provide incentives for mentoring. Because the research has demonstrated the importance student place on a sense of community, departments could encourage relationships between students, and between students and faculty. If faculty are aware of any degree of gender segregation among the students they should address it and efforts should be made to change it.

Specific suggestions to accomplish productive interpersonal relationships within a department have already been discussed, but two important points are

worth reiterating. One, increasing connections within a department should not be left to chance. Structural, pro-active measures should be taken to support positive and productive interpersonal relationships within the department. Secondly, both professors and students have a responsibility in this area and thus, each group needs to take an active role.

The doctoral educational system is an important and complex one. I hope this dissertation has introduced the reader to the many aspects involved in the pursuit of a Ph.D. A forum is needed for students' voices to be heard. More information about the experience will enable prospective students to make more informed choices about whether they wish to pursue a Ph.D.

This final chapter has dealt with the wisdom involved in understanding the need for change. There are clearly many problems in Ph.D. programs and there appear to be very relevant solutions for these problems. With the critical role that those who achieve the Ph.D. will play in our society and the evidence of loss through attrition in Ph.D. programs, there is every reason for graduate programs to begin the process of change as soon as possible.

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APPENDIX

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research question under investigation dictates the methodology that should be implemented. Matching the research approach to the study area probably enhances the accuracy and validity of the results found. The purpose of this appendix is to describe the methodology and the specific procedures that were used to examine the questions of this study.

Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), a qualitative methodological approach, was used in this research project. This decision was based on several factors. First, the researcher was interested in learning about the doctoral education experience in the students' own voices. Pursuing a Ph.D. is a long and all-consuming process. It was my sense that students talking about their reactions would enable the richness and depth of the experience to emerge. Grounded theory was selected as a way of understanding the students' view of the Ph.D. program, because Kerlin's (1997) study has shown that grounded theory results in meaningful answers.

Secondly, as Denzin (1989) wrote: "Open-ended interviewing assumes that meanings, understandings, and interpretations cannot be standardized: They cannot be obtained with a formal, fixed-choice questionnaire" (pp.42-43). The current study examined the training received in Ph.D. programs. This researcher believes that responses about knowledge and skills gained in these activities cannot be neatly standardized. To understand student perspectives, there needs to be the flexibility of grounded theory's open-ended interviewing.

A third reason that grounded theory was selected is that, in addition to its flexible approach, there is a systematic structure and rigor that contributes to its validity and reliability. This will be discussed later in this chapter. A final reason for choosing this qualitative approach is that the literature calls not only for more research on doctoral education (Bowen & Rudenstine, 1992), but also research based on the students' perspective (Tinto, 1993).

Overview of Grounded Theory

Grounded theory methodology was first delineated in the groundbreaking work The Discovery of Grounded Theory by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss in 1967. The objective of this approach is the formation of a theory about understanding social phenomena. Theory is defined in this system as "...a strategy for handling data in research, providing modes of conceptualization for describing and explaining" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.3). The theory emerges from the data gathered; it is grounded in the data, thus enhancing the validity of the theory.

Researchers "...enter the research setting with as few predetermined ideas as possible – especially logically deducted, a prior hypothesis" (Glaser, 1978, pp.2-3). The reason for having as few working assumptions as possible is that "...potential theoretical sensitivity is lost when the...(researcher)... commits himself (sic) exclusively to one specific preconceived theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.46).

The authors explain that "Generating a theory from data means most hypotheses and concepts not only come from data, but are systematically worked out in relation to the data during the course of the research. Generating a theory involves a process of research" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.6). The stages in the research process for grounded theory consist of data collection, coding, analysis and writing up the theory. The next section will describe the process of theory formulation in the grounded theory approach.

Data Collection, Coding and Analysis

The research process involves the collection, coding and analysis of data. These are the "underlying operations" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.71) in formulating theory. Construction of the theory is an active, dynamic process, where all three above elements are done together, as much as possible, from beginning to end.

When these three activities are done simultaneously, theory begins to emerge from the data that is collected. An early sense of a pattern points to subsequent collecting, coding and analysis. Thus, grounded theory works in a continuous loop, where the researcher begins with "... a partial framework of 'local' concepts, designating a few principal or gross features of the structure and processes in the situations that he (sic) will study" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.45). The beginning point leads to data collection, coding and analysis that either supports or changes the initial partial framework. Further steps in information gathering and understanding follow from this revised framework.

As the information is collected, it is coded and placed in a category with certain properties. "The essential relationship between data and theory is a conceptual code. The code conceptualizes the underlying pattern of a set of empirical indicators within the data" (Glaser, 1978, p.55) A category "...stands by itself as a conceptual element of the theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.36). Properties are smaller, defined elements within a category. The same authors (p.36) provide the following illustration of a category and a property: a category is a nurse's perception of the social loss of a dying patient; a property within this category is the rationale, such as the patient's financial status, why there would be a high social loss. Data collection begins with the formation of initial, lower level categories. These are based on the first few incidents the participants describe. As the investigation continues, higher level categories emerge; these consist of integrating lower level categories into fewer and more major categories. It is possible, however, that some higher level categories may emerge initially, rather than be produced by lower level categories combining together.

Constant Comparative Method

The analysis of the data is performed through the constant comparative method. This process consists of four steps. The first step, "comparing incidents applicable to each category" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.105), entails coding the information into either an existing category or creating a new category for it. "Data should not be forced or selected to fit pre-conceived or pre-existent categories or discarded in favor of keeping an extant theory in tact" (Glaser,

1978, p.4). The determination of which category to code the information into is done by comparing it to the other incidents in the category. Charmaz (1994, p.97) says that, "Coding, the initial phase of the analytic method, is simply the process of *categorizing* and *sorting* data." As the data is coded, Glaser (1978) suggests that their should be a focus on the core categories which are the "...'main theme,' ...for what is the essence of relevance reflected in the data..." (p.94).

While coding is occurring, the authors suggest writing memos about any ideas that occur to the researcher while they are fresh in mind.

> By committing ideas, hunches, questions, and elaborated categories to organized memos, the researcher *defines* what is implicit and what is explicit in the data. In that dialogue with self, the researcher looks at the data from a variety of perspectives and analyzes them. (Charmaz, 1994, p.85)

These memos force the researcher to think beyond the specific incident recorded. "Memos are the theorizing write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding" (Glaser, 1978, p.83).

The second step, "integrating categories and their properties" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.108), is described as follows: "...as the coding continues, the constant comparative units change from comparison of incident with incident to comparison of incident with properties of the category that resulted from initial comparisons of incidents" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.108). The third step, "delimiting of the theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.109), happens when "...the theory solidifies...the major modifications become fewer and fewer as the analyst compares the next incident of a category to its properties" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.110). A second form of the delimiting is the reduction of the number of

categories. As more information is gathered the researcher is able to combine categories that have become quite similar and eliminate categories that the researcher determines are insignificant. The fourth step, stating the theory, occurs when "...the researcher is convinced that his (sic) analytic framework forms a systematic substantive theory ...(and)...that it is a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.113). The theory is written up using the categories, properties and memos. Glaser (1978) discusses how the theory should fit the data collected and be able to "...explain what happened, predict what will happen and interpret what is happening in an area of substantive or formal inquiry" (p.4).

Validity and Reliability

The issues of validity and reliability are important when examining a research study's data and results. Validity is established when "...a researcher's data are valid to the extent that the results of the measurement process are accurate" (Huck & Cormier, 1996, p.88). Accuracy is assured in grounded theory because the theory is generated directly from the data collected. Glaser and Strauss (1967) note that other methodologies seek to verify existing theories. In grounded theory, a pre-existing theory is not verified, rather, a theory emerges from the data.

Reliability has been defined in the following manner: "Researchers can and do evaluate the reliability of their instruments from different perspectives, but the basic question that cuts across these various perspectives (and techniques) is always the same: 'To what extent can we say that the data are consistent?'"

(Huck & Cormier, 1996, p.76). Reliability within grounded theory is derived from the fact that categories emerge from repetition within the data.

Two strategies were used to increase the reliability and validity of the results. Firstly, the principal investigator and two colleagues, who were doctoral students trained and interested in qualitative analysis, analyzed the results. This research team sorted through the data and arrived at a consensus for the classification of the data. Any differences in opinion between the team members were discussed and resolved prior to any classification. Secondly, the results and analysis were presented to the participants in order to obtain their thoughts and reactions.

Data Collection

Participants

The participants were doctoral level students in the social sciences enrolled in different Ph.D. programs at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, who had, at minimum, completed their course work, but had not completed doctoral dissertation or degrees. The decision to choose students at this stage of their Ph.D. training was that they were in the program long enough to have accumulated a fair amount of education and experience, with the training still fresh in their memories. Different doctoral programs were used because as the researcher

> maximizes differences by changing the scope of his (sic) research--for example, by going to different organizations, regions, cities or nations--he (sic) discovers more startling differences in data, his (sic) attempts to understand how these differences fit in are likely to have important effects on

> both his (sic) research operations and the generality of scope of his (sic) theory. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p.57)

Though grounded theory states that research should be continued until the categories reach saturation, Rennie, Phillips, and Quartaro (1988) recommend that five to ten protocols are generally sufficient for achieving saturation. Eight doctoral students were interviewed for this study, with an equal gender distribution. No control for demographic variables was implemented and no incentives offered for participation.

The Interview

At the beginning of each interview the participants were provided a written introduction outlining the purpose of the study and instructions, such as their right to refuse to answer any question and to stop the audiotape recording at any time. The interviewees were asked to read and sign an informed consent form and permission to reprint form. The interviews were face-to-face, and audiotaped for future transcription. The conduct of the interview followed Denzin's (1989) suggestion that "An interview... should be a conversation, a give-and-take between two persons" (p.43). The reason for this suggestion was that Denzin (1989) believed that when the interview is all a series of questions and answers "...they become asymmetric, authoritarian social relations in which the power of social science determines the information given" (p.43).

The questions were directed to elicit demographic data and information about the participants training experience. The information from the interviews was coded, analyzed and the theory formulated in line with the grounded theory procedures outlined in this chapter. The analyzed results for each participant

were presented to that person to review (though one student decided not to) and s/he had a chance to provide input if s/he wanted to. The questions that were asked were the following:

1. What is your age, gender, year in the doctoral program, specific field, geographic location where you grew up, degrees and credentials held, past significant occupations, and future vocational goals?
2. What were your expectations when entering the Ph.D. program? What influences led you to having these expectations? Tell me about the influence, if any, that your family and background had on these expectations. Explain to me the role that your gender had, if any, on these expectations. Possible follow up questions for this general question about gender may be, what were the effects on your expectations based on: a) different gender role views you have been exposed to in the past, b) the gender composition of the faculty, fellow students and/or your chosen profession?
3. How would you evaluate your Ph.D. experience in relation to your original expectations?
4. What was the psychological and emotional impact, if any, of having or not having your Ph.D. expectations met?
5. Have you felt enabled and supported in your scholarly pursuits, such as conducting research, by the institution and department you were in? Please explain. What was your emotional response to this?

6. In your relationships with your faculty have you felt enabled and supported in your scholarly pursuits? Please explain. What was your emotional response to this?
7. What possible changes to your program would you suggest, if any?

There were also follow up questions asked to clarify or elaborate responses to the initial questions.

Confidentiality for the participants was insured in several ways. First, each interviewee was given a code name which was subsequently used on his/her interview tape, transcripts and in the written result of the research study. The principal investigator was the only one who knows which code name was assigned to each participant. Secondly, the tapes will be erased at the completion of the dissertation. Thirdly, certain identifying information mentioned by the participants during the interview, such as unit and/or professor's names, were also coded in the transcripts and the dissertation write up. Fourthly, confidentiality was further insured by each member of the research team signing a pledge of confidentiality prior to reading the research data (the data at this point had identifying information coded).

Limitations of the Research.

There may be several limitations to this research. First, the information gathered was self-reported. The validity of this approach is contingent on the participants' motivation to be self-revealing. A second limitation was that this research sought the students' evaluation of their doctoral training. Since a

doctoral program requires a large investment on the part of students, it may be difficult for some to evaluate it critically. A third limitation of the current study is that an evaluation of their training may only be possible once the students have had a significant amount of time and distance from the experience. A fourth possible limitation is that the reported expectations for their doctoral experience are being recalled by them several years after matriculation.

VITA

Adam was raised in upstate New York. He graduated from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York, in 1992 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Human Development and Family Studies. He then moved to California and worked at the ARC of San Francisco, a non-profit organization that addresses the needs of adults with developmental disabilities. Adam was an instructor at the ARC for a year and a half, focusing on vocational and life skills development of the clients.

After living in the northeast and the western parts of the United States, Adam relocated to the southern part of the country. He attended the University of Georgia's Master of Education – Counseling and Guidance program. In his Masters program, which he graduated from in 1995, he received excellent clinical training. He provided counseling to individuals from the university and the community at the University of Georgia's Center for Counseling and Personal Evaluation. Adam was also involved in research focusing on people with disabilities, an interest that started with his work in California.

Adam entered the Doctor of Philosophy in Education program at the University of Tennessee in the fall of 1996. During his Ph.D., he further developed as a clinician, counseling a variety of client populations, including graduate students from the University of Tennessee and non-violent offenders from the judicial system. Adam also had the opportunity to counsel individuals presenting with a variety of concerns at the University of Tennessee's Student Counseling Services Center, as both a practicum student and a Graduate

Assistant. While pursuing the Ph.D., Adam conducted research on a primary interest of his, which examined gender roles in society. Adam participated in a clinical pre-doctoral internship at the University of Delaware's Center for Counseling and Student Development.