

SPORT MANAGEMENT

“Students Are the Reason Most of Us Have Jobs”: Sport Management Faculty Members’ Perceptions of and Attitudes Toward Students

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Abstract

Sport management is one of the fastest growing disciplines on college campuses nationwide. Its multifaceted nature suggests that it has a unique blend of students with broad ranging interests. To ensure student success, it is important to understand faculty attitudes toward students. There are two predominant attitudes toward students that occur along a spectrum: conservative-autocratic and liberal-democratic. The conservative-autocratic attitude is characterized by traditional classroom authority, class discipline, and placing little emphasis in the encouragement of autonomy within their students. Liberal-democratic attitudes are characterized by the belief that students should be treated as individuals and can be self-directed in their learning. Liberal-democratic attitudes have been positively correlated with the academic success of students. Utilizing Ng’s (2002) Teachers’ Attitudes Toward Students scale (TATS) scale and informed

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by McGregor's (1960) X and Y managerial models of motivation, this study explored sport management faculty attitudes toward students. This study used a mixed methods approach, and 166 sport management faculty members participated in this study. Although the results indicate that the participants prefer adopting liberal-democratic approach in their teaching, older faculty members and tenure-track faculty members were significantly more likely to exhibit conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students. As such, faculty members need to be aware that some circumstances may impact teaching effectiveness and directly influence student outcomes.

Sport management is one of the fastest growing disciplines in American universities. The necessity for specialized education in sport management was recognized as early as 1966 when Ohio University established the first sport management program. In 2003, 166 institutions recognized by the North American Society for Sport Management (NASSM) housed sport management programs (Jones et al., 2008). By 2012, NASSM indicated there were over 300 sport management degree programs (Schwab et al., 2013). As of September 2020, NASSM (n.d.) lists over 700 graduate and undergraduate sport management programs at over 530 institutions of higher learning in the United States.

Sport management espouses health, socialization, socioeconomic development, and identity in ways that are unique to the field while having positive public outcomes (Chalip, 2006). To establish the legitimacy of sport management as its own field, it is necessary to find relevancy in existing theories from other disciplines, including psychology and, more specifically, pedagogy (Chalip, 2006). One element of pedagogy that deserves greater exploration is the attitudes and perceptions that faculty hold about students. Relationships between faculty and students are paramount to the success of students in many disciplines across universities and time (Baker & Griffin, 2010; Bordes-Edgar et al., 2011; Kuh & Hu, 2001). However, sport management faculty attitudes toward students have not been specifically assessed. Due to the unique multifaceted nature of sport management, these attitudes may manifest differently in this field of study than in others. Sport management faculty attitudes toward students must be better understood, as such perceptions can directly influence learning outcomes (Ng, 2002).

As Ng (2002) proposed, attitudes toward students occur on a spectrum. This spectrum ranges from conservative-autocratic to liberal-democratic. Faculty with conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students believe that students are expected to respect authority and that those who do not cooperate should be disciplined (Heyder & Kessels, 2015; Ng, 2002; Smith, 2017). Research demonstrates that students taught by conservative-autocratic instructors exhibit lower confidence, have a lower sense of self-worth, and have low rapport with their faculty (Ng, 2002; Webb & Barrett, 2014). Faculty with liberal-democratic attitudes toward students believe students to be capable of independence and self-direction in their learning. They may use a more personal approach in interactions with students (Kauts, 2016; Ng, 2002). Students taught by faculty with liberal-democratic attitudes have been shown to be more creative and independent and enjoy being challenged (Ng, 2002; Reeve et al., 2018).

On a deeper level, these attitudes are rooted in the faculty-held beliefs regarding the motivations of students. Conservative-autocratic attitudes are predicted by the conscious or subconscious belief in McGregor's Theory X, which states that students are unmotivated to learn and require extrinsic incentives to complete coursework. Alternatively, a liberal-democratic attitude is predicted by a similar belief in Theory Y, which states that students are self-directed and intrinsically motivated in their learning. By measuring the attitude dyad, researchers have identified not only the attitude and resulting teaching style but also the underlying perceptions of student motivations (Ng, 2002; Rao, 2016).

Within the field of sport management, research has examined the academic preparation of sport management faculty (e.g., Dittmore et al., 2007; Mahony et al., 2006), mentoring relationships (Baker et al., 2019), experiential learning (Sattler, 2018), and work motivation and job satisfaction (Stokowski et al., 2018). However, a paucity of research exists regarding sport management faculty attitudes toward students, which have tremendous impacts on learning outcomes. Informed by the conservative-autocratic/liberal-democratic dyad as developed by Ng (2002) and its basis in McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Y, this study examined sport management faculty

attitudes toward students. Specifically, this study strived to answer the following research questions:

- **RQ1:** To what extent do sport management faculty exhibit conservative-autocratic or liberal-democratic attitudes toward students?
- **RQ2:** Which factors predict the degree to which sport management faculty exhibit conservative-autocratic or liberal-democratic attitudes toward students?

Importance of Student–Faculty Relationships

Student success must be an essential factor in all institutional work and decision-making (Drake, 2011). In academia, faculty are the experts who possess both skills and content knowledge that students need to be successful. Faculty can form conceptual frameworks and facilitate learning of new content to their students (Coil et al., 2010). Students gain their information primarily through interactions with faculty who determine if students are appropriately conquering that knowledge (Murray et al., 2008). As Bain et al. (2011) identified, student success is linked to “(a) department culture, (b) student–faculty relationships, (c) financial support, (d) student involvement and (e) program satisfaction” (p. 3). The focus of this study is the second tenet of this theory. Student–faculty interactions can moderate self-confidence, retention, and ultimately academic success (Komarraju et al., 2010).

Self-Confidence

Student–faculty interactions are mediated by respect and approachability (Micari & Pazos, 2012). Respect and approachability are developed through investment. Respect is a key component in developing self-confidence in students (Scott, 2017). Self-confidence and subsequently respect can be fostered through healthy and positive student–faculty interactions. Faculty who voice care and concern for students, as if they have an investment in them not only as students but also as human beings, contribute positively to the construction of respect between faculty and student. This investment demonstrates to the student that professors want the student to succeed and will do everything possible to help in that success (Bain et al., 2011). Further, Zepke and Leach (2010) reported that students will be committed to working harder, be more willing to express

their opinions, and benefit more from sessions if they perceive faculty to be approachable and respectful. Investment through respect and approachability is foundational in the creation of mutually beneficial student–faculty interactions and is positively associated with academic success. Student–faculty interactions take many forms, and the context of the interaction is key to the construction of approachability and respect.

Student–faculty interactions are generally considered to be either formal or informal. Formal interactions include email, course lectures, syllabi, and instructions. Informal interactions include conversations with students during office hours, before class, or after class and social media interactions. Positive formal relationships between students and faculty increase reports of ethnic minorities feeling more comfortable in their educational program (Meeuwisse et al., 2010). However, formal contact is not the only type of interaction that is important for students. According to Micari and Pazos (2012), there was a significant relationship between persistence in college and informal contact with faculty in first-year students. Thus, both types of interactions between faculty and students are critical in developing and exhibiting respect and approachability, which may ultimately culminate in a greater sense of self-confidence for the student. Faculty, then, should seriously consider the context of each interaction when engaging with students to foster student success.

Retention

According to Fowler and Boylan (2010), student retention and engagement are positively associated with the successful student's relationship with faculty members. Zepke and Leach (2010) believe students will be more likely to engage with faculty who create appealing learning environments, challenge their students, and demand high standards, all while making themselves available to discuss academic progress. Komarraju et al (2010) addressed similar findings in that faculty who initiated relationships with their students increased the engagement and retention of such students. The degree to which faculty interact with their students also plays a key role in the level of engagement. Greater frequency of student–faculty interaction has been positively correlated with a more engaged student body (Micari & Pazos, 2012). Cooperative learning environments in which faculty have greater quality of interactions have also been positively

associated with retention and persistence in college (Meeuwisse et al., 2010; Micari & Pazos, 2012). Komarraju et al. (2010) suggests that even without such learning environments, students are more likely to feel more satisfied and remain enrolled if they are successful in having a close relationship with at least one faculty member.

Academic Success

Finally, student academic success in higher education as it is measured via course grades, test performance, and GPA is positively associated with greater positive student–faculty interaction (Al-Hussami et al., 2011; Cung et al., 2018; Kim & Sax, 2009). Not only the general study body benefits greatly from positive student–faculty interactions, but also the subpopulations within it, including students who have been marginalized historically (Schreiner et al., 2011). First-year students who felt their academic pursuits were supported by faculty were significantly more likely to show an improvement in academic performance than students who did not have such support (Zepke & Leach, 2010). While good interactions with faculty have positive downstream consequences, negative interactions with faculty predictably have the opposite impact.

Negative interactions with faculty deleteriously affect students' decisions to seek further assistance (Murray et al., 2008). Students may also feel alienated and distant from faculty members as a result of poor or unpleasant interactions. Students who perceive faculty to not care for them or their learning report feelings of discouragement and apathy as well (Komarraju et al., 2010). It is then critical for the academic success of college students that student–faculty interactions be on average positive experiences for the student.

What, then, determines the nature of a student–faculty interaction? Ng (2002) proposed that the worldview of faculty, including how faculty perceive student motivation, plays a key role. Perception includes sensory information obtained through experiential observation. Perception data and other factors combine to form a person's attitude toward students generally and attitudes have real-world impacts on the quality of the student–faculty interaction (Hor & Ng, 2005; Ng, 2002).

Faculty Attitudes Toward Students

An attitude is a psychological tendency toward an evaluative response, generally liking or disliking of an object or a person (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Attitudes can be formed in many different ways. They can form as a result of a summative process—constructed from feelings about the elements of an object. They can be formed from social learning—other people tell a person what to like or dislike. They can be formed via classical conditioning—positive or negative association with an object that becomes paired enough times to create an attitude, or it can be genetic. The attitudes that faculty develop toward students are equally as complex and can be formed in as many ways.

As Ng (2002) found, age, mentor, and experiences have an impact on faculty attitudes toward students. Examples of common attitudes toward students include the attitudes that student athletes are not strong students (Baucom & Lantz, 2001; Engstrom et al., 1995), that international graduate students are good students (Trice, 2003), and that female sport management students are more suited for positions in a women's professional basketball league compared to their male counterparts (Grappendorf & Burton, 2016). Ng noted that these attitudes can be categorized into two separate but broad categories: conservative-autocratic and liberal-democratic.

Faculty attitudes toward students can be viewed on a continuum from the belief that students can be self-directed and motivated in their learning (liberal-democratic) to the belief that students need structure and extrinsic reward to complete their work (conservative-autocratic; Amoura et al., 2015; Ng, 2002). These attitudes are critical, yet few faculty understand their bias in reference to these attitudes (Markwell, 2004). Faculty attitudes toward students are correlated not only with their teaching style but also their perceptions of students generally. Rooted within their attitudes exist their beliefs about the motivational states of students and thus characteristics of students generally. The conservative-autocratic/liberal-democratic attitude dyad rests upon the perceptions of students and McGregor's Theory X and Y, which is a theory not only of management but also of human nature generally.

Liberal-democratic attitudes are associated with adopting students' perspectives, welcoming students' thoughts, and supporting autonomous self-regulation (Reeve, 2009). Faculty who follow Theory Y may be more likely to exhibit liberal-democratic attitudes toward students and treat students as unique individuals (Ng, 2002). Ng (2002) purported that teachers can in fact meet those three needs in accordance with Theory Y via supporting personal autonomy, become interpersonally involved with students, and providing challenging tasks for students.

Demonstrations of the liberal-democratic attitude may include nurturing inner motivations, providing rationale to answers, using noncontrolling informative speech, and displaying patience (Reeve, 2009). Faculty with liberal-democratic attitudes may exert less control in the classroom and may even have a less regimented course schedule, allowing for discussion and dialogue (Markwell, 2004). Students of instructors who hold a liberal-democratic attitude report being more curious, more independent in their learning, and more committed to learning objectives (Ng, 2002). The liberal-democratic attitude is more often associated with positive academic outcomes such as increased academic performance and motivation to learn (Markwell, 2004; Rao, 2016).

Alternatively, faculty who believe students are lazy, unmotivated, and lack work ethic are more likely to have a conservative-autocratic attitude toward students (Heyder & Kessels, 2015; Ng, 2002; Smith, 2017). Those who share the conservative-autocratic view often feel that hard work and meeting the goals outlined by the instructor are vital to learning (Heyder & Kessels, 2015; Ng, 2002; Smith, 2017). Conservative-autocratic attitude is operationalized through relying on extrinsic sources of motivation, neglecting rationales, using pressuring speech, and displaying impatience for students to produce the right answer (Reeve, 2009). Students subject to a conservative-autocratic attitude report feeling less connected to teachers, lower confidence in their own abilities, and decreased ambition in further educational pursuits (Ng, 2002).

Again, these attitudes exist on a spectrum and faculty can vary to the degree by which they hold such attitudes. Students are perceptive and can identify which attitude a faculty member may hold (Grolnick & Ryan, 1989). It is unlikely that faculty hold both attitudes at the

same time, however. Amoura et al. (2015) and Rao (2016) found independence of the two attitudes in higher education. The degree to which a faculty member holds a certain attitude is directly related to their perception of students. These perceptions, in this context, are rooted in the believed motivational states of students. For the purposes of this study in replication of Ng's (2002) methodology, McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Y serve as the perceptions (sensory information) upon which the conservative-autocratic/liberal-democratic attitudes are formed.

McGregor's Theory X and Y

McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Y are polarized views of motivational states. The theories jointly hold that professors and instructors act as managers in the classroom and guide students to learning objectives of the course (McGregor, 1960). However, to act in a certain way and hold either a conservative-autocratic attitude or a liberal-democratic attitude, faculty must first perceive students to be a certain way.

Theory X assumes that the average student does not like work, lacks drive, and requires extrinsic incentive to motivate action (McGregor, 1960). Faculty beholden consciously or subconsciously to Theory X are typically more traditional, older, tenured, or mentored by faculty who held such views. Theory X believers may be considered to hold conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students. Theory X posits that grades serve as the extrinsic reason for students to complete work. Theory X also suggests that those who misbehave are punished or embarrassed and thus seen as an undesirable model for classroom learning (Noland, 2014).

Theory Y assumes that the average student enjoys work and that students are capable of exercising self-direction and self-control in relation to learning objectives (McGregor, 1960). Students of those who utilize Theory Y report being more curious, more independent in their learning, and more committed to learning objectives (Ng, 2002). McGregor's Theory Y encourages faculty to meet the three basic psychological needs of students as suggested by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 2008): autonomy, competence, and relatedness. While Theory X uses grades as the extrinsic reason for student action in the classroom, Theory Y assumes that the intrinsic motivation behind student action is the joy of learning.

Several studies have examined these perceptions directly and as Theory X and Y closely overlap with the attitudes of concern in this study, the results of such studies are telling. In a study of 260 faculty, Rao (2016) found that most faculty either consciously or subconsciously hold a Theory Y perception to a general degree (54%) or to an extreme degree (24%), whereas only roughly 20% of faculty have a Theory X perception. Similarly, Markwell (2004) also found that more faculty perceived students to be self-directed and motivated but acknowledged that the degree to which they were Theory X or Y varied and had an impact on their classroom practices. Faculty who are more Theory X oriented are more likely to be controlling in the classroom and have a more regimented syllabus, have less interactive classes, and prefer a traditional lecture format (Markwell, 2004). Theory Y faculty on the other hand usually use less structure in their classes and are more open to a two-way dialogue while using discussion as a key element to academic success in the classroom (Markwell, 2004). Theory Y generally has a more positive outcome for students in terms of academic success, retention, and satisfaction (Hor & Ng, 2005; Ng, 2002; Rao, 2016).

Previous Research Using TATS

The Teachers' Attitude Toward Students (TATS) scale assesses the degree to which a faculty member views students through the Theory X lens or the Theory Y lens with the assumption that those who see students as lazy or unmotivated (Theory X) and need discipline are conservative-autocratic in their attitudes toward students. The TATS scale was developed to measure teachers' attitudes toward students on the continuum from conservative-autocratic to liberal-democratic based on McGregor's Theory X and Y (Ng, 2002). TATS has been used for this purpose in two studies (Hor & Ng, 2005; Ng, 2002). Ng (2002) initiated this dyadic interaction in primary and secondary school teachers and found that the more experienced a teacher is, the more conservative-autocratic they are. In replication of this, Hor and Ng (2005) assessed the attitudes of primary school teachers and found that most primary school teachers were liberal-democratic in their approach. Unfortunately, there has been very little utilization of this scale in higher education, presumably because of the lack of distinction between perceptions (McGregor's Theory X and Y) and attitudes (conservative-autocratic/liberal-democratic).

This study intentionally clarifies that distinction and allows for a greater understanding of the attitudes to be developed via a mixed methodology.

Sport Management Faculty

This contribution along with the dearth of research on sport management faculty attitudes toward students will provide greater understanding of the relationships between them so that ideal student outcomes may be more precisely aimed at. Little research exists on sport management faculty perceptions of sport management students. However, the research that does exist on sport management faculty indicates that autonomy is key in maintaining motivation and job satisfaction of faculty, perhaps insinuating that a liberal-democratic attitude toward faculty may be most beneficial (Stokowski et al., 2018). Many sport management faculty implement experiential learning in their classrooms as well, again indicating some demonstration of the liberal-democratic attitude in sport management faculty (Sattler, 2018). This evidence indicates that similar to the findings of Hor and Ng (2005) and Ng (2002), the findings in this study might show that sport management faculty have a liberal-democratic attitude toward students.

Method

Data Collection and Sample

One of the aims of this study was to examine sport management faculty members' perceptions of and attitudes toward teaching. In order to study the target population, NASSM's list of global sport management programs were used. Researchers visited program websites and obtained email addresses of sport management faculty. A total of 1200 email addresses were obtained. An invitational email containing an online survey link was sent out by researchers for inviting faculty members to participate in this study. In order to increase the response rate, a following email was also sent two weeks after the first invitational email.

A total of 193 sport management faculty members participated this study, with a response rate of 16%. After 27 responses were discarded due to excessive missing values, 166 valid questionnaires were obtained and analyzed. The mean age of participating faculty

in this study was 46.58 years, 66.9% of the respondents were male, and the majority of the participants worked at public institutions (65.7%). Of the respondents, 63.9% worked at teaching institutions and 80.7% were White.

Measurement

To answer the research question, we utilized the TATS scale, which consists of two subscales (Ng, 2002). The first subscale measures the conservative-autocratic teaching style, and the second subscale measures the liberal-democratic attitude of teachers. Each subscale consists of eight items, which were answered on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*). Both subscales have adequate reliabilities from .65 to .76. For more in-depth thoughts about faculty perceptions, an open-ended question about the overall experience of faculty in teaching was also included in the distributed survey.

Data Analysis

The data analysis was conducted via SPSS 22.0. First, a series of independent *t* tests was conducted for examining whether there were differences among sport management faculty TATS scores in terms of their gender, age groups, types of funding of institutions (private/public), and types of institutions (teaching/research). Second, to measure whether tenure status impacted faculty TATS scores, we also conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Content analysis was used for analyzing the open-ended question pertaining to each respondent's teaching experience. Open coding was utilized (Merriam, 2009) and Sarah Stokowski, Bo Li, and N. Shelby Hutchens analyzed the participant responses.

Results

Quantitative Data

We measured the extent to which sport management faculty members were conservative-autocratic in their attitudes toward students and the means of this section of the scale ($M = 2.69$, $SD = .81$) indicated that they were in the middle. The faculty were asked whether their teaching style was more liberal-democratic and the results show that all participating faculty prefer adopting liberal-democratic approach in their teaching (see Table 1).

Table 1
Results of TATS Scale

Item	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Conservative-autocratic	2.69	.81
1. Teachers should have absolute authority in class; students should obey the teacher without fail.	2.91	1.15
2. A revival of the teacher's authority is needed, otherwise students will lose respect for teachers.	2.87	1.14
3. The traditional moral standards of society should be ingrained in students without fail, otherwise they will go astray.	2.78	1.10
4. Teachers should ensure [that] students understand their proper place, i.e. I'm the teacher, you're the student, you must obey what I say.	2.58	1.10
5. Training students to behave properly is more important than developing their creativity.	2.22	1.05
6. In teaching students, the most critical task is to instill the right discipline in them.	2.48	1.11
7. Students shouldn't be entrusted with too much freedom, as they'll climb over the teacher's head.	2.21	1.06
8. Students should maintain a proper distance from their teachers, e.g., they should address him/her in a respectful manner.	3.46	1.11
Liberal-democratic	3.32	.56
1. Teachers should adopt an open and democratic attitude in class; students should be able to challenge what he/she says.	3.95	.70
2. Teachers should reason with misbehaving students, instead of punishing them.	3.11	.99
3. Teachers should "open negotiation" with students, e.g., on how much work he/she can give them.	2.40	1.02
4. What is needed is a sensitive teacher who can develop good rapport with his/her students.	3.59	.93
5. In teaching students, the most important thing is to nurture their creativity and individual talents.	3.68	.97
6. Teachers should reduce their personal distance with students by sharing intimate details, e.g., birthday, favorite pop star, etc.	2.86	1.00
7. The traditional moral standards of society should not just be accepted by students; they should learn to critique it.	3.60	.89
8. Teachers should not use threats and punishments to control the behavior of students.	3.35	1.01

Results of the independent *t* tests indicated that age was a significant factor, as faculty whose ages were above that of the mean ($n = 69, M = 2.19, SD = .092$) were more likely to exhibit conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students, $t(164) = 7.955, p < 0.01$, compared to younger faculty members ($n = 97, M = 3.04, SD = .063$; see Table 2).

Table 2
Results of Differences in TATS Between Different Age Groups

Attitude and age	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Conservative-autocratic				7.955*	164	< .001
Younger	67	3.04	.063			
Older	99	2.19	.092			
Liberal-democratic				.275	164	.784
Younger	67					
Older	99					

There was a significant difference in conservative-autocratic in terms of faculty tenure status, $F(2, 163) = 7.81, p = 0.01$ (see Table 3). Post hoc analyses were conducted given the statistically significant omnibus ANOVA *F* test. Specifically, Tukey HSD tests were conducted on all possible pairwise comparisons. The following pairs of groups were found to be significant different ($p < .05$). The conservative-autocratic mean of tenure-track faculty ($n = 49, M = 3.05, SD = .72$) was significantly higher than that of tenured faculty ($n = 71, M = 2.48, SD = .73$) and non-tenure-track faculty ($n = 46, M = 2.63, SD = .89$). There were not significant differences between tenure-track, tenured, and non-tenure-track faculty in reference to their liberal-democratic attitudes toward students, $F(2, 163) = .734, p = .482$.

However, results of independent *t* tests revealed no significant difference between male faculty and female faculty in terms of their conservative-autocratic behaviors and their liberal-democratic behaviors. Also, no significant difference was found between faculty in public institutions and faculty in private institutions in their attitudes in teaching. Faculty working in research institutions and teaching institutions were also not different in their attitudes.

Table 3
Results of SMF Differences in TATS Between Tenure Statuses

Attitude and tenure status	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
Conservative-autocratic				7.81	2, 163	.001
Tenured	71	2.48	.73			
Tenure-track	49	3.05	.72			
Non-tenure-track	46	2.63	.89			
Liberal-democratic				.734	2, 163	.482
Tenured	71	3.37	.62			
Tenure-track	49	3.25	.49			
Non-tenure-track	46	3.29	.54			

Qualitative Data

Three main themes appeared in the content analysis of the open-ended question pertaining to faculty teaching experience: respect, authority, and caring.

Many participants (34%) valued the importance of respect in developing the relationship between a faculty member and a student. Participant 5 mentioned that respecting students could enhance the mutual trust between two parties: “I have learned to trust those who are trustworthy. Sometimes students are influenced by who is around them and discipline is instilled early in the learning process, so creativity can blossom when knowledge is gained.” However, multiple faculty cited an ever-increasing lack of respect in the classroom. Participant 43 explained, “I am not a tyrant, but I do demand a certain modicum of respect. With that I also nurture creativity. I do not think they are mutually exclusive.” Participant 24 also noted that students’ behavior has changed nowadays, as “more and more students behave like a customer.”

Caring is another theme that was often mentioned by participating sport management faculty. Participant 32 believes that increasing students’ satisfaction is crucial in higher education. The participant noted, “Academics need to recognize that the students are the reason most of us have jobs.” Caring for students was mentioned as an effective approach to developing the relationship. Participant 60 explained, “When positive connections are made, and caring exists,

teacher-to-student and student-to-student relationships help the educational processes during class. By caring for students, they will care about their learning and understand the professor is ‘there for them.’”

Some participants mentioned that establishing authority in the classroom is also critical in teaching. Participant 13 stated that students have their right to voice their opinions in classroom, but “there MUST be a certain level of respect in that the student recognizes the authority of the professor.” Participant 50 also supported this opinion, mentioning that authority matters to a professor in the classroom, but the authority should be established through their base of knowledge rather than their role of being a teacher.

Discussion

As predicted by previous studies, older faculty were more likely to exhibit conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students than were younger faculty (Ng, 2002). One reason for this, as proposed by Participant 24, is that the model of higher education is changing and modern students behave much like customers. A customer service model has taken over many institutions, and as Participant 32 pointed out, students are the reasons that many academics remain employed (Tomlinson, 2017). These results are emblematic of a real-world dilemma that higher education more generally faces: Traditionalists in higher education cling to the educational model where professors professed and students absorbed as much as they could while younger professors have adjusted their attitudes to the new business model and attempt to appease the customers (Tomlinson, 2017).

Tenure-track faculty were also more likely to exhibit a conservative-autocratic style than both already tenured faculty and non-tenure-track faculty. Mentorship may play a key role in the attitude formation of tenure-track faculty (Davis et al., 2011). The requirements and expectations of departments may also affect the attitude formation of tenure-track faculty. Michel et al. (2018) found that tenure-track faculty in the social sciences such as sport management expect more out of their students, as such disciplines focus more on broad general knowledge and student development than factual memorization.

Contextual factors such as institution type, public or private, and gender did not have a statistical impact on faculty attitudes toward students. However, it appears that the differentiation among attitudes is much more dependent on the classroom environment and subject matter than on any binary category (Michel et al., 2018). Other contextual factors were addressed in response to the open-ended question at the end of the survey, where three themes emerged: respect, authority, and caring. Two such themes, respect and caring, are strongly associated with the liberal-democratic teaching style, whereas authority is associated with the conservative-autocratic model and traditional classroom atmosphere as Ng (2002) originally suggested.

Theory Y and the liberal-democratic style is supported by self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), which promotes autonomy, competence, and relatedness as the three needs of students that must be met by faculty if students are to engage in class. Respect and caring are deeply intertwined with the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Need-supportive teaching leads to higher GPA and higher levels of autonomous motivation (Wallace et al., 2014). Faculty who support autonomy, competence, and relatedness may be more successful in motivating their students to productivity (Lyness et al., 2013). Research on self-determination theory indicates that students who are provided more avenues of autonomy report having positive relationships with instructors and peers alike (Ruzek et al., 2016).

As several participants mentioned, developing and requiring respect is key. Respect for the instructor is generated when the instructor provides opportunities for students to act autonomously (Wallace et al., 2014). Autonomy is supported when the instructor eliminates any sense of coercion in the classroom and provides students with choice (Niemic & Ryan, 2009). Several participants indicated that it is important for students to feel that professors care about them. By making students feel that the faculty member cares about them, the faculty member establishes relationships and becomes more approachable. Developing relationships with students and investing in them nourishes feelings of relatedness as posited by self-determination theory (Ng, 2002). Faculty may also be able to provide emotional support through these relationships, which

further strengthens students' sense of relatedness to the professor (Ruzek et al., 2016). Caring and respect as part of the liberal-democratic teaching style fulfill the psychological needs of students better and may be more effective in the classroom.

Authority is generally considered deleterious to the development and motivation of students (Cheong et al., 2016). However, as Participant 50 indicated, authority should be established based on knowledge, not just classroom hierarchy. Assumption of authority based solely on the relationship between professor and student has a negative effect on the classroom environment and may also have a negative impact on the psychological needs of students (Cheong et al., 2016).

Realistically, students may be more responsive to each theory at various points in the semester (Noland, 2014). Extrinsic incentive may be required for some individuals and not for others in any particular context. The more frequently a professor can attempt to meet the psychological needs of their students, the more motivated their students may be, but exclusively utilizing one teaching style over another is not realistic, which is perhaps evident in the data, considering the mean scores for each scale was within a few deviations of each scales midpoint. Future research needs to determine if this is a unique trend in sport management faculty and social science faculty, or if, in fact, this is a trend in every college department. Mentorship may also be a reason that tenure-track faculty identified with conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students; however, further research is needed on the topic. Future research should also investigate the relationship between autonomy and respect. It is apparent that autonomy is the most important psychological need of students; however, its relationship with generating and maintaining respect is unclear.

Practical Implications

This study replicated the results of Ng (2002) in higher education and more specifically within sport management faculty. Older faculty and tenure-track faculty were more likely to hold conservative-autocratic attitudes toward students, thus assuming that students need extrinsic motivation to complete tasks in the classroom. As also predicted, younger faculty exhibited liberal-democratic attitudes toward students; this is great, as such attitudes are correlated

positively with student success including retention, test scores, and GPA (Markwell, 2004; Rao, 2016). This is a potential problem, as conservative-autocratic attitudes are negatively correlated with student success, and if higher education is to promote student success, administrators should work with faculty to ensure they retain the liberal-democratic attitude they appear to start with. Educators should do their best to be cognizant of this change in attitude and not allow external pressures to impact teaching.

Future Research

Future studies should investigate why and how attitudes toward students change over the course of a faculty member's career. Is the nature of higher education and the publish-or-perish mindset having a deleterious impact on faculty attitudes toward students? It is unclear and requires further investigation. Future research should also identify the most effective way of sustaining the beneficial liberal-democratic attitude toward students over the course of a faculty member's career. More research is also needed as to the ability of faculty to identify their own attitudinal shifts over time to determine if it is even possible for faculty to be aware of their own changing attitudes. Further, tenure-track faculty members in sport management should be of interest to future researchers. It is important that tenure-track faculty receive classroom support to help develop these individuals into effective teachers.

Limitations

This study is limited by the sample size ($N = 166$) and response rate (16%). Another limitation of this study is the lack of previous literature supporting the use of the TATS measure. However, we believe this scale to be useful in categorizing faculty attitudes toward students broadly, but future studies should include other measures of attitude scales for comparison. Further, response rate on the non-forced response open-ended question on teaching resulted in a low response rate, resulting in few overlapping thematic categories for analysis.

Conclusion

Faculty members play large roles in the academic performance and retention of students (Baker & Griffin, 2010). Two particular

attitudes toward students—liberal-democratic and conservative-autocratic—have different impacts in the classroom. Tenure-track faculty are statistically more likely to identify with conservative-autocratic attitudes than are non-tenure-track and tenured faculty. All three faculty groups identify with the liberal-democratic attitude more so than the conservative-autocratic. Liberal-democratic attitudes are more apt to meet the psychological needs of students, which faculty in this study identified as important.

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