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# A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students

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# A PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING IN THE UNITED STATES AND THE UNITED KINGDOM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CURRENT AND FORMER EXCHANGE STUDENTS

by

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## ABSTRACT

While once almost indistinguishable, the systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom have diverged during the past 200 years to the point where today there are few similarities. However, due to increasing globalization and the growing ubiquity of the internet, many contemporary issues in higher education are often faced by institutions across the globe.

After detailing the historical role of scholarship and teaching in the two countries, this study concentrates on two aspects that have been extensively researched in recent years, namely the role of technology in the classroom and the balance that many modern day faculty must seek with regard to teaching and research. A new perspective on these issues is then explored by considering the perceptions of current and former exchange students from the United States and the United Kingdom.

Data were collected by interviewing 12 students representing eight universities in the two countries, and an analysis was conducted according to established phenomenological principles. Four primary themes emerged as a result, which allowed me to seek commonalities and differences with the existing literature, and make suggestions for the direction of future research.

The conclusions made center around how students want technology to be used by faculty in a moderated fashion, and a distinction is formed between the way in which faculty and institutions in the two countries use web-based technology. With regard to the teaching-research nexus, this study largely refutes the notion that contemporary faculty prioritize research to the detriment of undergraduate students, and posits that the two disciplines are integrated in the sense that they can positively affect each other.

For Cindy, Bryn, and Evan

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The most common answer to the question “How long did it take you to finish your Ph.D.?” ranges from three to five years. However, I feel that this dissertation represents the culmination of a much longer process, to the extent that my response to the question would be “(Almost) 40 years”. As a consequence, I do not think it is appropriate to restrict my acknowledgments to those who have guided, encouraged, and inspired me during the four years I have been in the Higher Education and Policy Studies (HEPS) program, and that a longer timeline deserves to be considered.

When a colleague questioned what I would gain from this qualification, I replied that although there are over a thousand people with a Ph.D. within 2 miles of my office, there are very few indeed within 2 miles of my parents’ house in North Wales. And the 60,000 students at UCF stands in stark contrast to the 100 at St. Ethelwold’s Primary School, or the 600 at Maes Garmon Secondary School. Nonetheless, it was this background that motivated me to begin a journey of lifelong learning, along with teachers who now have an almost mythical place in my memory after so many years, but whose genuine devotion to education directed me on a path that ends with this dissertation.

After graduating from the University of Leicester in England, and a transformational year spent as an exchange student at the University of Texas, I decided to return to the United States for graduate school, arriving in Gainesville in August 1996. The fact that I have stayed in Florida during the highs and lows of the past 18 years is a testament not only to my stubborn persistence to succeed, but also to the love and support I have received along the way, primarily from my parents, but also from my brother, my friends, and in recent years my wife and children. And it is to Cindy, Bryn, and Evan that

this dissertation is dedicated. On the one hand my desire to spend more time with them made the writing of a doctoral dissertation even more of a challenge, but this was greatly offset by the encouragement they have given me to finally complete the task.

Having had several options, I can truly say that I never doubted my decision to enter the HEPS program, or felt any frustration or doubt with regards to my progress through it. I am deeply grateful to my advisors, Dr. Tom Owens and Dr. Rosa Cintrón, for their guidance, along with the confidence they have shown in me. Being able to work at my own speed, while always moving forward, has been invaluable, and their timely advice was always given and received with sincerity.

The 12 exchange students from whom I gathered the data form an integral part of this dissertation, and it was both a pleasure and a privilege to hear their stories. I will always be grateful to the staff at Keele University for allowing me to spend my sabbatical year there, and the warm welcome that I received. Finally, I also owe a debt of gratitude to the two other members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Selcuk Haciomeroglu and Dr. Kerry Welch, the instructors whose classes I took (in particular Dr. Tammy Boyd, with whom I took four), and my fellow students, who made the evening, weekend, and online classes so much more enjoyable. While it is difficult to single out individuals, I must thank Mark Lemon and Alton Austin, who kindly shared their completed dissertations with me, along with Matthew Ruane and Joshua Truitt, who have been an enduring source of support and good humor.

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# CHAPTER 1
# INTRODUCTION

## Introduction to the Problem

The initial alignment of the systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom began with the founding of the colonial colleges, which were largely modeled on the universities in Oxford and Cambridge. Harvard in particular ensured that its statutes were written *pro modo Academiarum in Anglia*[1] (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968). McLean (1995) notes that "Evidence of convergence can be reconciled with a cultural-historical view" (p. 21). A close connection between the two countries continued for over a century before revolutionary forces, and the embrace of the German academic model, caused British and American institutions to continue along divergent tracks. This divergence continued into the 20th century, during which the American system, incorporating European aspects along with its own unique elements, became pre-eminent, to the extent that universities around the world now look to the United States in an effort to advance their institutions.

The contemporary academic environment in the United States and the United Kingdom has been studied in the literature, often using publicly available databases, and primarily from the viewpoint of administrators or those looking at the administrative structure of the institutions. Dearlove (1998) describes how "tighter times in the 1980s encouraged the call for more efficient university management and in the 1990s the issue of good university governance was pushed to the fore" (p. 59). However, there are few

[1] According to the manner of universities in England.

comparative studies which analyze the similarities and differences of undergraduate teaching in the two countries, even though the discipline of international and comparative education exists at many elite institutions[2], and no literature was found detailing first-hand perceptions of undergraduate teaching by students who have studied in the two countries. Furthermore, while international comparative studies look to gain a cross-cultural understanding by establishing generalized statements about education that are valid in more than one country (Noah & Eckstein, 1969), many gain data from the respective countries prior to the researcher putting forth the comparisons, with no anecdotal evidence to reinforce the claims made. This phenomenological study was designed to allow me to question current and former exchange students who have experienced the systems of higher education in both countries. By allowing the participants to discuss their experiences, the study provides a voice to the narrative of exchange students, and thus yields unique first-hand insight into the observed similarities and differences in undergraduate teaching in the two countries.

## Background to the Problem

From the founding of New College in 1636 (renamed Harvard College three years later), and for almost 150 years afterwards, any study comparing the academic environments of the United States and the United Kingdom would have been at best highly nuanced, and in many cases irrelevant. Given that the only universities in the English speaking world at that time were Oxford and Cambridge (and the fact that most

[2] Graduate programs in international and comparative education are offered at prestigious institutions such as Harvard, Stanford, and Columbia in the United States, and also Oxford and Bristol in the United Kingdom.

colonial inhabitants were either English, or of English descent), it was natural that the new colonial colleges were created in the mold of the Oxbridge[3] model. However, after gaining independence in 1776, the American model of higher education gradually gained a more distinctive flavor, with the 19th century giving rise to the first literary societies, the growing influence of intercollegiate athletics, and the rapidly increasing number of women's colleges, which all created an atmosphere on campus very different to that at Oxbridge[4,5].

The rate of divergence between British and American universities increased markedly during the second half of the 19th century, with the construction of land grant colleges allowing instruction of a more vocational nature, and the embrace of the German model placing a growing emphasis on graduate education and research. This new approach stood in contrast to the staunchly traditional instruction given at the Oxbridge colleges, where higher education was still primarily viewed as being for the elite few, and the proliferation of existing knowledge was regarded as being more important than the creation of new knowledge through scientific inquiry.

In conclusion, while the systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom were once almost identical, pressures placed on American institutions, both internal and external, began the process that would lead to increasing divergence over time. Today these distinctions still largely remain in place, though due to the rise of

[3] Oxbridge is the portmanteau combining Oxford and Cambridge University.
[4] Although four Scottish universities, namely St. Andrews, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and Edinburgh, existed prior to the United States gaining independence, there were only two universities in England until 1826, with Durham, King's College (London), and University College (London) being established during the following decade.
[5] Although over 100 women's colleges were founded in the United States during the 19th century, it should be noted that long-established institutions such as Yale and Harvard did not admit female students to all programs until 1969 and 1973 respectively.

globalization and technology, economic pressures, enhanced travel opportunities for students and faculty, and the increasingly common attitude towards higher education for the masses shown by the British government, the trend at the start of the 21st century has been for the academic structures of the two countries to converge once more.

## Statement of the Problem

While the general theme of this study was focused on perceptions of undergraduate teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom by current and former exchange students, two specific issues were investigated, which repeatedly feature in modern research journals. The first issue revolved around the long-standing argument of whether faculty members value their research more than their teaching, prioritizing the former to the detriment of the latter. The second issue involved the more contemporary discussion of whether using modern technology enhances teaching, and how much is too much? Rather than relying on national databases, or surveys of faculty in the two countries, this study used first-hand accounts of exchange students to gain fresh insight regarding the two issues.

While the relationship between these two issues may at first appear tenuous, they both form part of the broader discussion of undergraduate teaching that has emerged in the past half century, during which time higher education has been transformed both in the United States and the United Kingdom from the realm of the elite to the domain of the majority. This new era of massification has caused the role of faculty to be debated and challenged traditional teaching methods.

A stereotype that is commonly attached to faculty in the United States is that they value their research more than their teaching. Furthermore, there is perceived to be a reluctant attitude on the part of tenured faculty to teach lower-level material, which is facilitated by administrators who realize that money can be saved by hiring adjunct instructors or graduate students (Bok, 2006). This discussion was brought to national prominence with the publication of *Profscam* by Sykes (1988), who famously declared that "The academic culture is not merely indifferent to teaching, it is actively hostile to it. In the modern university, no act of good teaching goes unpunished" (p. 54). In contrast, the historical roles of teaching and research in the United Kingdom have long been viewed as symbiotic. One could even go so far as to suggest that until recent times teaching was viewed as being preeminent, with Engel (1983) relating that with regard to Oxbridge colleges at the turn of the 20th century "The pursuit of scholarship was a desirable way of ameliorating the image of college tutors as mere teaching drudges" (p. 189). This study allowed me to question former and current exchange students to gain their perceptions with regard to the quality of teaching and the emphasis placed on it by faculty today.

The appropriate role of technology in higher education is being debated with vigor on both sides of the Atlantic, with proponents and skeptics spanning the full spectrum between a full embrace of the digital age and outright hostility. Enthusiasts will point to the fact that technology has always played a role in education, from the widespread dissemination of books and the use of blackboards and pencils, through to the 20th century when radio and television became new mediums for teaching and learning. The role of the internet is therefore viewed as being part of a natural progression in

educational instruction, and the increasing popularity of distance education and computer-based learning software is viewed as symptomatic of the irresistible role of classroom technology. In a study encompassing academics from institutions in North America, Europe, and Asia, Glenn (2008) found that more than two-thirds of those surveyed worked at universities offering online courses.

While those in favor of its increased usage can point to the fact that advances in technology have always been opposed by a large number of those working in the educational sector, which by and large changes very slowly, skeptics can point to a wide range of concerns over the role of digital media. From a historical standpoint, opponents can single out the revolutionary predictions that were made at the advent of the radio and television era, which turned out to be overstated. However, more direct refutations are centered on the cost of implementing modern technology into the curriculum, which has the effect of giving wealthier institutions a large advantage with regard to access, as well as an advantage for individuals who have access at home. Teachers must be retrained, and assessment becomes more challenging, with cheating being hard to guard against. The inspirational effect that teachers can have is also mitigated as more of the teaching role is given to computers. Glenn (2008) notes that easy access to mobile technology has increased the occurrence of plagiarism and cheating, and found that students have become more easily distracted.

As with all such arguments, the answer to how much technology should be used in the classroom will fall somewhere between the two extremes. This study provides insight from students who have experienced the educational system in both the United States, where (as will be detailed in Chapter 2) the use of modern technology in the

classroom is more widespread, and the United Kingdom, where it will be shown that the literature suggested that the curriculum is presented in a more traditional manner.

## Theoretical Frameworks

Two distinct models that share the common theme of student perception were chosen as the theoretical frameworks for this study. Fang et al. (2008) developed a theoretical framework that enables us to better understand student perceptions of web-based learning, which is based on the work of Bandura (1986), while Coate et al. (2001) created a theoretical framework that allows the categorization of feedback received with regard to student perceptions of the relationship between teaching and research.

Bandura (1986) developed social cognitive theory, in particular triadic reciprocal determinism, which cites three factors contributing towards perception, namely personal determinism, environmental determinism, and behavior. Instead of passively assessing a given task, the theory posits that inherent traits of the individual, along with the behavior that is directed towards the task, combine with external (uncontrollable) factors to form an overall perception of the task when a subject is asked about their experience.

Personal determinism is unique to each individual assessing the environment, but can constantly change due to cognitive and biological factors, as well as self-efficacy. In the case of web-based learning, a student's general attitude towards computers and technology may affect their overall assessment. Environmental determinism can result from the nature of the task being given, or the effect of how others perceive the task. If the web-based task is part of a group assignment, then the other members of the group can have a significant bearing on each individual's perception of the assignment.

Behavior includes the amount of effort given to the task, the level of persistence, the creation of a constructive environment, and the steps that may be taken to reduce anxiety or low self-efficacy. The figure below shows how the three factors combine to form an overall perception of (in this case) web-based learning.

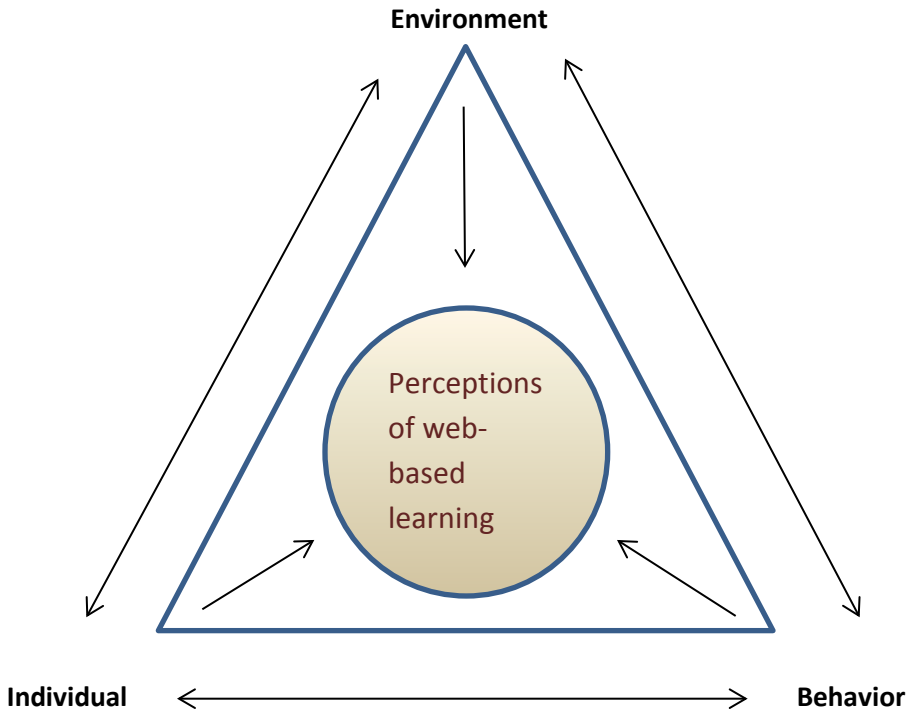


*Figure 1* – Factors Affecting Student Perception of Web-Based Learning

The second conceptual framework is also based on perceptions of higher education. Coate et al. (2001) used the figure below to categorize the six possible relationships between teaching and research. While their study was primarily concerned with the perceptions of faculty rather than students, and a review of the literature which has led to all six relationships having some evidence to support them, I posit that the framework is equally valid in the context of the proposed study involving the perceptions

of students. The framework also ties in with several other studies that have looked at student attitudes towards research, which are detailed in Chapter 2.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Integrated**<br>Research and teaching are not distinct, considerable overlap (if not identical) | |
| **Positive**<br>Research has a positive influence on teaching | **Positive**<br>Teaching has a positive influence on research |
| **Independent**<br>Research and teaching independent of each other (neutral relationship) | |
| **Negative**<br>Research has a negative influence on teaching | **Negative**<br>Teaching has a negative influence on research |

*Figure 2* – Perceived Relationships Between Teaching and Research

While the authors outline evidence for six possible relationships between teaching and research, it is perhaps easier to consider each row of Figure 2 as providing four relationships, two of which have subcases. The first row is indicative of a perceived symbiotic relationship between teaching and research, whereby both positively affect the other to the point where the two activities are not distinct. The second row indicates that while teaching and research are perceived as being distinct, one positively influences the other (which gives rise to the two subcases). The third row encompasses perceptions of teaching and research as being independent of one another. The last row includes those who view teaching and research as distinct activities, but perceive one to have a negative influence on the other (giving rise to two subcases).

Given the nature of the six categories, it is necessary to first ascertain whether participants in the proposed study perceive that a relationship exists between teaching and research, and if so question them further on whether they believe the relationship to

be positive or negative, i.e. how research affects teaching and vice-versa. If no perceived relationship exists, then a follow-up is question is unnecessary, and we conclude that the participant believes the two disciplines to be independent. Hence, diagrammatically, Figure 2 could be conceptualized in the manner indicated below.

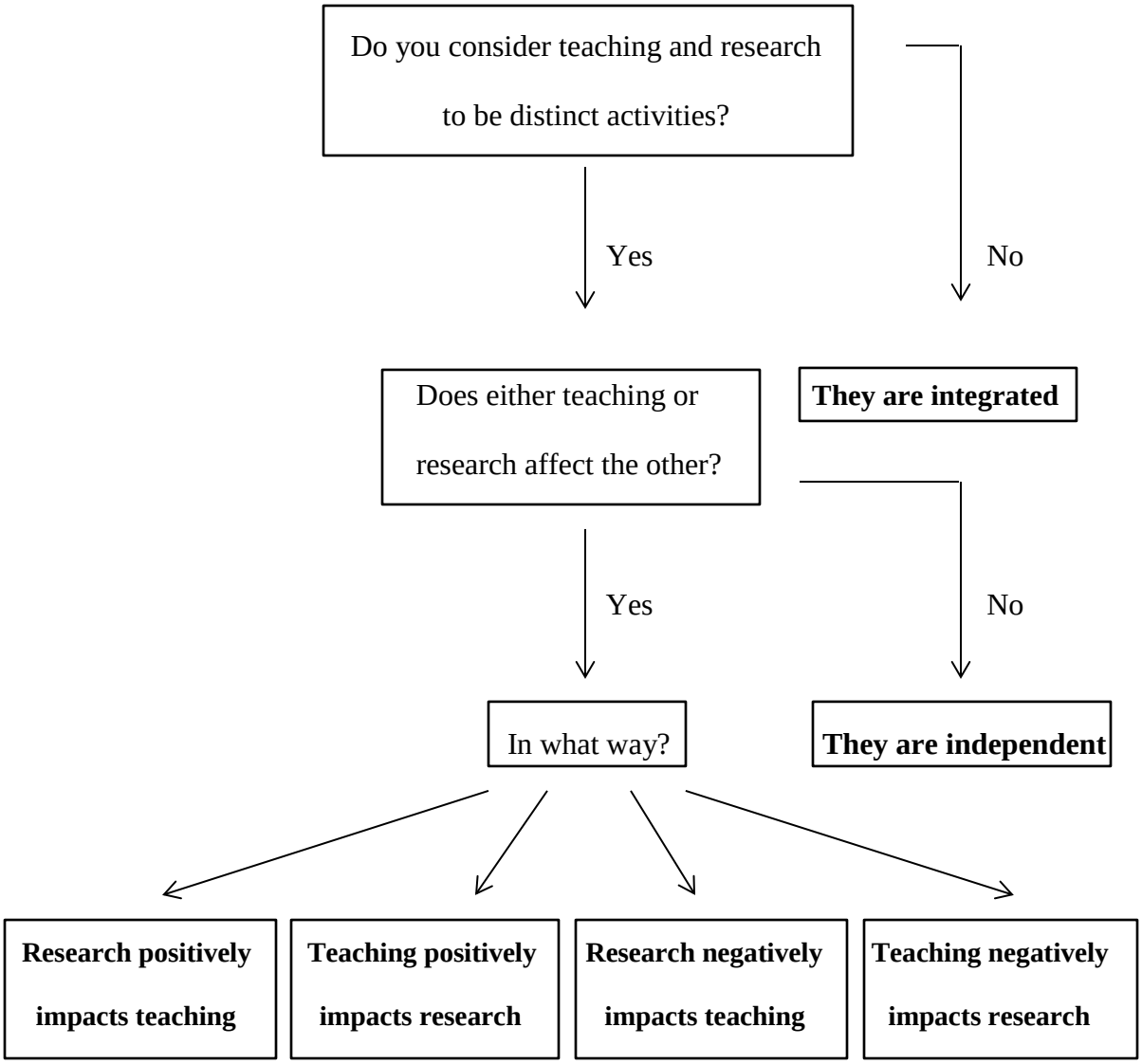




*Figure 3* – Perceived Relationships Between Teaching and Research

## Research Questions

The study described in this dissertation was guided by the following research questions:

1. Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that the role of classroom technology differs between countries?
2. Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that undergraduate teaching and faculty research are integrated or independent?

## Definition of Terms

Exchange student. A person who goes to a foreign country in order to undertake learning and schooling while a student from that country or location attends a school in the first country[6].

United Kingdom. The United Kingdom (more formally known as the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) consists of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland.

Perception. The process of becoming aware or conscious of a thing or things in general; the state of being aware; consciousness; understanding.

[6] Exchange students are also characterized by completing part of their baccalaureate degree course in multiple countries, as opposed to international students, who may complete their entire degree course while away from their home country. It is exchange students that this study will focus on in order to gain comparative data from those who have studied in multiple countries.

## Significance of the Problem

As the dominant powers in the English speaking world of higher education, understanding the commonalities and differences of the academic environment between the United States and the United Kingdom is important for several reasons. Mundy et al. (2008) state that "Perhaps more than any other theme, globalization has provoked expanding interest and lush debate within the field of comparative education" (p. 17). However, a report published by the Office for Standards in Education in England during the mid-1990s stated that "Only two decades ago, there was little reference in discussion of educational policies within the United Kingdom to 'overseas' evidence" (Reynolds & Farrell, 1996, p. 3).

Although Altbach (1998) contends that "In the post-World War II period, many of the changes that have taken place in higher education in Europe have been in a basically 'American' direction" (p. 56), the Bologna Accords, which began in 1999, recommended European reform that is broadly in line with the model already in place in the United Kingdom[7]. Consequently, this study forms an increasingly relevant foundation to the broader question of how the attitude towards undergraduate teaching in the United States compares with that of Europe as a whole, even though it will focus solely, from a European perspective, on the United Kingdom.

Many have suggested that the incremental introduction of tuition fees during the past two decades in the United Kingdom will lead to a more "Americanized" system of education, with Chitty (2009) predicting a "further intensification of the hierarchical

[7] In particular, a three year bachelor's degree will become the standard, even though many questioned "whether the three-year degree is equipping British students to compete effectively on the international stage" (Anderson, 2006, p. 198).

natures of the universities sector" (p. 214). On the other hand, there are aspects of the British model that may prove helpful for leaders in the United States looking to update the academic environment in response to the new challenges that are being faced. This study involves pieces of both arguments, which in turn lead to greater issues.

The start of the 21st century, and the prevailing demands of increasingly globalized economies, has seen growing pressure on both sides of the Atlantic to alter the systems of higher education. Kubow and Fossum (2007) describe how "In the United States as in England, calls for educational change have been vehement and persistent" (p. 146). The recent push towards economic integration in Europe, which began with the signing of the Treaty of Rome in 1957, has now transcended trade and the free movement of European Union citizens to include the higher education systems of its members. The Bologna Accords, the first of which was signed in 1999, sought to standardize the bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees throughout the continent. While the primary rationale for the change was student mobility, an equally important reason was to ensure that European institutions remained competitive against the increasingly dominant role played by international institutions, in particular the elite universities in the United States. Bray et al. (2007) noted how "From the beginning of the 19th century, education was increasingly regarded as a tool to reinforce national strength. In more recent times, the forces of globalization have eroded these views" (p. 127).

Similarly, institutions in the United States face pressure from private industry, government, and the growing threat to its position of prominence given the increasing collegiate standards in China, India, Brazil, and elsewhere throughout the developing world. Barnett (1994) describes how "higher education is becoming an institution of

society and not simply an institution in society" (p. 22). The relevance of many qualifications has been called into question due to the significant shortage in the level of skilled labor, and the spiraling cost of education has come under increasing scrutiny during the current period of economic uncertainty. Global comparisons (most notably at the high school level) show American students underperforming their peers around the world in mathematics and science (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

However, underpinning all of these issues has been the economic slowdown, which has occurred in almost every developed country during the past decade. This has created new challenges of how to fund higher education. Governments are looking to decrease their overall spending at a time when more and more young adults are trying to enter tertiary education due to the reduced employment opportunities. Field (2010) puts forward the argument that investment in higher education brings multiple economic benefits to national governments, given that students do not count towards youth unemployment, do not receive direct welfare benefits, and will enter the workforce possessing an increased level of knowledge and training. Nevertheless, Douglass (2010) cites several examples, in particular the United States, where substantial cuts have been made in the funding given to higher education, noting the particularly "dire situation" in California with regard to the reduction in funding and student numbers, stating that "political leaders have been largely ignorant of important global trends" (p. 4). This continues the theme of an earlier paper (Douglass, 2006) outlining why recent cuts have led to a diminishing of America's advantage in higher education compared with countries in Europe and Asia, and the consequences for regarding higher education as a "second-tier political issue" (p. 19).

## Assumptions and Limitations

There are a number of assumptions and limitations that were taken into consideration with regard to this study.

1. While this study incorporated viewpoints and experiences gained from different institutions, the diversity of higher education within each country (in particular the United States) meant it was inevitable that many institutional types were unable to be included.

2. Even within the same department, differences between individual students mean that perceptions formed can vary significantly due to personal events that have shaped their opinions. As a result, any broad generalizations were formed very carefully, and the possibility for false implications cannot be entirely discounted.

3. Academic environments are dynamic, and can change quickly due to internal restructuring on the part of an institution's administration, and external agents such as changing economic conditions and new government policies. So while the conclusions reached as a result of this study offer a snapshot of undergraduate teaching in the two countries at the time of the study, they are very much time dependent and are subject to the need for continual updating.

4. Crossley and Watson (2003) caution that everyone who attempts to conduct a comparative study in international education faces the problem of "organization and management of potentially vast amounts of information…[due to]…the wide range of disciplinary perspectives and methodological paradigms" (p. 33). This study attempted to minimize the former issue by narrowing its focus to just two countries, but the problem cannot be completely overcome given the scope of the study.

5. One could argue that undergraduate students are so far removed from the world of academic research that they are not in any position to make comments on the subject. However, undergraduate research today is common at many universities, supporting the view of Healey and Jenkins (2009) that "all undergraduate students in all higher education institutions should experience learning through, and about, research and inquiry" (p. 3). An increased awareness of research among undergraduate students in recent years was found in a study conducted by Short et al. (2010), and is especially prevalent among the most talented undergraduates. Given that exchange programs typically have strict academic requirements, it was fully expected a priori that worthwhile data could be collected on this subject.

## Positionality and Subjectivity

"All researchers have great privilege and obligation: the privilege to pay attention and the obligation to make conclusions drawn from those choices meaningful to colleagues and clients" (Stake, 1995, p. 49). To that end, this section will look at two important questions that needed to be considered as the research interviews were carried out, namely: how does the positionality of the investigator affect the way in which the data are collected, and secondly, how does one address the subjectivity of the investigator when collecting and analyzing the data?

Glesne (2011) discusses the difficulty that power and hierarchy can pose when conducting interviews, stating that "All need to be mindful of status differences inherent in research interactions and work to minimize them (p. 127). Given my duties as a faculty member, which were disclosed in the introductory approaches to those being interviewed,

the fact that I have a broad knowledge of both countries, and my British accent, there might have been a tendency for the participants in the study to regard the questions that I posed with suspicion, and either suspect that I had an ulterior motive for seeking out their opinion, or feel that they were under pressure to provide me with answers they assumed I was looking for, rather than an honest assessment. Hence on one side, I was a researcher with no agenda, but on the other I could be viewed as an insider, given my position of authority within the universities with which I am affiliated.

It is certainly true that I have a personal interest in the comparisons being made between the two countries, and that my passion for teaching creates a considered opinion of the research questions that are being posed. However, it should also be acknowledged that my background as a faculty member provides me with numerous advantages that are not typically in the arsenal of doctoral students when conducting the research. Having not only had considerable experience in teaching undergraduate students in a classroom setting since 1996, I have interviewed hundreds of students seeking employment since gaining my current position as Director of the Math Lab at the University of Central Florida in 2002. This has refined my skills with regard to one-on-one communication, in particular the ability to coax information from those whose personalities are more introverted (which Lapan et al. (1996) found to be common among mathematics majors) through appropriate questioning, and then asking follow-up questions based on the answers received to gain further insight. This is not to suggest that in the past, I have engaged in the sort of interview required in a phenomenological study, but the semi-structured nature of the interviews was something I am very comfortable with. Hence I felt fully able to comply with the methods of data collection advocated by Moustakas

(1994) with regard to phenomenological inquiry, specifically that "although the researcher should develop a series of questions aimed at evoking a comprehensive account of the person's experience of the phenomenon, [they should be] varied, altered, or not used at all when the participant shares the full story of his or her experience" (p. 114). Therefore, while it was always my hope that the questions in the interview protocol (see Appendix B) would yield useful data with regard to the research questions, it was also likely that the most insightful information would come from recognizing follow-up opportunities as they arose, or by allowing participants to continue with a response that, although straying from the question asked, moves closer to the essence of the research questions.

Another aspect of positionality that could be regarded as positive, certainly with respect to the nature of the study, is my experience of having been an exchange student for a year in 1994-95. Having never been outside of the United Kingdom at the time, my year spent as a student at the University of Texas at Austin was both hugely enjoyable and highly influential. I decided to return to the United States as a graduate student, this time at the University of Florida, and was an international student for two years from 1996-98. Since becoming a full-time teacher in 1999 I have maintained a close personal and professional affiliation with international students and faculty.

The United Kingdom was chosen for this study primarily based on my background, given that I lived there until entering graduate school in 1996. I have returned there on numerous occasions since moving to the United States, and have created an exchange program allowing students at the University of Central Florida (UCF) to study in the United Kingdom. I believe my past experience was beneficial in

mitigating some the problems of ethnocentricity, creating the "neutrality in attempting to understand other systems of education" recommended by Phillips and Schweisfurth (2006, p. 93). I was granted professional development leave from my current position at UCF to spend the 2012-13 academic year at Keele University in the United Kingdom, thus allowing me to reacquaint myself with the British university system prior to gathering the data.

Although trained in mathematics and economics, receiving master's degrees in both, my experience of being both a student and faculty member in both countries implicitly guided my line of inquiry. Having spent close to 20 years in each country was of benefit both in terms of the terminology used (which can subtly differ between the two countries), the understanding of regional differences and tendencies within the United States and United Kingdom, and knowing how to quickly process the responses received in order to generate appropriate follow-up questions. It also ensured some common ground between the participants and me, in spite of me being a faculty member, and the participants being 20 years younger in most cases.

Subjectivity in this instance refers to the experiences that I have had, my academic philosophy with regard to teaching, and how these factors play a role in the assumptions and possible bias in the questioning of participants and the analysis of the results. It was important to recognize the impact that subjectivity could have in the way that participants were selected, and the manner in which not only the questions were written but how they were phrased when read to those being interviewed. In this regard, I needed to be careful not to use the position of power that a faculty member assumes over students merely in order to gather data which satisfied an underlying agenda. Given that I

have taught undergraduate courses for 18 years, often using technology, and also published research papers, it was important for me to realize that the way the questions are phrased and the process of analyzing the data may create bias, false assumptions, or a misunderstanding between the participants and myself regarding the issues being discussed. A failure to do this would have caused issues which could have mitigated or nullified the academic merit of the project.

It is therefore important to outline the measures that were taken to safeguard against these factors. Firstly, I composed the questions in a way that allowed the participants to freely express their opinion, without appearing to lead them in a direction that satisfied any bias of my own. Secondly, a mix of male and female subjects from different institutions was selected to allow a full range of opinions to be gathered. Finally, by recording the interviews, I had the opportunity to listen to the answers on multiple occasions, allowing me to detect not only the words that were being spoken, and any tonal bias when the questions were posed, but also the emotions of the participants as the answers are being given. As a result, I could proceed with a methodical analysis, using the guidelines for a phenomenological study recommended by Moustakas (1994) and others. Subsequently, I could present an objective outline of the results, followed by a reflective conclusion, where I objectively outline the flaws in the research design, and the possible improvements if the study were to be replicated or expanded.

Without these measures being carried out the research would have lost much of its value, as it would be open to questions regarding both the methodology employed and my underlying motives. It is hoped that by paying careful attention to the issues of

positionality and subjectivity at each step of the process, the data provided a worthwhile contribution to the subject being investigated and can lead to future research projects.

## Conclusion

The systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom have diverged significantly since the founding of the colonial colleges. Today the two systems are markedly different, though internal and external pressures have caused each to face similar issues. Though the role and nature of undergraduate teaching are continually debated at an institutional and governmental level, this study offers insight which is in keeping with the direction of current research, while offering a new perspective relative to the two countries being studied.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation discusses the literature related to undergraduate teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom, emphasizing comparative studies, but also including important single country studies. It will cite sources detailing the historical foundations for the initial convergence, and subsequent divergence, of the two systems of higher education. Chapter 3 outlines the qualitative methodology that was used in this study to gather data. Chapter 4 presents the results of the research conducted. Chapter 5 includes an analysis of the data collected, and demonstrates how the four primary themes emerged from the data. Chapter 6 connects the phenomenological methodology with the field work conducted. Chapter 7 uses the results of the data analysis to answer the two research questions. Chapter 8 offers conclusions, and considers the avenues for future research.

# CHAPTER 2
# LITERATURE REVIEW

## Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the issues being considered in this study. This culminated with the disclosure of the two theoretical frameworks being used, and the two research questions that this study will attempt to answer. Chapter 1 ended with an explanation of why this study is significant, a consideration of the assumptions and limitations, and a detailed explanation of how my own positionality and subjectivity could be detrimental if not taken into account during the collection and analysis of the data.

Chapter 2 will begin with an historical overview of the almost 400 year relationship between the systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom with regard to higher education. Five specific periods will be cited, beginning with the colonial period when the two systems were initially aligned, before increasing divergence took place due to revolutionary pressures, as well as new ideas that propagated from France and Germany during the late 18th century and throughout the 19th century. Once the historical basis for the study has been explained, the focus then switches to literature that has considered undergraduate teaching in the two countries, with particular emphasis on the work that has been done with regard to the teaching-research nexus and the role that technology plays in the classroom. While the amount of prior research done is extensive, it should be noted that there is very little that takes a comparative stance in looking at the two countries, and none that considers the issues from the viewpoint of exchange students. Therefore, it is necessary to separately consider

past research that represents the views of academics in the United States and the United Kingdom, and then consider work that has focused on the perceptions of students, to emphasize the areas that will be combined in this study and highlight the gaps in the current literature.

## Historic Role of Scholarship and Teaching in US and UK Colleges and Universities

This section considers how the initial alignment between the academic systems of the United States and United Kingdom slowly evolved to the point where two contrasting philosophies emerged. While the splitting of the time period from the colonial era founding of Harvard to the present into different subsections is somewhat artificial, it is broadly in keeping with the work of Cohen (1998), who divides the history of American higher education into five distinct eras.

### *Colonial Era Alignment*

Thelin (2011) describes how "The collegiate system of living and learning was at the heart of the Oxford and Cambridge pedagogy, and this vision was seminal in the plan for higher education that college-founders pursued in the American colonies" (p. 8). It is also noteworthy that of the 130 university educated men who travelled from England to New England prior to 1645, 35 of them had attended Emmanuel College, Cambridge (Morison, 1935, p. 95). It was therefore natural that when a college was created in the Boston area in 1636, named after former student John Harvard in 1638, Emmanuel College became the prototype. However, while the statutes were written *pro modo Academiarum in Anglia* (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 3), and the curriculum incorporated

the classical disciplines of the ancient *trivium* and *quadrivium* taught at Oxford and Cambridge, the influence of the church on the daily lives of students was far greater than in England, with "the desire for a literate, college-trained clergy [being] probably the most important single factor explaining the founding of the colonial colleges" (Ibid., p. 4). One of the original statutes at Harvard stated that "Everyone shall consider the main end of his life and studies [is] to know God and Jesus Christ which is eternal life" (Morison, p. 434).[8]

Another distinction between the two countries was the reduced autonomy enjoyed by faculty at the colonial colleges compared with their counterparts in England. Thelin notes that "Whereas Oxford and Cambridge masters had endured and ignored kings, queens, and bishops for centuries, the colonial college faculty faced daily scrutiny by, and little indulgence from, a stern governing board and its appointed administrators" (p. 11).

It should also be noted that, as in England, the initial focus of instruction in the colonial colleges was on teaching established truths and continuing the traditions of western civilization, rather than seeking new knowledge. However, the colonial colleges were quick to adopt the latest scientific theories into the curriculum, with Harvard playing a leading role in establishing the Hollis Professorship of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy in 1728, which encouraged using experiments to aid teaching. The publication of original research soon followed, and became common from scholars at Harvard during the 18th century (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968) before proliferating to faculty at other colleges.

[8] Cowley and Williams (1991) note the apparent contradiction between venerating both Christian tradition and honoring the language and literature of pagan antiquity, explaining that "Christianity determined the social life [of the students], but the spirit of the Renaissance dominated the curricula" (p. 85).

### *Post-Revolutionary Pressures*

Education in the new republic instilled selflessness, patriotism, and virtue. Denominationally sponsored colleges found few students and little influence (Geiger, 2005). While the duopoly of Oxford and Cambridge was maintained in England until 1832, with the founding of Durham University, new colleges were created at a rapid pace in post-revolutionary America, to the extent that the number increased from 25 to 52 in the first two decades of the 19th century. Medical colleges, law schools, and opportunities for women gave the United States a unique level of diversity among its institutions of higher education.

The curriculum was also modernized to better meet the needs of the fledgling nation. Brubacher and Rudy (1968) note that "The central education battle in 19th century America was fought over the elective system" (p. 98). In spite of the famous Yale Report of 1828, which sought to maintain the classical disciplines at the heart of the college curriculum, those in favor of modernization slowly gained momentum, to the extent that by the end of the century the only required classes for freshmen at Harvard were in English and a modern language (Ibid, p. 111).

Rather than looking to England for new ideas, the new alliances formed during the revolution meant that for the remainder of the 18th century the French system of education came to be admired and emulated, with new academies such as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1780, being created in line with those already established in France, most notably the Academy of Sciences. The initial founders of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences noted their intention to "give it the air of France

rather than that of England, and to follow the Royal Academy[9] rather than the Royal Society" (Goode, 1901, p. 270). However, the liberalism that swept through revolutionary France at the end of the century caused French influence to wane, and for the remainder of the antebellum period, American higher education followed a unique course.

It should be noted that the collegiate structure built in the United States developed more quickly than the schooling system for the general population. As a result, many came to college academically unprepared for advanced study. Indeed, the early American college was more akin to a German style *gymnasium* than an agency of higher learning, with the realization of a university, i.e. an institution of large size, which affords instruction of an advanced nature in all the main branches of learning, not arriving until the foundation of Johns Hopkins in 1876. The rapid growth of state universities in the aftermath of the Civil War, described in the next subsection, was fueled to a large extent by the rise of the public school system, with 5000 schools built between 1870 and 1900.

### *Postbellum Initiatives*

While the previous two subsections describe how England and France both significantly influenced the American system of higher education, the nation that has had the most lasting effect is Germany. A century ago it was written that "The prevailing method of university work today is distinctly the German method" (Münsterberg, 1913, p. 49).

[9] Originally formed in 1666 by Jean-Baptiste Colbert as the Academy of Sciences of Paris, the academy was renamed the Royal Academy of Sciences in 1699 by Louis XIV, before losing its royal designation in the aftermath of the French Revolution.

Between 1850 and 1915, more than 10,000 American students enrolled at German universities in Berlin, Leipzig, Heidelberg, Halle, Bonn, Munich, and Gottingen (Brubacher & Rudy, 1968, p. 176), and as a result the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Goethe, and the uniquely German notions of *lehrfreiheit* and *lernfreiheit* slowly became the norm in American colleges and universities from the middle of the 19th century, replacing the original English system and the traditional curriculum. *Lehrfreiheit*, or freedom to teach, gave faculty more academic freedom, both in the classroom, and in their research. As a result research started to compete with classroom instruction on the priority list of faculty, to the extent that some believe today that the balance has shifted too far in favor of research. *Lernfreiheit*, or freedom to learn, gave students more control over their education, allowing them to choose electives rather than the prescribed curriculum of colonial colleges, where no choice was given. Charles Eliot at Harvard was among the first to advocate this increased freedom, and it soon became widely adopted, even though pockets of resistance remained, as typified by the Yale Report.

Another distinct feature of the German model was the central focus on scientifically based research, rather than the liberal culture that still persisted in England and France. By 1897, Herbert Bates, an English instructor at the University of Nebraska, wrote that academics could be divided into two groups, “Those who seek fact, and those who seek inspiration through fact; the party of mere science, and the party of those who demand not only science, but beauty. Germany stands mainly on the side of mere fact; England and France mainly on the side of culture; America hangs in the balance” (Bates, 1897, p. 605).

However, the balance was tipped decisively in favor of the German model by the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876, which quickly adopted the research-oriented Ph.D. degree as the gold standard for graduate students. The passage of the second Morrill Act in 1890, which contained provisions for research experiment stations, also created momentum that ensured that by the beginning of the 20th century, the German model had begun to dominate the landscape of higher education in the United States in a manner that would provide a platform for the unprecedented dominance that would occur.

### *Twentieth Century Expansion*

The 20th century witnessed an unprecedented worldwide increase in the number of students attending institutions of higher education. From 500,000 students across the globe in 1900, representing approximately 1% of traditional college-age students (Banks 2001), the number increased by a factor of 200, reaching over 100 million by the start of the 21st century, representing almost 20% of all traditional college-age students. In some industrialized countries, a majority of college-age students enrolled in some form of higher education (UNESCO, 2004).

The United States in particular expanded its system of higher education to meet the needs of a population that tripled between 1900 and 2000 (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002). However, population growth alone is not enough to explain the expansion of the higher education sector, which saw the number of enrolled students rise from less than 250,000 in 1900 to over 21 million by 2000 (NCES, 1993, 2012). Calculated decisions were taken to give an increasing priority to the role that education plays in economic development.

Ralph and Rubinson (1980) make the case that "The United States is certainly one country where education is seen as fundamental to national purposes. But if this characterization is true today, this has not always been the case. For during most of the period of educational expansion in the United States, the links between education and national development and between education and mobility were not assumed" (p. 943).

By contrast, in the United Kingdom population growth during the 20th century was relatively modest, rising from 38 million in 1901 to 59 million in 2001 (Hicks & Allen, 1999), and the number of universities built was very low. Even by the early 1960's, only 6% of students leaving high school in the UK attended an institution of higher education (Blanden & Machin, 2004). This started to change with the publication of the Robbins Report (Robbins, 1963), which was the primary catalyst behind the sudden doubling in the number of British universities in the 1960s. The report recommended the expansion of the university system so that places became available "to all who were qualified for them by ability and attainment," and the "elimination of artificial differences of status, recognising hierarchy only in so far as it is based on function and attainment" (p. 265).

A greater increase was caused by the passage of the Further and Higher Education Act in 1992, which allowed 38 polytechnics to immediately become degree-granting universities, and by 2012 the total number of universities had reached 115. Total student numbers have risen from 400,000 in the 1960's to over 2 million today (Greenaway & Haynes, 2003), with 80% of students staying in high school until the age of 18, and 40% of all 18-year-olds going on to university.

While this expansion in the number of students and institutions in the United Kingdom has been significant, the country still lags far behind its transatlantic counterpart in the breadth of opportunity available to those leaving high school. Although the 115 universities represent a fourfold increase in the past half century, it is still an extremely small number when compared with the 2500 four-year colleges and universities located in the United States.

Schofer and Meyer (2005) put forth the hypothesis that the differing rates of expansion in the United States and United Kingdom were largely due to contrasting attitudes towards decentralization at the governmental level. Whereas the close link between the government and the elite colleges in the United Kingdom served to delay rapid expansion of higher education to the masses, in the United States "organizational decentralization permits such pressures to operate in very inflationary ways" (p. 901).

### *Twenty-First Century Challenges*

As the 21st century unfolds, there is evidence to suggest that after a long period of divergence, the systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom are once again converging, with questions over funding and access dominating the agenda in both countries. The Bologna Process has sought to bring standardization to university degrees throughout Europe, enable greater mobility for students and faculty, and create uniform courses that will allow employers to better compare qualifications. While the implementation of a three year bachelor's degree did not cause any major

changes to be made in England and Wales[10], the introduction of a standardized credit system, whereby students accumulate credits en route to graduation, and the focus on lifelong learning is very much akin to that seen in the United States.

A more significant alignment of the two systems has come in the increasing massification of higher education, which has seen a far higher percentage of college-age students attend institutions of higher education in the United Kingdom. The Robbins Report (1963) cited that only 2% of 19 year olds in the United Kingdom were receiving full-time education in 1938, with the total number of higher education students being 69,000. By the 2010-11 academic year this figure had reached over 2.5 million (Higher Education Statistics Agency, 2012), with 47% of 17-year-olds participating in some form of higher education by age 30 (United Kingdom Statistics Authority, 2012).

It therefore became inevitable that the long-standing right to free tuition in the United Kingdom, as well as housing grants for students in higher education, should come under increasing scrutiny, as the burden on taxpayers (the majority of whom did not enjoy the privileges of a university education) began to increase. While the number of students attending higher education spiraled ever upwards, the amount of funding per student could not keep pace, dropping by 36% between 1989 and 1997 (Clarke, 2003). This led to the commissioning by the government of a committee chaired by Ronald (Lord) Dearing, which was charged with recommending a course of action that would alleviate the funding problems within the system of higher education and further increase the number of students while maintaining academic standards. Of the 93

[10] In Scotland, most undergraduate degree courses are of four years duration, with a structure more in keeping with that used in North America. However, approximately 10% of Scottish students are able to "articulate onto a degree programme with advanced standing into the second or third year" (Jennings, 2011) by gaining advanced qualifications in high school.

recommendations made (Dearing, 1997), the most significant was that for the first time 25% of the cost of tuition, or £1000 per year, should be shouldered by students, supported by low interest government loans. The proposal was controversially enacted into law on July 16, 1998, putting an end to the 900 year tradition of free university tuition for British students. Since that time the controversy over tuition fees has not subsided, and has instead escalated due to the increasing burden placed on students. The passing of the 2004 Higher Education Act raised tuition fees to a maximum of £3000 per year, and most recently the publication and subsequent enactment of the Browne report in 2010 allowed annual tuition fees to be raised up to £9000. As a result, increasing numbers of students are taking out loans and working during the semester to pay for their education.

In the United States, the start of the 21st century has seen a period of intense scrutiny to consider and try and address similar challenges to those being faced in the United Kingdom, with Zusman (2005) narrowing the focus to three basic questions, namely "Who pays? Who benefits? Who decides?" He argues that the economic model for higher education has dramatically altered given the reductions in state funding, and that the long-term prospects for funding are "not favorable" (p. 117) given the mandated costs allocated to healthcare and the K-12 system. This presents a growing challenge to colleges and universities given that enrollment continues to increase, and as a result even public institutions are becoming increasingly privatized given the academic and sporting partnerships being formed with local and national companies. As the demand for greater cost efficiency increases, there is a fear that teaching will suffer given the reliance on lower paid faculty and adjunct instructors, with the majority of faculty now being off the tenure track.

The second question raised by Zusman – "Who benefits?" – is relevant because although the college enrollment rate of high school graduates surpassed 60% in the 1980's, there is a significant difference in enrollment rates based on race and family income, with African-American and US born Latino students being proportionally underrepresented compared with white students. Zusman states that "Poverty is the biggest barrier to college attendance" (p. 129), and goes on to argue that the situation may not improve in the current generation given the increasing cost of tuition and other expenses. So rapidly has the cost of attending college increased that to many "higher education looks like yet another greedy industry" (Lazerson, 1998, p. 65).

At the other end of the scale the increasing number of postgraduate degrees being awarded has meant that Ph.D. recipients are less secure in finding appropriate employment opportunities after graduation. This is particularly true for those seeking to work in higher education, with many forced to work at junior colleges or accept temporary work. However, it is possible that the situation will improve given the impending retirement of large numbers of faculty hired during the 1960s and 70s.

The third question of "Who decides?" is linked to the question of who pays, as lower amounts of state funding leads to institutions demanding greater autonomy over how they operate. Nevertheless, given that the state remains a significant stakeholder, the level of independent control often depends on strong alumni, the make-up of the governing board, the level of external grant funding, and the administrative structure that is in place.

The contentious nature of the debate means there is no shortage of critics of the current direction that higher education in both the United States and the United Kingdom

is headed. Bok (2009) makes the case that the increasing commercialization is undermining the traditional focus on academic matters, writing that "I worry that commercialization may be changing the nature of academic institutions in ways we may come to regret. By trying so hard to acquire more money for their work, universities may compromise values that are essential to the continued confidence and loyalty of faculty, students, alumni, and even the general public" (p. x). Similarly, while the level of government control is higher, and partnerships with private industry less common in the United Kingdom, cuts to state spending and greater scrutiny of faculty research has led many to suspect that the only way to survive is to be "more responsive, rhetorically and substantively, to commercial and political agendas" (Willmott, 2003).

Workload studies and issues of faculty productivity have also become common in the United States. Even though a 1992 study by the Carnegie Foundation found that faculty are working longer hours and that time spent in the classroom has not declined (Boyer et al., 1994), there have been widely publicized books (Boyer, 1990; Sykes, 1988) that questions the merits of much of the research that is produced by faculty, and argue that more time should be spent teaching.

Altbach (2005b) notes how the increased enrollment seen on most campuses has led to an exponential increase in the number of administrative staff, and that due to "bureaucratic, governance arrangements taking the place of the traditional general faculty meeting, a sense of shared academic purpose has become elusive" (p. 301). Altbach also contends that increased levels of specialization within each discipline has caused faculty to believe that their peers are to be found at conferences and other institutions rather than within their own department and university. This changing nature of the profession is

seen on both sides of the Atlantic, with Sahlin (2012) stating that (in Europe) "Universities are increasingly seen as institutions just like any others to which the same general principles of governance and management can be applied" and that "the culture of collegiality is very much under threat."

## Exchange and International Students

While it is important to detail the historical development of higher education in the United States and United Kingdom to put the study conducted in a broader context, the main focus of this study was to look at the contemporary perceptions of current and former exchange students with regard to undergraduate teaching. Therefore the sections that follow will increase the emphasis on this central theme by providing an overview of the literature concerning undergraduate teaching in the two countries. I will then proceed to look at previous studies involving exchange and international students.

The tables below illustrate the most recently collected data regarding the destination of American and British students participating in study abroad programs[11]. Both tables show that despite the pronounced differences in the structure of tertiary education in the two countries, students in both countries find the other an attractive place to spend their time overseas. It should be noted though that while the number of American students studying in the United Kingdom has slowly increased over the past decade (from 29,289 in 1999-2000 to 33,182 in 2010-2011), the percentage of all study abroad students choosing the United Kingdom has dropped during the same period (from

[11] The numbers do not distinguish between types of institution, for example public universities, private universities, and liberal-arts colleges. However, the vast majority of American students included in the tables will be in their junior year, whereas the British study abroad students will generally be in their second year.

20.3% to 12.1%), with more students choosing to go to Asia and Latin America, rather than the more established universities in Western Europe.

Table 1

*Leading Destinations of US Study Abroad Students 2011-12*

| Destination | Number of Students | Percentage of the Total |
|---|---|---|
| United Kingdom | 34,660 | 12.2 |
| Italy | 29,645 | 10.5 |
| Spain | 26,480 | 9.3 |
| France | 17,168 | 6.1 |
| China | 14,887 | 5.3 |
| Germany | 9,370 | 3.3 |
| Australia | 9,324 | 3.3 |
| Costa Rica | 7,900 | 2.8 |
| Ireland | 7,640 | 2.7 |
| Japan | 5,283 | 1.9 |
| Argentina | 4,763 | 1.7 |
| India | 4,593 | 1.6 |
| South Africa | 4,540 | 1.6 |
| Brazil | 4,060 | 1.4 |
| Mexico | 3,815 | 1.3 |
| World Total | 283,332 | 100.0 |

*Note*. From "U.S. Study Abroad: Leading Destinations," by the Institute of International Education, 2013, retrieved from http://www.iie.org/opendoors

Table 2

*Leading Destinations of UK Study Abroad Students 2010*

| Destination | Number of Students | Percentage of the Total |
|---|---|---|
| United States | 8,783 | 38.1 |
| France | 2,704 | 11.7 |
| Ireland | 1,804 | 7.8 |
| Australia | 1,661 | 7.2 |
| Germany | 1,342 | 5.8 |
| World Total | 23,039 | 100.0 |

*Note*. From "Global Education Digest Report 2012," by UNESCO, 2012, retrieved from http://www.iie.org/en/Services/Project-Atlas/United-Kingdom/UK-Students-Overseas

In spite of the large number of American students studying overseas, it was barely half a century ago that Churchill (1958) wrote that "Studies of American students abroad are rare." Since then the literature has grown substantially, but even among contemporary researchers, studies devoted to exchange students focus primarily on either the reasons behind the students deciding to go overseas (Barnick, 2006; Brewer, 1983; Burrow, 2010; Caudrey, Petersen & Shaw, 2008; Ho, 2009; Krzaklewska, 2008; Sánchez, Fornerino & Zhang, 2006; Van Der Meid, 2006) or the effects, impact, and transformative power resulting from time spent as an exchange student (Braskamp, Braskamp & Merrill, 2009; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Fry, Paige, Jon, Dillow & Nam, 2009; Golay, 2006; Hadis, 2005; Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Opper, Teicher, & Carlson, 1990; Sutton & Rubin, 2004, 2010; Williams, 2005).

In addition, there are many studies incorporating the perceptions of international students who are not part of an exchange program. However, these studies typically focus either on undergraduate students who have no experience of higher education in their

own country, or graduate students who received their undergraduate degree in a different country. They also tend to concentrate on the social difficulties experienced by international students adjusting to living in a foreign country (Adler, 1975; Church, 1982; Fisher & Cooper, 1990; Hull, 1978; Johnson, 1971; Klineberg & Hull, 1979; Livingstone, 1960) or the problems that exist (especially for students from Asia) in bridging the communication gap as teaching assistants (Damron, 2000; Ekachai et al., 1998; Gravois, 2005). The latter has led to analyses of student performance related to the ethnicity of teaching assistants (Borjas, 2000; Jacobs & Friedman, 1988) and investigations of how American students stereotype those on campus coming from overseas (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001).

The following sections look at the work done in the specific areas of undergraduate teaching that the conducted study addressed, namely the link between teaching and research (often referred to as the teaching-research nexus) and the use of technology in the classroom. While the study focused solely on the perceptions of students, the perceptions of faculty are considered here, as they form the majority of the literature. The views of faculty are also included so that comparisons could be made with the perceptions of students, and in particular exchange students, once the data were gathered and analyzed.

## Faculty Perceptions of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States

### *Perceptions of Classroom Technology*

Technology in the classroom has now grown both in its usage and as a research topic to the extent that there are entire journals devoted to the topic. Distance learning was once considered to be the preserve of lesser institutions, but has now become common at MIT and many other leading universities, and this trend shows no sign of abating. Many now question whether the traditional lecture format, and indeed the need for a campus with its expensive maintenance, will survive given that computerized technology now allows students to receive instruction from wherever they are located.

Reaction to the use of classroom technology in the United States has varied from fearful resistance to an enthusiastic embracing. President Clinton, speaking in 1996, promised that every school in the United States would be connected to the internet by the start of the 21st century, and predicted that "computers would become as much a part of the classroom as blackboards" (Eggers, 2005). In 2001 the United States appropriated $872 million of the congressional budget to educational technology. However, many argue that the internet is merely the latest in a long line of technological advances that has been touted as a revolutionary force in higher education. While radio, film, and television have all been used to an extent, their overall impact has not matched the forecasts that were made when they were first introduced. Kent and McNergney (1999) claim that the only technologies to have had a lasting impact in the classroom are "the printed textbook, the chalkboard, and the overhead projector" (p. 2).

It seems likely that the appropriate use of technology falls between the two extremes, with Gregorian (2005) stating in consecutive paragraphs that "Technology will supplement education, but will never replace the need for the residential university," and also "Swept up in the electronic wave is the false notion that an education can merely be a bunch of courses, rather than a well-constructed curriculum of study" (p. 94). Wilson (2001) takes a similarly measured approach in stating that "Technology by itself neither guarantees nor inhibits quality. The design and the delivery of the educational experience are the critical factors" (p. 211).

### *Perceptions of the Teaching-Research Nexus*

There is no shortage of literature concerned with what is perceived to be a declining focus on undergraduate teaching on the part of faculty and administrators in American institutions of higher education (Altbach, 2005a, 2005b; Boyer, 1990; Douglas 1992; Fairweather 2005; Fairweather & Rhoads, 1995; Finkelstein, 2003; Finkelstein & LaCelle-Peterson, 1993; Tang & Chamberlain, 1997; Winston, 1994). The criticisms take many forms, but for the purposes of this study will be restricted to those which most directly affect students, namely the dichotomy for tenured faculty between teaching and research (especially at larger public universities), and the mode of instruction given how technology in the classroom has started to proliferate.

With regard to these two issues, there is general agreement that the changing nature of the academic profession, with its ever increasing importance of securing external grant funding at research universities, and the challenges caused by trying to accommodate more students in a time of economic hardship has led to more contingent

faculty being hired. Studies by Baldwin and Wawrzynski (2011) and Jaeger (2008) indicate that contingent instructors account for almost 50% of the teaching staff at research universities. There is a predictable preference on the part of students for an experienced faculty member to teach them rather than an inexperienced graduate student, with a group of biology students featured in a paper by Kendall and Schussler (2012) describing professors as "experienced, structured, confident, knowledgeable, organized, and in control of the classroom," while graduate teaching assistants were viewed as "hesitant, nervous, and uncertain" (p. 187). However, Altbach (2005b), citing the results of national surveys, contends that research faculty are not turning their back on their teaching responsibilities, and that "American professors seem to be working longer, not shorter, hours, and classroom hours have not declined" (p. 299).

A long-standing argument in the literature is whether faculty research prowess is correlated to classroom value as a teacher. Over a century ago, David Starr Jordan (1896) at Stanford declared that "No second-hand man was ever a great teacher, and I very much doubt if any really great investigator was ever a poor teacher" (p. 38). However, Feldman (1987) conducted an extensive study concerned with the correlation of faculty research output and their instructional effectiveness, and found that approximately 98% of the variation in the latter was due to something other than the research ability of the faculty member.

## Faculty Perceptions of Undergraduate Teaching in the United Kingdom

### *Perceptions of Classroom Technology*

When considering technology in the classroom, the simple conclusion that can be drawn from the literature is that it has not proliferated in the United Kingdom at the same speed or to the same extent as in the United States. White et al. (2007) postulate that this is "because higher education institutions [in the United Kingdom] are resistant to change," and that therefore "educational technology in universities has not managed to match the ubiquity of technology in everyday life" (p. 840). Maier and Warren (2000) discuss how the information revolution is merely part of a bombardment by political forces calling for higher quality teaching and more accountability on the part of faculty. They state that "academics are not only faced with learning how to apply new technologies to their teaching craft, but also how they can be applied within an educational framework that encourages autonomous learning and supports collaborative work" (p. 159).

In 2009 the UK government took steps towards making the country a global leader rather than a laggard with regard to online learning. Coinciding with a report by Bradwell (2009), which stated that technology needs to become ingrained into both the way that universities regard teaching and the overall student experience, David Lammy, then Higher Education Minister, announced a £10 million scheme to "develop projects to help transform the way people can get a degree. Advances such as 3G, webcasts and Web 2.0 will allow UK universities to reach out to communities as far flung as Africa and Hong Kong and to deliver high-quality, student-centred higher education across the

globe" (Attwood, 2009). A task force was created to look at how universities in the United Kingdom could increase their competitiveness in the global education market and position themselves as leaders in online-learning. The subsequent report by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (2011) made six main recommendations, which called for immediate collaborative action to be taken by institutions of higher education, national bodies in the education sector, and the government, to ensure that appropriate investment is made in gauging international demand, training faculty, content development, and enhancing the choices available to students.

### *Perceptions of the Teaching-Research Nexus*

In 1997, the government-commissioned Dearing Report (Dearing, 1997) found that only 3% of academics believed that the promotion structure in place at their university rewarded high-quality teaching. The report recommended a significantly enhanced emphasis on teaching by administrators when considering promotion, and that universities should not exclusively consider research credentials. This support for teaching was endorsed by a report by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills (Clarke, 2003), which stated that "In the past, rewards in higher education – particularly promotion – have been linked much more closely to research than to teaching. Indeed, teaching has been seen by some as an extra source of income to support the main business of research, rather than recognised as a valuable and high-status career in its own right. This is a situation that cannot continue" (p. 51).

While many would be skeptical about the motivations behind government-commissioned reports, the highly centralized nature of higher education in the United

Kingdom (particularly with regard to funding) mean that such publications have a significant effect[12], and in this instance there is evidence of a significant shift in rhetoric and policy by universities to reflect the wishes of the government. A survey conducted by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (2001) found that the proportion of universities explicitly mentioning teaching reward mechanisms increased from only 12% in 1998 to 65% by 2000, and while an investigation by Parker (2008) into the role that teaching plays in faculty promotion found that the rank of (full) professor is still awarded almost exclusively on the basis of research, promotion criteria to become a senior lecturer (equivalent to associate professor in the United States) do formally recognize teaching and research equally, with the former polytechnics (which were given university status in 1992) leading the way. In spite of this, David Willetts, then the Education Secretary, addressed a meeting of university vice-chancellors (equivalent to university presidents in the United States) in 2010, and warned that "It remains hard to shift the impression that what really counts in higher education is research. This needs to change" (Feilden, 2010).

The level of discourse bemoaning the declining focus on teaching undergraduates is noticeably less in the United Kingdom when compared to the books and research papers that the subject has generated in the United States. This is understandable given that the use of adjunct and part-time instructors is less common, teaching by graduate students is almost unheard of (with the exception of weekly tutorial sessions), and there are no general education courses, which ensures that lecture halls almost exclusively consist of students who are majoring in the discipline being taught. That is not to say that

[12] The Higher Education Funding Council for England (2008) notes that of the £7.48 billion available in government sponsored recurring research grants in 2007-08, £4.63 billion was for teaching, more than three times the £1.46 billion available for research.

similar concerns to those voiced in the United States do not exist, with Gull (2010a) writing that "Traditionally, teaching and research [in the United Kingdom] have gone hand in hand: however, the balance has been tipping. Teaching has not only been undervalued and marginalized, but is in danger of being seen as a negative attribute by institutions and their departments." Hattie and Marsh (1996) looked at 58 studies done on the subject of the teaching-research nexus, and concluded that "The common belief that teaching and research were inextricably intertwined is an enduring myth. At best teaching and research are very loosely coupled" (p. 529). This dichotomy between teaching and research is addressed by Coate et al. (2001), who conclude that part of the challenge of developing a synergistic relationship between them derives from the way that departments are managed, with those in charge often viewing teaching and research as independent activities (which are evaluated accordingly), even though individual faculty are often keen to integrate the two.

In his extensive report on the status and valuation of teaching commissioned by the Academy of Medical Sciences (Gull, 2010b), Gull goes on to recommend that all faculty should be expected to engage in teaching, though the amount of teaching needs to be sufficiently flexible throughout the career of an academic. He also lauds the graduate programs at top institutions in the United States, claiming they are "a long way ahead of UK institutions in mentoring, supervising and training of teaching at this critical early stage of an academic career" (p. 26). However, there is some evidence that the link between teaching and research in the United Kingdom is being strengthened. Hunt and Chalmers (2012) point to the fact that students in the United Kingdom often write a dissertation or take a research-based course during the final year of their undergraduate

degree, and recommend that such projects be moved to the first year to encourage "research experiences from the day they enter higher education" (p. 136). Examples of inquiry-based learning in first year courses at York St John University and Warwick University are given by the authors to show how research skills have been embedded. These are very much in line with the many examples given by Jenkins et al. (2007), who concluded their lengthy report on the relationship between teaching and undergraduate research by writing that "We are convinced that re-shaping or reinventing our disciplines and departments in a way that focuses more on the teaching-research nexus can aid students' learning, their pride in their discipline and department, staff morale, and the overall effectiveness of the department and the institution" (p. 76).

### Student Perceptions of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States

It is perhaps not surprising that the literature generated in the United States is dominated by faculty perspectives, rather than those of students, on the matters considered by the research questions of this dissertation. However, even when compared with the number of studies done in other countries, there is a paucity of previous literature to consider, particularly with regard to the teaching-research nexus. This can partly be explained by the different way in which degree programs are structured. While it is common for final-year students in Europe to complete a thesis or take courses which involve some degree of inquiry-based learning, it is less prevalent in the United States. However, undergraduate research has been an area of investment, both from public and private sources during the past 25 years, with the National Science Foundation (1989) announcing that "It is clear that the academic community regards the involvement of

undergraduate student majors in meaningful research…with faculty members as one of the most powerful of instructional tools" (p. 6). That being said, the studies that have been conducted with regard to the perceptions of research by undergraduate students have shown a tendency to focus on those who have recently completed an undergraduate research project, and hence provide a distorted view of the effect that faculty research has on teaching. The benefits of undergraduate research found by previous studies have generally been predictable, with student participation promoting confidence, critical thinking skills, and knowledge retention, which in turn leads to better employment prospects and enhanced opportunities for postgraduate study (Hunter, 2006). However, there are no broad studies which consider the general attitude of students towards faculty research and how it correlates with the quality of undergraduate teaching.

On the subject of technology in the classroom, there have been a number of US-based studies considering the perceptions of undergraduate students. Pollara and Kee Broussard (2011) reviewed the research done with regard to student perceptions of mobile learning. Of the 18 papers that they considered, 17 resulted in positive findings, though the authors note that the majority of the research in the area is conducted outside the United States, and only five of the studies consider student achievement in addition to their perception of the technology used. Similar results are found in other papers, with Lowerison et al. (2006) reporting that while popular with students, “research on the effects [of integrating technology] on learning are variable and inconclusive” (p. 478).

McCabe and Meuter (2011) state that today’s students “assume technology will be integral to their college experience” (p. 155). However, they also caution that instead of using technology to interact with increasingly large numbers of students, faculty

emphasis should be placed on ensuring that an effective learning environment is created in terms of student attainment.

Diemer et al. (2012) conducted a study involving 209 students across a range of disciplines who were given tasks involving an iPad. Student perception was extremely positive, with high levels of perceived learning reported. Interestingly, while 85% expressed a preference for using classroom technology, and 30% wanted technology to be used extensively, 55% preferred a moderate amount of technology to be used, indicating that there is a point at which it is felt that technology is being over used. This is in keeping with studies looking at courses where technology is used to replace the traditional classroom setting, either through distance learning or a course taught entirely through online resources. O'Malley and McCraw (1999) found that student perception of distance learning courses is negative when compared with the traditional lecture format, and that while online courses allow for flexible scheduling and time saving, students do not believe that they ultimately learn more, and express concern regarding the lack of classroom discussion. Research has also shown that allowing students to use laptops in the classroom can have a negative effect, with both Fried (2008) and Hembrooke and Gay (2003) recommending that faculty curb their use to avoid students being distracted by multitasking.

Student Perceptions of Undergraduate Teaching in the United Kingdom

Jenkins et al. (1998) wrote that "To date no studies have been located which directly examine the teaching-research nexus with a focus on students' views" (p. 129). Their work on the subject involved interviewing approximately 40 students (the exact number is not given) at Oxford Brookes University to gain their perceptions of the link between teaching and research. While some of the participants in the study complained that research faculty were often unavailable, and as a consequence appeared preoccupied with their research at the expense of teaching, the overall conclusion was that perceptions of the teaching-research nexus "are largely positive, while the main adverse impacts can, in part, be resolved though effective management" (p. 139). Another study conducted at Oxford Brookes University, by Breen and Lindsay (1999), found that negative perceptions of research are often formed by students less willing to interact with faculty members, and that those more motivated and communicative often have positive perceptions.

Zamorski (2002) also looked at undergraduate student perceptions of the teaching-research nexus, this time at the University of East Anglia, with the difference being that instead of survey based questioning along the lines of "Do you agree with the following statement?" the author recruited 12 students, who then asked open ended questions to eight of their peers in order to gather the data. The recruited students also kept a journal to detail the occasions on which they encountered research on campus, as well as writing reflective essays about their views and experiences. The collected data showed that while students valued the idea that universities form part of a research community, they also expressed a misunderstanding of the different aspects of a faculty

member's responsibilities, and did not always see the relationship between teaching and research. These findings were confirmed in a study by Healey et al. (2010), who concluded that inquiry-based learning is the best way to link the disciplines of teaching and research, and that while students can often be initially resistant to doing research projects as undergraduates, faculty "have an important part to play in developing students as researchers and active learners" (p. 240).

Since the start of the 21st century, studies looking at student perceptions of the teaching-research nexus have started to become more specialized. Perceptions within individual departments are now being considered, in contrast to broader approaches, where data are gathered from multiple countries for the purpose of comparative analysis. Ball and Mohamed (2010) considered the perceptions of hospitality management students at Sheffield Hallam University, while Johnes (2006) studied final-year sports science and sports studies students at St. Martin's College. In both cases, a positive attitude was found towards research, with participants indicating that they value the skills learned during the completion of their research projects. Turner et al. (2008) questioned over 500 final-year undergraduate students in the United Kingdom and Canada about their perceptions of research. In both countries they found that students at research intensive universities had a greater awareness of the research activities taking place on their campus[13].

[13] It is interesting to note that complaints about the teaching ability of known researchers were markedly higher at the Canadian institutions (which are more similar to those in the United States) compared with those in the United Kingdom. 33% of those studying at research intensive Canadian universities reported that research faculty "lack interest in teaching and facilitating my learning," compared with 16% at comparable universities in the United Kingdom, while 24% of Canadian students perceived an "inability to explain material," compared with only 2% in the United Kingdom (p. 205).

With regard to technology in the classroom, Milliken and Barnes (2002) found that business marketing students responded very positively to its addition, with 90% of the 484 students surveyed indicating that they would like a computer-based learning approach to be used in their other courses. A significant factor cited was the clarity of the (electronically written) lecture notes as opposed to handwritten notes on a board. Mitchell et al. (2005) found a correlation between the level to which students enjoy using the internet and their perception of the utility of online learning environments. Familiarity with the technology platform was also cited by Conole and Alevizou (2010) as being a major factor unpinning student perception, along with the ability to customize software in order to meet personal needs. After surveying students at the University of Glasgow, Dunn (2013) found that 68% thought social media could enhance their learning experience, concluding that "The question is not if we *should use* social media to enhance learning, but *how it should be used* effectively."

There is evidence however that excessive use of technology on the part of faculty can lead to negative results. An attempt to use wiki technology (whereby an editable website is created by collaborating students) was described as a "failed experiment" (Cole, 2009), with no posts to the wiki during the first half of the semester. Students cited a lack of interest, a lack of time, and confusion with the technology as the main reasons for their failure to contribute. It is often the case that students are uncomfortable with the way that informal learning environments contrast with the typically formal relationship students have with faculty, which is particularly true outside of the United States (and described in the next section). Selwyn (2009) described how students disliked using Facebook for educational purposes, citing role conflict, given that "Facebook is used by

many students as a space for contesting and resisting the asymmetrical power relationships built into the institutional offline positions of student and university system, therefore affording these students with backstage opportunities to be disruptive, challenging and resistant" (p. 171). The same issues regarding the blurring of social boundaries were alluded to by Boon and Sinclair (2009), Madge et al. (2009), and Anagnostopoulou et al. (2009), with the latter concluding that "Although technology appears to be an integral part of students' lives, it does not seem to be an integral part of their learning lives."[14]

A symposium was held at the University of London in 2010, where student representatives gave their opinion on a range of issues concerned with the use of technology in higher education. A report was subsequently published (HEFCE, 2010) detailing the findings. It was noted that a difficulty in gauging student opinion regarding classroom technology arises from the lack of uniformity in its usage between institutions, and it was recommended by the students that compulsory training be given to all faculty to ensure a minimum standard of competence. The differing needs of part-time and mature students were cited in comparison with those of full-time students. In particular those with part-time or full-time jobs were said to be more inclined to welcome the added flexibility afforded by online learning. Negative comments focused on the fear that online learning could compromise the overall standard of teaching, with the lack of social interaction afforded by a traditional classroom viewed as being undesirable.

[14] Wikis and weblogs were generally perceived positively by participating students in a study at the University of Strathclyde (Hemmi et al., 2009). However, participants were mostly postgraduate students, who one might expect to be more comfortable operating in a less formal environment, and up to 50% of the course grade was given for the completion of personal weblogs.

## Teaching Exchanges

There is a small body of literature concerning international teaching exchanges that have taken place between faculty members, mainly in the social and clinical sciences. While many dwell on introspective issues related to the adjustment to a new culture (Schaub, 2007; Enskär et al., 2011), some provide an interesting mirror image to this study given that they provide insight into instructors' perception of students, rather than student perceptions of teachers and their teaching. Some believe that teaching is a discipline common to all countries, with Texter (2007) claiming that "Despite the differences between teaching in the States and teaching internationally, the point of commonality is that, ultimately, teaching and learning really are universal. Once the class starts and I begin to talk with my students about the concepts and ideas, it doesn't matter what country I'm in" (p. 356). However, most papers written in this area dwell on how the distinct characteristics of students from different countries force faculty to adapt their natural style.

Sisco and Reinhard (2007) give a detailed comparison of university students at Johnson and Wales University in Rhode Island and the Berufsakademie in Ravensburg, Germany, which is very much in line with my own experiences when teaching at Keele University in England. They relate how "At home at Johnson & Wales, I rely on dialogue, discussion, and student involvement. I use humor and anecdotes to liven up the material I cover. I only gradually understood that the typical German classroom is not as interactive as my American classroom. In fact, the Berufsakademie students seemed unaccustomed to playing an active part in classroom lectures, preferring instead to listen and talk among themselves. I initially interpreted this behavior as somewhat rude, until I

reminded myself that I was not in an American classroom and that I could not use my American values to interpret German behavior" (p. 358).

Citing evidence from faculty who had taught in India, southern Africa, and Latin America, Sandgren et al. (1999) also found that faculty adapt their teaching style to fit the norms of the country that they are in, and having participated in a short-term faculty exchange, they are likely to view the courses that they teach in a more globalized way. This outcome is supported by Forest (2002), who goes so far as to say that "universities should consider rewarding teachers who incorporate an international dimension in their classroom materials and instruction" (p. 449).

## Gaps in the Literature

Although there is considerable literature dealing with all the aspects of undergraduate teaching that this study addresses, there has been no previous work done that uses exchange students as the primary source of data to compare perceptions in the United States and the United Kingdom. The figure below shows how this study brought together two widely studied areas, the research-teaching nexus and technology in undergraduate teaching, under the umbrella of perceptions of undergraduate teaching from the viewpoint of exchange students, with the arrows demonstrating the different ways in which comparisons may be made.

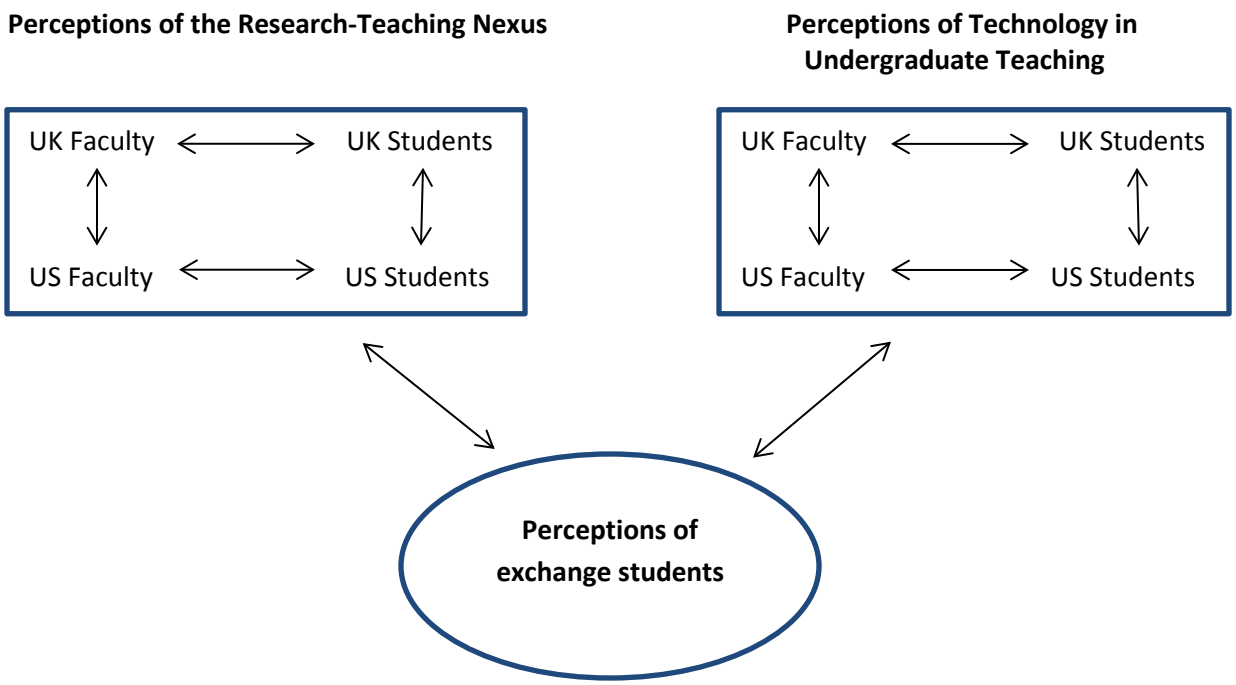




*Figure 4* – Relationship of the Study to the Existing Literature

This study considers the extent to which two contemporary issues, namely balancing the roles of teaching and research, and the implementation of technology in the classroom, interact to shape the experience of those affected by the consequences. The issue is in keeping with the avenues for further research discussed by Bartram et al. (2010), who concluded after gathering data from faculty regarding technology in the classroom that "in terms of signposting further directions for research, it would be worth carrying out a similar project across a number of universities to produce a more robust impression of the validity of the findings which have emerged. It would also be interesting to include student perspectives, in an attempt to gain an understanding of the extent to which they corroborate or deviate from faculty perceptions" (p. 10).

## Conclusion

While the main themes of the study conducted, undergraduate teaching and the experience of exchange students, are well represented in the literature, there have been no prior studies investigating the former from the perspective of the latter. While the limitations of this study do not allow definitive testing of existing theories put forth, it provides fresh insight from those at the heart of the issues, namely the students, to see if they share the concerns that researchers and commentators perceive.

This study forms a link between the existing literature on the two main themes which not only address, confirm, and confound the existing theories, but also offers fresh and constructive insight for administrators in the two countries involved. It examines classroom strategies that students believe to be effective in each country and provides a platform to indicate what each country can learn from the other to improve the quality of undergraduate teaching.

The timing of this study makes it particularly worthwhile. It coincides with a period of transition for higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom, during which the world's most populous English speaking countries can no longer rest on the traditions of the past and the prestige conferred by studying in those countries. The recent economic downturn in the West, the pace of development in Asia, the massification of the sector to allow increasing numbers of students to enroll, the way that technological advances have been incorporated in the classroom, and the increasingly global strategies employed by institutions everywhere mean that long-cherished notions related to higher education must be examined, and in many cases overhauled, to face the realities of the modern age.

# CHAPTER 3
# METHODOLOGY

## Introduction

Chapter 1 provided an introduction to the systems of higher education in the United States and the United Kingdom. The two areas of undergraduate teaching that this study emphasizes are discussed, and the research questions were stated, which indicate that this study looks at undergraduate teaching through the lens of exchange students. The two theoretical frameworks are outlined, along with the relevance of this study with regard to contemporary issues in higher education. Chapter 2 opens with an historical overview, beginning with a description of how the foundation of the American system of higher education was based on that in England during the colonial era from 1636 to 1776. This is followed by four more subsections which detail the growing divergence between the systems of higher education in the two countries between 1776 and the present day. The remainder of Chapter 2 looked at the literature specific to this study, i.e. research that has focused on international students (and in particular exchange students), and the role (both historical and contemporary) of undergraduate teaching at institutions in the two countries.

This chapter will outline how phenomenological methodology relates to this study and the specific process by which the data were gathered and analyzed. It will describe how the participants were chosen and provide background information on the universities that they represent. The research sites are discussed, along with the nature of the interviews. An explanation of how common themes will emerge from the collected data

is given, and the chapter concludes by discussing the interview protocol, the timeline of the process, and the limitations of the study.

## Research Design

This study utilized a phenomenological approach as its theoretical framework. Phenomenology was a term originally coined by the philosopher Edmund Husserl in his book Logical Investigations, published at the start of the 20th century. It was seen as a method for bringing the discipline of philosophy back from the abstract metaphysical approach of Kant and his successors to consider theories based more on lived experiences. Husserl (1900/1901) declared that "phenomenology has, as its exclusive concern, experiences intuitively seizable and analyzable in the pure generality of their essence, not experiences empirically perceived and treated as real facts" (p. 249). Moran (2001) wrote that "phenomenology was seen as reviving our living contact with reality, and as being remote from the arid and academic discussion of philosophical problems found in 19th century philosophy" (p. 5), and that the first step in the process of conducting a phenomenological study is to ensure that the explanations are gathered from within the situation being considered, rather than being based on perceptions that occurred in advanced. Husserl (1900/1901, p. 263) put great emphasis on the *principle of presuppositionlessness* that must be present in a phenomenological investigation, i.e. that no initial bias must exist.

Since the initial work done by Husserl, many 20th century philosophers have debated the virtues of his work, with some (for example Heidegger) being critical of the approach, but many (most notably Schütz) seeing merit in Husserl's ideas to the extent

that the theory was expanded upon, and was eventually incorporated into the social sciences as a tool for qualitative research. However, while Schütz gave context to qualitative research by proposing that its aim is to start with the experiences of individuals and develop them via a reflexive format, Flick et al. (2010) note that "Schütz himself was never concerned with the *methods* of empirical social research" (p. 71). It was left to researchers such as Colaizzi (1978), Polkinghorne (1989), and Moustakas (1994) to provide the generally accepted practice that accompanies the theoretical foundations of phenomenology, with the four main steps being to thoroughly read through all of the transcribed data, extract statements deemed to be significant with regard to the purpose of the study, form clustered meanings of the themes which emerge, and finally integrate the themes into a coherent narrative.

In this study, a phenomenological approach was deemed to be the best way to consider the issues being investigated. While a survey of hundreds of past and current exchange students might have provided worthwhile feedback, it is the perceptions and lived experiences of the participants which were most of interest, and so by listening and talking to the participants it was anticipated that the data would generate a better understanding of the issues being studied. This ontological approach is in keeping with the philosophy that "qualitative research should be strategically conducted, yet flexible and contextual" (Mason, 2011, p. 7).

## Research Protocol

Given that the study involved a phenomenological investigation into the areas of interest, it proceeded according to the seven stage protocol recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 102) for conducting interview based inquiry. This starts with "themizing", i.e. deciding on the theme that is to be studied in the interviews, which in this instance was a transatlantic comparison of undergraduate teaching. The next stage is the design of the interview questions, along with the format and location. Once the interviews had taken place, the transcribing of the data could begin, leading to a period of analysis. Any findings were then examined with regard to validity, reliability, and generalizability[15], before being reported.

Due to the fact that the investigation was a qualitative rather than a quantitative study, it was helpful to have some flexibility with regard to the way that participants were questioned. Silverman (2010) states that "In contrast (with quantitative protocols), qualitative interview studies tend to be conducted with quite small numbers and with rather informal patterns of questioning, where the aim is to allow the interviewee to set the pace. Usually the interviewer will have a prepared set of questions, but these are only used as a guide. Departures are not seen as a problem, and are often encouraged" (p. 194). As a consequence, data collection involved 12 semi-structured interviews, during which participants were questioned about their perceptions of undergraduate teaching in

[15] While common in quantitative research, the notions of validity and reliability are increasingly featured in qualitative studies, with Golafshani (2003) stating that "Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in the qualitative paradigm" (p. 604). However, while common qualitative analysis techniques such as triangulation can mitigate bias and increase validity and reliability, Maxwell (1992) cautions that validity (in particular external validity) cannot be achieved to the same extent as in quantitative or experimental research.

the two countries that they have studied, in particular with regard to how they view the link between teaching and research, and the use of technology in the classroom.

Moustakas (1994) counsels that when conducting phenomenological research the interview must reflect the passion, knowledge, and background of the researcher. He states that "The researcher's excitement and curiosity inspire the search. Personal history brings the core of the problem into focus" (p. 104). This is very much in accordance with my own positionality, discussed in Chapter 1. My experience of being an exchange student, an international student, and a faculty member in both countries, along with my passion for undergraduate teaching provided me with a distinct advantage when conducting the study, both in the formulation of the interview protocol, and in the analysis of the data collected.

Two words that continually arise when scholars discuss phenomenology are "essence" and "meaning". By being able to discern the subtle differences in phrasing and terminology that exist between the United States and the United Kingdom, along with the regional variations within each country, I was better positioned both when asking follow-up questions during the interviews, and in adding some phenomenology in terms of the emotions and implicit meaning found when analyzing the recorded data.

## Data Collection and Research Participants

Once the dissertation committee and the Institutional Review Board approved the proposal, data were collected in the form of recorded interviews with past and current exchange students affiliated with eight institutions, four in the United Kingdom and four in the United States (see Table 3). International students, who have generally only studied

at one university, along with graduate students, were excluded from participation. All data were gathered under guidelines approved by the Ethical Review Board and the Institutional Review Board at the respective universities (see Appendix C), with participants signing a waiver to indicate that they had been notified and agreed with the terms of the interview process. While there were no perceived risks associated with participating in the study, subjects had the right to withdraw from the study at any time if they considered it to be necessary.

In accordance with the guidelines for the number of participants recommended by Creswell (1998, p. 64), Morse (1994, p. 225), and Bertaux (1981, p. 35), 12 students were interviewed in order to gather the data. Six of these students were current exchange students from the US studying in the UK, while the other six were UK students who had previously spent a semester or a full academic year studying in the US. A concerted effort was made to gain perspectives from a wide range of academic disciplines, with the goal being to select an equal number of students from the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities. However, due to the lack of students fulfilling the criteria for participation, this was not possible, and in the end six students from the natural sciences participated, along with five from the social sciences, and one from the humanities.

Purposive sampling was used, with the philosophy that "it is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand, and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned" (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). Care was taken to ensure that the students being interviewed were not all comparing undergraduate teaching in one country to a single university in the other. As a result four universities from each country were represented. A balance was maintained between the

number of male and female participants, but age and grade point average did not fluctuate significantly given the requirements of the participants. Ethnicity was not considered to be a relevant factor in this study.

## Research Sites

Two universities were used to collect the data, namely Keele University in England and the University of Central Florida. They were chosen based on where I worked as a faculty member during the period during which the data were gathered, though it should be noted that the students participating in the study combined to provide perspective from four institutions in each country (see Table 3).

Keele was given university status in 1962, and currently has approximately 10,000 students, three-quarters of whom are undergraduates. It occupies a distinctly rural location in Central England, though caters to a student body spanning the entire country. Keele is renowned for offering a diverse range of undergraduate degree programs, and scores highly when measuring student satisfaction, ranking second in the national rankings of 2013 (Keele University, 2013). Participants interviewed at Keele were either current students who have spent time in the United States, or students from the United States spending a semester or longer as an exchange student at Keele.

The University of Central Florida (UCF) was originally named Florida Technological University when it opened in 1963, and has grown to the point where it is now the second largest university in the United States, with approximately 60,000 students, of whom five-sixths are undergraduates. UCF is located in Orlando, Florida, with most students being in-state residents. Participants interviewed at UCF were either

current students who have spent time in the United Kingdom, or students from the United Kingdom spending a semester or longer as an exchange student at UCF.

The other universities at which participants studied was not something that could be completely controlled for, given the relatively small pool of current and former exchange students at Keele and UCF who had studied in the two countries of interest, but the table below profiles the institutions represented.

Table 3

*Profile of Universities Studied at by Participants*

| University | Location | Profile |
|---|---|---|
| 1. University of Central Florida | Orlando, Florida | UCF opened in 1963, and is now the second largest university in the United States, with recent expansion raising enrollment to around 60,000 students, five-sixths of whom are undergraduates. |
| 2. University of North Carolina, Wilmington | Wilmington, North Carolina | UNCW was established in 1947, and is part of the University of North Carolina system. Enrollment is approximately 14,000, approximately 90% of whom are undergraduates. |
| 3. Ball State University | Muncie, Indiana | Ball State is a public university that opened in 1918. There are 21,000 students on campus, which is located 50 miles north east of Indianapolis. |
| 4. University of Southern Mississippi | Hattiesburg, Mississippi | Southern Miss was established in 1910, with the current student enrollment of 15,000 accounting for almost one-third of Hattiesburg's population. |

| University | Location | Profile |
|---|---|---|
| 5. Keele University | Keele, England | Keele was given university status in 1962, and currently has approximately 10,000 students, three-quarters of whom are undergraduates. The campus occupies a distinctly rural location in Central England. |
| 6. University of Surrey | Guildford, England | The University of Surrey was founded in 1966, and is regularly ranked among the top 20 universities in the UK. The suburban campus has an enrollment of approximately 16,000. |
| 7. Queen Mary University of London | London, England | Established in the 1880s, Queen Mary University now has 15,000 students, and is a member of the Russell Group, which includes many of Britain's leading research universities. It is located on the east side of London. |
| 8. University of Leicester | Leicester, England | The University of Leicester was granted university status in 1957, and today has 17,000 students, two-thirds of whom are undergraduates. The university has an urban parkland setting, and consistently ranks among the top 15 in the UK. |

## Study Timeline

It was always intended that the data collection would begin in the spring semester of 2013. While it was possible for the interviews at Keele to take place during the fall 2012 semester, waiting allowed the American exchange students interviewed to be given a longer time frame in which to form their opinions of the differences between the academic environments. British students returning from overseas were also given more time to reacclimatize, and thus provide a more balanced comparison. The interviews,

along with the organization and analysis of collected data, therefore took place in the spring of 2013 in the United Kingdom, and the fall of 2013 in the United States. The results and conclusions were written between December 2013 and June 2014, with final editing and the dissertation defense occurring at the start of the fall 2014 semester.

## Data Analysis

Due to the number of questions that were asked during each interview, a significant amount of information was amassed during the collection period. While the process of analysis was time-consuming, I considered it to be of paramount importance that it was conducted in a timely manner. Merriam (2009) states that "the much preferred way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection" (p. 171). This is not to say that hasty conclusions were made, but rather that the process of forming the conclusions began as soon as the data are collected. It was therefore prudent to conduct the interviews in each country within as short a space of time as was feasible. Therefore, in each country, once the first person had been interviewed, the other interviews followed within a three month period.

Given that the data collected were purely qualitative, and hence not conducive to the statistical methods associated with quantitative analysis, issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability became a concern. Dey (1993) lists the following six questions that one should ask when assessing the quality of the collected data:

- Are the data based on your own observation or hearsay?
- Is there corroboration by others of your observations?

- In what circumstances were the observations made or reported?
- How reliable are the people providing the data?
- What motivations might have influenced the reports of the participants?
- What biases might have influenced how an observation was made or reported?

Somekh and Lewin (2011, p. 131) recommend using Dey's method of qualitative analysis as it does not "prejudice the phenomenological approach" of Moustakas (1994) and others. Rather than considering the validity of the data, Moustakas (1994, p. 52) states that "perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted," and goes on to outline a multistep method of analysis which develops the work of Van Kaam (1959, 1966), and is in broad agreement with the steps outlined by Colaizzi (1978) and Polkinghorne (1989). The first step in the data analysis is to thoroughly read through all of the transcribed data, setting aside any preconceived notions. This is often referred to as the bracketing phase, or the epoch phase (using the original terminology of Husserl (1913)). The next step is phenomenological reduction, whereby statements deemed to be significant with regard to the purpose of the study are extracted. Clustered meanings of the themes which emerge are then formed. Observing related statements from multiple sources (triangulation) adds to the reliability of the sources and gives more credence to any inferences made. The final step is to integrate the themes into a coherent narrative.

It should be noted that checklists and mechanisms for conducting analysis, such as those described above, are sometimes viewed skeptically, with Barbour (2000) suggesting that "If we succumb to the lure of "one size fits all" solutions we risk being in

a situation where the tail (the checklist) is wagging the dog (qualitative research)" (p. 1115). However, by answering specific questions and following prescribed steps as part of a broader understanding, it was hoped that many of the common issues surrounding the collection and analysis of qualitative data would be mitigated to the extent that valid conclusions could be reached.

Of the six questions listed by Dey (1993), it was hoped that simple affirmative answers could be given to the first two, which would add weight to the conclusions. The standard qualitative methods of coding and triangulation were used to corroborate the observations, and the careful way in which the participants were selected and the data collected increase the reliability. The last of Dey's six questions is dealt with in the positionality section of Chapter 1. This just leaves the motivation of the participants to be explained, which will be discussed in Chapter 6 when outlining how the phenomenological theory aligns with the field work conducted.

## Themes

It was expected as the data were collected and analyzed that common themes would emerge. Ryan and Bernard (2003) list 12 different techniques for identifying themes, ranging from a thorough reading of the transcripts in order to spot word repetition, to complicated detection techniques developed by linguistic anthropologists. Given that this study yielded verbatim, textual data, with a small number of paragraphs containing the response to each question, the authors recommend that researchers limit themselves to three basic techniques. The first recommended technique is a basic search for word repetition, the second is a search for similarities and differences by pairing

responses from different participants, and the third is to cut and then sort all the responses to a given question into piles with similar quotes. Once this had been done, both by visual observation and using computer software, I was able to discuss the primary themes found, and use my own narrative to introduce and contextualize the quotes gathered from participants. Complete details of this process are included in Chapter 5.

## Interview Protocol

The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was constructed based on the theoretical framework formulated by Fang et al. (2008), with regard to perceptions of undergraduate teaching, and the theoretical framework created by Coate et al. (2001), with regard to the balance between teaching and research. The two research questions were considered by combining several questions from the interview protocol, as shown in Table 4 below. It should be noted that while some of the items in the interview protocol (in particular questions 1-3, 14-18) may appear to be too general, and unrelated to the research questions, they were included to gain a more complete understanding of how the environment may have shaped the behavior and overall perception of the participants with regard to the issues being investigated. The answers to these questions are therefore believed to be an important factor in the phenomenological analysis of the data gathered from the interviews.

Table 4 shows the relationship between the research questions, the categories within the two theoretical frameworks being used, and the interview protocol items.

Table 4

*Relationship of Research Questions, Theoretical Frameworks, and Interview Protocol Questionnaire*

| Research Question | Theoretical Framework | Interview Protocol Items |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that the role of classroom technology differs between countries? | Individual<br>Behavior<br>Environment | 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, 19, & 20 |
| 2. Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that undergraduate teaching and faculty research are integrated or independent? | Integrated<br>Independent<br>Positive correlation<br>Negative correlation | 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20 |

The interview protocol contained 20 questions. The first three questions, along with the last five, looked to gain an overall perspective on the experience of the participants as exchange students, and were used when considering both research questions. The remaining 12 questions were equally split between those focusing on classroom technology (questions 4-9) and those with a focus on the teaching-research nexus (questions 10-15).

## Institutional Review Board and Ethical Review Panel

Given the nature of the study, i.e. one which involves human subjects, it was necessary to gain approval from the Institutional Review Board at the University of

Central Florida and its equivalent at Keele University, the Ethical Review Panel. This was to ensure the integrity of the process, and the ethical treatment of participants.

The procedure for gaining approval was similar at the two institutions. In addition to an application form, an outline of the proposal itself was required, along with a facsimile of the student consent form, a guide to the interview topics, and the letter (or e-mail) of invitation send to prospective participants (see Appendices C and D).

The University of Central Florida also requires researchers to have completed the Social and Behavioral Responsible Conduct of Research program offered by the University of Miami through their online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI). This program was completed on the 8th of January, 2010.

In addition, all the written and audio data collected was given for review to Dr. J. Thomas Owens, the dissertation chair for this study.

## Incentives

No incentives were given to those participating in the study conducted. Each interview was of approximately 20 minutes duration, though in several instances participants continued to chat with me long after the recorded part of our conversation had ended.

## Confidentiality

All data gathered were stored electronically. Data included responses to semi-structured questions, along with background demographic information that was gathered from each participant at the time of the interview. Participants were assigned unique

pseudonyms unrelated to their personal information. For the security and privacy of all participants all data were password protected, and only accessible to the principal investigator.

## Originality Report

A requirement of the College of Graduate Studies at the University of Central Florida is for dissertations and theses to be submitted to Turnitin.com to assess the originality of the work. For this study an acceptable originality score was defined by the major professor to be a score between zero and ten percent. Once the list of references, quoted materials, previous submissions, and all matches less than 1% are excluded, the final score for this dissertation is approximately zero.

## Limitations

Anderson (2010) states that "Qualitative research is often criticized as biased, small scale, anecdotal, and/or lacking rigor; however, when it is carried out properly it is unbiased, in depth, valid, reliable, credible and rigorous" (p. 2). This statement very much applies to the study conducted. It is always difficult to reach broad conclusions when sampling only a small fraction of the total population, and in this instance, while the number of students interviewed was in line with the recommendations given by a majority of qualitative researchers, it still provides only a small glimpse into the experiences of thousands of students who participate in exchange programs each year. However, it is still believed that the data collected permits an in-depth analysis of the specific topics being considered.

Bias is another difficult element to completely remove, but in this case my background and experience, in addition to the counsel given by those advising me, hopefully led to a study where the inferences made are both credible and informative, as well as being true to the sentiments of those providing the data. The anecdotal nature of a phenomenological study is undeniable, but that is not to say that data obtained are necessarily unreliable. By using the standard procedures of coding and triangulation, as well as looking at past research to corroborate the patterns which emerged, it is hoped that this study derived reliable, credible and rigorous results.

## Conclusion

Noah (1994) stated that "An important use of descriptive statistics lies in the opportunity they provide to estimate the standing of the United States relative to other countries along dimensions of education that are of interest" (p. 552). The goal of this study was to use the techniques of qualitative research to conduct a phenomenological investigation into the perceptions of undergraduate teaching among current and former exchange students from the United States and the United Kingdom. The data were collected by way of recorded interviews made at Keele University in the United Kingdom and the University of Central Florida, and then carefully analyzed according to phenomenological principles. It is hoped that the analysis of the collected data adds to the existing literature, and that by using exchange students as the lens for the first time this study provides new information on the well-researched topic of undergraduate teaching, which will in turn create avenues for future research.

# CHAPTER 4
# EXPERIENCE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

## Introduction

I conducted a phenomenological study in order to gather the lived experience of 12 current and former exchange students with regard to specific aspects of undergraduate teaching. This allows me to analyze the results in the subsequent chapters, with particular emphasis on how they relate to the two research questions. The narratives contained in this chapter are based on recorded interviews, each of which were quickly transcribed and annotated to avoid any personal thoughts and interpretations being lost. Throughout the process, the participants were very willing to discuss their experiences, providing a large amount of useful feedback, with little need for intervention or rephrasing of questions on my part.

It should be noted that while phenomenological transcription generally requires the inclusion of every utterance by the participants, instances of disfluency are not included in the quotes. I believe that to do so would cause the reader to question the intelligence and eloquence of those involved, which would give a false impression.

## Interviews

The 12 interviews took place in 2013 and 2014, with five taking place in the United Kingdom and the remaining seven in the United States. The interview protocol (see Appendix B) was used as the basis for the interviews, with additional questions being asked when it was either felt that the original question was misinterpreted, or the

answer that was given allowed further insight to be sought. Interviews typically lasted approximately 15 minutes, followed by a (sometimes lengthy) period during which the participants and I chatted informally.

The process of interviewing the participants and learning of their experiences was very enjoyable. Many of their perceptions, and also their misconceptions, were reminiscent of my own when I was of a similar age, and it was comforting to know that there are some timeless aspects to studying abroad which are unique to those who have been through the process. All 12 of the students interviewed seemed very willing to give their time and answer the questions, often being apologetic if their limited experience of classroom technology or research meant they could not always provide a lengthy response. The majority spoke with considerable enthusiasm about being an exchange student, and on only one occasion did a student (who ultimately did not participate) fail to attend an agreed meeting.

## Profiles of the Participants

The 12 participants all satisfied the two criteria of being a current or former exchange student and having studied in the United States and the United Kingdom, with the name, gender, major course of study, and location of the home university of each participant included in Table 5. Traditional demographic information such as ethnicity and age are not included, as it was not considered relevant for this study, but 11 of the 12 participants were Caucasian, with one student of Asian origin. All of the participants were aged between 20 and 22, with the British students being in their second or third year of study when travelling to the United States, and the American students being in their

third or fourth year when travelling to the United Kingdom. Grade point average was not requested from students, as the academic requirements to participate in an exchange program are typically high, and there is no equivalent metric used in the United Kingdom.

While it was anticipated that the participants would be equally dispersed among those majoring in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities, the lack of students fulfilling the criteria for participation meant this was not possible. As a result, while the gender and nationality of the participants are balanced, there are six participants from the natural sciences, five from the social sciences, and only one from humanities.

Table 5

*Demographics of the Participants*

| Participant | Gender | Major | Home Country[16] |
|---|---|---|---|
| Allison | Female | Mathematics | USA |
| Beth | Female | Mathematics | USA |
| Colin | Male | Chemistry | USA |
| Diana | Female | US Studies | UK |
| Eric | Male | Psychology | USA |
| Felix | Male | Mathematics | USA |
| Grace | Female | Hospitality | USA |
| Hazel | Female | Hospitality | UK |
| Ivan | Male | Hospitality | UK |
| Jessica | Female | Biochemistry | USA |
| Kyle | Male | Music | UK |
| Lee | Male | Chemistry | UK |

[16] This represents the location of the home institution of each participant. In most cases it is the same as their nationality, with the two exceptions being Hazel, who has dual citizenship of the United Kingdom and Hong Kong, and Ivan, who is from Slovakia.

## Narratives of the Participants[17]

### *Allison*

Allison is an American mathematics major with a cheerful personality, who clearly enjoyed her time spent as an exchange student, and welcomed speaking with me about her experiences afterwards. There was no hesitation in providing answers to all of the questions, though there was a serious, considered tone throughout, indicative of someone who, while having a lot of fun, also managed to gain an A-grade in all of her classes. Allison appeared comfortable throughout the interview, and was in no hurry for it to end. Indeed, after turning off the voice recorder, Allison happily chatted with me for almost half an hour about her time in England, detailing the people she had met, the side trips to continental Europe that she had taken, and how she had blogged about her experience in order for friends and family to share her journey. I sensed some disappointment from Allison when I indicated that there were no further questions, as if she wanted the memory of her experience to continue for as long as possible.

Allison was very content with the standard of teaching that she received both as an exchange student and at her home university, remarking that faculty tend to be more available in the US, spending more time in their office.

> My teachers were excellent, both here and in the UK. Teachers relied more on their own notes in the UK, so I guess it was more personal, what they wanted to teach you. In the US it's a case of what's in the book and following a set syllabus.

[17] While repetitive, any time a specific university was mentioned by a participant, it has been changed to either "in the UK" or "in the US". This is to protect the anonymity of the participants, given that it is often the case that only one student per discipline per year participates in an exchange program.

> But the teachers in both countries are very professional. Office hours [in the UK] were a bit different – not as open as in the US. I feel that professors welcome you in a bit more in the US, whereas in the UK you had to search online and try really hard to find when a professor was actually in their office, so it was a bit more difficult to get a hold of them. If you sought it, [the professors in the UK] would help you, but it was more of an effort to get that extra help than it would be in the States. (Interview 1, Line 3)

Allison indicated that technology was not really a factor in her classes, either in the United States or the United Kingdom. Being a mathematics major who had not taken any remedial courses upon entering university, she had not experienced any large-lecture sections incorporating online homework and testing, which are increasingly used for introductory classes at large public universities in the United States. So after only a brief remark about the use of (or lack of) classroom technology, Allison moved on to citing the differences in assessment, with the exam questions in the United Kingdom going into greater detail than is the norm in the United States.

> They don't use a lot of technology at either [university]. PowerPoint slides mainly, and all of the exams were written. The exams were more difficult than in the States, but they kind of narrowed down what you need to know, and on the exam, you only need to answer three or four questions, so you could not study a chapter if you didn't want to answer a question from it. In the States you need to know everything, whereas in the UK you need to know more about it. (Interview 1, Line 29)

Allison expanded on the two testing systems, delineating what she saw as the pros and cons of one (in the United States) where there is continual testing throughout the semester, with all points earned contributing the overall score for the semester, and the other (in the United Kingdom) where the final examination counts for almost the entire course grade, and midterm assessments either do not occur or count for very little.

> It was nice when we were studying to know what we could cut out, but a lot of times I would know half of one question and half of another, and wish it would be the average of all those, so it was a lot more stressful. It was a little frustrating to work hard on the class tests when they didn't really matter. A lot of the time, if I did really well in one class and poorly in another, I would still need around the same on the final to get a good grade, so that was frustrating. (Interview 1, Line 35)

As is typical with most undergraduate mathematics majors, Allison did not have significant experience with undergraduate research[18], and could not recall instances of mathematics faculty discussing their own research. As a result her answer was very clear when asked whether she believed that faculty prioritized their research over their teaching responsibilities: "No, not at all. I never heard them bring up their research, and they never missed any lectures - always on time" (Interview 1, Line 81). In spite of this response, Allison still believed that research done by faculty does enhance the reputation of an institution, and that research positively affects classroom teaching: "Oh, yes, definitely. I definitely think research [positively] affects teaching" (Interview 1, Line 85).

[18] Federal programs such as the Research Experiences for Undergraduates funded by the National Science Foundation exist for those studying natural sciences, but they are typically very selective.

*Beth*

Beth is an American mathematics major with a reserved personality. However, she possesses a flamboyant dress sense, with bright turquoise trousers covered in paisley swirls. Her answers were given in a concise, reserved fashion, and although there is little enthusiasm in the tone of her voice, towards the end of the interview I sensed that she was feeling less cautious, and more willing to open up about her experience of studying in the United Kingdom, which she enjoyed.

Beth believed the quality of classroom teaching to be of a similar level in the two countries, with the primary difference being the amount of material covered by faculty in the United Kingdom, which she believed to be much greater than that in the United States.

> [In the UK] They like to pile on information, pile it on, pile it on, pile it on, then they'll do some example classes, as opposed to here [in the US] where they'll do a little section on something, do an example, do a section, do an example, and so on. (Interview 2, Line 3)

Beth noted that while she felt the classes she took in the United Kingdom were slightly easier due to being applied rather than theoretical, the structure of the final exams and their heavy weighting compared with those in the United States caused her scores to be lower than the norm.

> To me, the courses seemed a little bit easier [in the UK]. But at the same time I wasn't making the grades that I make here [in the US], so it was a little bit more difficult in that respect, they were a little bit harsher [with the grading]. I was really worried going into the exams, but then as soon as I got there I thought "I

know this stuff" because I've been doing it all semester. I was really motivated to do well on the final because it counted for so much. (Interview 2, Line 33)

When asked about the use of classroom technology, Beth predictably (for a mathematics major) noted that there is little technology used in either country, with the exception of the commonly used MATLAB software package and the posting of online lecture notes on the university's server after each class. She also noted that in spite of lecture notes being posted online, it did not have an adverse effect on attendance.

> I mean, they used slides and MATLAB [in the UK], but other than that, no, there was no technology used – the same as here [in the US]. They did post the lecture notes online [in the UK], which was nice, but I always went to class. It seemed like they had better attendance [in the UK]. Some teachers were more picky about it than others. One of my professors really didn't like it when people skipped class, but I guess no one really does. (Interview 2, Line 70)

Beth stated that she had not participated in any undergraduate research projects, indicating that it was due to a lack of opportunity rather than a lack of desire: "No, I haven't really done any undergraduate research. I wish I'd had more of an opportunity to do research, as I want to go to graduate school, and so it would probably be helpful" (Interview 2, Line 73). She was very clear in stating that she did not believe faculty cared more about their research in either country, saying "I really feel like the professors I've had have cared about the students" (Interview 2, Line 76); however, she felt that research and teaching should be integrated as "it makes the class more interesting" (Interview 2, Line 78).

*Colin*

Colin is an American chemistry major with a mild personality. He spoke quietly, but was unequivocal and somewhat forthright in his responses. He did not hesitate in answering my questions, and readily provided follow-up information when requested. Colin admitted to doing a lot of learning on his own, and sometimes misses class. It was not easy for me to gauge whether he was enjoying his time as an exchange student, as he spoke more in terms of what he has observed rather than what he has experienced with others. He mentioned his dislike of the food and the weather in the United Kingdom, and complained about the Wi-Fi signal in the local area.

Colin believed that the level of instruction he gained in the United States was slightly higher than that received in the United Kingdom, noting that in the United States, there are typically multiple sections of each course, and so by carefully selecting a highly rated teacher during the registration process he is able to ensure that (in his mind) he always receives the best instruction.

> I would say that the standard of teaching is slightly better in the US. I found here [in the UK] that you can have some great teachers, and then some that are just really not up to the task. In the US you pick your teachers, and so if you have a high GPA, you always find your way into the classes with the better teachers, and so that might sway my opinions. (Interview 3, Line 3)

Colin noted that in the United Kingdom there is typically only one section of each course, and since it may be taught by multiple instructors, the quality of teaching is more varied. He noted that class sizes appear larger, which is indicative of the fact that during the first two years of study at a university in the United Kingdom there are a lot of

mandatory classes taken in a large auditorium by all students sharing a common major course of study.

> I find here [in the UK] that if a class is being taught, then it's being taught only once, especially in my chemistry modules, where you have three or four teachers teaching one class. Classes are also generally bigger here, especially in the math department. That has good and bad consequences. You get to meet more people, but don't feel as open to ask questions in the classroom. (Interview 3, Line 17)

On the subject of technology, Colin stated that while he was disappointed with campus-wide aspects of technology in the United Kingdom, such as Wi-Fi connectivity, he very much liked how technology was used to augment classroom teaching, in particular the use of PowerPoint slides and the fact that lecture notes are posted online.

> In general, I've been disappointed by the technology in the UK. The lack of Wi-Fi and things like that, but I've found that in a lot of my lectures they're using PowerPoint slides, which I really enjoy. It's also really nice being able to go home and download the lectures, the written notes and comments. (Interview 3, Line 34)

Colin added that he is a big proponent of online coursework given that he already gains a lot of information related to his courses from the internet.

> I'm completely in favor of it. I do a lot of my learning out of textbooks, or just by doing research online, and so I don't think that the lectures are the be all and end all. I think there are a lot of ways to get to the same point. (Interview 3, Line 39)

Colin stated that he has no experience of undergraduate research in either country, but strongly indicated a belief that some faculty care more about research than teaching, citing the university in the United Kingdom as an example.

> I find that, here [in the UK], for example in the chemistry department, there's about 20 professors, but only four of them teach and the rest do research. So it's probably true that most just do care about their research, because you'll never see them in the lecture. (Interview 3, Line 70)

When I asked if he ever sensed a reluctance on the part of faculty to teach lower-level courses, Colin responded by saying that he thought some faculty would prefer to be teaching higher level courses, or teaching fewer courses to accommodate their research interests, and that the teaching load among faculty was not balanced.

> I've noticed some teachers are a little annoyed by how much they're teaching. Probably because they'd rather be doing their research, or teaching upper-level classes. They'd rather have less of the lecture workload; maybe distribute it among their peers who aren't teaching. (Interview 3, Line 78)

I than asked Colin about the general relationship between teaching and research, and how the latter affects the reputation of a university. He acknowledged that research can enhance a university, but that it needs to be blended with teaching in order for the students to fully benefit.

> Yes, it [research] does [benefit the reputation of a university], but I think that they [faculty] need to focus on teaching also, because it helps the students more. I think they [teaching and research] can help each other, yeah, they affect each other. (Interview 3, Line 84)

*Diana*

Diana is a British female student with a bubbly personality, majoring in American studies. She made no secret of the fact that she greatly enjoyed her time as an exchange student, and was enthusiastic about the novelty of the whole experience, embracing all aspects. All of the responses to my questions indicated that Diana preferred the methods of teaching and assessment used in the United States, and she was highly critical of faculty in the United Kingdom for seemingly prioritizing research over their teaching.

Diana enjoyed the fact that in the United States a student's overall grade is generally arrived at through a process of continual assessment, with credit being awarded throughout the semester, rather than having a final exam at the end of the semester which almost exclusively determines final grades. While in-class midterm exams and graded homework assignments are used at some universities in the United Kingdom (albeit counting for very little), points for participation and attendance are never awarded.

> In the UK you're left to yourself more. In the US you had lecturers helping you all the time. I was an international student, so they would help me a lot, and there wasn't a big essay at the end that was worth 60. In America, there is more regular assessment. You get participation marks and discussion points. I got loads of points for that. It was more assessment based, which I find a lot easier than exams. (Interview 4, Line 3)

Diana found that her easy-going personality meshed well with the faculty she met in the United States, finding it easier to build personal relationships, in comparison with the more "hands off" approach adopted by faculty in the United Kingdom. She took the step of contacting her professors in the United States prior to arriving on campus, thus

introducing herself before the first day of class. This paid dividends, as she found that many of them had visited the United Kingdom, and hence took a greater interest in her situation.

> A lot of them (in the US) were just really easy to chat to. A lot of them had been over to England, so there was a commonality to begin with. And I did e-mail them before to let them know that I'm an international student, from England, and they were fine with that, really chatty. Some of the lecturers knew my lecturers in England, so they were easy to get on with, whereas I don't feel that I have that kind of relationship with any of my lecturers in the UK. (Interview 4, Line 20)

Diana admitted to me that she had no experience of online coursework, and found that the use of technology did not differ markedly when comparing the two countries. In both places it just amounted to PowerPoint slides being used to augment the lectures, which she welcomed, and the use of Blackboard software in the United Kingdom to store lecture notes.

> They use PowerPoint slides – that's usual. But it's probably about the same [in both countries]. I do [like technology to be incorporated in the classroom]. PowerPoint is really good. The slides are quite detailed in the UK. Maybe a bit too detailed. There's quite a lot of stuff on the slides. Going slowly through the slides is also good, and then putting them up on Blackboard afterwards. I like to read through what I've learned. (Interview 4, Line 27)

When asked whether she ever sensed that faculty care more about their research than their teaching, Diana responded by saying that she definitely felt that to be the case in the United Kingdom, but had not noticed it in the United States.

> In the UK, yeah. I've never ever met my personal tutor here [in the UK], and you're meant to, so that's a bit awkward. I don't know why, but he kind of goes on research leave quite a lot. The study abroad tutor, he's now on research leave. I didn't really notice that much in America, people going on research leave. (Interview 4, Line 70)

Diana added that she received more contact time with the faculty in the United States, and attributed that to the fact that faculty in the United Kingdom spent more time doing research, and sounded frustrated when citing examples of faculty in the United Kingdom who regularly go on research leave.

> I only have 8 hours a week of contact time [in the UK], whereas in the States I had 12 credit hours, so I felt there was more personal contact time. You could get to know more what the researcher's specific interests were, whereas in the UK they go off on research leave for a semester. One of my lecturers [in the UK] went to Los Angeles recently for a week and a half. I don't know what for. (Interview 4, Line 74)

However, when I asked whether faculty mention their own research in the classroom, Diana indicated that in her experience it was more common in the United States: "They do [mention their research] in the US. I had a history professor who told us of all the books he's written, or helped to write. I don't really know what my lecturers here in the UK do" (Interview 4, Line 80).

Diana cited a specific instance, when I asked whether she had ever sensed reluctance on the part of some faculty to teach lower-level courses, and that it had an effect on the way that she approached the course.

> Especially in the UK [faculty seem reluctant to teach lower-level courses]. In the first semester of my first year a lecturer said "Yeah, I don't like teaching first year students." And it was a 5-6pm seminar. She didn't care, so I didn't care back. She couldn't be bothered to teach us really. It was probably a waste of time. (Interview 4, Line 84)

Diana noticed the use of graduate students in the United Kingdom, noting that in her experience it has not been positive. By contrast, she did not see graduate students used in a teaching capacity in the United States, with their duties confined to proctoring.

> I do a module now [in the UK], and the main guy, I don't know what he's doing now, but he's not teaching us. It's a graduate student, and I'm not keen on the way she teaches stuff. I didn't notice it in the US – just a lot here. Graduate students sat in while you took your exams [in the US], but they didn't teach me. (Interview 4, Line 89)

### *Eric*

Eric is an American psychology major, with a serious, level-headed personality. He gave long, articulate, and precise answers to my questions, and was an extremely enjoyable person to interview. There was no noticeable enthusiasm or humor shown during the responses, and it did not surprise me to learn that he prefers studying on his own as opposed to studying in groups, though he appeared to be enjoying his time as an exchange student.

When I asked Eric to compare the level of teaching in the two countries, he indicated that it varied on a class-by-class basis, but found that in the United States the

material tends to have a broader scope, whereas in the United Kingdom faculty tend to dig deeper into the topics that are covered. Eric also believed that note taking is more difficult in the United Kingdom given that it involves more than just copying what is projected onto a screen, and that the laid back atmosphere of the seminars he is accustomed to in the United States makes students feel less intimidated.

> I think, depending on the class structure, [the teaching] is either different or the same. The lectures here [in the UK] are more dense, the topics that are covered. At Southern Miss, easy isn't the right word, but it's less dense, the material. And it's easier to follow, people just copy off the PowerPoint notes. Here it's not as easy. As far as seminars go, I like those at Southern Miss a little better, because, saying they're laid back is too generous, but it's less intimidating. (Interview 5, Line 3)

When I asked to expand upon how the system of teaching in the United Kingdom made students feel intimidated, Eric pointed to the fact that students tend not to ask questions during lectures, and on a more personal note he added that by using a laptop computer to take notes, he felt like the lecturers were wary of him, given that he tended to be the only student in the room not using the traditional pen and paper approach to note taking.

> You can't ask questions in lectures [in the UK], which is both convenient and inconvenient. It seems like it is taboo to ask questions, which I think is weird. Also I felt like the lecturer always had a keen eye on me, to be working, especially because I had my computer, which is different because in the UK not a lot of people use computers [in the lectures]. (Interview 5, Line 21)

Eric did become very animated when I posed an unprepared question that asked him to compare the level of difficulty of the courses that he had taken in the United Kingdom with those he was accustomed to taking in the United States. He admitted finding the courses much more difficult in the United Kingdom, with the long essay based assignments being more demanding than the multiple choice exam questions he was used to

> Oh my God, it's ten times harder here! In the US we would take four multiple choice exams, and I would fly through them in 20 minutes. Here you have to do a 2000 word essay, 3000 word essay, in each class. I'm not used to that at all, and it's stressful because they're all due at the same time. But it has taught me a lot, because the academic standards are so high. It's beneficial for American students I think. (Interview 5, Line 42)

On the specific question about the role of technology use in the classroom, Eric was happy to use the statistical software package SPSS for one of his classes, but found in general that technology use in the United Kingdom was less than in the United States; however, he did not perceive this to be something negative.

> The use of technology depends on the class structure. In one of my psychology classes we used SPSS a lot, which I'd never used before. It was great. It was really hard to use, and confusing, but that's because I hate stats. On the whole I think technology is used less over here [in the UK], which is OK. (Interview 5, Line 28)

Eric then stated that while he likes technology to be incorporated into a course, when it comes to assignments he would like to see more consistency, with them either

being completed online or turned in face-to-face, and that in the UK he finds the current system somewhat confusing.

> I like technology to be used, but would like it to be used more consistently. In one class I had to turn everything in online and there was only one physical thing I had to turn in. In other classes you have to physically turn in everything and digital copies are just for verification. Because it's so inconsistent across all the different subjects, it is confusing. (Interview 5, Line 32)

Eric's experience of online learning amounted to having completed computerized assignments, and when I asked him about those, his views were mixed. While seeming not to mind doing online assignments, Eric noted their asocial nature, in the sense that peer pressure is more noticeable when a hard copy of the assignment needs to be handed in to the faculty member.

> It depends on the online homework. In America, we sometimes have to do homework specifically on the internet. It's OK, but I would much rather turn in a physical copy to the teacher like they do here [in the UK], because I feel pressured to turn it in. If everyone else in the class turns it in and I'm the only one who doesn't turn it in then I feel like a jerk, but turning it in digitally is more asocial. (Interview 5, Line 37)

The discussion then turned to the subject of research, and the first question I asked Eric was whether he had been required to conduct any research. He answered that he had, in both countries, and went on to give a brief comparison of the process: "Yeah, I've done research here [in the UK] and in America. Over here it was much more hands-

on than in America. Well, it wasn't hands-on, but it was a different kind of experiment. It was beneficial" (Interview 5, Line 84).

I then asked Eric whether he has ever perceived that faculty care more about their research than their teaching, and to contrast the situation in the two countries. He responded by saying that this attitude is more prevalent in the United Kingdom, citing an instance where he did not receive the help he was expecting from a lecturer. Eric stated that in his opinion faculty in the United States are committed to their teaching and that research is a secondary concern.

> Yes, I think that sometimes faculty care more about their research. In a past question you asked me about the faculty's attitudes. I work closely with one of the faculty I described negatively, and she taught one lecture, and she was the head lecturer, she did one lecture, and when I asked her a question about the exam she kind of just said "Go to the revision lecture" and just blew me off, which was frustrating. In the US, lecturers lecture first and do research second. Here I feel that it's the other way around. (Interview 5, Line 87)

I got the sense that Eric's impression that faculty in the United Kingdom care more about their research may have been fostered by the fact that his lecturers there referred to their own research more when compared with their counterparts in the United States. Eric stated that in the United Kingdom, material is taught in a way that illustrates the literature, whereas in the United States courses involve a broader overview of the discipline.

> Some lecturers do mention their research, some of them don't. Less so in the States. They mention research more here [in the UK]. The material is more

research-based. In the US they might give you a broad overview of the topic, here they'll tell you specifically what specific people found. (Interview 5, Line 98)

### *Felix*

Felix has a friendly yet reserved personality. He gave his answers in a quietly fluent manner, but did not provide me with a lot of detail. Given that Felix is a mathematics major it was perhaps not surprising that he was one of only two participants who quantified their time as an exchange student into a mark out of ten, awarding the experience seven and a half points. When I asked what would have made the experience better, he stated that it would have been nice to have been accompanied by other students from his program.

On the subject of teaching, Felix found that the quality was high in both countries, and did not indicate a preference.

> I would say that the teaching is probably about the same, on the same level. I think the teachers here (in the US) and over there (in the UK) knew what they were talking about, and they were very good at explaining everything. They answered questions and all that. So I think it's pretty much the same. (Interview 6, Line 3)

The differences in the classroom atmosphere that Felix perceived were not attributed to the faculty, who he viewed as being friendly, and more to do with the size of the classes. Larger class sizes in the United Kingdom caused Felix to perceive that students had less of an opportunity to ask questions during the lectures.

> The faculty were all nice, open, friendly. Any questions you had, they would answer. They were humorous at times. They were nice people. Typically the classes over there [in the UK] were a lot bigger than over here [in the US] – there were more students in each class. You could still ask questions [in the UK] but there were a lot of people, the rooms were very big, so that could hinder someone's ability to ask a question if they don't like to talk out loud. (Interview 6, Line 8)

On the subject of classroom technology, Felix responded in a quizzical manner, and appeared somewhat surprised that I would even mention it, as if technology was not compatible with the subject material: "I was taking math classes, so over here [in the US] they don't use much technology, they just write on the board. And they did that over there [in the UK] too, so it's about the same" (Interview 6, Line 17). However, Felix appeared very open to the use of mathematical software to help solve problems, citing MATLAB as a program he had used in applied mathematics courses in the United Kingdom.

> I think software is important. Actually, one of my classes (in the UK) used MATLAB for assignments, but I don't like online coursework as far as doing problems. I think they should be done on paper and turned in to the professor. As far as learning online, I have no problem with that. (Interview 6, Line 20)

Given Felix's initial response indicating the incompatibility of classroom technology and teaching mathematics, I was expecting him to indicate that he had not encountered any instances where (in his opinion) technology had been used excessively, but he hypothetically described a scenario where it could occur: "I've never experienced

this, but if a math teacher is teaching using PowerPoint slides then I think that's not right" (Interview 6, Line 26).

While not having participated in any undergraduate research projects (though admitting that he would like to), Felix acknowledged a link between teaching and research, stating that "research can definitely be used to help teaching" (Interview 6, Line 31). He then spoke about how faculty in both countries had mentioned their research during lectures, citing examples.

> Yes, here [in the US], and actually over there [in the UK] faculty mentioned their research. My ODE (Ordinary Differential Equations) class here, the professor told us how he used to work on rogue waves, using, I forget the equation. Over in the UK, one of my professors told us how he used to model the normal modes for airplane wings. (Interview 6, Line 33)

Felix answered affirmatively when I asked him whether he thought that faculty research enhances the reputation of a university, and did not believe that faculty prioritized their research over their teaching: "No, I don't think faculty care more about their research. Both here and there. They have office hours and they are pretty generous with those, so I don't think they value their research over their teaching" (Interview 6, Line 37).

### *Grace*

Grace is an American hospitality major. She gave lengthy answers to each of my questions (including a 212 word response to the first question) and spoke in a slightly jumpy manner initially, almost treating the questions as if she was taking an oral exam;

however, she responded with greater fluency as the interview progressed. Grace's nervous laugh was present throughout, but she spoke with great enthusiasm about her experience overseas, and in particular with regard to the emphasis on self-learning and reading journal articles.

When I asked her to compare the teaching she had received at the two universities, Grace initially discussed the set nature of the timetable in the United States, with classes meeting at the same time, in the same rooms, with the same professor. In the United Kingdom she observed that the timetable is much more fluent, with times, rooms, and staff changing from day to day. Grace noted that it took some time before she was able to adapt to this.

> In the US the teaching schedule is a lot different than it was in the UK.
>
> Completely. Here [in the US] it's more organized. We have classes at a certain time and on a certain day and that doesn't really fluctuate. In the UK it's about three hours' worth of lecture, tutorial, or workshop, and they can range in days, they can range in hours, and professors too. So I was finding myself a little bit lost in knowing where to go, but they were very helpful in explaining things, because it was completely different. (Interview 7, Line 3)

In the same response, Grace then went on to compare the curriculum in the two countries, citing the obvious difference of fewer exams and graded assignments during the semester in the United Kingdom, but also how the lectures were more research-based there, with students required to read journal articles. Grace found this to her liking because she claimed not to be a good test taker.

> Teaching wise, the curriculum is completely different. Our classes in the US are broken up into tests and quizzes and papers, and we have a wide range of grades, whereas in the UK they have two grades, and both of them are at the end of the semester, so more of my learning was research. I did a lot of research, which I was happy to do, because I'm not a good test taker. So I liked that, and our classes were more based on research and articles and journals. And I liked that because that's where I learn the most. It wasn't just reading off slides. They were really in depth with the material and I enjoyed that. (Interview 7, Line 8)

Grace did not notice a difference in the amount of classroom technology used, saying that PowerPoint slides were the extent of it in both countries. However, she did allude to the fact that faculty in the United Kingdom tend to post the notes online after class, which means that students can read through them in class, absorbing the material, rather than spending time hurriedly copying the slides to their notebooks.

> Yeah, I do like technology to be used, for visuals, but when it becomes predominately PowerPoint, slide after slide, you can't really pay attention. And that was also something different over there, students were not constantly taking notes and writing from the slides, and that was cool because we could just listen, and we didn't have to vigorously take notes, because our teachers won't post the PowerPoint slides. So I could lose focus easily because I was constantly writing and then not listening to what they were saying. (Interview 7, Line 30)

The discussion then turned to the topic of online coursework, and Grace made it clear to me that she was unhappy to be taking courses in the United States that had a significant online component, questioning whether she was getting her money's worth if

there was little interaction with a faculty member. In Grace's view, faculty availability in virtual form (via e-mail) does not make up for going to class and being able to communicate in person.

> [Laughs before answering] I'm taking an online class now, where I don't see my teacher at all, and I don't really like it, because I don't really feel like I'm learning as much as I could. She's very open and I can ask her anything I want via e-mail, but I almost don't feel like I'm getting my money's worth. For these classes I'm paying so much and then I don't even have an interaction with a real professor. I do like real lectures because I feel I get more out of it. (Interview 7, Line 37)

Based on the prior response, I expected Grace would be of the opinion that online technology could be used to the point where it becomes detrimental to the course. This proved to be the case, and she explicitly stated that she prefers to be able to ask questions face-to-face rather than online or via e-mail. However, she acknowledged a perception among students that online classes are easier than those taught using the traditional format.

> I can just see it from me and my peers that online classes, they seem easier, because you have so much free range with them, but I'd rather be face-to-face with a professor and getting more insight from them, and being able to ask questions on the spot. If I have a question online, then I might not be able to get it answered right away, and I lose focus a little bit. (Interview 7, Line 43)

The conversation then switched focus to the role of research in the undergraduate curriculum, and Grace responded by saying that the majority of her learning in the United

Kingdom was derived from reading research articles, which she enjoyed, and that it contrasts with the way that material is conveyed in the United States.

> The focus was on research much more so in the UK. Here [in the US] we don't do as much research. Most of my learning [in the UK] was through research and reading articles and writing these really long papers with groups or just on my own, which I liked. (Interview 7, Line 49)

I then asked Grace about the relationship between teaching and research, and whether she views them as being independent or integrated. Instead of answering in general terms, she talked specifically and at great length about her experience. While it was not the answer I was expecting, it gave considerable insight into both the teaching methods employed in the two countries, and also to Grace's preferences, which implicitly gave her views regarding the connection between teaching and research.

> In the UK the professors showed us how to do research. In our tutorials we would sit down and the professor would have articles for us to read and then we would critically analyze – what was good about it, what was bad about it. Remain critical to everything that you read, and don't just take it as it is. We never get that type of interaction with research here. Here it is "Take it as it is, don't really question it." There it was "Question it, and remain critical to everything you read," and I thought that was cool, because it helps with my papers. I wasn't just one sided, I could go back and forth. It just opened up a whole new realm. In the US I haven't really done any research. We have a lot of resources and a good library database, but I haven't really used it. (Interview 7, Line 53)

Grace was very enthusiastic about how faculty in the United Kingdom talked about their own research in the classroom, noting that in the (smaller) tutorial sessions, faculty would share updates on their research to see what students could gain from them.

> Oh, yes! [Faculty did talk about their research.] In the UK, whenever we would come together for tutorials, they would have research updates done and allow us to read them and see what we got from the articles. Here [in the US] we really don't touch on research. (Interview 7, Line 62)

I asked Grace whether she had ever formed the impression about a faculty member that they cared more about their research than their teaching. After a series of lengthy answers Grace responded to this one curtly by saying that in her experience it has not been the case: "[Long pause]. No, I don't think so. Sorry, that wasn't very elaborate" (Interview 7, Line 66).

My final question on the subject of faculty research involved asking Grace whether she believed it enhanced the reputation of the university. Given her previous responses, indicating a very positive attitude in general towards research, it was no surprise to find that Grace perceived a positive correlation. However, she went further in detailing specific instances where faculty members in the United Kingdom had gone to other countries, and related their research findings to the students upon their return. In Grace's mind this gave her an advantage over students at other universities by ensuring she was up to date with current trends in the hospitality industry.

> Yes, I think so. Research keeps the students really engaged with what is going on. New trends in the industries, new advancements. By relaying that kind of information to your students, and keeping them focused on it, it keeps them ahead

> of other students and ahead of the competition. I think it's important to understand what's going on in different countries. We focused a lot on other countries. How they are dealing with tourism and sustainability, things of that nature. A lot of my professors there [in the UK], they would go off on projects all the time and come back and tell us all their information that they'd discovered. They were always away in a different country, but they would always come back for lessons and relay their information, which was really good because we'd be getting inside knowledge right away. (Interview 7, Line 69)

### *Hazel*

Hazel is a British student studying hospitality. She is originally from Hong Kong, but has lived in the United Kingdom from an early age and has a broad British accent, with elongated vowels. Her bubbly personality was evident from the start of the interview, and she spoke to me in an engaging manner, with lots of excitement in her voice as she related both her experiences as an exchange student, and her goal of returning to the United States for an internship after graduation. Her energy level seemed to drop towards the end of the interview, as I asked more pointed questions, and her answers became progressively shorter.

Hazel's initial comments centered on the difference in class sizes, noting that most of the classes she had taken in the United Kingdom were in large lecture halls, while in the United States the number of students was smaller, with more opportunity to ask questions as a result. This ability to ask questions reminded her of when she was in high school, and by the tone of her voice it was clear she regarded this as being positive.

> I think in the UK it's mostly in large lectures, there are hundreds and hundreds of us. Whereas I heard that over here [in the US] it was large lectures as well, but for me it's small classes, I think there's only 50 of us, so that you learn a lot more, you get to ask questions. I feel like I'm in high school here. You can ask questions back in the UK, but for some people that might not be comfortable because there are so many people and it's such a big room. (Interview 8, Line 3)

In spite of the ability to ask questions in the classroom, Hazel went on to say that she did not have the same personal connection with the faculty in the United States, and that she felt somewhat anonymous in the class: "Even though here [in the US] it's a smaller classroom I don't really think my lecturers really know me. I would have to go and talk with them in order for them to really know me" (Interview 8, Line 14).

On the subject of classroom technology, Hazel did not notice any marked difference between the two countries, with PowerPoint being the only software used. Hazel pointed out that in the United Kingdom lecturers were more likely to put the slides online, which she liked, but believed it led to higher levels of absenteeism as a result.

> I think the classroom technology is about the same for the lectures, there are PowerPoint slides, but here [in the US] they don't put the PowerPoint slides up [online]. If you don't go to the lectures, then you don't get the answers, whereas in the UK they put everything up [online], so some people don't go to lectures. (Interview 8, Line 18)

When I asked whether she had ever notice technology being used in one country but not the other, Hazel recalled two accounting classes she had taken, one in each country. In the United States students were expected to use Excel for all their homework

assignments, whereas in the United Kingdom calculations were done on paper. There was a roll of the eyes and considerable sarcasm in her voice as she noted how she believed the methodology in the United Kingdom to be more proper given the nature of the discipline.

> For accounting homework [in the US] you type everything in Excel, but back home [in the UK] – I did accounting last year as well – it was all paper work for that. And all of my exams and quizzes are online, which I find a bit interesting, because it's accounting, you're supposed to be doing the maths, whereas last year I was doing all the writing and the calculating. (Interview 8, Line 23)

Speaking more generally about her opinion of using technology in education, Hazel was positive, with the caveat that she would not want entire courses to be taught online: "I think it really depends. For accounting, not really. I mean, I do like technology to be used, but not for all of the course" (Interview 8, Line 29).

On the subject of research, Hazel admitted to having little hands-on experience. As a result, she did not offer much in response to my questions. However, she was clear in her belief that teaching and research are correlated, with research positively affecting teaching: "Yeah, I definitely think teaching and research are integrated. Because you know more about the background [to the material]. I think research [positively] affects teaching, definitely" (Interview 8, Line 37).

When I asked Hazel to recall instances of faculty mentioning their research in the classroom, she was not able to provide any specific examples, but did offer the opinion that it tends to be more common in the United Kingdom. "I think faculty do mention it [their research], but I don't remember any particular research. Back in England, yeah, but here no" (Interview 8, Line 42).

*Ivan*

Ivan was very different from the other students interviewed. I was told by some of his peers that it would be hard to arrange an interview due to the fact that he rarely responds to e-mail, and after 20 minutes of waiting at the agreed location, I was beginning to wonder if he would show up. However, when he did, he apologized for the delay (caused, he said, by transportation issues), and looked very happy to go ahead with the interview.

His strong accent was indicative of Eastern Europe, and he revealed that he was originally from Slovakia, commenting nonchalantly that "not many Americans know where that is." He moved to England for the last two years of high school and became a hospitality major there, spending a semester as an exchange student in the United States.

Ivan came across as being very casual, and was dressed accordingly, but offered forthright views (beginning six answers with "I think…"), particularly with regard to higher education in the United States. Based on the manner in which these opinions were delivered, and how I could sense a kinship with some of my own views (particularly when I was of a similar age), I had to stifle a smile on many occasions during the course of the interview, and we spent some minutes chatting once it concluded. Like Felix he quantified his experience as an exchange student, by giving a score of eight out of ten. He preferred the weather in the United States to that in the United Kingdom (though could not wait to get back to Europe for Christmas), and enjoyed the company of his fellow students, promising to return for vacation if not employment.

I began by asking Ivan to compare the overall standard of the teaching he had received at the two universities. He answered that generally it was very good, but did not

like the way that points were given out cheaply in the United States, in particular for attendance, suggesting perhaps that he sometimes skipped class. He also questioned the qualifications of some of his instructors.

> I think the standard of teaching is very good, but there are some spaces where you can improve it. For example, I think they shouldn't give marks for attendance. They do that here [in the US], but not in the UK – it's up to you if you want to go to lecture, and some of the teachers here need to be more qualified. (Interview 9, Line 3)

One of the main benefits perceived by Ivan regarding his classes in the United States was the smaller number of students. He felt that, as a result, there was an increased opportunity to ask questions.

> I think the classroom atmosphere is better over here [in the US] than in the UK. There are smaller classes, so we can learn better, especially in lectures. I think this is one of the advantages over here. More opportunity to ask questions, and have group discussions. (Interview 9, Line 8)

I then asked about the technology used in the classroom, and Ivan (shrugging his shoulders) said that there was no noticeable difference in philosophy or application between the two countries: "I think it is the same in both countries. They try to keep in with technology, keep up to date, new stuff, have students use computers" (Interview 9, Line 16).

When I asked about the use of technology in the curriculum, Ivan focused on the personal benefit of learning new skills, and how it would be valuable to him as an employee in the future: "Yes, of course, because technology brings something new. You

can improve yourself, and know how to use certain programs. I think it's quite interesting and valuable to have those skills in industry or in the future" (Interview 9, Line 21).

I then questioned Ivan about his experience of online learning, and whether he thought technology could be used excessively, to the detriment of a course. He responded by citing an example from a class he was taking at the time. While positive about that particular project, he also felt that there were times when written assignments were more appropriate.

> I had my first experience of web-based learning here, where we did a project. We had to watch videos and then the teacher gave us a question. It was quite interesting, but I think it has to be 50/50 to make sure it is balanced. It is good to have technology, you can learn new stuff, but sometimes it is better to write rather than typing. (Interview 9, Line 25)

I hypothetically asked Ivan if he would like to take a class that was taught completely online. He responded by specifically mentioning classes his roommates were taking, which were web-based. He seemed amazed that such classes even exist, and questioned whether the grades received were actually indicative of the ability of the students.

> No, no, no. I am quite surprised, because here [in the US] some of my roommates have only online exams, online, online…For me if you are only doing online it's not your actual grade. You can open your book, read stuff, Google it. It is not 100% your grade, more like 50%. (Interview 9, Line 31)

Changing the subject to research, Ivan had recently participated in a group project involving research, and while not going into too much detail, he spoke positively to me about the experience.

> Yeah, we did some research for a group project that was quite interesting. We divided up the parts, as there were six people, and it was easier to get the assignment done when we split the parts. It was interesting. (Interview 9, Line 31)

Ivan was of the opinion that teaching and research are independent activities, and that it is at the discretion of each instructor as to how much the two are integrated: "I think they are separate. It depends. Some of the teachers are doing research and teaching as well, so it's interesting how they mix them together, but I think it's up to the teachers" (Interview 9, Line 38).

This answer was somewhat contradicted by Ivan when I asked him whether he thought research can influence teaching, or vice-versa. He cited a specific example from one of his classes where research was incorporated into the discussion: "I think research affects teaching. For example, last week we had a tourism lecture, and we were talking about ecotourism, and it's useful to have research and then put it into practice, or present it in the college" (Interview 9, Line 43).

I then asked whether faculty ever mentioned their own research in the classroom. Ivan responded by saying it is more prevalent in the United Kingdom: "Yeah, some of the lecturers in the UK, they actually wrote a book, did the research, and were presenting it. In the US I don't know. I think some of them do research" (Interview 9, Line 47).

Ivan was emphatic in rebuffing any notion that faculty cared more about their research than their teaching, stating that he had "never" got that impression. He did

however believe research to be an important factor in enhancing the reputation of a university.

> I think research can enhance the reputation of a university because then all the other universities can see that this teacher or this lecturer did this and this and this, so you can see that they are working not only on teaching but also doing research for the university, and that means something. They want to be more successful and get a better knowledge of the subject. (Interview 9, Line 53)

### *Jessica*

Jessica was a remarkable student to interview. She is an American biochemistry major, hoping to go to veterinary school upon graduating, but gave answers that were so fluent and detailed that it was akin to speaking with an experienced politician. In terms of time it was one of the shorter interviews, lasting slightly less than ten minutes, but the rapid back and forth nature of it meant that I asked several unscripted questions, and between us we exchanged over 1700 words, making transcription challenging. She admitted that she "absolutely loved" her time as an exchange student in the United Kingdom, and would like to work at a veterinary hospital there in the future.

I began by asking Jessica about the general standard of the teaching she had received, asking her to make comparisons between the two countries. She spoke about how demanding the instructors were in both countries, and contrasted the British approach and its heavy reliance on independent study, with the American style of continuous assessment, whereby assignments are due and tests are given on a more regular basis.

> I think both standards of teaching were very high. They expect a lot from the students. In the UK things were a little higher as far as independent study. You were expected to keep on track with your reading, and be prepared for class in a way that was a little different. Here in the US, in a lot of classes in the sciences, you have individual assignments that you are expected to complete every couple of weeks and a very small amount of reading, whereas in the UK we would have one or two assignments throughout the entire semester, and it was much more independently based. You are more expected to be on your own in keeping up with work, and you are not checked up upon. The final counted for 80% or 90% of the grade, which is a big difference from the classes here. (Interview 10, Line 3)

Jessica noted that many of the classrooms were larger in the United Kingdom, with more students as a result. Consequently, the ability to ask questions appeared to be reduced when compared with lectures in the United States. However, Jessica then added that in the one course she took in a small class setting, the nature of the lectures were more discussion based, and therefore akin to what she was used to.

> I was in two classes that took place in large lecture halls, and so there were about 200 students, so the atmosphere was very different and you couldn't really ask specific questions during the lectures. You were expected to go to office hours if you had individual questions, but there was one class that only had about 25 students and that was much more discussion based, and you were about to present questions to the instructors. Here [in the US] all the classes are that discussion

style, because I've never been in a class with more than 30. (Interview 10, Line 13)

Since Jessica was able to compare classes with an equal number of students in terms of their ability to ask questions, I asked her to expand upon her answer. Her response was interesting because she preempted the questions that would follow regarding the comparative emphasis on research.

I would say the ability to ask questions was about the same. [Pause] I think there *were* more questions in the UK actually, because they were very specific to research topics, it was kind of a research-based class. Here [in the US] the smaller classes are very lecture based, so we are lectured to, and the questions are more sporadic, it's less of a discussion type atmosphere. (Interview 10, Line 22)

My next question, on the demeanor of faculty in the two countries, was again meant to generate a more complete overall impression, rather than to address the research questions directly, but again Jessica mentioned how research affected the general behavior.

I found that the faculty members in the US are a little more approachable. I think that a lot of the faculty members in the UK were very involved with their research and their Ph.D. students, so actually approaching them, you didn't have the same relationship. But it's also hard as a study abroad to tell whether other students have that relationship, because here [in the US] I've had the same professors for multiple classes, so I've had more time to actually interact with them. (Interview 10, Line 27)

Jessica and I then began to discuss the comparative role that technology plays in the classes she has taken in the two countries. It was clear that she believed technology is used to a greater extent in the United States, with online programs being used more widely for homework assignments and general study.

> I would say technology use would actually be a little less in the UK. Here [in the US] they are very dependent on online computer programs for study methods, and lectures through the computers, and using clickers to answer questions. In the UK it was all just PowerPoint in lectures, so that was pretty much all they used as far as computer technology. For general biology and chemistry here we have online programs where you could do homework, and do practice problems, and study things. (Interview 10, Line 33)

When I asked whether she likes technology to be used, Jessica said that it depends on the class, but that in the United Kingdom (where, in her opinion, it was not so prevalent) a greater emphasis is placed on her independent study skills, alluding to the fact that she enjoyed facing that challenge as well.

> I think [whether I like technology to be used] depends on the class. I think that it helps a lot to have those programs to do individual homework problems, but [in the UK] we didn't have those individual homework assignments at all. However, if you're being independent you could still find similar things to keep up with the classes. (Interview 10, Line 40)

I then asked questions about Jessica's experience of online learning. She responded by saying that she had never taken a class that was completely online, and was unequivocal in stating her opposition to the thought of taking such a class.

> I have never had an entirely web-based class, so I've never taken anything like that. If it's online homework it's something you can still go to the professors for. It's never completely web-based. I know that at some of the large state schools there are entire courses that are online, and I would hate that! I think that would be very negative to my education. (Interview 10, Line 45)

Jessica and I then began discussing the role of research in undergraduate education, and she stated that she planned to do a research project during her senior year. I asked Jessica whether she viewed teaching and research to be independent or integrated, and she said that, in her view, it was the latter, stating that an integrated approach was more apparent in her instruction in the United States.

> I think that they are pretty integrated. In the UK a lot of the science classes didn't have lab components, not even necessarily independent research projects, but just laboratories in general, whereas here we have a lab component every week, and I think that's really important for a science student to have those research-based classes because it helps you for graduate school and building independent skills. (Interview 10, Line 58)

I followed up this response by asking whether Jessica viewed teaching as something that affects research or research as something that affects teaching. She gave a very interesting example of how research can negatively affect teaching if a faculty member allows their own research interests to dominate the curriculum in lieu of a broader approach.

> I think that a lot of the time a faculty member's interest translates to the class they are teaching, and it can be a little bit detrimental. For example, in the UK, in

> animal physiology they had a neurology specialist and a reproductive research specialist giving the lectures, so the class was very focused on those two subjects. I think it hurt the course a little bit because you didn't learn the spectrum of everything that should be taught in that course. It was focused on what their interests were and not on teaching the entire subject. (Interview 10, Line 64)

While my next question, regarding whether faculty mention their own research in the classroom, had partly been answered by her previous response, Jessica was still able to provide a succinct clarification as to the different approaches she had witnessed in the two countries.

> It was done very much more so in the UK. Here [in the US] they don't really mention their research at all. If it's an example they are giving for a particular topic you're on, the professors here will mention their research, but over there [in the UK] it was very, very focused on their research, they would bring it up a lot, and incorporate it into their entire course. (Interview 10, Line 71)

As a result of this response, I asked Jessica an unscripted question about why she thought the faculty who had taught her in the United States seemed less inclined to talk about their own research. Jessica offered the opinion that a more standardized curriculum caused faculty in the United States to stay on topic rather than tilting the emphasis towards their own interests.

> I'm not sure. I think that teaching and research are a little more separated here [in the US]. I think it has a lot to do with what the school expects them to cover as far as the course goes. They have to stay focused on a set number of topics. A lot of the courses here you end up with a standardized exam that students at colleges

> across the US will take, so they have to cover all these different points, so they will mention their research but I think they try to stay away from getting it incorporated into the entire semester. (Interview 10, Line 76)

When I asked whether she had ever perceived that faculty members care more about their research than their teaching, Jessica said that with one exception (in the United Kingdom) she never had that feeling, and that in general she believed faculty research enhances a university's reputation, and leads to better recruitment and funding.

> I think research definitely does enhance a university's reputation. It positively impacts the school as far as attracting people that may be interested in that subject area. In terms of getting grants and things like that, it really looks good for the school. (Interview 10, Line 87)

### *Kyle*

Kyle is a music major from the United Kingdom, and was an absolute joy for me to talk to. He spoke with the carefree insouciance of someone really embracing his experience as an exchange student, citing how the campus in the United States has a vibrant buzz, and remarking on all the different student led activities. Even when alluding to things that he does not agree with, such as the American attitude towards gun rights, he clearly enjoys the novelty of debating such matters with his roommates, and says that his overall experience "couldn't be better".

The answers he gave to my questions related to teaching, technology, and research were nuanced and balanced, with time taken to carefully construct an answer if one did not immediately come to him. Once the voice recorder was turned off, we spent

at least 15 minutes discussing various aspects of American culture, in particular the cost and importance of textbooks to students, and the commercial and political aspects of the media.

When I asked to relate his opinion as to the standard of teaching in the two countries, Kyle paused before giving an answer which clearly contrasted the two, noting positively the individual attention he gets in some of his classes in the United States, but expressing surprise at how the rigidity with respect to attendance and regular testing resembles a British high school.

> I'd say, with music, it's certainly an interesting one. Two of my classes out of four here [in the US] are one on one, which is something I'm not familiar with. In the UK it's much more classroom based. As for the standard of teaching, the biggest shock, I thought, is that it seemed almost more of a high school atmosphere here compared to back home. Everything is slightly less informal on the academic side certainly, but on the punctuality side, it is stricter, you know, registers and weekly homework. That was certainly a big shock having not done that for three years. (Interview 11, Line 3)

I then asked Kyle to comment on the classroom atmosphere, and the ability to ask questions. He did not perceive much of a difference, beginning at one point in his response to suggest that there is more classroom discussion in the United States, but then changing his mind, and implicitly indicating that any difference is due to the fact that two of his classes in the United States are one on one, which naturally leads to a greater level of discussion.

> The classroom atmosphere is very similar. Encouraged debate, engaging in sharing ideas and answers, discussions, things like that. The biggest difference, even in the one on one classes, is the weekly homework expectation. The ability to ask questions is unchanged. It's more of a discussion here, but…no, I think they are similar in that sense. With the one on one classes, I'm really lucky with the teachers here. I think discussion is always really helpful, especially if I'm taking conducting and composing, two things you really need to talk about and get some different opinions. (Interview 11, Line 14)

When I asked about the comparative demeanor of the faculty, Kyle again alluded to his surprise at the formal nature of classes in the United States, and how it reminded him of being in high school, noting that in the United Kingdom it is not uncommon for faculty and students to socialize.

> The lecturers are much more informal in the UK. For example, when I first came over, I got [chastised] for referring to people by their first name. Nobody told me that they don't really do that here. So that was a shock. And in the ensembles, it does come across as much more high school-y, that's the only way I can describe it, whereas in the UK at the end of the week you could just go for a pint. (Interview 11, Line 23)

Unfortunately, the long fluent answers dried up somewhat when we started discussing the role of classroom technology, primarily it seems due to the nature of his discipline, music, which is less inclined (or able) to incorporate it.

> The use of classroom technology is identical. For projectors and presenting, laptops, listening to music, playing music through speakers. In the UK we're very

> fortunate. The music department has a lab set up with 50 Mac computers, with all the latest stuff on, which is completely open. As far as I'm aware they don't have something similar here. (Interview 11, Line 32)

Kyle added that he likes technology to be used in the classroom, but did not have any experience of web-based learning. He mentioned how some of his roommates were taking online classes, but perceived that they were at a much lower level, and hence did not affect him: "Web-based learning? No, not at all. I know people on exchange that do that here. I had to do all those courses before I arrived" (Interview 11, Line 41).

My next question asked whether technology could be used so much in a course that it became detrimental. After a lengthy pause, Kyle responded by saying that he could not envision such a scenario, but his response indicates that he is unaware of classes that are taught completely online, as he cites his own experience where, even in the most technology driven courses, he still was able to discuss the material in the classroom: "I don't think technology can be used too much, because in the classes where it is quite technology driven there's an equally important emphasis put on debate and in-class discussion" (Interview 11, Line 44).

Kyle and I then began discussing the role of research in the undergraduate curriculum, which was a topic he was more comfortable discussing given his past experience, in particular in the United Kingdom. As a result Kyle's responses become long and fluent again, with a good deal of humor mixed in as he recounted his startled reaction to the laissez faire approach taken by faculty in the United States towards his written assignments.

> Dissertations and things like that? Yes. That was definitely one of my highlights in the UK. It was worth three modules, so a fair chunk of my overall degree, and I found it really, really interesting, whereas I haven't had anywhere near the same kind of emphasis on research here at all. It's to the point where I haven't seen any sort of consistency in citation systems, or if there is, the lecturers aren't concerned about it at all, which was a real shock. When they ask for an assignment, I'm like "How many words to you want, where do I hand it in, which citation system would you like?" In the UK there was always a strict word count, hand in date, time, a front page. Here it's like "Whenever you want, however long you want, whatever citation system you like." (Interview 11, Line 47)

Kyle was very clear in his belief that teaching and research are integrated, giving me a concise description of their symbiotic nature. He then went on to speak of his own experience, where research had been assimilated into the coursework by his instructors.

> Isn't it kind of like a cycle? Teaching helps stimulate the research, and then the research will feed back in to the teaching. I think that kind of leads on to the one on one thing, which I'm quite fortunate to have. Even in the UK I had a lot of individual emphasis, which is really good. And of course research in conducting and composing is really important, not so much formal academic research, but historical background and learning what's around and what's happening. (Interview 11, Line 57)

I then ask Kyle whether any of his instructors had ever mentioned their own research in the classroom. He gave a lengthy response, with the first half devoted to how

music students in the United Kingdom are expected to put their work in an academic context, an approach that leads to both pros and cons.

> I think they do more in the UK. In the UK it was more academically driven in that sense. For example, things like composition, we were told to have a real academic context to what we're doing, with the justification that you were at a university, you need to make it academic. The problem with that in music is that you end up justifying things academically and then the final product isn't exactly what you want. (Interview 11, Line 65)

Kyle went on to discuss how his instructors in the United States did not expect the same level of academic rigor when completing assignments. He spoke of the mutual amazement, both on his part and on the part of his American instructors when he assumed the requirements would be similar to those in the United Kingdom . This led to a period of laughter before I was able to ask any more questions.

> Here [in the US] it's been the *absolute* polar opposite. It's just like "We're not interested in any books to reference". I said "How many books would you like me reference for this piece of music?" and they looked at me as if to say "Are you crazy?! It's a piece of music!" And I thought, "It is a bit strange isn't it?" [Laughing] So that's been quite liberating actually. Sorry UK, but it's true. (Interview 11, Line 70)

Kyle quickly dismissed any notion that faculty care more about their research than their teaching, clearly believing that it did not require any further comment. He then stated a belief that faculty research benefits a university's reputation, citing individuals from the two music departments he has been a part of.

> Does faculty research enhance the reputation of a university? Yes, I think so, definitely. There are a few quite big musicologists in the UK that I've had lectures with. They've been absolutely great, and they're renowned for their books. And equally here [in the US], I'm studying composing, and my instructor is pretty well known now. It's interesting to hear his story. (Interview 11, Line 79)

### *Lee*

I enjoyed talking with Lee very much. Given that he was the last scheduled person to be interviewed, I kept in regular contact with him for a few weeks before we met, as I did not want a delay in the completion of the data collection. As a result there was almost a sense that we had met in advance, not least because we both attended the University of Leicester prior to coming to Florida, albeit almost 20 years apart.

While not particularly eloquent, Lee answered my questions with great pleasure, and was keen to provide comparisons between the two universities he had studied at. His enthusiasm was evident in all of the responses, and he left me in no doubt as to how much he was enjoying his time studying as a chemistry major exchange student, openly stating that it had been the best year of his life. Once again, a lengthy conversation took place between the participant and I after the conclusion of the recorded interview, during which we discussed social attitudes in America, and how they relate to the university experience.

The interview began with me asking Lee to compare the overall standard of teaching in the two countries. He believed that the standard was high in both, but that the less reserved nature of American faculty better complimented his own personality.

> Personally, I feel the teaching is actually better in the US. The British professors, they are good, but I find them sometimes to be a bit stale. I think maybe the personality of Americans is a bit more out-going, there's more interactions in lessons. I actually prefer the teaching over here. I'm not putting down the British teaching, because that's amazing as well, but I'm more suited to the teaching here in the US. (Interview 12, Line 3)

Lee went on to compare the level of classroom interaction between students and faculty, and how the increased levels in the United States do not really suit his passive approach. He senses that this is a cultural difference between students in the two countries.

> People don't ask questions in the UK. Over here [in the US] they want you to interact, and I'm not used to interacting, which has been quite bad, because there's participation marks, and I don't want to say something, even though I might know it, but there are always Americans who are willing to shout out. But I think that's just the culture difference, British people are more reserved. (Interview 12, Line 9)

As a follow-up question, I asked Lee whether the increased classroom interaction in the United States occurs as a result of faculty being more approachable, and more willing to entertain questions, or whether it is due to the difference attitudes of students towards what represents normal classroom behavior. He responded by emphatically stating that it is the students rather than the faculty who differ between the two countries, adding that in his opinion faculty in the United Kingdom are more flexible in giving their time to help students.

> It's the students who are different. I think the UK teachers are great in terms of helping you out. I think you can go to them at any time in the UK and they'll give you help, but here [in the US] you've only got designated office hours. And even then I don't think they're as willing to help as the people back home. (Interview 12, Line 19)

I then steered the conversation towards the subject of classroom technology. Lee mentioned how, in the classroom, there is little difference, with PowerPoint slides being the extent of the classroom technology in both countries. However, he gave a long response discussing the laboratory equipment on the two campuses where he had been a student, indicating that in the United States, he worked with equipment that was far less modern than at his home campus in the United Kingdom. Far from being critical though, he stated that he enjoyed using the older equipment, and derived considerable amusement from the fact that it often did not work.

> When we're talking about technology I can only really compare labs, because in the classroom it's pretty much the same – they just use the PowerPoint slides. The chemistry labs at home though are far better equipped than they are here. Here there are machines running from the 1970s. Every time we're in a lab we don't know if the machine's going to work. I quite like it. We're in these old buildings and we were using floppy disks the other day to retrieve data, which I quite enjoy, because I personally don't like technology that much, so it's quite good to see how things used to be done. In the UK everything's all modern, all the equipment. Here, even the professor says, "This might not work," and most of the time it doesn't work, so they just send us the data anyway. (Interview 12, Line 28)

His answer to the previous question indicated that Lee is not a big proponent of classroom technology, but I specifically asked him to elaborate. He confirmed that he prefers traditional methods, such as completing handwritten assignments and turning them in to the instructor in person.

> No, I'm more old school. I'm just not a technology person myself, so I like things nice and simple, on paper. I hate it when you have to submit something online. It's a lot easier handwritten, hand it in, but I find it's becoming uniform, across the board, everything's going more with technology. (Interview 12, Line 39)

Lee added that he has had little exposure to online coursework, and I fully expected him to be critical of the notion of fully online courses. However, due to his preferred style of learning and his reluctance to get up early in the morning, he said that he would welcome the opportunity to take a proportion of his courses online, quickly adding though that if the balance were tipped too far towards online courses then students would start to lose out on the university experience.

> I know business majors who don't have to go to class because they're all online. Personally, I prefer that because I don't like waking up early in the mornings. I can't concentrate that well in early lectures. And I'm quite an independent learner, so if I had an online class I could watch it by myself in the afternoon and evening, and understand far more than I would in the morning. So personally, I'm all for online lectures, but then it takes away the experience of attending lectures, and what's the point of the university then? You might as well stay at home, watch the lectures, and save a lot more money, like the Open University in England. Maybe

> if I did one or two classes online, and the rest in lectures. I think a mix would suit most people. (Interview 12, Line 48)

Lee and I then began discussing research, and he stated that while not having had the opportunity to do any research projects in the United States, he would have the opportunity when he returned to the United Kingdom: "I'm not currently, but if I was back home [in the UK] I would be doing some research. Next year, in my final year, I will be doing research, but I haven't had the opportunity in the US" (Interview 12, Line 60).

This response prompted me to ask Lee whether he believed there is a greater emphasis on undergraduate research in the United Kingdom. He gave a very interesting answer given his limited time in the United States, stating that in his mind universities in the United Kingdom place a greater emphasis on the undergraduate degree, whereas for those studying chemistry in the United States an undergraduate degree is viewed as training for graduate school.

> Yes, because in America it seems all about the postgraduate degree. As an undergraduate, you learn your stuff, but when you go to graduate school, that's where you become a chemist in America. England has more of an emphasis on the undergraduate degree. (Interview 12, Line 64)

I then asked Lee if he viewed teaching and research as being integrated or independent. Lee gave an extremely long and detailed response, stating that while the two disciplines are integrated, research is often detrimental to teaching because faculty are so focused on the former that they don't give sufficient attention to the latter, and that the best teachers are those who concentrate solely on teaching.

> Research and teaching are integrated because faculty do research as well as teaching, but I do think research is bad for the teaching. I always used to ask the professors in the UK what kind of research they were doing, as I was quite interested, but I remember them telling me that they only teach because they have to. They're going to the lectures thinking about their research, so that does affect the teaching in a negative way. I find the teachers that solely concentrate on teaching, they're fantastic, they're the best you'll find. They're snowed under with students asking them questions, and they don't have time to do research, it's not part of their schedule. The people who are doing research, that's all they want to be doing. That's what they came into chemistry for, they didn't want to teach. I mean, they might want to teach on the side, but it's all about publishing their papers and achieving something that way. (Interview 12, Line 71)

I went on to ask Lee (given that he believed some faculty to be consumed with their research) whether the faculty members he has had ever mentioned their own research in the classroom. He said that it was more prevalent in the United Kingdom, and added somewhat paradoxically that he would be interested to hear more about faculty research: "I haven't heard faculty mention their own research here [in the US], but sometimes in the UK. I think they should integrate it more, and show what you're actually studying chemistry for" (Interview 12, Line 82).

My final question involving research asked Lee to discuss whether faculty research enhances the reputation of a university. He responded by saying that it does, and that as a result, it is positive for students also, as a degree from a university with a good reputation can enhance job prospects for graduates. He acknowledges though that there is

somewhat of a contradiction to his answers, which I believe can be reconciled by the fact that while he acknowledges the importance of research, Lee also wants faculty to fully concentrate on their teaching when they are in the classroom to ensure that students do not suffer.

> Everything's now based on research, so it's a good thing for the lecturers to concentrate on research in a way. Even though it's probably a negative for the teaching, it enhances the university's reputation, which has a knock-on effect, because if the university's better then you'll get a better job. It's all mixed up really, but research is vital because of technology advancement. (Interview 12, Line 86)

## Summary

This chapter presents the information that was collected as a result of recorded interviews with 12 current and former exchange students from the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as an introductory profile of each participant. The details of each interview include exact quotes from the participants, along with my own narration, which attempts to put the words into a broader context. The narrative was written after repeatedly listening to the audio data, multiple readings of the transcriptions, and paying particular attention to phrasing and voice intonation. Chapter 5 will consider the recurring themes that emerged from the interviews.

# CHAPTER 5
# RESEARCH FINDINGS

## Introduction

In this chapter I will consider the results outlined in Chapter 4, and discuss the four primary themes that emerged after conducting a qualitative analysis. While Chapter 4 considered each participant individually, this chapter will divide the data into common themes, which allows for contrasts between the narratives to be better discussed. This will allow me to discuss how the primary themes relate to the two research questions.

## Generating the Themes

Ryan and Bernard (2003) list 12 different techniques for identifying themes, ranging from a thorough reading of the transcripts in order to spot word repetition to complicated detection techniques developed by linguistic anthropologists. However, given the nature of this study, with its reliance on short answers to recorded interview questions, the advice of the authors is to only consider three basic techniques.

The first recommended technique is a simple search for word repetition, which was done using the NVivo software package. The second technique is to search for similarities and differences by pairing responses from different participants, and the third is a cutting and sorting of all the responses to a given question into piles with similar quotes. I accomplished this using Microsoft Word, after transcribing the interviews and carefully reading through them.

As a result of these techniques, I created a matrix of content themes (see Table 6), which demonstrates how several issues were alluded to by at least half of the participants. While some of the issues were referred to in the interview protocol (see Appendix B), the table only includes the occasions when participants provided a comparative response which implicitly or explicitly discussed the issue by considering both countries.

Table 6

*Matrix of Content Themes*

| Issues | Allison | Beth | Colin | Diana | Eric | Felix | Grace | Hazel | Ivan | Jessica | Kyle | Lee |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ability to ask questions | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |
| Academic standards | | x | x | x | x | | | x | | | x | |
| Class size | | x | x | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Classroom technology | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x |
| Enjoyable experience | x | x | | x | | | x | x | x | x | x | x |
| Faculty prioritizing research | | | x | x | x | | | | | x | | x |
| Faculty not prioritizing research | x | x | | | | x | x | x | x | | x | |
| Faculty discussing their own research in class | | | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | |
| Method of assessment | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | x | x | x | |
| Quality of teaching | x | | x | | | x | | | x | x | | x |
| Relationship with faculty | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | x | |
| Research affects teaching | x | x | x | | | | | x | x | x | x | x |
| Research enhances university reputation | x | | x | | | x | x | | x | x | x | x |
| Use of PowerPoint slides | x | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x | | x |
| Web-based teaching | | | | | x | x | x | x | x | x | | x |

It should be noted that, occasionally, an issue was noted by participants in a way that did not warrant inclusion in the table. This is either due to it being discussed only briefly, in a way which indicated that the issue was not considered overly important, or if the issue was only raised due to the way that a question was asked. For example, when I asked Hazel whether she believed faculty research enhances the reputation of a university, she answered with an apathetic "I think so" (Interview 8, Line 47), which did not lead to me include it in the matrix. By contrast, Ivan and Jessica gave lengthy justifications to corroborate their opinion.

After carefully considering the issues included in Table 6, I continued to follow the guidelines given by Moustakas (1994) in bracketing the initial themes to show how they form clusters, which allows names to be given to the four primary themes. This is shown in Table 7. While there is obviously considerable subjectivity involved with the way I have chosen to bracket the 15 initial themes, there was little doubt on my part as to where to place each one once the four primary themes emerged. Five themes in Table 6 clearly allude to classroom teaching and the relationship between faculty and students (without mentioning research), five themes directly address faculty research, four themes incorporate the subject of classroom technology, and there is one remaining theme which indicates how enjoyable the experience of being an international exchange student was to the participants in this study. Although again very subjective, I believe that the four primary themes that emerged encapsulate the overall impression I formed of the participants' perceptions, to the point where it is equally difficult for me to either choose a fifth theme, or reduce the choice of four down to three.

Table 7

*Bracketing of Content Themes*

| Content Themes | Primary Theme |
|---|---|
| Ability to ask questions<br>Academic standards<br>Class size<br>Quality of teaching<br>Relationship with faculty | Carry on Teaching |
| Faculty prioritizing research<br>Faculty not prioritizing research<br>Faculty discussing their own research in class<br>Research affects teaching<br>Research enhances university reputation | Research is Good…Just Don't Forget About Teaching |
| Classroom technology<br>Method of assessment<br>Use of PowerPoint slides<br>Web-based teaching | Faculty Using Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not |
| Enjoyable experience | Spread Your Wings and Fly |

The four primary themes are thus:

1. Carry on Teaching
2. Research is Good…Just Don't Forget About Teaching
3. Faculty Using Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not
4. Spread Your Wings and Fly

It is clear that there is no formality in the title of these themes; instead they are phrased in a way that clearly articulates the sentiments of the participants, and are hence not open to misinterpretation. It could be claimed that Themes 1-3 are themselves linked, and that a further consolidation could occur, given that they all relate to undergraduate teaching. While this is partly true, it is shown in Table 8 that Themes 2 and 3 relate to different research questions (while Theme 1 relates to both), and hence I feel that any

further coalescing of the topics will distort the clear and distinct opinions that were expressed by the participants, and detract from the overall goal of this dissertation.

Table 8 demonstrates the relationship between the two research questions and the themes that emerged from the interview data. The first research question, regarding the perception of classroom technology, was addressed by Themes 1 and 3, *Carry on Teaching* and *Faculty Using Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not*. The second research question, regarding how exchange students perceive the relationship between teaching and research, was addressed by Themes 1 and 2, *Carry on Teaching* and *Research is Good…Just Don't Forget About Teaching*. Finally, it should be noted note that while Theme 4, *Spread Your Wings and Fly*, does not directly address either of the two research questions, it was such a strong feature of the data collected that I felt it could not be omitted. Furthermore, the way in which Theme 4 implicitly affects how the research questions are answered will be considered in Chapter 6.

Table 8

*Relationship of Research Questions to Primary Themes*

| Research Questions | Primary Themes |
|---|---|
| 1. Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that the role of classroom technology differs between countries? | 1. Carry on Teaching<br>3. Faculty Using Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not |
| 2. Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that undergraduate teaching and faculty research are integrated or independent? | 1. Carry on Teaching<br>2. Research is Good…Just Don't Forget About Teaching |

## Discussion of Themes

The sections that follow provide a detailed discussion of the four primary themes that emerged after carefully analyzing the data collected from the recorded interviews. Exact quotes will be used to illustrate and contrast the responses of the participants, while the narrative will attempt to tie the responses together in a way that I feel best explains each theme.

### *Theme 1: Carry on Teaching*

In Chapter 2, I referred to a significant amount of literature which addressed the perceived decline in faculty attitudes towards teaching, with the expectations of contemporary faculty to publish high-quality research seen as the main culprit that shifts the focus away from teaching. This was largely perceived as being true by those researching the issue in the United States, and was a source of concern at the governmental level in the United Kingdom, with secretaries of education throughout the past 20 years warning universities to pay more attention to teaching, both with regard to undergraduate education, and during the faculty promotion process.

However, a large number of the participants I interviewed for this study commented favorably on the quality of the teaching they have received, and many were openly dismissive of the notion that faculty care more about their research than their teaching. Allison commented that “My teachers were excellent, both here and in the UK” (Interview 1, Line 3), adding later in the interview that “I never heard the faculty bring up their research, they never missed any lectures, they were always on time” (Interview 1, Line 81). Beth spoke of how “I really felt like the faculty cared about the students”

(Interview 2, Line 76), and Colin mentioned the enthusiasm that faculty have for the material that they teach: “The faculty are very interested in teaching you what they want to teach you - in both places” (Interview 3, Line 27).

While many noted that the number of questions asked in the United Kingdom was far lower when compared with the United States, this was perceived as a cultural difference rather than a result of faculty in the United Kingdom being unwilling to seek input from students. Eric commented somewhat sarcastically that “It seems like it’s taboo to ask questions [in the UK], which I think is weird” (Interview 5, Line 21). Lee also noted that “Americans are more willing to ask questions. There will always be someone willing to ask questions back home [in the UK], but it’s quite rare. There are a lot of questions asked here” (Interview 12, Line 15).

I asked some participants to specifically clarify whether the difference in the number of questions was due to students in the United States wanting to ask more questions, or faculty being more willing to answer them. Lee stated clearly that the students are the reason for the difference. “It’s the students who are different. I think the UK teachers are great in terms of helping you out” (Interview 12, Line 19). This view was endorsed by Beth, who spoke of how instructors in the United Kingdom encouraged questions despite reticence from the students: “The lecturers [in the UK] always wanted to answer questions. The lecturers would always stop and make sure they answered any questions, and make sure we had nothing (more) to ask. They encouraged questions” (Interview 2, Line 15). In fact, one participant found that under certain circumstances the number of questions asked by students in the United Kingdom was higher.

> I think there were more questions [in the UK] actually, because they were very specific to research topics, it was kind of a research-based class. Here [in the US] the smaller classes are very lecture based, so we are lectured to, and the questions are more sporadic, it's less of a discussion type atmosphere. (Interview 10, Line 22)

The availability of faculty outside the classroom was commented on by several participants, with most speaking in positive terms. Colin commented that in the United Kingdom faculty would often be available whenever students decided to seek their help.

> Here [in the UK] and at my home university teachers are very open to taking time out of their schedule just to help you out. On numerous occasions here I've just randomly showed up at a chemistry lecturer's office and they've just helped me for half an hour or an hour, so there's not an issue there. (Interview 3, Line 12)

Grace also spoke about the approachability of faculty members: "Faculty members were all very welcoming and very helpful when we had questions. They were good at responding to e-mails and going out of their way to help us" (Interview 7, Line 24). Eric echoed this opinion by commenting that "I'm not usually someone who goes and gets help too much, but when I asked for it, I got it" (Interview 5, Line 9).

The enthusiasm shown for the subject material and the knowledge that faculty demonstrated featured repeatedly in the comments that participants made. Colin noted that "They are very interested in teaching you what they want to teach you – in both places" (Interview 3, Line 27). This theme was reinforced by Felix, who commented that "I think the teachers here [in the US] and over there [in the UK] knew what they were talking about, and they were very good at explaining everything" (Interview 6, Line 3).

A final issue that I found was frequently mentioned by participants with regard to their favorable opinion of the teaching they had received was how friendly faculty seemed in both countries. Diana spoke of how easy it was to speak with faculty in the United States.

> A lot of them [in the US] were just really easy to chat to. A lot of them had been over to England, so there was a commonality to begin with. And I did e-mail them before to let them know that I'm an international student, from England, and they were fine with that, really chatty. (Interview 4, Line 20)

The approachability of faculty in the United States was also commented on by Felix, who said "They were all nice, open, friendly. Any questions you had, they would answer. They were humorous at times. They were nice people" (Interview 6, Line 14).

The informally of faculty in the United Kingdom came as a surprise to exchange students from the United States, but was welcomed by all who mentioned it. Beth alluded to the fact that "It's a lot more casual over there [in the UK], so I think it is easier to approach the faculty" (Interview 2, Line 19). Kyle seconded this assertion, and with considerable humor in his voice, told me of how he struggled to adapt back to a more formal style of teaching in the United States.

> They're much more informal in the UK. For example, when I first came over, I got [chastised] for referring to people by their first name. Nobody told me that they don't really do that here. So that was a shock. And in the ensembles, it does come across as much more high school-y, that's the only way I can describe it, whereas in the UK at the end of the week you could just go for a pint. (Interview 11, Line 5)

*Theme 2: Research is Good…Just Don't Forget About Teaching*

Prior to speaking with the participants, I had some concern that undergraduate students would not be sufficiently knowledgeable about faculty research to offer any worthwhile opinions. However, my hope was that given the general caliber of exchange students, and the tendency of students in the United Kingdom to participate in undergraduate research projects during their final year of study, sufficient worthwhile data would be collected to address the second of the two research questions, namely "Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that undergraduate teaching and faculty research are integrated or independent?" As it turned out, there was no reason to be concerned, as each of the 12 participants were comfortable discussing research, providing me with substantial and insightful feedback, with no noticeable difference in the depth of understanding between students from the two countries.

Participants were very positive about the research projects they had already participated in, or the prospect of doing research in the future, with Beth disappointed that she had not been given such an opportunity as an undergraduate: "I wish I'd had more of an opportunity to do research, as I want to go to graduate school, and so it would probably be helpful" (Interview 2, Line 73). Eric had done research projects in both countries, and was able to compare the two, saying "Yeah, I've done research here [in the UK] and in America. Over here it was much more hands-on than in America. Well, it wasn't hands-on, but it was a different kind of experiment. It was beneficial" (Interview 5, Line 84). Felix also had participated in research projects in both countries, stating "In my ODE (Ordinary Differential Equations) class here, the professor told us how he used

to work on rogue waves, using, I forget the equation. Over in the UK, one of my professors told us how he used to model the normal modes for airplane wings" (Interview 6, Line 33). Ivan spoke of how he engaged in a research project during his time in the United States, saying "We did some research for a group project that was quite interesting. We divided up the parts, as there were six people, and it was easier to get the assignment done when we split the parts. It was interesting" (Interview 9, Line 35).

Given that many of the participants had experience of undergraduate research, it was not surprising that they valued its importance, and believed that it helped enhance the reputation of a university. Some provided very short responses in this regard, likely because they believed the value of research to be so clear that it did not warrant any further explanation, but others went into more detail. Grace explained the specific benefits to students that she believed research brought.

> [Research] keeps the students really engaged with what is going on. New trends in the industries, new advancements. By relaying that kind of information to your students, and keeping them focused on it, it keeps them ahead of other students and ahead of the competition. A lot of my professors [in the UK], they would go off on projects all the time and come back and tell us all their information that they'd discovered. They were always away in a different country, but they would always come back for lessons and relay their information, which was really good because we'd be getting inside knowledge right away. (Interview 7, Line 69)

Ivan and Jessica both spoke with me about the positive impact that research can bring to a university and its reputation. Ivan commented about how it reflected well on the ambition of faculty members.

> I think research can enhance the reputation of a university because then all the other universities can see that this teacher or this lecturer did this and this and this, so you can see that they are working not only on teaching but also doing research for the university, and that means something. They want to be more successful and get a better knowledge of the subject. (Interview 9, Line 53)

Jessica alluded to the ripple effect that research brings to a university, stating that "[Research] positively impacts the school as far as attracting people that may be interested in that subject area. In terms of getting grants and things like that, it really looks good for the school" (Interview 10, Line 87).

Lee was slightly more guarded in his enthusiasm for research, alluding to the possibility that faculty can dwell on it to the detriment of their teaching, but he was in no doubt regarding its importance.

> Everything's now based on research, so it's a good thing for the lecturers to concentrate on research in a way, even though it's probably a negative for the teaching, but it enhances the university's reputation, which has a knock-on effect, because if the university's better then you'll get a better job. It's all mixed up really, but research is vital because of technology advancement. (Interview 12, Line 86)

Lee's comment regarding how research can affect teaching was one of the many statements I was given regarding whether faculty care more about, or prioritize, their research at the expense of their teaching. On this point opinion was very much divided, with almost an even split between those who did believe that faculty favor their research ahead of their teaching, and those who did not. However, it was very noticeable that those

believing faculty research did not adversely teaching were curtly dismissive of the notion, and hence did not feel the need to elaborate further. When asked “Do you ever sense that faculty members care more about their research than their teaching?” Hazel and Kyle both responded “No. No” (Interview 8, Line 44, and Interview 11, Line 76), while Ivan was similarly briefly in stating “No, no, no. Never” (Interview 9, Line 50). After a long pause Grace answered “No, I don’t think so. Sorry, that wasn’t very elaborate” (Interview 7, Line 66), while the longest such answer was provided by Felix, who said “No. No I don’t. Both here [in the US] and there [in the UK]. They have office hours and they are pretty generous with those, so I don’t think they value their research over their teaching” (Interview 6, Line 37).

By contrast, those who believed that faculty members prioritize research over teaching went into great detail in order to illustrate their point of view. Diana cited how faculty in the United Kingdom can be granted research leave for a semester, which excuses them from their teaching duties.

> [In the UK] faculty go off on research leave for a semester. One of my lecturers went to LA recently for a week and a half. I don’t know what for. I didn’t really notice that it that much in America, people going on research leave. You know of what they’ve done, but it didn’t seem as big a problem as it does [in the UK]. (Interview 4, Line 70)

Some participants discussed specific faculty who they perceived to be unhappy with the amount of research they were doing, surmising that it was due to the fact that they would prefer to be doing research. Colin made a statement to this effect.

> I've noticed some teachers are a little annoyed by how much they're teaching. Probably because they'd rather be doing their research, or teaching upper-level classes. They'd rather have less of the lecture workload; maybe distribute it among their peers who aren't teaching. (Interview 3, Line 78)

Jessica mentioned that it is difficult to develop the same rapport with faculty who are consumed by graduate students and research: "I think that a lot of the faculty members [in the UK] were very involved with their research and their Ph.D. students, so actually approaching them you didn't have the same relationship" (Interview 10, Line 27).

It is no coincidence that the quotes in the previous two paragraphs refer to perceptions of faculty in the United Kingdom, as a prevailing sentiment that I found among almost all of the participants was that research is more prominent at the undergraduate level in the United Kingdom versus the United States. This sentiment was generally expressed positively, with participants discussing how they relished the opportunity to do research as an undergraduate in the United Kingdom, and how it was often a highlight of their program of study. Grace stated that "Here [in the US] we don't do as much research. Most of my learning [in the UK] was through research and reading articles and writing these really long papers with groups or just on my own, which I liked" (Interview 7, Line 49), while Kyle responded by saying how doing undergraduate research has been one of the best aspects of his degree program.

> Dissertations and things like that? Yes. That was definitely one of my highlights [in the UK]. It was worth three modules, so a fair chunk of my overall degree, and I found it really, really interesting, whereas I haven't had anywhere near the same kind of emphasis on research here [in the US] at all. (Interview 11, Line 47)

I found that even those participants who had not had the opportunity to participate in an undergraduate research project mentioned how faculty in the United Kingdom tended to refer to research more in the classroom (often their own) compared with faculty in the United States. Eric alluded to this distinction.

> Some lecturers do mention their research, some of them don't. Less so in the States. They mention research more here [in the UK]. The material is more research-based. In the US they might give you a broad overview of the topic, here they'll tell you specifically what specific people found. (Interview 5, Line 98)

Grace made a similar comment contrasting how often faculty in the two countries discuss their research in the classroom.

> Oh yes. [In the UK] whenever we would come together for tutorials they would have research updates done and allow us to read it and see what we got from the articles. Here [in the US] we really don't touch on research. (Interview 7, Line 62)

Jessica also mentioned to me how faculty in the United Kingdom will try to incorporate research into the courses they teach.

> [Discussing research] was done very much more so [in the UK]. Here [in the US] they don't really mention their research at all. If it's an example they are giving for a particular topic you're on, the professors here will mention their research, but over there it was very, very focused on their research, they would bring it up a lot, and incorporate it into their entire course. (Interview 10, Line 71)

As a follow-up question, I asked Jessica why she believed this to be the case. She responded by conjecturing that the curriculum is more standardized in the United States.

> I'm not sure. I think that teaching and research are a little more separated [in the US]. I think it has a lot to do with what the school expects them to cover as far as the course goes. [Faculty in the US] have to stay focused on a set number of topics. (Interview 10, Line 76)

I posed the same question to Lee, who posited that while faculty in the United States will wait until students are in graduate school before exposing them to research, in the United Kingdom most students will terminate with a bachelor's degree.

> In America it seems all about the postgraduate degree. As an undergraduate, you learn your stuff, but when you go to graduate school, that's where you become a chemist in America. England has more of an emphasis on the undergraduate degree. (Interview 12, Line 64)

*Theme 3: Faculty Using Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not*

When I asked the participants about the use of technology in undergraduate teaching, it was important to clarify the context given that it has become so prevalent that it is often taken for granted. My questions were therefore centered on three broad aspects of technology usage, namely how technology is used in traditional lecture-based classes, how technology is used as a medium for doing assignments (for example homework, group projects, or term papers), and finally how courses can be taught completely online, with little if any face-to-face time with the instructor. If participants had first-hand experience of web-based courses they could obviously speak with greater familiarity, but since most of them did not, I often resorted to hypothetical questions regarding whether they would welcome taking courses of that nature. As a result, everyone was able to give

me detailed feedback, and participants often gave both their own perceptions, as well as those of other students they had spoken with.

Almost everyone spoke positively when I asked them whether they like technology to be incorporated in the classroom. When Ivan was asked this question, he said "Yes, of course, because it brings something new. You can improve yourself, and know how to use certain programs. I think it's quite interesting and valuable to have those skills in industry or in the future" (Interview 9, Line 21). Diana answered in a similar manner, saying that "I do [like technology to be used]. PowerPoint is really good. Going slowly through the slides is also good, and then putting them up on Blackboard afterwards. I like to read through what I've learned" (Interview 4, Line 29).

Diana's comment was in keeping with other participants who spoke with me about the benefits of lecture notes being uploaded to a university-wide database. While this seemed to be especially common in the United Kingdom, Eric was of the overall opinion that technology tends to be used less in the United Kingdom compared with the United States, though he did not view this as something negative.

> In one of my psychology classes [in the UK] we used SPSS a lot, which I'd never used before. It was great. It was really hard to use, and confusing, but that's because I hate stats. On the whole I think technology is used less over here [in the UK], which is OK. (Interview 5, Line 28)

Felix also noticed that discipline specific software packages are prevalent in the United Kingdom: "Yes, especially in math. I think software is important. Actually, one of my classes [in the UK] used MATLAB for assignments" (Interview 6, Line 20).

Complaints about classroom technology were not common, and the use of PowerPoint seemed to be both ubiquitous and popular among classes taken by the participants. However, Grace spoke of how the monotony of going through slides could become annoying, and how students in the United Kingdom were less inclined to take notes directly from the slides.

> Yeah, I do like technology to be used, for visuals, but when it becomes predominately PowerPoint, slide after slide, you can't really pay attention. And that was also something different [in the UK], students were not constantly taking notes and writing from the slides, and that was cool because we could just listen, and we didn't have to vigorously take notes, because our teachers won't post the PowerPoint slides. So I could lose focus easily because I was constantly writing and then not listening to what they were saying. (Interview 7, Line 30)

Attitudes towards online homework were varied, but most of those I interviewed were either wary or outright opposed to doing assignments online. The exception was Colin, who was very open to the idea of using different approaches.

> I'm completely in favor of it. I do a lot of my learning out of textbooks, or just by doing research online, and so I don't think that the lectures are the be all and end all. I think there are a lot of ways to get to the same point. (Interview 3, Line 39)

Some participants, like Ivan, who was experiencing it for the first time, saw online assignments as an interesting novelty, though he added the caveat that he believed they need to be used in conjunction with written assignments rather than as a replacement.

> I had my first experience of web-based learning here [in the US], where we did a project. We had to watch videos and then the teacher gave us a question. It was

> quite interesting. I think it has to be 50/50 to make sure it is balanced. It is good to have technology, you can learn new stuff, but sometimes it is better to write rather than typing. (Interview 9, Line 25)

Jessica was more enthusiastic about online assignments, noting how they seem to be more prevalent in the United States than the United Kingdom.

> I think it depends on the class. I think that it helps a lot to have those programs to do individual homework problems, but [in the UK] we didn't have those individual homework assignments at all. However, if you're being independent you could still find similar things to keep up with the classes. (Interview 10, Line 40)

Eric did not object to using technology in order to complete assignments, but told me that he found the lack of consistency between different classes to be frustrating.

> I like technology to be used, but would like it to be used more consistently. In one class, for politics, I had to turn everything in online and there was only one physical thing I had to turn in. In other classes you have to physically turn in everything and digital copies are just for verification. Because it's so inconsistent across all the different subjects, it is confusing. (Interview 5, Line 32)

Some participants strongly disliked online assignments, and preferred the traditional paper and pencil approach. Felix noted that "I don't like online coursework as far as doing problems. I think they should be done on paper and turned in to the professor. As far as learning online, I have no problem with that" (Interview 6, Line 23). Lee was of a similar mindset, but noted how there is an increasing use of online assignments.

> No, I'm more old school. I'm just not a technology person myself, so I like things nice and simple, on paper. I hate it when you have to submit something online. It's a lot easier handwritten, hand it in, but I find it's becoming uniform, across the board, everything's going more with technology. (Interview 12, Line 39)

Taking the use of technology to the extreme, I asked participants for their thoughts about classes taught completely online, where all the communication with faculty and other students occurs via the internet. Most of the students from the United Kingdom had no experience of such courses prior to studying in the United States, given that only the Open University promotes distance learning in the United Kingdom to any great extent (mostly to non-traditional age students). However, it was noticeable from the responses that participants from both countries viewed online classes negatively, with a range of academic and economic objections being cited. Grace described an online class in the United States she was taking, and mentioned how the reduced amount of learning made her feel as if she was not getting value for money from the class.

> [Laughs before answering] I'm taking an online class now, where I don't see my teacher at all, and I don't really like it, because I don't really feel like I'm learning as much as I could. She's very open and I can ask her anything I want via e-mail, but I almost don't feel like I'm getting my money's worth. For these classes I'm paying so much and then I don't even have an interaction with a real professor. I do like real lectures because I feel I get more out of it. (Interview 7, Line 37)

Jessica was likewise dismissive of online courses, saying "I know that at some of the large state schools there are entire courses that are online, and I would hate that! I think that would be very negative to my education" (Interview 10, Line 52). Hazel was of a

similar mindset, and while her response was brief, it seemed to encapsulate the general feeling: "I like technology, but not for all of the course" (Interview 8, Line 33).

Exchange students from the United Kingdom often shared their amazement with me that online courses even existed, and had difficulty in comprehending them. Ivan wondered how it was possible to prevent cheating, and questioned whether grades obtained in online courses had merit.

> I am quite surprised, because here [in the US] some of my roommates have only online exams, online, online…For me if you are only doing online it's not your actual grade. You can open your book, read stuff, Google it. It is not 100% your grade, more like 50%. (Interview 9, Line 31)

Lee gave me a more balanced answer, but after stating how online courses might benefit him personally, he concluded by considering the extreme case in which all courses are online, stating how it would take away much of the university experience, and be akin to studying at the Open University[19] in the United Kingdom.

> I know business majors who don't have to go to class because they're all online. Personally, I prefer that because I don't like waking up early in the mornings. I can't concentrate that well in early lectures. And I'm quite an independent learner, so if I had an online class I could watch it by myself in the afternoon and evening, and understand far more than I would in the morning. So personally, I'm all for online lectures, but then it takes away the experience of attending lectures, and

[19] The Open University was established in Milton Keynes, England, in 1969, and is almost exclusively devoted to distance learning, offering a full range of undergraduate and postgraduate degree courses. While the majority of the 250,000 students currently enrolled are of non-traditional age (the term "mature students" being used in the UK), the Open University caters to an increasing number of students who are under 25 years old given that tuition fees are approximately half those at traditional campus-based universities.

> what's the point of the university then? You might as well stay at home and watch the lectures and save a lot more money, like the Open University in England. (Interview 12, Line 48)

### *Theme 4: Spread Your Wings and Fly*

Although a couple of the participants in this study appeared somewhat ambivalent about their experience as an exchange student, the sentiment of a clear majority was that studying abroad is an overwhelmingly positive experience. While it was noted during my final defense that this enthusiasm is in line with my own positionality, I did not assume it to be the case in advance, and it does not feature in either the research questions or the interview protocol. However, aside from the comments, many of which are included below, there was a recurring undercurrent of happiness when the 12 contributors were interviewed, which I believe justifies the inclusion of a fourth primary theme.

All the participants were very willing to give their time to talk, and generally chatted with me for lengthy periods once the voice recorder was turned off. Many did not want the experience of being an exchange student to end, and were already planning to return to the country in which they spent their exchange to either attend graduate school or seek employment. Hazel commented that "I would like to stay for the next semester, but I can't. I'm thinking of coming back for an internship next year" (Interview 8, Line 49), Kyle stated that "Undoubtedly, yes. I'm going to try and work here if that's possible" (Interview 11, Line 95), while Lee added that "It's the best year of my life. I'd like to stay here longer, but it's a shame I have to go back" (Interview 12, Line 92).

When I asked the participants to explain the aspects of studying in the other country that they liked best, the answers fluctuated between features of the academic environment and the characteristics of the social environment, with Grace citing both in her response.

> I loved it. I had a great time [in the UK]. I really liked the class style and the self-learning, doing research and writing papers. I liked my teachers and their knowledge of the industry. It was endless. I could ask them anything at any time. And then socially it was great, meeting different people from different cultures, which I don't get here at all, so that was really nice. (Interview 7, Line 81)

Jessica went into detail about both the academic and social merits of studying abroad, firstly discussing how the experience of two different styles of learning would ultimately benefit her.

> I loved it, I absolutely loved it. I loved being immersed in the culture and I loved learning from a different perspective. I think it added to my educational experience because now I can say that I have the ability to succeed in a class that is very discussion based, or in a class where you're very independent because you're in a large lecture hall, and that's two very different skills, and I'm glad that I have them both now. (Interview 10, Line 91)

Jessica then went on to delineate how different the two countries were from a social perspective, contrary to her preconception.

> I really think it was the social aspects [that I enjoyed most]. Being able to meet friends and go out and learn about the culture that they have. I didn't really realize before I went there how very different the culture was. You kind of have

> this idea in your head that because they're both English speaking countries that they are more similar than maybe a very foreign country is, but no, there are a lot of things that are very different as far as how people interact socially, things I didn't know about before. (Interview 10, Line 104)

Even peripheral aspects of campus life were sources of wonderment to some of the participants. Diana spoke with me about how the library was so much bigger on the campus she studied at in the United States, with designated floors for student-athletes.

> The library was amazing! You could rent books out for a whole semester. Eight floors – it was ridiculous! The top floor was for the sports students, and we weren't allowed to go there. You could book study rooms for 24 hours, here we can only book rooms for 2 hours. My fines are ridiculous here. In the US I didn't get any library fines. (Interview 4, Line 111)

Eric made similarly positive comments to me about the library he used at a campus in the United Kingdom.

> The library is crowded here all the time. People are loud in the quiet areas, which is annoying, but you can send a text message to tell people to shut up. I really like that. In the US we don't have that, you have to go up and confront them. (Interview 5, Line 117)

Finally, I sensed that the warm welcome that the participants of this study received from other students and the local community played an important role in their positive overall experience. Ivan spoke of how "My roommates are from America and always helping me, and we are getting along well. I plan to come back, I don't know when. If not for employment, then for vacation" (Interview 9, Line 58). Lee echoed this

perception, stating “I’ve met so many people. Americans, they love foreigners, and they’re always interested to speak with you. I find that American people in general have been friendly and welcoming, and never look down upon you because you’re foreign” (Interview 12, Line 95). Jessica spoke well of students in the United Kingdom, saying “I think that my fellow students were very interested in my culture, and they would ask me a lot of questions about America for sure” (Interview 10, Line 101).

## Summary

This chapter contains a discussion of how several common themes emerged after collecting data from the 12 participants, and includes a matrix showing which participants substantively discussed each theme. These initial themes were then bracketed to form clustered meanings of the themes which emerged. The four primary themes I identified were the positive perceptions of faculty (titled *Carry on Teaching*), the positive perceptions of research (titled *Research is Good…Just Don’t Forget About Teaching*), the contrast of positive perceptions of classroom technology to negative perceptions of web-based learning (titled *Faculty Using Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not*), and the enthusiastic embrace of the experience of being an exchange student by the participants (titled *Spread Your Wings and Fly*). I give an explanation of how the themes relate to the two research questions, which is followed by a detailed analysis of each theme. Direct quotes from the participants are used to demonstrate both the commonalities among the responses, and the way that they form the primary themes.

# CHAPTER 6
# ALIGNMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROTOCOL AND THE FIELD WORK

## Introduction

Chapter 3 introduced the phenomenological research protocol selected for this study. The experience of the participants was then described in Chapter 4, followed by a discussion of the research findings in Chapter 5. It is important for me to now connect these three chapters, by explicitly detailing the manner in which I adhered to the guidance provided by the research protocol, both when carrying out the field work, and also when interpreting the data collected. The purpose of doing so is not merely for the sake of checks and balances, but to ensure that a foundation has been laid which allows a legitimate discussion of the research findings, which in turn allows conclusions and recommendations to be formed, in Chapter 8.

## Adherence to the Research Design

As was detailed in Chapter 3, phenomenological methodology has consistently been refined since the initial work of Husserl (1900/1901) at the start of the 20th century. After considerable discussion in the literature, it was researchers such as Colaizzi (1978), Polkinghorne (1989), and Moustakas (1994) who provided the generally accepted practices that are used today, with the four main steps being to thoroughly read through all of the transcribed data, extract statements deemed to be significant with regard to the purpose of the study, form clustered meanings of the themes which emerge, and finally integrate the themes into a coherent narrative.

For the purposes of this dissertation all four steps were carefully followed, with the raw data digitally collected from the interviews being quickly transcribed. This allowed the words of the participants to be analyzed while the memory of them was still fresh in my mind. Timely processing of the data is in keeping with the advice given by Merriam (2009), who states that "the much preferred way to analyze data in a qualitative study is to do it simultaneously with data collection" (p. 171).

The transcribed interviews were reviewed several times to elicit the common themes that emerged, with the NVivo software program used to augment the manual process. The content themes (detailed in Chapter 5) were then bracketed to show how they formed clusters, allowing names to be given to the four primary themes. These primary themes were then individually discussed in narrative form, with examples provided by quotes from the participants.

Another important aspect when conducting a phenomenological study, discussed by Moran (2001), is to motivate theories and conclusions based on the specific situation being considered and the data collected, rather than any preconceived notions. In the case of this study, that involved allowing the participants to freely answer the questions, without leading them in a direction that serves to bolster a theory that has already been determined. There are several specific instances which can be used to illustrate how this was done in practice, i.e. where the participants were carefully steered in a manner which did not allow them to deviate from the research questions, but also did not coax them to give answers supporting a predetermined theory. For example, after Lee spoke of his intention to do a research project when he returned to the United Kingdom, I asked if he sensed a greater emphasis on undergraduate research there. This resulted in valuable

feedback being provided. When Jessica indicated that faculty in the United Kingdom tend to mention their research in the classroom more than their counterparts in the United States, I asked why she believed this to be so, and received an insightful response detailing the greater flexibility within the curriculum. And when Hazel gave a neutral response to my initial question asking her to compare the use of classroom technology, I reiterated it in a more specific way, asking if there were some technologies used in one country and not the other. This led to a much more interesting response, with specific software noted.

## Adherence to the Research Protocol when Gathering the Data

Silverman (2010) states that, "In contrast (with quantitative protocols), qualitative interview studies tend to be conducted with quite small numbers and with rather informal patterns of questioning, where the aim is to allow the interviewee to set the pace. Usually the interviewer will have a prepared set of questions, but these are only used as a guide. Departures are not seen as a problem, and are often encouraged" (p. 194).

There were many instances during the interviews where the questions I asked deviated from the interview protocol (see Appendix B). This was done for two main reasons. The first was that in several cases a response was given that warranted a follow-up question, either to gain more information, or to clarify the initial response. The second was to try and elicit a better response when the initial reply did not yield anything of value. When Ivan stated that there needs to be a balance maintained when using technology in the classroom, there was an implicit assumption that he did not favor the idea of courses taught completely online, and so I asked another question to ensure that

was the case. Kyle initially hinted that there was no difference between the technology used at the two universities he had experience of, but when pressed further, he described additional hardware at the university in the United Kingdom, which balanced out the opinions of other participants, who felt that technology was more prevalent in the United States.

Another important aspect of phenomenological research, detailed by Moustakas (1994), is that the conducted interviews must reflect the passion, knowledge, and background of the researcher. He states that, "The researcher's excitement and curiosity inspire the search. Personal history brings the core of the problem into focus" (p. 104). I think there is little doubt that my passion and background came to the fore on several occasions during the process of data collection, and led to situations where instead of speaking coldly into a recording device, the participants were engaged in a lively conversation which often went on long after the formal part of the interview had ended.

Having both attended the University of Leicester gave me an immediate rapport with Lee, which I believe played a big part in the success of the interview. Prior to the formal part of the interview with Jessica we chatted about life in the United Kingdom, and in particular some of the attractions in London. As a result she was very willing to discuss her experiences once the digital recorder was switched on, and spoke very candidly. Finally, Diana's transition from a small university in the United Kingdom to a large university in the Midwest was very reminiscent of my own experience as an exchange student. By mentioning this in advance of our interview, I am convinced that a better connection was created than would ordinarily be the case when a faculty member

in a mathematics department is speaking to an undergraduate majoring in American studies.

It was also mentioned in Chapter 3 how I was able to discern the subtle differences in phrasing and terminology that exist between the United States and the United Kingdom, along with the regional variations within each country. This allowed me to extract greater essence and meaning when collecting and processing the data. For example, comments were often made during the interviews without explicitly stating whether it was in reference to the United States or the United Kingdom, but it was always clear to me. There was, therefore, no need to interrupt the flow of the interview to ask for clarification. There was also never any misunderstanding of terminology ("module" as opposed to "course", "marks" as opposed to "grades", "revise" as opposed to "study", etc.) given my background in the two countries.

I think my positionality was particularly useful when interviewing Ivan. A number of people had cautioned me that he is a difficult person to speak with, but as soon as we met I asked him about his accent, and he revealed that he was from Slovakia. I joked that he probably has to explain where that is on a regular basis, as was the case with me when describing my Welsh background. He responded by smiling and saying that, "Yeah, American students are not very good at geography." From that point on, Ivan was extremely candid and engaging, appearing completely relaxed, and providing lengthy and insightful answers to my questions.

## Adherence to the Research Protocol when Analyzing the Data

In Chapter 3, I described how Dey (1993) lists six questions that one should consider when assessing the quality of the collected data. In this section I will provide an answer to each one, with the first three questions being relatively straightforward, and the last three questions requiring more detailed responses.

The first question is "Are the data based on your own observation or hearsay?" It is clear from the nature of this study that I alone collected and interpreted the data. However, it should be noted that many of the participants gave valuable anecdotes involving other students, especially with regard to taking online courses, when they themselves had little or no experience of them.

The second question states "Is there corroboration by others of your observations?" The standard qualitative methods of coding and triangulation were used to corroborate the observations, and Chapter 5 provides an explanation of how the primary themes were generated. The issue of whether the data collected corroborates or refutes the results of similar studies is discussed in Chapter 8.

The third of the six questions asks "In what circumstances were the observations made or reported?" All of the interviews took place on either the home campus of the participants after they had returned from their study abroad program, or on the campus at which the program was taking place. While the majority of the interviews took place in my office, there were some occasions where it was more convenient to conduct the interview at the campus library, or elsewhere on campus. In each instance, the interview was held in person with no one else present, and there were no external interruptions.

The fourth question, “How reliable are the people providing the data?” requires a careful response. On the one hand, the participants appear to be extremely reliable. They all met the criteria of being current or former exchange students in the United States and the United Kingdom, and they were all still undergraduates when interviewed, which ensured that their perceptions were fresh. They all spoke willingly and with considerable candor, and provided highly intelligent insight to the topics being discussed. However, that alone does not ensure reliability. It was therefore necessary to analyze the data according to generally accepted phenomenological principles to ensure that the minimum standards for reliability were met. This process was described in Chapter 5, with four primary themes emerging from a long list of recurring observations. As a result of this procedure, the findings were given a measure of reliability that allows inferences to be made in Chapter 8 when assessing the broader appeal of this study.

The penultimate question, “What motivations might have influenced the reports of the participants?” is a difficult one to assess with any great degree of certainty. However, I think it should be stated that I believe all the comments were made sincerely, and did not detect any that were made out of spite, or to pursue an agenda which deliberately denigrated either specific faculty or an institution as a whole. Indeed, most of the comments made were given in such a way as to accentuate the positive aspects of the issues being discussed. That said, all the participants were relatively young, and hence impressionable. Many had not been overseas prior to embarking on their study abroad program. It is therefore natural that some of the views stated could have been clouded by a “grass is greener on the other side” mentality. This is something I alluded to in

Chapter 5, when discussing how even peripheral aspects of campus life, such as the library facilities, were sources of amazement to some of the participants.

The previous paragraph also provides an answer to the first part of the final question, "What biases might have influenced how an observation was made or reported?" What remains is to discuss my own biases in reporting the observations. In the first chapter of this dissertation I stated my positionality, both as a former exchange student, and as someone who has studied and taught in the United States and the United Kingdom. These experiences have certainly allowed me to form opinions on the subjects being discussed in this dissertation. However, after meticulously transcribing the recorded data, and repeatedly listening to the audio files, I was careful to ensure that all findings were examined with regard to validity, reliability, and generalizability, before being reported. I am therefore confident that the phenomenological principle of presuppositionlessness has been adhered to as much as possible, to the extent that any bias on my part in reporting the information is at worst subliminal.

## Conclusion

While not being lengthy, this chapter forms a necessary bridge between the theory and the field work. Having verified that the phenomenological foundations described in Chapter 3 were adhered to when collecting and analyzing the data, I am now in a position to consider how the results align with the two theoretical frameworks in Chapter 7. This will allow conclusions to be drawn and recommendations for the direction of future study to be made in Chapter 8.

# CHAPTER 7
# ALIGNMENT OF THE RESULTS WITH THE THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

## Introduction

I introduced the two theoretical frameworks for this study in Chapter 1. Fang et al. (2008) created a theoretical framework based on the work of Bandura (1986) to describe the factors affecting student perceptions of web-based learning, while Coate et al. (2001) created a theoretical framework to describe the combination of perceptions that students can have of the link between teaching and research.

By conducting 12 in-depth interviews, with current and former exchange students from the United States and the United Kingdom, it is possible in this chapter for me to discuss how the data collected aligns with the two theoretical frameworks. This allows a subsequent discussion of whether the theoretical frameworks have been validated for the narrow demographic under consideration, or whether they need to be modified or enhanced in this instance.

## Alignment of the Results with the First Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presented by Fang et al. (2008), based on the theory of triadic reciprocal determinism developed by Bandura (1986), posits that there are three factors affecting a student's perception of web-based learning, namely personal determinism, environmental determinism, and behavior. Personal determinism in this instance could refer to a student's attitude towards technology, environmental

determinism could be affected by the nature of the task being given, or the effect of how others perceive the task, and behavior might include the level of effort accorded to a task.

The data that I collected from the 12 interviews substantiated this theory for the most part, but it remains challenging to predict the overall attitude of a student towards web-based learning, even after gauging the level of the three input variables alluded to by Bandura (1986). In terms of personal determinism, the view of most participants was very positive with regard to technology. When I asked the question "Do you like technology to be incorporated in the classroom?" there was no one who answered negatively, though even to this initial question positive responses were often moderated by caveats clearly indicating that many participants believed it is possible to have too much of a good thing.

Behavior was often not a factor, as many of the participants had little or no first-hand experience of web-based learning. Even for those who did, behavior was largely independent of the general assessment by participants. This may well be due to the fact that exchange students are predominately excellent students who are under pressure to succeed academically in a foreign country, and are hence able to overcome any negative feelings towards an assignment they have been given. The positive feelings towards the exchange program as a whole, the openness to experience different aspects of a different education system, and the reluctance to cause trouble, might also mitigate any desire to rebel against an unpopular assignment.

It was the environmental determinism variable that I found to be most strongly correlated with the overall attitude of the participants towards web-based learning. While attitudes varied, almost from one extreme to the other, the general feeling seemed to be

that using technology to teach a class offered diminishing returns, to the point where participants were almost uniformly against the notion of online courses.

While it would be advantageous to construct a table clearly showing how environmental determinism affected the perception of each participant with regard to web-based learning, it would be overly simplistic to draw such conclusions given their nuanced (and sometimes self-contradictory) attitudes. For example, both Ivan and Jessica spoke of how they found merit in online homework projects, but dismissed the notion of a course taught completely online. Ivan told of how "I had my first experience of web-based learning here [in the US], where we did a project. We had to watch videos and then the teacher gave us a question. It was quite interesting" (Interview 9, Line 25), but when asked whether he would welcome an online course he responded by saying "No, no, no. I am quite surprised, because [in the US] some of my roommates have only online exams, online, online…For me if you are only doing online it's not your actual grade. You can open your book, read stuff, Google it" (Interview 9, Line 31). Jessica spoke positively of how "For general biology and chemistry here [in the US] we have online programs where you could do homework, and do practice problems, and study things" (Interview 10, Line 36), but then added that "I know that at some of the large state schools there are entire courses that are online, and I would hate that! I think that would be very negative to my education" (Interview 10, Line 52).

Hazel succinctly encapsulated the view of the majority by stating that "I like technology, but not for all of the course" (Interview 8, Line 33). Lee explained some of the pros and cons of web-based courses by discussing the flexibility they offer in terms of

scheduling, but also questioned the need for a university campus if lectures are able to be watched online.

> I know business majors who don't have to go to class because they're all online. Personally, I prefer that because I don't like waking up early in the mornings. I can't concentrate that well in early lectures. And I'm quite an independent learner, so if I had an online class I could watch it by myself in the afternoon and evening, and understand far more than I would in the morning. So personally, I'm all for online lectures, but then it takes away the experience of attending lectures, and what's the point of the university then? You might as well stay at home and watch the lectures and save a lot more money, like the Open University in England. (Interview 12, Line 48)

## Alignment of the Results with the Second Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework presented by Coate et al. (2001), which I modified in Figure 3 to give a more accessible way to understand it, shows the different ways to categorize the perceived relationship between teaching and research, which in this study has involved the perceptions of current and former exchange students. It shows six possible relationships, which as I outlined in Chapter 1, could be thought of as four relationships, two of which have subcases. The first possibility is that teaching and research are not considered to be distinct activities, and are hence viewed as being integrated. The second possibility is that while considered to be distinct activities, teaching and research are perceived as not having any effect on each other, and are therefore independent. The third possibility is that teaching and research are considered

to be distinct activities, with one positively affecting the other. This leads to two subcases: either research positively affects teaching, or teaching positively affects research. The final possibility is that teaching and research are considered to be distinct activities, with one negatively affecting the other. This also leads to two subcases: either research negatively affects teaching, or teaching negatively affects research.

The data collected from the 12 interviews shows that six participants believe research positively affects teaching, four participants believe research negatively affects teaching, and two participants perceived there to be a symbiotic relationship between teaching and research whereby both activities positively influenced the other. Table 9 shows the distribution of perceptions among the participants, and it should be noted that no significant correlation emerged based on gender, nationality, or major course of study.

Table 9

*Perceived Relationship of Teaching and Research by Participants*

| Relationship Between Teaching and Research | Participants |
|---|---|
| Research positively affects teaching | Allison<br>Beth<br>Felix<br>Grace<br>Hazel<br>Ivan |
| Research negatively affects teaching | Diana<br>Eric<br>Jessica<br>Lee |
| Teaching and research positively affect each other | Colin<br>Kyle |

Participants who believed that research positively affects teaching alluded to how faculty presenting contemporary ideas helps students keep abreast of current developments in their subject, and in the words of Beth "makes a class more interesting" (Interview 2, Line 78). Ivan cited a specific example, whereby "Last week we had a tourism lecture, and we were talking about ecotourism, and it's useful to have research and then put it into practice, or present it in the college" (Interview 9, Line 43). Grace commented that being up to date with present-day research gives students an edge, presumably with regard to future employment.

> [Faculty discussing research in the classroom] keeps the students really engaged with what is going on. New trends in the industries, new advancements. By relaying that kind of information to your students, and keeping them focused on it, it keeps them ahead of other students and ahead of the competition. (Interview 7, Line 69)

For the most part, the four participants who viewed research as having a negative effect on teaching cited examples where faculty were more interested in their research, and hence demonstrated a lower priority for their classroom duties. Diana spoke of how "I've never ever met my personal tutor, and you're meant to, so that's a bit awkward. I don't know why, but he kind of goes on research leave quite a lot. The study abroad tutor, he's now on research leave" (Interview 4, Line 70). She then mentioned that one of her lecturers had recently travelled overseas, compounding her frustration: "One of my lecturers went to LA recently for a week and a half. I don't know what for" (Interview 4, Line 77). Lee gave a similar justification for why research has a detrimental effect on teaching, believing that for many faculty teaching occupies a secondary role.

> I do think research is bad for the teaching. I always used to ask the professors in [the UK] what kind of research they were doing, as I was quite interested, but I remember them telling me that they only teach because they have to. They're going to the lectures thinking about their research, so that does affect the teaching in a negative way. (Interview 12, Line 71)

Jessica, however, gave a different explanation of why she believed research can cause instructors to less effective in the classroom, inferring that when a faculty member cares too much about their research it can lead to an overly narrow focus of the material that they are teaching, which does not give undergraduate students the broader knowledge that they need.

> I think that a lot of the time a faculty member's interest translates to the class they are teaching, and it can be a little bit detrimental. For example, in animal physiology they had a neurology and a reproductive research specialist giving the lectures, so the class was very focused on those two subjects, and I think it hurt the course a little bit because you didn't learn the spectrum of everything that should be taught in that course. It was focused on what their interests were and not on teaching the entire subject. (Interview 10, Line 64)

It was interesting for me to observe that the two remaining participants believed that teaching and research affect each other in a symbiotic way, which combines two of the six possibilities discussed by Coate et al. (2001). While Colin did not go into detail, just commenting that "I think they can help each other, yeah, they affect each other" (Interview 3, Line 87), Kyle answered with a quizzical look, as if I was asking a trick

question: “Isn’t it kind of like a cycle?  Teaching helps stimulate the research, and then the research will feed back in to the teaching” (Interview 11, Line 62).

It is also noteworthy, though perhaps not surprising, that some of the possible relationships between teaching and research listed by Coate et al. (2001) in the theoretical framework did not arise during the interviews. None of the participants perceived teaching to have a positive or negative effect on research, but given their limited exposure to research, and very limited experience of doing research, this was perhaps to be expected.

## Reorganization of the Theoretical Frameworks

When conducting a study like the one described, it is possible, and perhaps preferable, for the results to yield a new or refined theoretical framework compared with those used to guide the research. In this instance, however, there were no such expectations, and the interest lay in determining whether the broad outline of the two theoretical frameworks still applied when narrowing the sample to exchange students from two countries. So it became a question of whether it is still true in the case of exchange students that three factors (behavior, personal determinism, and environmental determinism) contribute towards the perception of web-based learning, and whether it is still appropriate to conclude that six possibilities can arise when analyzing the relationship between teaching and research.

The results indicated that both of the theoretical frameworks used still apply to a large extent. However, one of the three factors Fang et al. (2008) proposed as affecting the perceptions of web-based learning, environmental determinism, has a more profound

effect than behavior and personal determinism when restricting the sample in the manner of this study. Behavior includes the amount of effort given to the task, the level of persistence, the creation of a constructive environment, and the steps that may be taken to reduce anxiety or low self-efficacy, and as I mentioned in an earlier section of this chapter, it was not a significant factor given that many participants had little experience of web-based learning. Similarly, personal determinism, which in this case could include a participant's general attitude towards computers and technology, did not seem to be correlated with their wide ranging views on web-based learning, since almost everyone had a positive overall view of technology. It was, therefore, the environmental determinism variable, which can result from the nature of the task being given, or the effect of how others perceive the task, that I found to be most strongly correlated with the overall attitude of the participants towards web-based learning. The conclusion that using technology in the classroom eventually offers diminishing returns, to the point where participants were generally hostile to the notion of online courses (even if they had no experience of taking them), shows how environmental determinism affected perceptions.

In a similar way, as I alluded to in Table 9 and the subsequent discussion, four of the six perceived relationships between teaching and research proposed by Coate et al. (2001) still very much apply when restricting the participating sample to international exchange students. It was observed that some participants believe research positively influences teaching, while others believe it has a negative effect. Some believed teaching and research to have a symbiotic effect, in that they both positively influenced each other. There are, however, two scenarios described in the second theoretical framework which are unlikely to emerge, namely that teaching positively or negatively affects research, are

less likely to emerge when questioning undergraduate students due to their limited experience of doing research.

## Validity, Reliability, and Generalization

Following the seven stage protocol recommended by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) for conducting interview based inquiry, the findings of a phenomenological study must be examined with regard to validity, reliability, and generalizability. As mentioned in the research protocol, the notions of validity and reliability are increasingly featured in qualitative studies, with Golafshani (2003) stating that "Reliability and validity are conceptualized as trustworthiness, rigor, and quality in the qualitative paradigm" (p. 604).

In the case of this study, I addressed the three aspects of trustworthiness, rigor, and quality both in the design of the study and in the processing of the data. By conducting semi-structured interviews, I asked participants a common set of questions, but also a number of follow-up questions to clarify or reinforce the responses given. This was done for the purpose of reliability, especially if initial responses mirrored the reply of other participants. As a result, the four primary themes described in the previous chapter readily emerged, with a considerable amount of triangulated interview data in each case to support common perceptions.

Validity is a difficult concept to assess in the case of a qualitative study, and is often disregarded. However, for this study, the fact that the data I collected supports the two theoretical frameworks (subject to minor modifications) lends support to the notion that the research instrument, in this instance the interviews, accurately focused on the

central issues of the study, namely the two research questions regarding classroom technology and the teaching-research nexus.

With regard to generalization, Myers (2000) states that "Since we maintain our humanity throughout the research process, it is largely impossible to escape the subjective experience, even for the most seasoned of researchers. [As a result] small qualitative studies are not generalizable in the traditional sense, yet have redeeming qualities that set them above that requirement" (p. 3). This study was conducted with a similar philosophy in mind. The narrow sample (current and former exchange students from two countries), and the narrow line of inquiry (classroom technology and the teaching-research nexus) does not allow the findings to be easily generalized to a wider population, for example to all exchange students, or wider issues related to undergraduate teaching. Hence, as I will stress in the next chapter, any conclusions, implications, and recommendations have to be tempered by the fact that external validity is difficult to accurately measure when conducting a qualitative study.

## Summary

This chapter discusses how the interview data collected aligns with the two theoretical frameworks, namely the factors influencing the perception of web-based learning created by Fang et al. (2008) and the possible perceptions of the relationship between teaching and research created by Coate et al. (2001). Subject to minor modification, I found that the research findings support a conclusion that the theoretical frameworks encompass the perceptions of current and former exchange students in the United States and the United Kingdom.

# CHAPTER 8
# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

In this final chapter, I will discuss the data gathered in terms of the implications they have not only for the work done previously by others in studying the perceptions of web-based learning and the teaching-research nexus, but also in terms of recommendations for future study in these areas. Consistencies and discrepancies between this study and others will be noted, and the chapter will end with a brief personal reflection on the process of completing this dissertation.

It should be noted before proceeding that after writing the previous three chapters in a manner which was very careful to report and interpret the data in a way that was clearly consistent with the intentions of the participants (subject to the license granted by a phenomenological approach), it is important for me not to use the concluding chapter to make rash generalizations, or conclusions based more on personal speculation that the evidence collected. While a qualitative study involving 12 participants can make an important contribution in adding to existing literature, Maxwell (1992) cautions that validity (in particular external validity) cannot be achieved to the same extent as in quantitative or experimental research, and this sentiment will be used both as a guide and a restraint throughout this chapter.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to take two areas that have been widely discussed in the literature, namely perceptions of web-based teaching and the teaching-research nexus, and to consider them from the viewpoint of current and former exchange students in the United States and the United Kingdom. It is particularly relevant given that it stands at the crossroads of several topics that are of interest in contemporary higher education, in particular the way to integrate different modes of instruction, the changing duties of faculty members, and the increasingly global outlook of university administrators.

After a lengthy period during which the research proposal was constructed and refined, I gathered data in both the United States and the United Kingdom from 12 participants representing eight different institutions. The data were then analyzed according to generally accepted phenomenological principles, so as to consider whether the two broad theoretical frameworks used still apply given the narrow focus of the study. Four primary themes emerged, detailed in Chapter 5, which give some measure of reliability to the findings, and allow inferences to be made when assessing the broader appeal of the study. Another important aspect when analyzing the narratives of the participants is to consider whether they support the considerable amount of literature compiled in the two areas of interest, which is described in Chapter 2. I will do this during the subsequent sections of this chapter in order to form and support the conclusions, implications, and recommendations.

## Conclusions

Many aspects of the existing literature with regard to web-based learning and the teaching-research nexus were confirmed as a result of this study. The following sections look at the two topics individually, considering how, for the most part, the data validated previous studies, but also pointing out where the findings differed. I will revisit the two research questions posed in Chapter 1, and instances will be noted where there was a discrepancy in the results between the two countries[20].

### *Conclusions with Regard to Web-Based Learning*

The data collected from the 12 participants back up the assertion by McCabe and Meuter (2011) that "Today's students assume technology will be integral to their college experience" (p. 155). However, it is worth noting that the way in which students prefer technology to be integrated is simply through the use of PowerPoint slides during lectures and the subsequent uploading of lecture notes to the internet, rather than moving entire courses online. In this respect, the statement by Gregorian (2005) that "Technology will supplement education, but will never replace the need for the residential university" (p. 94) is validated, as is the study by Milliken and Barnes (2002), who found that a significant factor in their study showing a positive response by students to the use of classroom technology was the clarity of the (electronically written) lecture notes, as opposed to handwritten notes on a board. It appears that there is a law of diminishing

[20] There was nothing to indicate that results differed either by gender or academic discipline. While it is very possible that such differences could emerge as a result of a broader study, the emphasis here was to consider differences in perception between students from the two countries. Although a broad range of disciplines was spanned by the 12 participants, and the participation of males and female was roughly equal, this was done to try and produce a more representative sample rather than to consider differences between them.

returns in place, which implies that students are in favor of classroom technology up to a certain point, but that once technology is used to supplement rather than augment the role of the instructor, opinion becomes increasingly negative. This is in keeping with the findings of Diemer et al. (2012), who noted that a moderate usage of technology is preferable both to an over usage, or using none at all. The consistent opposition to classes taught entirely online cited by students in this study centered around the lack of classroom discussion and social interaction, as well as a sense that online classes do not offer the same value for money. This is in keeping with previous studies both by O'Malley and McGraw (1999) and HEFCE (2010).

It is important at this stage for me to also consider the specific research question posed at the beginning of this study, "Do the perceptions of exchange students who have studied in both the United States and the United Kingdom indicate that the role of classroom technology differs between countries?" Given the way that the research question was phrased, it is fair to conclude that there is little if any difference in how technology is used *in the classroom* between the two countries, as in both it generally amounts to just using PowerPoint slides or discipline specific software programs. However, there does seem to be a difference in the way that technology is used outside the classroom, with faculty members in the United Kingdom being more likely to upload lecture notes and homework solutions to a class website, and faculty members in the United States being more likely to utilize online homework programs. The role of online and distance learning is also largely confined to the United States at this stage, with students from both countries being wary of courses taught completely online. This indicates that the United Kingdom has some way to go in order to make the country a

global leader in online learning, as advocated by Bradwell (2009), and confirms the assertion of White et al. (2007) that "educational technology in [UK] universities has not managed to match the ubiquity of technology in everyday life" (p. 840).

### *Conclusions with Regard to the Teaching-Research Nexus*

The results of this study reinforce the assertion of Altbach (2005b) that "American professors seem to be working longer, not shorter, hours, and classroom hours have not declined" (p. 299). The same can be said of faculty members in the UK, with the consensus being that whatever their research commitments, faculty are perceived to be heavily invested in their undergraduate teaching duties. While research leave or attending conferences during the semester is a source of irritation, none of the participants could be said to have shared the opinion that "It remains hard to shift the impression that what really counts in higher education is research," a sentiment voiced by David Willetts, who at the time was the Education Secretary in the United Kingdom (Feilden, 2010). Indeed, while Gull (2010a) writes that "Teaching has not only been undervalued and marginalized, but is in danger of being seen as a negative attribute by institutions and their departments," the findings of this study stand in stark contrast, with participants quick to praise the efforts of the faculty whose classes they have taken.

With regard to the second research question posed at the beginning of this study, the prevailing opinion of the participants of this study is that undergraduate teaching and faculty research are integrated, or at least should be, noting that this tends to happen more in the United Kingdom where undergraduate research is common and the curriculum is less rigid, allowing faculty to skew the material more towards their own interests. This

aligns with the assertion by Hunt and Chalmers (2012) that the links between teaching and research in the United Kingdom are now being strengthened after a long period during which research became predominant.

However, for several reasons I must be careful to avoid interpreting the results in a wider context, or to believe that teaching and research are seen as being integrated by all students. Firstly, the elevated academic standing of exchange students means that they often bridge the gap to faculty more than typical undergraduates, and are more likely to participate in undergraduate research. Secondly, the fact that everyone taking part in this study has been a student in the United Kingdom, where undergraduate research projects are a common part of the bachelor's degree may also play a part in the findings. Thirdly, it was shown by Breen and Lindsay (1999) that motivated and communicative students (which certainly describes the participants of this study) have more positive perceptions of faculty research. And finally, the participants of this study were from institutions with a heavy emphasis on faculty research. Turner at al. (2008) found that students had an elevated awareness of research under such circumstances, and hence the positive perceptions found by this study might not extend to universities where faculty research is not prioritized to the same extent. Ultimately, as suggested by Coate et al. (2001), any synergistic relationship between teaching and research is derived from the way that departments are managed, and whether those in charge views them as integrated or independent activities.

## Implications and Recommendations

This study adds to the current literature by looking at two well-researched topics, the role of classroom technology and the teaching-research nexus, from a new perspective, i.e. by considering the perceptions of current and former exchange students. However, before being able to generalize the findings of this study, I would need to address several factors, which could be considered in future work. An obvious way to expand upon this study would be to allow students from more countries to participate, or incorporate some of the institutional types in the United States which were not included here. Another possibility is to repeat a similar study and determine whether the results are consistent over time, especially as the role of web-based learning continues to evolve.

Implications and recommendations for future study also arise from the conclusions I made in the previous section, along with the four primary themes generated by the results discussed in Chapter 5. The comments quoted when discussing the first theme, *Carry on Teaching*, indicate that the widely discussed notion (especially in the United States) that contemporary faculty care more about their research than their teaching is not shared by exchange students. Further work could be done to investigate whether the opinions of exchange students mirror the student population as a whole, or whether exchange students have qualities which skew their perspective. Given the recent efforts of the government in the United Kingdom to give teaching a greater emphasis in the role and promotion of academic personnel, such studies can augment those already completed to measure the policy's success. Regardless, the results of this study, and the appreciation of good teaching by exchange students, should provide comfort to faculty

enduring the tension between teaching and research, and belies the notion of Sykes (1988) that "In the modern university, no act of good teaching goes unpunished" (p. 54).

The second common theme, *Research is Good, Just Don't Forget About Teaching*, has potentially important implications for university administrators, as the popularity of undergraduate research among those who have participated in such projects raises the question of why it is restricted to a very small number of students, especially in the United States. While Lee is almost certainly correct in stating that institutions in the United Kingdom recognize that the bachelor's program represents a terminal degree for the vast majority of students, who are therefore more inclined (and better prepared) to engage in a semester or yearlong research project[21], this does not warrant universities in the United States waiting until students enter graduate school to begin integrating research into the curriculum, especially in the sciences where it can often be difficult to recruit domestic graduate students. Needless to say, student-faculty ratios at large public universities in the United States makes the expansion of undergraduate research programs difficult, but increasing enrollment in directed research sections (which are commonly found in undergraduate handbooks, though often sparsely populated), and the expansion of grant-funded programs such as the Research Experience for Undergraduates (sponsored by the National Science Foundation), could allow more students to participate in what is clearly a beneficial and popular activity.

The third theme, *Faculty Incorporating Technology is Good, but Technology Replacing Faculty is Not*, goes to the heart of a very important debate which will shape

[21] Students in the United Kingdom often view the option of completing a research project as a soft option, given that there are no written exams involved, and group work is often permitted. The reality though is that high grades are only given to those who produce very high-quality work, and such projects therefore offer ideal training for those wishing to go on to write a thesis or dissertation.

the future of higher education during the next generation. While much is made of the current generation of students, and their love of cell phones, iPads, and tablet computers, White et al. (2007) are correct in stating that "educational technology in [UK] universities has not managed to match the ubiquity of technology in everyday life" (p. 840). Although this remark was referring specifically to technology usage in the United Kingdom, it also applies to how students perceive the use of technology in the United States. The disconnect reinforced by this study and others is that while distance learning and online classes are generally touted as being in line with student wishes, and rarely portrayed as a necessary cost saving tool that allows administrators to do more with limited resources, there is evidence suggesting that the students want technology to be used in moderation in order to preserve the experience of attending a university, unless they have specific circumstances which preclude this option. It is clear that there is scope for further study in this regard, as the correct judgment of how to utilize technology both inside and outside the classroom could be an important factor in the future success of an institution, which becomes all the more important for department chairs and administrators at stressed colleges in the United States, i.e. those highly dependent on student tuition and lacking name recognition.

The fourth theme, *Spread Your Wings and Fly*, carries with it the implication that student exchange programs are very positive and should be expanded to allow more and more undergraduates to experience the benefits. All too often institutions will tout dozens of such programs on the website of their Office of International Studies, when the reality is that the number of students participating in them is very small, or often zero. While the number of exchange students from the United States has tripled during the past two

decades, it is still the case in every state that the number of exchange students from other countries is higher than the number sent overseas (Institute of International Education, 2013).

Finally, it was often noted by participants in this study that while there was a desire to return to the country of their exchange, it would not be possible either for academic or financial reasons. It would be interesting to conduct a longitudinal which tracked exchange students to consider the long-term impact of their programs, noting whether it turned out to be a singular experience, or one which directly correlated with their postgraduate degree or future employment.

## Reflection

When I was admitted to the doctoral program, prior to the fall 2010 semester, it was always intended that this dissertation would have an international flavor. However, the two research questions that were ultimately chosen did not begin to coalesce until the spring 2012 semester, when taking the Literature, Research & Professional Writing Seminar with Dr. Cintrón. The class, commonly referred to as "prospectus," represented a *fin de siècle* experience, representing the last time I would be with the students I consider to be my cohort in a classroom setting, and the beginning of the more solitary journey of dissertation writing. While the notional goal of the prospectus class is to write the first three chapters, a more realistic expectation is for the outline to be formed, but the 25-30 pages that I completed barely represented that. However, after much refinement, the two research questions were finalized, and I departed for my sabbatical at Keele University in England with a clear notion of what needed to be achieved, prior to my return to UCF.

The year at Keele, while beyond compare with regard to my personal life and the working environment in the Mathematics Department, did not allow as much time for dissertation writing as I had imagined, given the surprising (and humbling) way in which my colleagues assimilated me into their department. I was given high levels of responsibility, which meant that my duties took up much of my time, and it was not until the late spring of 2013 that my primary focus switched to gathering the necessary data in order to answer the research questions. That said, I was able to make significant progress once the academic year ended at Keele, and I returned to UCF with the initial draft of the first three chapters completed, having gathered all the data I needed from students in the UK. After making the changes recommended by my committee I was able to defend my proposal in October 2013, and set about collecting the remaining data in order to begin the process of analysis during the Christmas break.

Without question, however, the most pleasure I derived from writing this dissertation came from interviewing the 12 participants. Almost without exception, they were open, engaging, and very happy to discuss their current or former experiences as an exchange student. Many exuded the joy of the time they were having, or the reverie that comes with recounting a memorable experience from the past. It was therefore a pleasure to transcribe and interpret their words, and the quality of the interviews improved markedly during the process, no doubt due to me becoming more adept and comfortable with phenomenological inquiry. The first three chapters of this dissertation took almost two years to write, but once I began writing Chapter 4, the pace of progress increased significantly, to the point where several pages were written each week, and one day of every weekend was used to steadily progress towards the goal of completion.

While some would question the rationale and merit of a degree in Higher Education and Policy Studies for a faculty member in a mathematics department, I am extremely happy with the choice I made. Indeed, I am proud of not choosing a path of lesser resistance, and of putting forth the necessary time and effort (without asking for or receiving any special favors) to complete a program which merges my interests, my abilities, and my professional career. To write a dissertation involving the perceptions of international students with regard to aspects of undergraduate teaching ties in perfectly with my background and my current role in the UCF Mathematics Department, especially as the study abroad coordinator.

Since starting as a UCF faculty member in 2002, web-based learning has always been a subject of discussion and contention, and so the research question that pertained to this issue was a natural one for me to consider. However, I have been surprised and pleased to find that the teaching-research question alluded to by the second research question has also become more personal to me since beginning the doctoral program. I had little inclination to conduct academic research in the past, due to both a lack of interest and perceived inability, but since 2012 I have written or coauthored four research papers, two of the papers resulting from classes I have taught, which has given me a direct interest in the relationship between teaching and research. This development as an educational researcher is something I hope to continue, and therefore I do not see the completion of this dissertation, and the gaining of a doctoral degree as merely the end of a long journey; instead I view this qualification as the beginning of a new path where the skills and knowledge gained during the program can be used to seek out new challenges and accomplish new goals.

## Summary

Going beyond the discussion in Chapter 5 of the four primary themes generated by the data, this chapter looks at how the results of this study correlate with the established literature, which allows conclusions to be drawn, along with implications and recommendations for future research. The conclusions I made with regard to web-based learning center around how students want technology to be used by faculty in a moderated fashion, with a distinction drawn between the way in which faculty and institutions in the United States use web-based technology compared with their counterparts in the United Kingdom. With regard to the teaching-research nexus, I concluded that this study largely refutes the notion that contemporary faculty prioritize research to the detriment of undergraduate students, and that students (at least in this instance) believe the two disciplines to be integrated in the sense that they can positively affect each other. Due care was taken in emphasizing that these conclusions do not easily generalize to a broader population of students beyond those considered here, and the opportunities for further research are described.

# APPENDIX A
# PERMISSION TO USE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

**From:** Kelly Coate <kelly.coate@kcl.ac.uk>
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2014 2:25 PM
**To:** Griffiths, Barry
**Subject:** Re: Permission to use copyrighted material

Dear Mr Griffiths

I am very happy for you to reproduce the figure from our paper.
I wish you the best of luck with your PhD - it sounds very interesting!

All the best
Kelly

Dr Kelly Coate
King's Learning Institute
Assistant Director & Senior Lecturer in Higher Education
King's College London

---

**From:** Barry Griffiths <Barry.Griffiths@ucf.edu>
**Sent:** Monday, February 17, 2014 2:05 PM
**To:** Coate, Kelly
**Subject:** Permission to use copyrighted material

Dear Dr Coate,

I would be very grateful if you would grant permission for me to use a figure from one of your research papers as the theoretical framework for my Ph.D. dissertation, which will study perceptions of undergraduate teaching by current and former exchange students. One of my research questions involves the perceived relationship between teaching and research.

The paper in question is the following:

Coate, K., Barnett, R., & Williams, G. (2001). Relationships between teaching and research in higher education in England. *Higher Education Quarterly, 55*(2), 158-174.

I would like to use Figure 1 on page 165 titled "Relationships between teaching and research".

Sincerely,
Barry Griffiths

Ph.D. Candidate
College of Education
University of Central Florida

**From:** Rong-Jyue Fang <rxf26@mail.stust.edu.tw>
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2014 11:42 AM
**To:** Barry Griffiths
**Subject:** Re: Permission to use copyrighted material

Dear Mr. Barry Griffiths:

Hereby, on behalf of my research team, I authorize you the right to use Figure 1 on page 419 titled "Perception of Web-based Self-directed Learning Environment form factor", which originated from the article: Fang, R-J et al. (2008). Web-based self-directed learning environment and online learning apply on education. *WSEAS Transactions on Advances in Engineering Education, 5*(6), 417-426.

Wish you have a good academic performance in the long run!

Dr. Rong-Jyue Fang, Chair Professor
Information Management Department
College of Business and Management
Southern Taiwan University of Science & Technology

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**From:** Barry Griffiths <Barry.Griffiths@ucf.edu>
**Sent:** Monday, April 21, 2014 11:39 AM
**To:** Fang, Rong-Jyue
**Subject:** Permission to use copyrighted material

Dear Dr Fang,

I would be very grateful if you would grant permission for me to use a figure from one of your research papers as the theoretical framework for my Ph.D. dissertation, which will study perceptions of undergraduate teaching by current and former exchange students. One of my research questions involves the perceptions of web-based learning.

The paper in question is the following: Fang, R-J et al. (2008). Web-based self-directed learning environment and online learning apply on education. *WSEAS Transactions on Advances in Engineering Education, 5*(6), 417-426.

I would like to use Figure 1 on page 419 titled "Perception of Web-based Self-directed Learning Environment form factor".

Sincerely,
Barry Griffiths

Ph.D. Candidate
College of Education
University of Central Florida

# APPENDIX B
# INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

## Background Questions

A. Home institution
B. Institution visited during exchange program
C. Academic major
D. Class standing (sophomore, junior, etc.)

## Interview Questionnaire

Thank you for participation in this study. I am going to ask you a number of questions related to your time spent as an exchange student, and in particular your perceptions of the undergraduate teaching that you have received. I would be particularly interested if, when you answer the questions, you could draw comparisons with your home institution. The interview should last around 15 minutes, though I may ask you to elaborate on some of your responses to gain further insight.

1. How would you generally compare the standard of teaching at the two universities?
2. How would you compare the classroom atmosphere, and your ability to ask questions?
3. How would you compare the demeanor of faculty members?
4. Do you find that faculty use technology more or less in the UK compared with the US?
5. Did you find that there were there technologies that were used in one country but not the other?
6. Do you like generally like technology to be incorporated in the classroom?
7. What is your experience of web-based learning?
8. Can you describe the nature of the tasks that you completed online?
9. Have you ever felt that technology was used too much, to the detriment of a module?
10. Do you have any experience of undergraduate research?

11. Do you view teaching and research as being integrated (i.e. there is, or should be, an overlap between them) or independent (i.e. one does not, or should not influence the other)?
12. Do you think that research affects teaching, or teaching affects research? If so do you view the correlation positively or negatively?
13. Do faculty members explicitly mention their research in the classroom, either in the UK or the US?
14. Do you ever sense that faculty members care more about their research than their teaching?
15. Do you think that the research done by faculty members enhances the reputation of the university?
16. Overall, how would you rate your experience as an exchange student?
17. Did you feel that people were interested in you and your background?
18. What was the one aspect of British/American culture that you liked best?
19. What was the one aspect of British/American culture that you liked least?
20. Are you looking to return to the UK/US either for vacation/graduate school/employment?

# APPENDIX C
# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Keele University

**RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES**

4th July 2013

Barry Griffiths
School of Computing and Mathematics
Mackay Building

Dear Barry,

**Re: A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students**

Thank you for submitting your revised application for review.

I am pleased to inform you that your application has been approved by the Ethics Review Panel.

The following documents have been reviewed and approved by the panel as follows:

| Document | Version | Date |
|---|---|---|
| Summary of Proposal | 2 | 04/07/2013 |
| Letter of Invitation | 1 | 07/06/2013 |
| Information Sheet | 2 | 04/07/2013 |
| Consent Form | 1 | 07/06/2013 |
| Consent Form for use of quotes | 1 | 07/06/2013 |
| Interview Topic Guides | 2 | 04/07/2013 |

If the fieldwork goes beyond the date stated in your application 30th June 2014, you must notify the Ethical Review Panel via the ERP administrator at uso.erps@keele.ac.uk stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail.

If there are any other amendments to your study you must submit an 'application to amend study' form to the ERP administrator stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail. This form is available via http://www.keele.ac.uk/researchsupport/researchethics/

Research and Enterprise Services, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, UK
Telephone: + 44 (0)1782 734466 Fax: + 44 (0)1782 733740

Keele University

**RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE SERVICES**

**If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me via the ERP administrator on uso.erps@keele.ac.uk Stating ERP2 in the subject line of the e-mail.**

**Yours sincerely**

**Dr Colin Rigby**
**Chair – Ethical Review Panel**

**CC RI Manager**

Research and Enterprise Services, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG, UK
Telephone: + 44 (0)1782 734466 Fax: + 44 (0)1782 733740

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

# Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
**FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Barry J. Griffiths**

Date: **December 02, 2013**

Dear Researcher:

On 12/2/2013, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

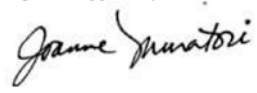
| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Review: | Exempt Determination |
| Project Title: | A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students |
| Investigator: | Barry J Griffiths |
| IRB Number: | SBE-13-09778 |
| Funding Agency: | |
| Grant Title: | |
| Research ID: | N/A |

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 12/02/2013 02:25:28 PM EST



IRB Coordinator

# APPENDIX D
# INFORMED CONSENT OF PARTICIPANTS

Keele University

# Information Sheet

**Study Title**
A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students

**Aims of the Research**
The research project aims to further the work that has been done looking at undergraduate teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom, using current and former exchange students as the lens for analysis.

**Invitation**
You are being invited to consider taking part in the research study *A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students*. This project is being undertaken by Barry J. Griffiths, Teaching Fellow, Department of Mathematics, Keele University.

Before you decide whether or not you wish to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read this information carefully and discuss it with friends and relatives if you wish. Ask if there is anything that is unclear or if you would like more information.

**Why have I been chosen?**
Participants have been selected based on their past experience as an exchange student either in the United States (in the case of British students) or the United Kingdom (in the case of American students).

**Do I have to take part?**
You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign two consent forms, one is for you to keep and the other is for our records. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time and without giving reasons.

**What will happen if I take part?**
You will participate in a semi-structured interview lasting approximately 15 minutes, during which you will answer questions asking you about your experiences of undergraduate teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom. The interview will be audio recorded.

**If I take part, what do I have to do?**
You will answer questions related to your experience of undergraduate teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom.

**What are the benefits (if any) of taking part?**
There are no foreseeable benefits.

**What are the risks (if any) of taking part?**
There are no foreseeable risks.

**How will information about me be used?**
All data gathered will be stored electronically, with the data consisting of responses to interviews. Participants in these studies will be assigned unique pseudonyms that are unrelated to their personal information and collected data. Background demographic information such as area of study and home university will be gathered from each participant at the time of the interview.

**Who will have access to information about me?**
For the security and privacy of study participants, all data will be password protected, and only accessible to the principal investigator.

I do however have to work within the confines of current legislation over such matters as privacy and confidentiality, data protection and human rights and so offers of confidentiality may sometimes be overridden by law. For example in circumstances whereby I am made aware of future criminal activity, abuse either to yourself or another (i.e. child or sexual abuse) or suicidal tendencies I must pass this information to the relevant authorities.

Data collected will be retained by the principal investigator for two years, before being secured disposed of. It will not be retained for use in future research studies.

**What if there is a problem?**
If you have a concern about any aspect of this study, you may wish to speak to the researcher(s) who will do their best to answer your questions. You should contact Barry J. Griffiths on b.j.griffiths@keele.ac.uk. Alternatively, if you do not wish to contact the researcher(s) you may contact Professor Graham Rogerson, Head of School, School of Computing and Mathematics, Keele University. E-mail: g.a.rogerson@keele.ac.uk

If you remain unhappy about the research and/or wish to raise a complaint about any aspect of the way that you have been approached or treated during the course of the study please write to Nicola Leighton who is the University's contact for complaints regarding research at the following address:-

Nicola Leighton
Research Governance Officer
Research & Enterprise Services
Dorothy Hodgkin Building
Keele University
ST5 5BG
E-mail: n.leighton@uso.keele.ac.uk
Tel: 01782 733306

Keele University

# CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students

**Name and contact details of Principal Investigator:** Barry J. Griffiths, Department of Mathematics, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG.Tel: (01782) 733414. E-mail: b.j.griffiths@keele.ac.uk

| | | **Please tick box if you agree with the statement** |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions. | ☐ |
| 2 | I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. | ☐ |
| 3 | I agree to take part in this study. | ☐ |
| 4 | I understand that data collected about me during this study will be anonymised before it is submitted for publication. | ☐ |
| 5 | I agree to the interview being audio recorded | ☐ |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Name of participant | Date | Signature |
| Researcher | Date | Signature |



PLEASE COMPLETE:
Version No: 1
Date: 7th June, 2013

ERP312

Keele University

# CONSENT FORM
## (for use of quotes)

**Title of Project:** A Phenomenological Analysis of Undergraduate Teaching in the United States and the United Kingdom from the Perspective of Current and Former Exchange Students

Name and contact details of Principal Investigator: Barry J. Griffiths, Department of Mathematics, Keele University, Staffordshire, ST5 5BG.Tel: (01782) 733414. E-mail: b.j.griffiths@keele.ac.uk

**Please tick box if you agree with the statement**

1 I agree for any quotes to be used ☐

2 I do not agree for any quotes to be used ☐

| Name of participant | Date | Signature |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

| Researcher | Date | Signature |
|---|---|---|
| | | |



PLEASE COMPLETE:
Version No: 1
Date: 7th June, 2013

ERP312

## Informed Consent for an Adult in a Non-Exempt Research Study

Principal Investigator: Barry J. Griffiths, M.A.

Investigational Site: University of Central Florida, Department of Mathematics

**Introduction:** Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 6 people at UCF. You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a current or former exchange student. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is Barry Griffiths of the Department of Mathematics at the University of Central Florida. He is being guided by Dr. J. Thomas Owens, a UCF faculty supervisor in the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD).

**What you should know about a research study:**

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

**Purpose of the research study:** The purpose of this study is to investigate the way in which current and former exchange students perceive undergraduate teaching.

**What you will be asked to do in the study:** You will be asked to answer some general questions about your experience as an exchange student, as well as specific questions related to the relationship between teaching and research, and the role of technology in undergraduate teaching. All of your answers will be made in private, and none of the other participants will be aware of your answers. Your task will be performed by orally answering questions.

**Location:** The study will be conducted in the Department of Mathematics.

**Time required:** We expect that you will be in this research study for approximately twenty minutes.

**Audio taping:** You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will not be able to participate in the study. Discuss this with the researcher or a research team member. If you are audio taped, the tape will be kept in a locked, safe place. The tape will be erased or destroyed when the study is complete, which is anticipated to be no later than the end of 2014.

**Funding for this study:** There is no funding for this study.

**Risks:** There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study.

**Benefits:** There are no expected benefits to you for taking part in this study.

**Compensation or payment:** There is no compensation or other payment to you for taking part in this study.

**Confidentiality:** We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy. Organizations that may inspect and copy your information include the IRB and other representatives of UCF.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you talk to Dr. J. Thomas Owens, Director, Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD), (407) 823-4280 or james.owens@ucf.edu.

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901. You may also talk to them for any of the following:

- Your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team.
- You cannot reach the research team.
- You want to talk to someone besides the research team.
- You want to get information or provide input about this research.

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