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Part-Time Instructors and Faculty-Student Interaction: A Study of Perception and Practice in the Community College Classroom

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Part-Time Instructors and Faculty-Student Interaction:

A Study of Perception and Practice in the Community College Classroom

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Dustin Black

2019

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Part-Time Instructors and Faculty-Student Interaction:

A Study of Perception and Practice in the Community College Classroom

by

Dustin Black

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angles, 2019

Professor Mark Kevin Eagan Jr., Chair

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine part-time (PT) community college instructors' experiences with (and perceptions of) faculty-student interaction in their classrooms, and to describe the extent to which these faculty participate in (and benefit from) professional development activities aimed at improving those interactions. I administered online surveys to roughly equivalent samples of PT and part-time faculty (39 total), then conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of ten adjuncts from one Southern California campus. To explore their perceptions and reported practices related to classroom FSI, I posed the following research questions: 1) How do part-time community college faculty perceive their in-

class faculty-student interaction? 2) What institutional, departmental, and external barriers and opportunities influence classroom interactions according to part-time faculty?

Through a sequential process of comparative, pattern/focus, and axial coding, I developed themes that led to primary and secondary findings. The study's primary findings centered on part-time instructors' self-reported roles in fostering high-quality classroom FSI, which were focused on selective personal disclosure, employing social skills & subject expertise to mentor students, varying attitudes toward faculty/student power differentials, and the degree to which their FSI is marked by a balance between building connections and negotiating boundaries. Secondary findings pertained to adjuncts' descriptions of classroom FSI. Interviewee's narratives highlighted the importance of practices which include engaging students in non-academic pre-class *chit chat* to bond socially, moderating inclusive class discussions to ensure that students are "heard" and have a degree of "say" in the nature and direction of those discussions, and the use of classroom management techniques aimed at fostering positive relationships with students while upholding appropriate relational boundaries that reinforce classroom conduct policies.

With increasing proportions of adjunct faculty teaching at community colleges on the one hand, and at-risk students' growing reliance on these institutions as a gateway to higher education on the other, this study was, in part, a response to scholars like Yu, et al (2015), who have signaled the need for more qualitative research on the roles of adjunct faculty in college classrooms, and their impact on students' outcomes. To this end, I've employed my findings to offer a series of actionable recommendations for part-time CC faculty and the administrators tasked with supporting them.

The dissertation of Dustin Black is approved.

Christina Christie

Linda J. Sax

James W. Stigler

Mark Kevin Eagan Jr., Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angles

2019

DEDICATION

To the adjunct, on whom so many rely for so very much.

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VITA

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Chapter One: Introduction

This mixed-methods descriptive phenomenological study investigates perceptions and practices associated with classroom faculty-student interaction (FSI) among part-time (PT) community college instructors. A steady rise in the proportion of PT faculty on community college campuses in recent years has resulted in a high probability that students who attend these institutions will take a substantial amount of their coursework with such instructors. While distinctions between *part-time* and *adjunct* nomenclature are relevant to more detailed discussion of issues pertaining to employment contracts, pay, and benefits, this study will use the terms interchangeably, as is often the case in extant literature on FSI.

Instructors classified as PT now account for approximately two-thirds of community college faculty nation-wide (Yu & Mendoza, 2015), with a concomitant trend revealing high proportions of "at-risk" students attending these same institutions. Community colleges are widely seen as the most accessible (and thus, the most often utilized) form of higher education for a variety of at-risk student populations, including first-generation, low-income, basic skills, and students of color (Bush & Bush, 2010). As these trends converge, students who are the most vulnerable to attrition wind up taking much of their transfer-level coursework with faculty who Levin and Wagoner (2006) suggest may be the least-prepared for the sort of high-quality FSI that has been shown to help keep at-risk students on a path to academic success.

This study benefits from being framed by a synthesis of theoretical perspectives which focus on classroom involvement, organizational citizenship, motivational theory, and interaction typology (Astin, 1984; Organ, D. W., 1988; Blackburn, R. T., & Lawrence, J. H., 1995; Tinto,

1997; Cox & Orehovec, 2007). This multi-faceted framing resulted in a tailored inquiry geared toward arriving at rich, structural descriptions of these instructors' lived experiences (Van Manen, 1990), which, themselves, contribute to a better understanding of what Merriam (2009) describes as the underlying factors that account for PT instructors' FSI-related perceptions and classroom practices.

Adjuncts and Student Outcomes

A variety of conditions related to high numbers of PT faculty impact student outcomes. Citing turnover rates among adjunct instructors, a shortage of time to prepare course materials, and less time spent advising students, Benjamin (2003) asserts that higher proportions of PT faculty on community college campuses has negatively influenced educational quality. Less institutional support with regard to facilities (office space, computers, etc.) and access to professional development (PD) further compounds these conditions, contributing to a negative impact on student learning. Building on the body of research which finds a corresponding relationship between increases in percentage of PT faculty and decreases in graduation rates (Calcagno et al, 2007), Eagan and Jaeger (2009) suggest that increased exposure to PT instructors has a negative effect on students' academic outcomes, especially with regard to rates of transfer from community colleges to four-year universities. The students in question often encounter instructors that "have less knowledge about and remain more disconnected from their employing institution," and thus, are less likely to gain institutional insights that support academic success (p. 174).

Defining High-Quality FSI

What does high-quality FSI look like? Examples include faculty clearly signaling what Wilson et al (1974) identified as ''psychosocial accessibility'' to students (p. 76). Behaviors that encourage high-quality FSI can be rather obvious, like reiterated invitations for students to ask questions during class discussions. Such signaling may also be more subtle; an instructor's facial expressions fall under this category, as does the practice of keeping office hours (or, in lieu of an office, entertaining student questions before or after class), as well as expressing what Cox et al (2009) characterize as "a genuine interest in helping students learn" (p. 795). Greeting students upon entry to a classroom, Cox goes on to assert, and taking time to learn and use students' names both fit this definition as well. High-quality FSI is further encouraged by faculty members who have "…friendly personalities and strong interpersonal skills…" and who "…have a student-centered philosophy of education and believe that teaching is a critical part of their role as professors…" (p. 769).

FSI and At-Risk Students

High-quality FSI is particularly important to the academic success of at-risk students. Attrition rates for at-risk student populations hover, on average, between 40-60% nationally. Take, for example, those students who are the first in their family to pursue higher education; McKay and Estrella (2008) find that almost half of first-generation students entering college leave before finishing their degree, a rate that is, conservatively, 20% higher compared to the overall student average. Other factors beyond first-generation and basic skills enrollment have

been associated with negative retention among at-risk student populations. Polinsky (2003) asserts that central among these is a lack of interaction between students and faculty.

In cases where such interaction is present, it may not be adequate. McKay and Estrella argue that infrequent faculty-student interaction, or interaction that is lacking in intensity, has been associated with a variety of negative student outcomes, including attrition. Positive outcomes, it turns out, have much to do with faculty-student interaction as well. For the first-generation students that Nora and Rendon (1990) studied, academic and social integration into the campus community were vital to their rates of course completion and long-term persistence. High-quality FSI has been shown to both support integration into the campus environment and to positively influence student retention (McKay & Estrella, 2008). Such interaction has been shown to improve students' chances for transfer as well. Eagan and Jaeger (2009) posit that students garner important insights on successfully navigating their academic and transfer path from interacting with faculty who have high levels of institutional and procedural knowledge.

Studies have also shown that a college student's earliest classroom experiences are among the strongest indicators for subsequent academic progress (Schibik & Harrington, 2004). Of these experiences, the quality of FSI is among the most important in terms of predicting students' future academic success (Carroll, 1988). There are clear educational benefits when at-risk students have a community college experience that includes meaningful, high-quality interaction with their instructors.

FSI: A Challenge for Part-Time Faculty

The frequent student contact and institutional knowledge that support academic success requires considerable investment of time and energy on campus – an untenable proposition for many part-time instructors. An instructor's employment status, whether PT or FT, has an impact on their level of interaction with students, asserts Cox et al. (2009), whereby PT instructors are significantly less likely to engage with students, as compared to their FT colleagues (p. 770).

The study also supports Eagan and Jaeger's (2008) earlier finding that student persistence rates are negatively related to students' level of exposure to PT faculty, as these instructors often lack the time and/or availability associated with high-quality faculty-student interaction. The difference between PT and FT faculty interaction with students is due, almost entirely, to the respective amount of time each type of instructor spends on campus. Simply put: adjunct instructors "…interact less frequently with students, but they do so precisely *because* they are part-time employees" (p. 785).

Impact of PD on Adjuncts

Adjuncts who seek to improve their capacity for high-quality teaching practices have been shown to benefit from participation in PD programs, but such opportunities are not always available to them. Contractual obligations on most community college campuses bind full-time (FT) faculty to participate in a minimum amount of PD activity. Institutions, in turn, provide such learning opportunities to support the professional growth of their FT faculty. PD opportunities for PT faculty, however, are a different matter entirely. While many community college campuses provide PD programs geared toward improving FSI and other high-quality

teaching practices, various issues associated with contingent employment, (budgetary constraints of the institution and schedule constraints of the multi-campus adjunct, etc.), make PD a serious challenge for many adjunct faculty (Wallin, 2004).

Conversely, when institutions have designed PD programs that take into account issues unique to PT faculty, benefits have accrued to instructors and students alike. When adjunct instructors participated in PD workshops similar to those available to their FT colleagues, they show no significant difference between the learning outcomes of students taught by either faculty group (Bolge, 1995). Furthermore, Gerhard (2013) asserts that PD which goes beyond "the delivery of new content to include relationship building" both improves the adjunct's own learning, and strengthens their capacity to foster high-quality faculty-student interaction (p. 208).

Benefits of PD for FSI

The importance and potential impact of PD programming that improves instructors' capacity for high-quality teaching practices like FSI is borne out in the literature. As regards PD geared toward PT faculty in particular, Greive and Worden (2000) prescribe a program which addresses issues including understanding of the institutional mission, characteristics of the student body, institutional policies, adjuncts' sense of belonging, and, crucially, pedagogical technique. This last component – pedagogical technique – is where the approach to improving FSI begins.

Quality interaction is, among other things, a process, and PD programs that focus on *how* students learn have had significant impact on classroom learning outcomes (Fishman et al, 2003). Such teaching calls for targeted, ongoing development, is the conclusion that Dede (2006)

arrived at after finding that improvements in students' learning outcomes through engagement requires "high-quality, sustained professional development for educators…" (p. 237). Going forward, Newmann (1992) argues that "... advances in student engagement and achievement will depend on…the content of professional development…" (p. 9). Institutions, Cox (2007) points out, are searching for more effective ways of fostering better teaching practices like high-quality FSI: "…it is our hope that future research will identify specific personal and institutional tools that can be employed to bring students and faculty members together in meaningful ways…" (p. 359).

Study Overview

This was a mixed-methods, descriptive phenomenological investigation of community college adjuncts' perceptions of classroom FSI. Beyond contributing to extant literature on the subject of growing use of PT faculty on community college campuses, my goal is that the study's findings will help inform the design and implementation of future PD programs geared toward the specific needs and working conditions of PT instructors. Ultimately, the aim is to empower adjuncts in their efforts to improve their capacity to foster high-quality FSI in the classroom. Research suggests that as the proportion of adjuncts on community college campuses increases, student outcomes reflect a corresponding decline (Jacoby, 2006; Eagan and Jaeger, 2008, 2009). Citing work conditions that include a shortage of time to prepare course materials and less time spent interacting with students, Benjamin (2003) asserts that higher proportions of adjuncts at these schools has negatively influenced educational quality. Furthermore, community colleges are the most common gateway to higher education for students meeting one or more criteria for

at-risk, including freshmen, first-generation, basic skills, and students of color (Bush & Bush, 2010).

Many factors have been associated with negative retention among at-risk student populations. Polinsky (2003) asserts that central among these is a lack of interaction between students and faculty. While research suggests that PD can help adjuncts become more successful instructors (Bolge, 1995; Gerhard, 2013), many do not have access to such opportunities. One of my research objectives is to explore the PD activities that are available to this vital contingent of faculty, and to connect those professional experiences to spheres of practice where adjuncts can have the greatest impact on student outcomes – i.e. high-quality FSI in the classroom.

Research Questions

To investigate adjuncts' in-class FSI-related perceptions and practices, I will pursue the following research questions:

1) How do part-time community college faculty perceive their classroom FSI?

A) How do part-time faculty describe their classroom interactions with students?

B) What do they say is their role in fostering high-quality interactions?

2) What institutional, departmental, and external barriers and opportunities influence classroom interactions according to part-time faculty?

A) What institutional supports and challenges to classroom FSI do they identify?

B) To what extent do they participate in employer-hosted teaching-related PD activity?

C) What do they say are the incentives and barriers to their participation in such activity?

Rationale

Given the converging trends of increasing proportions of PT community college faculty on the one hand, and at-risk students' growing reliance on such institutions as a gateway to higher education on the other, more research is needed on adjuncts' perceptions of in-class FSI, and how their PD experiences shape their teaching practices. Exploring the boundaries that frame classroom interactions between faculty and their students, Hosek & Thompson (2009) argue that:

> "...it is incumbent upon teachers to create a positive relational climate, as this is important to student learning. The content and relational dimensions of the student-teacher relationship, as well as teacher behavior, continue to be important to examine given their impact on student learning and motivation" (p. 340).

Building on this rationale for further research, Yu, et al. (2015) assert that more qualitative research is needed to fully explore the relationship between PT faculty and students' educational outcomes. A descriptive phenomenological study is an ideal type of qualitative inquiry for capturing such data, in part, because it facilitates the gathering of potentially rich professional narratives.

While in-class FSI is one element common to all campus-based PT instructors' professional experience, opportunities for them to engage students outside the classroom vary greatly when comparisons are made between campuses, departments, and individual instructors. As a PT instructor at several regional community colleges myself, I have first-hand experience with the relationship between adjunct working conditions, access to PD opportunities, and the ways PT instructors develop their classroom practices, often in the absence of robust institutional support. Both personal observation and previous research suggest that further inquiry is needed

on levels of adjunct participation in PD activities, as well as on how such programs impact those instructors' perceptions of classroom practice.

Previous studies have already begun to show that PD geared toward helping adjuncts facilitate high-quality FSI has had a positive impact on both instructors and their students. Bosley (2004) found that when PT instructors are provided these types of training opportunities, they tend to take full advantage of them, and subsequently report higher job satisfaction and a greater sense of efficacy in the classroom as well. These much-needed PD opportunities, though, are not always available to adjunct faculty, as intimated in Rogers' (2015) assertion that "if student success in the classroom is the desired outcome… resources might be better focused on [improving] the professional development of existing… part-time faculty" (p. 682).

The sense of self-efficacy that adjuncts report after participating in meaningful PD activity is likely to have a positive influence on the emotional environment of the classroom. Eryilmaz (2014) suggests that, "the emotions students experience during lessons have a lot to do with teacher-student interaction [and] activities associated with success" (p. 2050). That there is a relationship between adjuncts' PD activities, their experience of in-class FSI, and the impact of PD on instructional practice is clear; what is less clear, and thus warrants further study, is a detailed picture of how that relationship is perceived by those PT instructors.

Site Selection and Population

The national trends of growing numbers of at-risk students and out-sized representation of PT faculty are in evidence at South Bay College (SBC), the Southern California community college campus I selected for this study. Nationally, community colleges serve many at-risk

student populations that include first generation college students, basic skills, and under-represented racial minority students, particularly those who identify as Latino or African American. According to recent college attendance data, 81% of all African American males pursuing higher education in California do so at community colleges, compared to 70% of White males and 60% of Asian males, and African American freshman men rank lowest among all race-gender groups with respect to course completion (Bush & Bush, 2010). Success rates among Latino students at SBC also mirror national statistics that suggest roughly one in four Latinos who begin their educational experience at a community college will actually transfer to a 4-year institution and/or earn a bachelor's degree (Fry, 2004).

South Bay College reflects the national trend of community colleges serving increasing numbers of at-risk students while increasing reliance on PT faculty instruction. SBC serves a student body that is approximately 65% African American / Latino, while employing PT faculty at a rate of 64% overall (SSI/SBC, 2015). As regards associate degree completion and four-year institution transfer rates, SBC reports a 30% associate degree completion rate and a 10% transfer rate to four-year institutions (NCES, 2016). Purposeful sampling lead to participation by faculty from diverse academic departments, including (but not limited to) English, dance, history, mathematics, anthropology, chemistry, political science, fine art, and psychology. For the purpose of this study, my sample population consisted of PT instructors who have at least one year of classroom experience teaching face-to-face, transfer-level courses in these disciplines.

Methods

Descriptive phenomenological methodology was employed to conduct this study.

These methods draw on ideas first developed by Edmund Husserl. Whereas the traditional scientific method is grounded in measurements that focus on objective operational definitions, scholars, like Husserl, found these instruments inadequate for capturing the essence of human experience. This methodological approach lends itself to examining the meanings of phenomena that constitute lived human experiences, within specific situations, and to convey these meanings through lucid narratives. Knowledge, from a phenomenological perspective, must be grounded in a whole range of individuals' lived experiences. Husserl developed an analytical process aimed at minimizing the researcher's preconceptions while reducing experienced phenomenon to their essence. This process consists of two main steps, where the researcher *brackets*, or identifies and attempts to set aside, their biases and attitudes toward the phenomenon under consideration. During and after data collection, the researcher then develops themes from within those data that gradually narrow to accurately describe the nature and parameters of the studied phenomena (Husserl, 1913).

To collect theses threads of experience and meaning, I took a multi-stage approach to collecting and analyzing data, including institutional document review, online surveys administered to both adjunct and full-time faculty (for comparison between the two quantitative data sets), and a series of semi-structured interviews with a selection of adjunct participants. Institutional document review provided insights related to various aspects of WBC, including such information as student demographics and enrollment patterns, the numbers of faculty and their employment classification, and the amount and type of PD on offer. The online survey served as a means to collect basic demographic information, quantitative data (via a Likert-scale

questionnaire portion), qualitative data (via an open-ended response portion), and as a screening

strategy for the interviews that would follow. To pilot my interview protocol, I selected a small

number of survey participants whose experience and profile otherwise did not fit my criteria for

further participation, ran one cycle of field testing by interviewing those individuals, and

conducted participant review to test for validity, thus further developing the interview protocol.

Site Engagement and Dissemination

Both the design of my study and the scope of its inquiry lent themselves to site

engagement, dissemination of findings, and the potential for significance in the wider

professional sphere. Coordination with site partners was important at several stages of this study,

and my plan is to work further with the institution's Professional Development Department, as

well as individual academic Divisions, to help leverage my findings to improve adjuncts' ability

to foster high-quality FSI for the at-risk students they so often work with. Research also

suggested that by participating in the reflective processes inherent to this type of study, my

participants would likely experience improved perceptions of efficacy, satisfaction, and

workplace belonging (Greive & Worden, 2000). As I'll address later in my findings discussion,

these benefits were born out in a variety of ways.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This study's primary purpose was to explore how part-time instructors perceive and enact faculty-student interaction in their community college classrooms, along with inquiry into factors that shape those instructors' FSI-related beliefs and practices. The secondary level of inquiry focused on adjuncts' access to and level of participation in FSI-related PD activity, and the incentives and/or barriers to that participation. The literature review begins with some historical context on the increasing use of PT instructors on community college campuses, and the associated impact of this trend on students' academic outcomes. A discussion of previous literature on what constitutes *high-quality classroom FSI* will be paired with an explanation of the link between such interactions and student success. What scholars refer to as "at-risk" students constitute a high proportion of community college enrollees, so defining this category will be followed by an explanation of why high-quality FSI is of particular importance to these vulnerable student populations. Brief review of this study's research questions is followed by an overview of the synthetic theoretical framing that informed the process of answering those questions. A presentation of previous approaches to inquiry on adjuncts' FSI and PD activity will set up discussion of the challenges PT faculty face vis-a-vis FSI outside the classroom, before closing with an explanation of the connection between adjunct-centered PD and improvements in classroom FSI.

Growing PT Ranks and Student Outcomes

A steady rise in the proportion of PT faculty on community college campuses has had a negative effect on students' academic outcomes. The increased use of PT faculty on college

campuses can be attributed to a variety of factors, including the desire for a flexible workforce in times of shrinking budgets, growing demand for postsecondary education, and the relative ease with which institutional policymakers can hold PT faculty accountable in an age of increased public scrutiny (Levin & Hernandez, 2014). In 1969, PT faculty accounted for 27% of all CC faculty positions, 52% by 1987, and 66.7% in 2003 (Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). Today, the proportion of instructors classified as PT who teach at community colleges nation-wide stands at just over 76% (AFT, 2009).

The growing use of PT instructors has been marked by a decline in quality of working conditions (Caulfield, 2015). Citing high turnover rates among adjunct instructors, lack of time to prepare course materials, and less time spent advising students, Benjamin's 2003 study found that higher proportions of PT faculty on CC campuses had negatively influenced educational quality. Less institutional support with regard to facilities (office space, computers, etc.) and little access to PD opportunities further compound these conditions, contributing to a negative impact on student outcomes (Gappa, 2000).

The trend toward increasing use of PT instructors has impacted a variety of students' academic outcomes. Jacoby (2006), writing on persistence and graduation rates among students at two-year institutions, observed that the FSI typically associated with students' social and academic integration is "less likely to be positive" on community college campuses (p. 1086). Calcagno et al. (2007) finds further evidence of a corresponding relationship between increases in percentage of PT faculty and decreases in graduation rates.

Eagan and Jaeger (2008) and Jaeger and Eagan (2009) suggest that students who take a higher percentage of their courses with PT faculty also tend to have lower rates of degree completion and transfer from two to four-year institutions. Such students encounter instructors that often "have less knowledge about and remain more disconnected from their employing institution," and thus, are less likely to gain institutional or procedural insights that support academic success (Eagan & Jaeger, p. 174). As the proportion of PT faculty at community colleges rises, so, too, does the need to better understand the perceptions and practices related to FSI in these instructors' classrooms.

Defining FSI and Links to Student Success

FSI is comprised of both affective and behavioral components. Early research into the signals instructors send to students highlight examples of what Wilson et al. (1974) describe as psychosocial accessibility - interpersonal receptivity, in other words, and an openness to dialog. This may occur, according to Wilson, by means of obvious behaviors, as with reiterated invitations for students to ask questions during class discussions. Later studies have found that such signaling operates on a more subtle level as well. An instructor's facial expressions, according to Cox et al. (2009), may characterize "a genuine interest in helping students learn," and that greeting students upon entry to a classroom, and taking time to learn and use students' names fit this definition as well (p. 768).

High-quality FSI is as much about the quality of interactions as it is the quantity. Students tend to be encouraged by faculty members who have "friendly personalities and strong interpersonal skills," and who express an interest in students' well-being through a "student-

centered philosophy of education and [a belief] that teaching is a critical part of their role as professors" (Cox et al., 2009, p. 769). Related research suggests that both obvious classroom behaviors on the part of the instructor, as well as more subtle, often non-verbal cues, contribute to an integrated student experience, with implications for academic outcomes. McKay and Estrella, for example, suggest that meaningful, high-quality FSI tends to support students' integration into the campus environment and to positively influence their retention rates (2008). These positive student outcomes have also been associated with FSI that focuses on student development issues (e.g., Astin 1993; Ishiyama 2002). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) take this notion a step further in concluding that the topics and themes discussed during faculty-student interaction may be just as important as the frequency of such contact.

Several decades-worth of research support the link between high-quality FSI and improvements in a variety of student outcomes. Citing a 2005 study by Umbach and Wawrzynski, Mayhew, et al. (2016) point to faculty members' "course-related interactions with students" in identifying some of the most significant contributing factors in students' cognitive development (p. 130). High-quality FSI has also been linked to improvements in grade-point average (Anaya and Cole 2001), plans for graduate study (Hathaway et al. 2002), and self-reports of learning (Lundberg and Schreiner 2004).

By virtue of their direct and frequent contact with students, faculty members are among the most important influencing agents in students' campus socialization (Lamport, 1993; Schwitzer et al. 1999). While an early study by Feldman and Newcomb (1969) cited the influence of peer groups in shaping students' college socialization, subsequent investigation

found that faculty influence can often override that of peer groups (Pascarella et al., 1978), and that students who meet with faculty more often tend to perform better in their coursework, as do those that are engaged in discussing intellectual matters by their instructors. Terenzini, et al. (1984) found that such interactions, both in and outside the classroom, had a positive influence on students' acquisition and development of vital academic skills.

It is also clear that interaction between faculty and students can positively impact student persistence. Students who experienced low levels of interaction with instructors are three times as likely to withdraw compared to their peers who have high-level and/or frequent interactions (Pascarella and Terenzini 1977; Lamport, 1993). Additionally, students tend to persist at higher rates when they encounter more frequent opportunities to discuss course-related matters, their academic interests and major, and their career trajectory with instructors during or after class.

"At-Risk" Students and FSI

FSI is particularly important to the academic success of the kinds of students most likely to find themselves in a course taught by a PT instructor - those classified as "at-risk". To begin with, community college campuses are more likely to host high proportions of at-risk students since these institutions tend to be the most accessible form of higher education for a variety of such student populations (Bush & Bush, 2010). Attrition rates for at-risk college students hover, on average, between 40% and 60% nationally (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2009).

Another characteristic placing students at greater risk of leaving an institution prior to reaching their academic goals relates to whether they are the first in their family to pursue higher education; McKay and Estrella (2008) find that almost half of first-generation students entering

college leave before finishing their degree, a rate that is, conservatively, 20% higher compared to the overall student average. Enrollment in Basic-Skills courses has also been identified as a key indicator of a students' at-risk status, while the negative retention trend among such students correlates, according to Polinsky (2003), with a lack of interaction between students and faculty. Infrequent or low-intensity FSI can occur in the classroom of *any* faculty member, regardless of the instructor's employment status. Such interactions, however, are a far more common experience for those freshman and Basic-Skills students who take courses taught by PT instructors (Cox et al, 2009; Caulfield, 2015). Beyond the classroom, college policymakers have addressed the issue of improving student outcomes from a variety of perspectives.

Although a number of studies have examined the effectiveness of out-of-class initiatives at enhancing student success, less attention has been given to the role in-class activities play in influencing students' academic and co-curricular experiences in college. High-quality interactions (i.e. those characterized by positive intensity and high frequency) with faculty represent a particularly important factor in the success of many at-risk student groups, as exemplified in a study by Nora and Rendon (1990), which found that academic and social integration were vital to course completion and long-term persistence among first-generation college students. Recent scholarship has helped to more clearly define and operationalize the concepts of social and academic integration, thus providing instructors concrete strategies for improving and enhancing interaction with their students. Cox et al., for example, assert that high-quality FSI can be defined by practices that include maintaining regular and frequent office hours (or, in lieu of office space which PT faculty often lack, fielding student questions and concerns

before or after class), as well as verbal expressions of sincere concern for students' success (Cox et al., 2010).

College students' earliest classroom experiences are among the strongest indicators for subsequent academic progress (Schibik & Harrington, 2004). Of these experiences, the quality of FSI is among the most important in terms of predicting students' future academic success (Carroll, 1988). Again, this is particularly relevant for the at-risk student, who, research suggests, is less likely to be engaged with challenging assignments that stimulate critical thinking, and is also less likely to encounter the high-quality FSI that has been shown to have a positive influence on academic performance (Mehan, 1996). There are clear educational benefits when at-risk students of any classification have a community college experience that includes meaningful interaction with their instructors. McKay and Estrella (2008) argue that infrequent FSI, or interaction that lacks intensity, has been associated with a variety of negative student outcomes, including attrition. Recent studies find that professional development (PD) is one avenue by which lackluster FSI can be improved.

Review of Research Questions

To investigate adjuncts' in-class FSI-related perceptions and practices, I will pursue the following research questions:

1) How do part-time community college faculty perceive their classroom FSI?

    A) How do part-time faculty describe their classroom interactions with students?

    B) What do they say is their role in fostering high-quality interactions?

2) What institutional, departmental, and external barriers and opportunities influence classroom interactions according to part-time faculty?

    A) What institutional supports and challenges to classroom FSI do they identify?

    B) To what extent do they participate in employer-hosted teaching-related PD activity?

    C) What do they say are the incentives and barriers to their participation in such activity?

Framing Adjuncts' FSI and PD Activity

This study was framed by a synthesis of theoretical constructs I've sorted into primary and secondary groups, reflecting their relative deployment in helping approach and answer the two research questions that guided this study. The primary group contributed the most to developing an understanding of (and investigative approach to) adjuncts' perceptions of classroom FSI, while the secondary group was instrumental in accounting for the degree to which adjuncts participated in PD activity, and their motivations for doing so. To investigate adjuncts' self-reported experiences with classroom FSI, I employed elements of Cox & Orehovec's (2007) educational interaction typology, Hosek & Thompson's (2009) work on personhood in the classroom, and Schwartz's (2011) faculty/student relational model. To help frame my inquiry into the extent of PT instructors' PD activity, and the incentives therein, I drew on Organ's (1988) treatment of organizational citizenship, as well as Blackburn & Lawrence's (1995) motivational theory.

The scholars and theories that were most helpful in framing my study's approach to and understanding of adjuncts' perceptions of classroom FSI are Cox & Orehovec's (2007) educational interaction typology, Hosek & Thompson's (2009) work on personhood in the

classroom, and Schwartz's (2011) faculty/student relational model. Cox and Orehovec's two-factor interaction typology consists of *casual interaction* and *substantive interaction,* where the factor analysis indicated a strong relationship between the two types of interactions. Both types were reflected in the online survey questionnaire and semi-structured interview protocol used in this study, thus, both featured prominently in the themes that arose from adjuncts' self-reported classroom FSI-related narratives. Likewise, Hosek & Thompson's (2009) work on the role of authenticity and disclosure in constructing personhood in the classroom and Schwartz's (2011) faculty/student relational model were also helpful in conceptualizing and executing this study.

The secondary group of theoretical frames I employed to conduct this study were Organ's (1988) organizational citizenship model, and Blackburn & Lawrence's (1995) motivational theory, both of which were instrumental in accounting for the degree to which adjuncts participated in PD activity, and their motivations for doing so. Organ (1988) inquires into why it is that some individuals take it upon themselves to strive for excellence in the workplace without:

> "...either an explicit or implicit promise of reward for the behavior? This conduct, known as Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), is a complex phenomenon now emerging as an important aspect of human behavior at work" (p. 5).

Job satisfaction, asserts Organ, is a major predictor of OCB, which, itself, is marked by altruism, conscientiousness, and courtesy in the workplace. In the context of higher education faculty, that job satisfaction could be measured in terms of fairness in teaching evaluations, or, more importantly to this study, the quality of interactions with colleagues and students. Organ notes that workplace satisfaction encompasses factors that go beyond salary or, in the case of

instructors, the status that comes with gaining tenure; these trends clearly emerged from the survey and interview data collected from survey respondents and interviewees for this study.

Blackburn & Lawrence's (1995) motivational theory provided a nuanced way of conceptualizing my exploration of adjuncts' incentives to strive for instructional excellence, and the PD activity that supports it. Both instructors and administrators, assert Blackburn and Lawrence, can benefit from a better understanding of the motivations, expectations, and desire for workplace satisfaction that factor into faculty's professional decisions and performance-related behaviors. The institutional and individual inputs that Blackburn and Lawrence identify relate directly to a pattern among interviewee responses – that there is a complex combination of *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* motivators at play in the phenomena I sought to capture and describe. The intrinsic consisted of faculty's subjective perceptions of achievement, competence, and a sense of pride in workmanship, while extrinsic motivators related to more objectively tangible metrics, including rate of pay, physical working conditions, and the likelihood of a FT position.

This synthetic, multi-faceted theoretical frame supported the tailored inquiry I geared toward collecting the sort of rich, structural descriptions of adjuncts' *lived experiences* (Van Manen, 1990), which, themselves, contribute to a better understanding of what Merriam (2009) describes as the "underlying and precipitating factors" (p. 93) that account for PT instructors' FSI-related perceptions, classroom practices, and associated PD activity.

Literature on Previous Approaches

Previous studies have identified campus-wide interventions that contribute to student success, but further research is needed at the classroom-level to understand the relationship

between high proportions of PT faculty and FSI (Yu, et al, 2015). The work of Astin (1984) and Tinto (1997) represent an important foundation for understanding the relationship between students' campus experiences and their academic outcomes. Scholars like Mason (1998) have accounted for the off-campus factors that impact student success, including students' background and community. Various campus programs have been found to support the academic and social integration of at-risk students. Examples include the use of learning communities and freshman orientation courses (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). With their emphasis on improving campus learning environments and addressing the needs of students whose academic backgrounds have not prepared them for pursuing higher education, such programs have been associated with improved success and retention rates (Zhao & Kuh, 2004).

Astin (1984) and Tinto (1997) shed light on the relationship between students' campus involvement and social integration on the one hand, and their academic outcomes on the other. A synthesis of these two scholars' arguments supports a link between the quality and frequency of FSI and students' academic outcomes. Astin's theory of student involvement, in particular, posits that the more energy students invest in their academic pursuits (i.e. frequent interactions with faculty members), the better their academic outcomes. Later scholarship accounted for other factors that could influence those academic outcomes. Much of the extant literature on student success, in fact, focusses on factors outside the classroom, like Mason (1998), who observes the many outside factors like family background, academic history, and community environment variables to account for academic disadvantages and declining learning outcomes prevalent among at-risk student populations. Such studies may help college staff and faculty better

understand the challenges their students face outside the classroom, but they point to factors that are largely outside these practitioners' control or influence. Astin's (1984) attention to students' campus experiences helps contextualize and narrow the focus of this study. Though off-campus inputs do figure into Astin's framework, it is the emphasis on environments (campus culture and climate, educational experiences, etc.), as well as the student outcomes (satisfaction, improved critical thinking skills, etc.) that were of greatest use in framing a variety of the referents, metrics, and possible PD contributions of this study. Astin found a correlation between student involvement and positive academic outcomes; some of the most intense and meaningful experiences that students have occur within the walls of their college classrooms.

Just as Astin's framework helps provide guiding ideas for part of this study, so, too, does Tinto's work. His 1997 study found that student persistence is strongly predicted by classroom experiences, especially those which help students achieve social and academic integration. Participation in college activities and/or interaction with faculty are prime examples of social integration, while academic integration has typically been associated with scholastic achievement metrics like success and retention rates. Integration, in this context, aids in the development of non-cognitive skills that have been shown to improve students' academic outcomes. Several campus programs have been found to support the academic and social integration of students. Such programs include learning communities (Zhao & Kuh, 2004) and freshman orientation courses (Barefoot & Fidler, 1996). With an emphasis on either campus environment or student background and experience, previous studies have informed campus programs that have delivered positive results in terms of improved success and retention rates;

what is largely missing from the record, however, are PT instructors' own narratives regarding

their perceptions of the nature and impact of classroom FSI, and an exploration of how PD may

help shape those interactions.

Adjuncts and Out-of-Class FSI

The frequent student contact and deep institutional knowledge that enable college faculty

to support their pupils' academic success requires considerable investment of time and energy,

both in and out of the classroom - a challenging proposition for many PT instructors. The fact

that adjuncts, on average, are substantially less available outside the hours of contracted

classroom instruction has attracted well-deserved scholarly attention (Benjamin, 2002). For

example, Cox et al. (2009) assert that an instructor's employment classification, whether PT or

FT, has considerable impact on the intensity and frequency of their FSI, whereby PT instructors

are significantly less likely to engage with students, as compared to their FT colleagues (p. 770).

These findings are supported by Eagan and Jaeger's conclusion that students with greater

exposure to PT faculty instruction tend to persist at lower rates compared to their peers with

fewer courses taught by PT faculty. The authors argue that a contributing factor to this finding

relates to the large disparity in the amount of time adjuncts spend on campus, relative to their FT

colleagues. Limited amount of time on campus constrains PT faculty's ability to interact with

students outside of class, and any additional investment of time by PT faculty may also be

undermined by low pay (relative to FT faculty), and/or a lack of benefits (health insurance,

robust retirement savings plans, etc.)

Adjuncts' opportunities for contact with students outside the classroom setting are further hampered by the often-conspicuous lack of suitable office space where conversations, advising, or mentoring could occur (Levin, Shaker, & Wagoner, 2011). While the working conditions of many PT community college instructors limit their chances for meaningful interaction with students across the campus at large, in-class opportunities for high-quality FSI remain a viable goal for these instructors. Delivering inclusive, high-quality classroom instruction is an effective intervention any faculty member can make, regardless of discipline, student population, or employment status (Tomaneng & Kaufman, 2014). Such pedagogy, though, requires adequate support, including opportunities for professional development.

Adjuncts, PD, and FSI

Research suggests that instructors' capacity for effective teaching practices like high-quality FSI can be improved through participation in PD programing (Davidson, 2015; Greive and Worden, 2000; Fishman et al., 2003; Dede, 2006). Quality interaction is, among other things, a social process, and PD activities that focus on how this relates to student learning have had significant impact on classroom learning outcomes (Fishman et al., 2003). Cultivating pedagogy that supports improvements in students' learning outcomes requires what Dede (2006) identified as targeted, high-quality, professional development that is ongoing. With regard to the particular needs of PT faculty in higher education, Greive and Worden (2000) prescribe a program that addresses issues related to improving participants' understanding of the institutional mission, highlighting characteristics of the student body, explaining institutional policies, increasing the instructor's sense of belonging, and, crucially, enhancing pedagogical technique. In light of the

intimate connection between an instructor's pedagogical technique and their approach to classroom interactions, the link between PD and FSI becomes clear.

Adjuncts' working conditions often limit their access to meaningful PD activity. FT faculty's contracts often obligate them to maintain some minimum level of participation in PD activities, some selection of which is usually provided by the employing institution. By contrast, PD opportunities for adjuncts, are a different matter entirely. While many campuses provide PD programs geared toward improving FSI and other high-quality teaching practices, issues associated with contingent employment (e.g., budgetary constraints of the institution, and schedule constraints of the "freeway-flying" adjunct, etc.), make PD participation a challenge for many PT instructors (Wallin, 2004). Thus, institutions seeking to improve student outcomes by improving the quality and frequency of teaching and instructors' in-class interactions with students have an opportunity to design PD activities that respond to the common challenges of attracting PT faculty's participation. Indeed, PT faculty's student learning outcomes do not differ in statistically significant ways from their full-time colleagues when controlling for their participation in PD activities (Bolge, 1995). Furthermore, Gerhard (2013) asserts that PD programs that go beyond "the delivery of new content to include relationship building" both improves adjuncts' perceptions of their own learning outcomes, and strengthens their ability to engage students with effective instructional practices, including expressions of interest in and openness to further engagement with students, both in and out of the classroom.

Conclusion

Community college is among the most important and in-demand forms of higher education in the nation, where as much as three-quarters of faculty are classified as part-time. However dedicated and well-intentioned these instructors may be, studies suggest they are significantly less likely to engage with students when compared to their full-time counterparts. Infrequent and low-intensity faculty-student interaction has been shown to have a negative effect on a variety of students' academic outcomes, including persistence, course completion, and graduation.

Delivering high-quality instruction has been shown to support positive student outcomes, and is an intervention that can be made by any faculty member, regardless of discipline, student population, or employment status (Tomaneng & Kaufman, 2014). Such instruction is defined by practices that help students integrate, at an academic and social level, into the classroom environment (McKay, 2008). Likewise, the "genuine interest in helping students" which Cox et al (2009) identified as a key component of high-quality FSI is often expressed through an instructor's behaviors (using students' names, etc.), or their attitudes (amiable personality, etc.) (p. 769). The link between FSI and student outcomes, though, goes beyond these factors.

High-quality FSI is an important component in the development of these non-cognitive skills, especially academic perseverance (grit, tenacity, self-control), and academic mindsets (sense of belonging, perceived self-efficacy, growth mindset) (Farrington, et al., 2012). Faculty play an important role in cultivating these capacities through classroom behaviors including encouragement to class discussion, effective classroom management marked by proportionate

responses to student behavior, attitudes and activities that foster an inclusive classroom environment, and thoughtfully planned in-class assessments characterized by instructional scaffolding and consistent evaluation. An instructor with the skills to engender this type of classroom environment can make a meaningful difference between the success and failure of a substantial population of community college students – those classified as "at-risk".

The challenge of improving students' educational outcomes in an era of shrinking budgets and greater public scrutiny has led many institutional policymakers to seek campus-wide solutions in a "wrap-around" approach to student services. Many of the factors these programs seek to address lie well outside the reach and authority of the average PT faculty member. Despite the success of some of these macro-level strategies, higher education leaders need evidence pertaining to the effectiveness of additional initiatives aimed at improving student outcomes. Particularly within community colleges, research about the efficacy of strategies that target faculty and consider the unique challenges of those employed in PT appointments is needed, as are studies that consider how adjuncts perceive and experience PD opportunities aimed at strengthening classroom FSI. This study addresses the gap outlined above by investigating PT faculty's perceptions of (and practical approaches to) classroom FSI, as well as how they characterize their lived experiences of PD programs aimed at enhancing their teaching and in-class connections with students.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

PT instructors constitute a majority of faculty on most community college campuses nationwide, and studies suggest that their high proportion is matched by a concomitant impact on students' academic outcomes. Adjuncts now account for approximately two-thirds of community college faculty in the United States (Yu and Mendoza, 2015). College leadership often cites the flexibility this practice affords the institution in responding to rapid fluctuations in enrollment (Umbach, 2007; Christensen, 2008). This flexibility, however, comes at a price, as research has shown that PT instructors are significantly less likely to engage and interact with students as compared to their FT colleagues (Cox et al., 2009). High-quality (i.e. frequent and/or intense) FSI has been linked to improvements in students' academic achievement, sense of satisfaction, and personal growth (Lamport, 1993). Much of the literature that supports a correlation between high-quality FSI and improved student outcomes focuses on interactions that take place outside the classroom, as illustrated in meta-analyses conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991, 2005).

This study aims to examine PT faculty members' experiences with and perceptions of their classroom interactions with community college students, and to describe the extent to which PT faculty have access to and benefit from PD activities focused on instructional improvement. This study has particular relevance given that the majority of those pursuing higher education in the U.S. do so on a community college campus, employment of PT faculty continues to grow despite evidence suggesting the limited capacity for contingent faculty to interact with students outside the classroom, and, therefore, that the vast majority of community college students'

interactions with their instructors, by default, occur inside the classroom. It follows that out-of-class interactions between PT faculty and their students occur too infrequently to adequately meet most commonly-accepted benchmarks for an effective learning environment (Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Thus, by focusing on the ways in which PT faculty establish connections in the classroom, and the extent to which PD programming can enhance these efforts, this study aims to provide college faculty and higher education leaders with additional tools to increase adjuncts' capacity for high-quality classroom FSI.

Review of Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study of the perceptions, practices, and challenges associated with classroom FSI and PD activity among adjuncts at one non-residential Southern California community college campus, West Bay College:

1) How do part-time community college faculty perceive their in-class FSI?

    A) How do part-time faculty describe their classroom interactions with students?

    B) What do they say is their role in fostering high-quality interactions??

2) What institutional, departmental, and external barriers and opportunities influence classroom interactions according to part-time faculty?

    A) What institutional supports and challenges to classroom FSI do they identify?

    B) To what extent do they participate in employer-hosted teaching-related PD activity?

    C) What do they say are the incentives and barriers to their participation in such activity?

Design

This qualitative study investigated PT community college instructors' self-reported classroom FSI, and the degree / motivation behind their professional development activities. My use of the descriptive phenomenological model was based on the premise that valuable data are contained within the professional narratives of PT community college faculty, and that to access this data, my study must engage participants in a manner that captures their lived experiences - in fact, the *phenomena* - associated with classroom FSI (Groenewald, 2004).

With an eye on shaping research that explores the nuance of these interactions while acknowledging and managing the possible effect of my own professional experiences and biases, it became clear that conducting a phenomenological study would best address the research questions that guide my study (Groenewald, 2004). Phenomenological studies usually take one of two forms – either *interpretive* or *descriptive*. Reiners (2012) explains:

> "Interpretive phenomenology is used when the research question asks for the meaning of the phenomenon and the researcher does not bracket their biases and prior engagement with the question under study. Descriptive phenomenology is used when the researcher wants to describe the phenomenon under study and brackets their biases" (p. 2).

A reading of Matua (2015) suggests that the researcher should consider certain criteria in selecting between the two approaches. The majority of phenomenological studies have been *descriptive*, in that they have been aimed, primarily, at illuminating and conveying poorly understood aspects of a given experience. This has enabled researchers to aim for clear descriptions that take into account both the objective inputs of a phenomena, without overlooking the possibility of rich, subjective experiences that, when collected from a sufficiently sized sample, will likely reveal valid, recognizable, emergent patterns. In the case of

this study, for example, saturation could be detected among the themes of investigation after approximately eight of ten interviews were conducted; had the sample size been fewer, confirmation of significant themes, and thus findings, would have been more difficult. This approach integrated the individual perceptions of one or another participant with the wider, situational context, thus providing a deeper understanding of the FSI and PD-related phenomena in question. While some elements of my study required a minimum of interpretive speculation (one of the limitations of the study), an emphasis on the descriptive approach helped account for (and minimize, or *bracket*) the potential influence of my own professional experiences and biases as I inquired into those of my colleagues.

This approach also served my goal of building on existing literature, which suggests a need for better understanding of what constitutes the high-quality interactions that positively correlate with improved measures of student success. Cox & Orehovec (2007), for example, assert that "the quantity of faculty-student interaction accounts for only one part of the equation; without understanding the quality of those interactions it is impossible to account for the related student outcomes" (p. 344). It followed that my descriptive phenomenological investigation was well-suited to revealing the lived experiences of adjuncts' interactions with their students.

My two research questions called for multiple cycles of sequential data collection, including institutional document review, online survey questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. Institutional document review preceded collection of data via the online screening questionnaire, which, itself, collected basic demographic and experiential data from prospective participants. Potential interviewees were identified and purposefully selected from the pool of

survey respondents, followed by individual semi-structured telephone interviews, comprised of both Likert-scaled items and open-ended questions. The rationale for using this method rests on the fact that my research questions sought to explore instructors' professional narratives as a means to identifying and describe their FSI-related perceptions, beliefs, and practices. As such, individual semi-structured interviews provided the necessary flexibility to probe for the affective, experiential, and explanatory detail that Merriam (2009) describes as central to the type of qualitative research questions that guided this study. Each one-hour interview was recorded using multiple digital recording techniques, and after transcribing each interview verbatim, I analyzed all transcripts, using both inductive and deductive coding methods.

Sites

The site I selected for this study reflects national trends in at-risk student enrollment and PT faculty employment at community colleges, which increases the likelihood that my local findings will bear a degree of transferability to other, similar institutions. The site is open access (lending to the collection of narratives that represent a diversity of classroom experiences), has a high proportion of traditionally under-served students, has student success rates (i.e. rates of degree completion and/or transfer to four-year institutions) that mirror national averages, has a mission statement that emphasizes instructional excellence, and has a recent employment history that reflects increased reliance on PT faculty labor.

While my initial survey of possible sites revealed a number of regional campuses that might have been suited to this study, it became apparent upon reflection that the classroom phenomena and related detail-rich narratives I sought would more likely result from deeper

inquiry at fewer institutions, as opposed to broader, surface-level data collection across more numerous sites. In addition to these criteria, prior access to (and an established relationship with) the site I chose facilitated inquiry that was realistic in scope, and within the realistic reach of my research time frame. Given these considerations, I selected WBC, which turned out to be an ideal site for my study.

As a community college, WBC is, by any measure, a prime example of the most widely accessible form of higher education available. Open access is central to the role of such institutions, where students from a variety of demographic and academic backgrounds are provided with equal entre to enrollment, basic skills/transfer-level academic courses, and, perhaps most significantly, equitable lifelong learning opportunities (Antalek, 2014). Relative affordability and geographic proximity to students' home cities are additional aspects of accessibility that make community college the most viable option for many undergraduate students.

Because of their open access missions, community colleges, including WBC, enroll large proportions of at-risk students. Latino and African American students are over-represented in what is commonly referred to as under-served and/or academically at-risk enrollment categories (Mason, 1998; Hagedorn & Maxwell, 2001; Glenn, 2003; Summers, 2003; Perrakis, 2008; Barbatis, 2010; Bush & Bush, 2010; Mamiseishvili & Deggs, 2013; Wendt, 2014). Enrollment patterns at WBC mirror these trends, with Latino and African American students constituting roughly 65% of student enrollment (SSI/WBC, 2015).

In terms of overall associate's degree completion and four-year institution transfer rates, WBC reports a 30% associate's degree completion rate and a 10% transfer rate to four-year institutions (NCES, 2016). WBC's mission statement emphasizes instructional excellence, and a preliminary review of institutional documents revealed the following excerpt from its 2017-2018 College Catalog: "[West Bay College] provides excellent comprehensive educational programs and services that promote student learning and success". WBC's mission statement reflects an institutional focus that privileges instruction over research, suggesting a focus on providing meaningful classroom experiences for their students. In short, WBC features a diverse student body, enrollment patterns, and mission statement reflect those found at community colleges across the nation.

The final consideration in selecting this site focused on the proportion of PT faculty employed by the institution. Part-time instructors account for more than half of all faculty appointments at the college at 64% (SSI, 2015; Graff, 2016). The vast majority of faculty teaching disciplines that make up the colleges' core transfer-level curriculum in a variety of academic disciplines are part-time - evidence that WBC is emblematic of the national trend toward increased employment of PT instructors.

Prior Access

Having met the primary criteria necessary for inclusion in the study, I will also give consideration to accessibility. As regional community college campuses situated less than ten miles from one another, both WBC and SCC fall within a geographic range that is convenient to the time, transportation, and other resource limitations of this study. While prior access and

established relationships are not the primary criteria for my site selection, these factors warrant brief discussion.

My current role at these schools also brings me into contact with those who are considered "gatekeepers" (e.g. division deans, department chairs, etc.), which should help me conduct the study within the target timeframe. I regularly engage in inter-departmental collaboration with colleagues on various program and committee initiatives, and I expect to draw on the wide expertise in this network of acquaintances, relationships, and partnerships to improve the efficacy of a study which will likely be an iterative process. While my role as a PT instructor has included establishing multi-faceted working relationships with both colleges, my experiences have likewise given me a familiarity with their respective institutional processes and procedures, helping to ensure due policy compliance and adherence to best practices. As two schools within the region most reasonably surveyed, as campuses that I have established relationships with, and as local institutions that reflect national trends, WBC and SCC are excellent sites for my proposed study.

Population

To better understand adjuncts' perceptions of and approaches to classroom FSI, my research population consisted of PT faculty who teach transfer-level courses in a variety of disciplines, including (but not limited to) anthropology, dance, psychology, English, history, and mathematics. These last three disciplines form the core of most community college Educational Plans that are geared toward degree completion and/or transfer to four-year institutions, and thus, tend to be in high demand. Based on the statistics presented in Table 1, the total possible sample

size from these representative disciplines is approximately 175 faculty members (SSI/WBC, 2015).

Table 1. Part-Time Faculty in English History, and Mathematics Departments	Number of PT faculty employed by English department	Number of PT faculty employed by history department	Number of PT faculty employed by mathematics department
WBC	73	17	85

To establish clearer parameters and criteria for prospective participants, I sought to recruit PT faculty who had earned an M.A. or M.S. degree or higher. Additionally, participants must have completed at least one year of classroom teaching experience. These criteria helped minimize some of the experience-related variability in teaching style, disciplinary strategies, and prior experience. Most participants, in fact, had at least five years experience. Successive email invites to 417 total prospective survey respondents garnered 39 responses that met my criteria (a response rate of 9.4%; 20 PT faculty, 19 FT faculty, for comparative purposes). Of those 39, I purposefully selected 18 adjuncts to invite for a semi-structured interview, 10 of whom agreed to an interview, reflecting a 56% response rate. Five interviewees identified as male, and five as female.

Data Collection

Data was collected sequentially, using the following methods: Institutional document review (websites, course catalog, etc.), online surveys (for screening, demographic/descriptive

data, Likert-scaled RQ-related items, and one open-ended question), and semi-structured interviews. The document review component of my data collection drew on publicly available information pertaining to the campus, its departments, and instructors within the scope of my study. As my study progressed, data points were harvested from the relevant division and department websites, as well as sites hosted by the colleges' Institutional Research and Human Resources departments. Course catalogs, class schedules, and other ephemera were also helpful reference points. Online access was the primary means to reviewing these documents, with hard copies and/or computer screenshots supplementing my database. From the standpoint of each site being a unit of analysis, these documents aided in both staging and supplementation of the data collection that followed.

Prospective participants were recruited via email invite, and initial development of the screening survey drew on extant literature and UCLA's online HERI protocol, then revised after piloting. Initial contact with the entire pool of possible participants was through email introduction of the study and its selection criteria, along with an invitation for those who met the criteria to complete the linked online screening survey (Appendix 4). To ensure that I reached the largest possible pool of prospective participants, I coordinated with department support staff to compile list serves for targeted email communication with current adjunct faculty in the various disciplines. Email introductions outlined the parameters of the study, delineated participation criteria, and included a link to the online screening survey for those interested.

The online screening survey collected demographic information to confirm participation eligibility and to screen for potential interview participants. This included gathering information

regarding respondents' gender, age, education attainment, discipline, courses taught, and years of experience as a community college instructor. The survey also included various Likert-scaled questions regarding respondents' perceptions of institutional and classroom conditions, as well as an open-ended question related to the kinds of PD activities faculty have had access to and/or participated in. Survey respondents were each compensated with a $20 bookstore gift card.

Semi-structured interviews comprised the final phase of data collection. Rough drafts of interview protocols were reviewed and revised to better understand how *individual* phenomena (i.e. "connecting with students") related to the *whole* being investigated (high-quality classroom FSI). Protocol language was further refined as piloting proceeded, and that language was systematically classified to correspond with units of meaning, or descriptors likely to orbit both anticipated and emergent analytical categories that proved effective once interview data collection commenced.

Interviews with participants explored domains central to this study. These included inquiry into PT faculty's pedagogical strategies, their understanding of (and thoughts about) in-class FSI, and their impressions on (and experience with) any professional development opportunities, if available to them. I sought out perceptions about challenges to high-quality classroom FSI inherent to the experiences of those teaching in a PT capacity, as well as any related institutional incentives or barriers those instructors might have encountered in crafting their approach to teaching. When analyzed alongside the basic demographic data collected from the online survey, the professional narratives that took shape formed the foundation for a fuller, more developed description of adjuncts' perceptions and practices.

To ensure confidentiality for the interviewees, interviews were conducted via telephone, and pseudonyms were assigned to each respondent. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, wherein participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their confidentiality. After data collection was complete, respondents' reported experiences were reviewed to compare the content of their professional narratives against various FSI-related "best practices" previously established in extant literature, an important step in phenomenological analysis that is not so much interpretive, but, rather, descriptive in nature (Berglund, 2007). Preliminary analysis of interview transcripts included the identification of both previously defined and emergent meaning units, which were then synthesized to compose statements aimed at describing the essential structure of the instructors' lived experiences relating to high-quality classroom FSI. Interviewees were each compensated with a $20 gift card.

Analysis

This mixed-methods phenomenological study was supported by data analysis that started from the very beginning of data collection, and was conducted in multiple passes, drawing on both inductive and deductive methods. Participants' lived experiences of FSI-related classroom phenomenon were captured via online survey and semi-structured interviews. From those discrete, subjective accounts of individual experience, general aspects of said phenomenon were derived. Analysis was performed during all phases, including data collection via online surveys and semi-structured interviews, and in deeper detail thereafter.

Online surveys were distributed, and used as both descriptive data collection tools, and as a selection device for assembling a purposeful sample of prospective interviewees from a wide

variety of disciplines. Survey questions were, primarily, Likert-scaled, with a small number of open-ended items. These data were used in their own right, as well as for triangulation after interviews were conducted. All ten interview transcriptions were subjected to cycles of various types of coding, with increasingly narrow aims and results for each. For the first cycle, I scrutinized, as closely as possible, each informant's language and word-choice in describing their classroom interactions with students and related PD experiences (Berglund, 2007). I took note of individual words, phrases, and/or portions therein to organize my data and begin developing themed analytic categories. The parsing of these minutia was vital to coaxing from informants' professional narratives the building blocks of nascent findings.

This process called for the meaning of a given sentence to be uncovered phrase-by-phrase, or even word-by-word, in order to achieve a detailed and nuanced understanding of the respondent's statement (Pinker, 1994). Reference to previously collected survey data also proved useful at this stage, especially the survey's open-ended response and Likert-scaled items related to the frequency of distinct classroom practices, i.e. addressing students by name, inquiring into students' personal well-being, and the like.

Coding was, like much of the study at large, an iterative process. Transcripts were coded in comparison to one another, such that analysis of the last five transcripts invited - in fact, required - review and recoding of the first five to account for emerging patterns and new insights or observations. This cycle of pattern/focused coding helped to "synthesize and explain larger segments of the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57), and resulted in my composing a codebook of both the a priori themes extant literature had led me to expect, as well as the posteriori themes which

had begun to reveal themselves. As theme development progressed, I began a parallel project of identifying, tracking, and logging approximately eighty-five individual descriptors, which, themselves, informed the axial coding that followed.

Conducting a cycle of axial coding accomplished two objectives: to further identify, isolate, and narrow key analytical themes, and to explore the relationships among and between those themes. Drawing on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory coding paradigm, I was able to clearly stake out the phenomenological parameters of my inquiry, along with the various classroom conditions associated with high-quality FSI. This coding approach also helped in articulating the specific behaviors and interactions associated with FSI-related phenomena, and it was instrumental in arriving at five key findings, which, themselves, answer the two research questions that guided this study.

Limitations

There are clear limitations inherent to the design and scope of my proposed study, including limited transferability, relatively small sample, and the subjective nature of much of the data that was collected. Qualitative research usually relies on collecting, analyzing, and reporting on data that are not easily measured or expressed numerically – my study was no exception to these. Anderson (2010) explains some of the limitations frequently associated with studies of this type: "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. 1). Of the limitations I encountered, perhaps the most important for me to have tracked and addressed were those connected to my own biases.

Appropriate methodology and identification of deviant cases helped to mitigate the bias that potentially limits a study of this type. To shape research that explored the nuance of adjuncts' classroom FSI while acknowledging and managing the possible effect of my own professional experiences and biases, it became clear that conducting a phenomenological study would be the best approach to answering my research questions (Groenewald, 2004). Such studies usually take one of two forms – either *interpretive* or *descriptive*. Reiners (2012) explains:

> "Interpretive phenomenology is used when the research question asks for the meaning of the phenomenon and the researcher does not bracket their biases and prior engagement with the question under study. Descriptive phenomenology is used when the researcher wants to describe the phenomenon under study and brackets their biases" (p. 2).

Given that research quality can depend heavily not just on the abilities of the individual researcher, but on their personal biases as well, the descriptive phenomenological approach I chose helped me to acknowledge my own potential bias, and to bracket my observations from those biases. Likewise, my practice of noting deviant cases as I collected and analyzed the data provided contradictory evidence aimed at ensuring that my biases interfered with my perception of that data as little as possible. Beyond the limitation of potential bias, another aspect of my study that presented a challenge was my positionality within the site I chose.

Positionality and Ethics

In conducting research at a site where I am employed, my insider status requires that I address the issue of positionality. My study is a prime example of *insider research*, in that I am a member of the group I am studying, and, thus, have detailed knowledge and understanding of the types of people and culture under consideration (Greene, 2014). Positionality, itself, depends on

one's relation to others in the group or institution. Beyond differences of education, experience, and the like, my employee classification is equal to those I seek to study. Nonetheless, inquiry into the beliefs that underlie one's professional practice could have pushed up against some participants' comfort zone; to address this possibility, I provided assurances of confidentiality, and of the academic nature of my inquiry (as opposed to a program assessment or other evaluation); these proved more than adequate measures. Likewise, it was vital that I approached participants with language couched in the spirit of equality, trust, and collegiality, such as would be expected of professionals engaged in a collaborative effort. After all, positionality, as Merriam (2001) suggests, is bound up with both the participants and the researcher's values and norms.

I did not expect to encounter issues with the ethical practices associated with this study, as I'd planned to take steps to ensure confidentiality and faithful collection of participants' narratives. All administrative gatekeepers, participants, and other site partners were furnished with a general summary of my research objectives. Beyond the vetting that the sites IRB approval confirm for sound design and methodology, I was diligent in protecting participants' identity and well-being. For an insider-research endeavor such as this, protection meant the use of pseudonyms, careful and selective use of direct quotes, and omission of personal details not directly related to research questions. Informed consent forms (Appendix 2) were completed by and obtained from all participants prior to data collection, and I permit participants to review my interview transcripts to support both transparency and trust between myself and my interviewees.

I've maintained, under lock and key (both physical and digital), all data, whether hand-written, computer-based, telephonic, or audio-recorded. All relevant computer files were password protected. Another point of ethical role management actually blended into my need to establish credibility and trustworthiness – that of grappling, as an adjunct instructor myself, with the question of part-time instructors' impact on student success.

Trustworthiness

This study presented me with an aspect of role management that, since handled responsibly and vigilantly, helped establish trustworthiness. Broadly speaking, my trustworthiness is based on honest and accurate expression of my own study-related perceptions. As a part-time instructor studying other part-time instructors, there were challenges in using, as a starting point, literature that suggested a negative relationship between part-time instructors and student outcomes. On a personal and professional level, reviewing such literature required thorough reflection on my part, and careful – at times critical – consideration of my own experiences and feelings regarding instructors' perceptions and practices associated with classroom FSI.

For a study of this type, trustworthiness depends on fostering self-awareness, dependability, and a degree of transferability. Some of the tasks associated with rigorous insider qualitative research include identifying, acknowledging, and addressing one's own personal and/or positional bias. Vigilant self-awareness of my own biases, did, indeed, help ensure sound research methodology (i.e. not engaging interviewees with leading questions, etc.), while, more generally supporting my trustworthiness. Such personal and positional bias management should

be matched by attention to sound methodology that is consistent with scholarly standards, and objectives that carry wider relevance. Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe two potential components of trustworthiness, transferability (through, for example, thick description in relaying participants' professional narratives) and dependability (as exemplified by audit trails) that could help reflect the measure of my study's scholarly worth.

Credibility

Establishing credibility, i.e. other people's positive *perception* of my trustworthiness, depended on accuracy and transparency in how I posed my inquiry, as well as an open, neutral tone in how I interacted with participants. Credibility, for example, involved addressing potential reactivity on the part of my interviewees, careful consideration of my research design and methodology, and how I couched my eventual findings. Given my current employment at the research site, and the fact that like many fields, education can be "a small world," I needed to address the possibility of reactivity among my interviewees.

Lincoln and Guba describe the sort of *confirmability* that I strove for in my study, i.e. taking measures to foster a high degree of neutrality, such that my findings were shaped not by my own bias, interests, or motivations, but by those who participated in my study. Triangulation between the multiple data sources I tapped helped address this issue, as did my style of approach to the interviews I conducted. To avoid my participants altering their viewpoints, behaviors, or narratives to reflect what they may have perceived to be the "right" responses, or to avoid those that might have fallen outside the norm of their actual experience, I worked to engage participants in a manner that avoided communicating any expectations, either subtle or overt.

Using neutral, non-judgmental terminology, avoiding stereotypical references in the wording of my interview questions and verbal probes, and employing member checks helped in this respect.

My experience teaching at WBC helped establish credibility for this study. Having taught at the institution for several years, my research, and subsequent findings, benefited from a context which was informed by the prolonged engagement and persistent observation that Lincoln and Guba cite as cornerstones of credible qualitative research.

Designing a study that is clear in its aim of collecting perceptions, as opposed to only collecting facts and figures, was crucial to my credibility, as it helped me avoid any claims of overly-broad transferability regarding the narratives I collected. Cross-checking instructors' theories-in-use against their espoused theories as they appear in different data sources aided in triangulation, and to further establish qualitative *credibility*, I ran a program of peer debriefing at the study's conclusion. Discussing my findings in terms of reasonable (i.e. not over-reaching) transferability to other groups was essential to establishing credibility.

Chapter Four: Findings

Introduction

Reflecting on the utility of hermeneutic analysis in explaining the relationship between the meaningful whole and its constituent elements, Friederich Ast (1808) asserts that, "the foundational law of all understanding...is to find the spirit of the whole through the individual, and through the whole, to grasp the individual" (p. 178). Beyond addressing the part-to-whole aspect of exploring the *lived experiences* a phenomenological study centers on, Ast's sentiment succinctly articulates the feedback loops that characterize an inquiry of this sort.

The purpose of this study was to examine PT community college instructors' experiences with (and perceptions of) interaction with students in their classrooms, and to describe the extent to which these faculty participate in (and benefit from) professional development activities focused on improving FSI-related elements of classroom instruction. My exploration of the perceptions, reported practices, and challenges associated with classroom FSI among PT instructors at one Southern California community college campus addressed the following research questions:

1. How do part-time community college faculty perceive their in-class faculty-student interaction?

2. What institutional, departmental, and external barriers and opportunities influence classroom interactions according to part-time faculty?

Chapter four will provide a brief overview of this mixed-methods phenomenological study, followed by explanation of the analytical coding cycles, as well as a findings summary. A large proportion of the data collected was qualitative, so detailed presentations of key findings will be punctuated by relatively brief discussions of the study's quantitative findings.

Review of Study

This mixed-methods phenomenological study is informed by a synthesis of theoretical frames guiding its questions, protocols, and analytical tools. Findings were arrived at by of, for example, a four-fold process which captured respondents' lived experiences of FSI-related classroom phenomenon. From those discrete, subjective accounts of individual experience, general aspects of said phenomenon were derived. Earlier iterations of the survey and interview protocols were reviewed and revised to better understand how *individual* phenomena (i.e. "connecting with students") relate to the *whole* being investigated (high-quality classroom FSI).

Protocol language was further refined as collection proceeded, and that language was systematically classified to correspond with units of meaning, or descriptors likely to orbit both anticipated and emergent analytical categories. After data collection was complete, respondents' reported experiences were reviewed to compare the content of their professional narratives against various FSI-related "best practices" previously established in extant literature, an important step in phenomenological analysis that is not so much interpretive, but, rather, descriptive in nature (Berglund, 2007).

Finally, both previously defined and emergent meaning units were synthesized to compose statements aimed at describing the essential structure of the instructors' lived

experiences relating to high-quality classroom FSI. Major and minor findings were thereafter derived, confirming both the overall value and limitations of the study.

Analysis Overview

All ten interview transcriptions were subjected to cycles of various types of coding, with increasingly narrow aims and results for each. For the first cycle, I scrutinized, as closely as possible, each informant's language and word-choice in describing their classroom interactions with students and related PD experiences. I took note of individual words, phrases, and/or portions therein to organize my data and begin developing themed analytic categories. The parsing of these minutia was vital to coaxing from informants' professional narratives the building blocks of nascent findings. This process called for the meaning of a given sentence to be uncovered phrase-by-phrase, or even word-by-word, in order to achieve a detailed and nuanced understanding of the respondent's statement (Pinker, 1994). Reference to previously collected survey data also proved useful at this stage, especially the survey's open-ended response and Likert-scaled items related to the frequency of distinct classroom practices, i.e. addressing students by name, inquiring into students' personal well-being, and the like.

Coding was, like much of the study at large, an iterative process. Transcripts were coded in comparison to one another, such that analysis of the last five transcripts invited - in fact, required - review and recoding of the first five to account for emerging patterns and new insights or observations. This cycle of pattern/focused coding helped to "synthesize and explain larger segments of the data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57), and resulted in my composing a codebook of both the a priori themes extant literature had led me to expect, as well as the posteriori themes which

had begun to reveal themselves. As theme development progressed, I began a parallel project of identifying, tracking, and logging approximately 85 individual descriptors, which, themselves, informed the axial coding that followed.

Conducting a cycle of axial coding accomplished two objectives: to further identify, isolate, and narrow key analytical themes, and to explore the relationships among and between those themes. Drawing on Strauss and Corbin's (1998) grounded theory coding paradigm, I was able to clearly stake out the phenomenological parameters of my inquiry, along with the various classroom conditions associated with high-quality FSI. This coding approach also helped in articulating the specific behaviors and interactions associated with FSI-related phenomena, and it was instrumental in arriving at five key findings, which, themselves, answer the two research questions that guided this study.

Findings Summary

This study revealed five key findings, which correspond to my research questions, as follows:

RQ 1A: How do part-time faculty describe their classroom interactions with students?

Finding:
Part-time faculty described FSI typical to their classrooms, including engaging students in non-academic pre-class *chit chat* to bond socially, moderating inclusive class discussions to ensure that students are "heard" and have a degree of "say" in the nature and direction of those discussions, and the use of classroom management techniques aimed at reinforcing positive relationships with students while upholding class conduct policies.

RQ 1B: What do adjuncts say is their role in fostering high-quality interactions?

Finding:

Adjuncts' self-reported roles in fostering high-quality classroom FSI often center on selective personal disclosure, employing social skills & subject expertise to mentor students, varying attitudes toward faculty/student power differentials, and the degree to which their FSI is marked by a balance between building connections and negotiating boundaries.

RQ 2A: What institutional challenges to classroom FSI do they identify?

Finding:
Adjunct instructors reported institutional and interpersonal barriers to fostering high-quality classroom FSI, including insufficient time to build rapport with students, and instances of students, themselves, expressing or exhibiting a disinclination for engagement by the instructor.

RQ 2B: To what extent do they participate in employer-hosted teaching-related PD activity?

Finding:
Adjuncts participate in on-campus professional development activity at substantially lower rates than their FT counterparts. When they do engage in PD activity, it centers on improving pedagogy and FSI-related skills development, and typically occurs off-campus, at the instructor's own expense.

RQ 2C: What do they say are the incentives and barriers to their participation in such activity?

Finding:
The most prevalent themes in adjuncts' reports on incentives to participate in PD activities are desire to develop pedagogical ability and improving chances for FT employment. The greatest barrier to PD participation is limited time on campus due to schedule conflicts.

RQ 1A: Adjuncts Describe Classroom FSI

Part-time faculty described FSI typical to their classrooms, including engaging students

in non-academic pre-class *chit chat* to bond socially, moderating inclusive class discussions to

ensure that students are "heard" and have a degree of "say" in the nature and direction of those

discussions, and the use of classroom management techniques aimed at reinforcing positive

relationships with students while upholding class conduct policies.

Non-Academic Pre-Class Chat

By far, the most prevalent phenomenological pattern to have emerged from adjuncts'

descriptions of typical FSI in their classrooms is the practice of non-academic pre-class *chit chat*

as a device for relating to and bonding with students. Several interviewees reported that this

technique is also effective as a segue to the day's lecture material. Max, for example, spoke in

detail about just how important those moments prior to lecture are for him to connect with his

students:

> "...to me, having those small moments...just a couple of minutes before we start [class] to
> chat about who they are, what are their interests, what are they studying, where they live,
> you know...those kinds of things. For me, it's been a really useful way to connect with
> them...to kind of show that, hey...I'm interested in you...I want to know more about
> you...that I care. It's been powerful for me to make those connections...to build that
> trust..."

Max's account makes particular sense in the context of Evertson & Poole's (2008) assertion that:

> "Trust is a key component of an effective classroom. Yet this implicit understanding
> between students and teacher cannot be demanded nor does it automatically emerge as a
> factor of sharing a classroom. Teachers establish trust by being dependable and by
> establishing a dependable environment" (p. 134).

Nicki, in turn articulated how she uses that pre-class non-academic chit-chat to both bond with

students, as well as a segue into that day's material:

> "Before we start, I'll talk to the students...you know, ask them about something I saw on
> Facebook or social media. And that usually gets them having a conversation with me, so
> that when lecture starts, um, it tends to encourage them to speak more during the lecture
> and contribute. I always start with some sort of fun topics. My purpose is more to get

them comfortable speaking up in class, so the initial couple of minutes - at the beginning - I don't necessarily start with material that connects to the classroom stuff."

Faculty/student interactions that occur before class officially starts, as we've seen, can be vital to cultivating social cohesion in the classroom, which, itself, contributes to an overall learning environment rich in opportunities for students to grow, and to participate.

Inclusive Class Discussions and FSI

A large majority of participants reported moderating inclusive class discussions which give all students an opportunity to respond to questions, voice opinions, and express feelings about the subject content – accomplishing with one technique multiple relational and instructional goals. Writing on the influence that both instructors *and* students have on classroom environment, Dobransky & Frymier (2004) assert that students:

> "...have power in the classroom. This may be in the form of resisting teachers...or in teachers empowering students. When teachers provide students with choices or allow them to have input into the content covered or other aspects of the class, the teacher is sharing control. This phenomenon has been studied under the rubric of empowerment...and [findings suggest] that students who were empowered by their teachers also reported feeling more motivated to study and reported performing more learning indicators" (p. 215).

The potential benefit of supporting such dialog in class, especially as regards better outcomes for student learning and faculty/student relationships, is clear. At the most basic level, most interviewees cited some example of this from their experiences with opening up the arena of opinion, fact, and feeling to the wider class, in the interest of a more inclusive discussion. An example of this was summed up by a brief comment that James dropped along the way to making an otherwise unrelated point, "...I let them know that I'm interested in hearing what

they've got to say." To build on this sentiment, Nicki's account unpacks the phenomena in a bit more detail:

> "I have students who take a course of mine, which may fit with another course they're taking at the same time...and so, they might come across something in that other course that can be useful in mine. I want them to understand, like, the connections, and I'm very willing to hear their side or their perspective...or if they know something I don't. I don't want them to be afraid to actually tell me, to share it with the class."

It's often in the "connections" that Nicki refers to in the above passage that students begin to make meaning, for themselves, of the content they learn while attending college. Pagano (1991) argues that

> "...that a principal aim of education is the development of a moral imagination, and that the development of a moral imagination is embedded in processes of identity formation and identification. In an educational setting, these processes involve students in locating their own questions in material to be studied and in identifying with and responding to the questions of others" (p. 260).

The "development of a moral imagination" Pagano discusses is an element that featured prominently in many participants' responses. When asked to what extent they agreed that their role as an instructor included helping students develop their personal values, 89% of part-time respondents to the pre-interview survey "agreed" or "strongly agreed" that yes, indeed, this was an important aspect of their role in the classroom (Figure 1).

9) Please indicate the extent to which you agree it is your role as an instructor to:
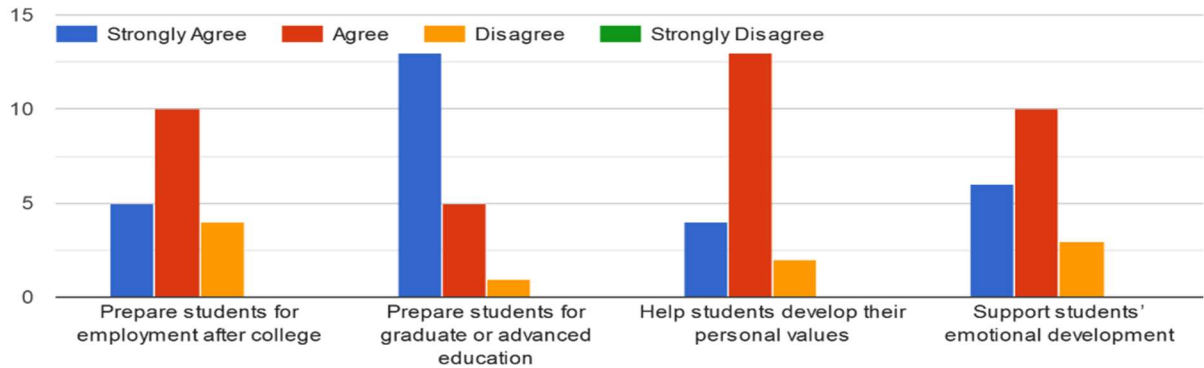
Figure 1. Part-Time Faculty Responses to Survey Item #9 (No "Strongly Disagree" responses recorded for this specific item.)

Elizabeth, a member of the "agree" camp cited above, shared her observation that by

encouraging open discourse between her and her students, she's able to convey the day's

material while gauging levels of understanding and, more generally, engagement in the class:

> "I think by always having that balance of making sure that there's a back and forth, and
> having questions and having comments...and noticing when there are no questions, or
> there are no comments, I think it's easier tell when it's time to switch direction a bit...you
> know, when there is no feedback or when they don't have anything to say."

As many instructors know, unresponsive students can be a sign that everyone is "on the same
 page," or, otherwise, that everyone is equally lost. Likewise, it can be when there is *too much*

responsiveness from the other side of the podium that the challenges begin. It is these moments

when classroom management can become as much an opportunity for high-quality FSI as it is a

set of tools for guiding wily pupils back to the day's topic.

Classroom Management and FSI

As with inclusive class discussions, most participants shared anecdotes reflecting the ways they use classroom management techniques to achieve multiple goals - not simply to enforce their policies, but to reinforce positive relationships with their students. Evertson & Poole (2008) notes that:

> "The relational interactions within a classroom foster dependability when a teacher puts into practice the norms and expectations planned for the social space of the class. These norms and expectations are typically outlined through class rules and procedures" (p. 138).

Approximately half of respondents relayed narratives reflecting a preference for avoiding rigid adherence to classroom rules, in favor of more relaxed response to classroom management issues. They often cited the relative maturity of CC students (necessitating fewer correctives actions), as well as better overall results when responding to the disruptions that occasionally occur. This was illustrated by Nicki's succinct explanation that, "I can't be super strict, because they're adults...they have critical thinking skills and abstract skills that I can utilize." In response to a question on how his approach to engaging students has evolved over his years of experience, Gonzalo acknowledged that:

> "...I've become, well, more relaxed. And when I first started, I was concerned about all these rules. I have to follow these rules and make sure that if, you know, this or that rule gets broken, then [there are hard consequences]. And I realized, especially with college students, that I don't often have behavioral issues, you know? They tend to be more mature, so I can be a little bit more relaxed."

When confronted with those occasional outbursts or inappropriate behaviors among students, both Walter and Gonzalo expressed a desire to make of the incident a teachable moment with their responses. These examples also represent the sensitivity to students' dignity, even when

disciplining inappropriate behavior, and the importance of connecting the "talking to" to the

professor's overall concern for the student to do well.

> Walter: "So, after an issue, I'll talk to them individually. I wait until I have chance be discrete, then try to pint out what they're doing, and I'll say this isn't okay and here's why. And I kind of explained step-by-step what they're doing and how that affects other students."

> Gonzalo: "Like, when I have problems with cheating, when I see someone doing something that looks suspicious, I wait and don't call them out in front of the class - I wait until a moment when I can address the student where it's just the two of us, I pointed it out, let them know I have to fail that assignment or test, but that if they don't do it again, we won't have a problem. I've loosened up a bit, cause' I was nervous when I first started teaching..."

Walter and Gonzalo's statements confirm what Evertson & Poole (2008) asserted, namely, that,

"...relying on personal rapport to influence behavior, some teachers privately hold needed

conversations with students." (p. 136). It's clear from participants' accounts that situations

calling for intensive classroom management can also be opportunities to engage in meaningful

FSI with students.

Summing up Adjuncts' Descriptions of Classroom FSI

Engaging students in non-academic pre-class *chit chat*, moderating inclusive class

discussions, and making use of classroom management techniques that bond as much as they

enforce are characteristic of the ways adjunct interviewees described the high-quality FSI typical

to their classrooms. Beyond specific practices, however, there are a variety personality-based and

motivation-related factors that inform these participants' self-reported roles in fostering those

FSI-related practices.

RQ 1B: Adjuncts' Roles in Fostering FSI

The roles that PT instructors perceive for themselves in fostering high-quality classroom FSI are bound up with issues of personal disclosure, tapping social skills & subject area expertise to mentor students, varying attitudes toward the faculty/student power differential, and the ways these factors influence the balance between building connections and negotiating boundaries. Extant literature suggests that both obvious classroom behaviors on the part of the instructor, as well as more subtle, often non-verbal cues, contribute to an integrated student experience, with implications for their outcomes that reach well beyond the classroom. McKay and Estrella, for example, suggest that meaningful, high-quality FSI tends to support students' overall integration into the campus environment and to positively influence their retention rates (2008).

To understand the roles that instructors perceive for themselves in the classroom, a look at research on their personality types was enlightening. Citing Buchanan's use of The Big Five Personality Test (2001), Kneipp et al (2010) asserts that "…this instrument was used to measure the five personality characteristics of Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agree-ableness, and Neuroticism" among a population of college instructors, going on to state that "the results indicated that of the five personality characteristics assessed, agreeableness was the only factor that significantly correlated with student ratings of instructional quality" (pgs. 44, 46).

In much the same way that these traits will vary widely from one instructor to the next, so, too, was there great variation among interviewee's responses to questions aimed at revealing how they perceived their primary roles in fostering a classroom environment that supports one of the most important elements of high-quality FSI - that of connecting with students.

Establishing and Maintaining Connection

In questioning interviewees on their role in fostering high-quality FSI in the classroom, responses which conveyed the importance of establishing and maintaining personal connections with students emerged as an unmistakable pattern. As one interviewee, Rosemarie, expressed:

> "…you're going to be [much] more able to communicate with the students if you can connect with them, and recognize their stories and what they're up to….I'll come in, I'll see how people are doing. I mean, the level of engagement with students changes as the semester progresses and I get to know them…but I definitely respond to that as an instructor…and so do they. For sure."

One simple auditory cue many participants reported as eliciting positive responses in their students was addressing them by name. Several respondents shared their thoughts on how important addressing students by name is in building connections with them, but it was Max who expressed it most fully:

> "I just believe so strongly in learning names as best as I possibly can. It really just comes down to loving students. It's really at the core. It sounds really cheesy, I know, but its sincere, you know? You can't love a student if you don't know their name, who they are, what they're interested in and why they're here...it's just part of my whole, my whole ethos as an educator."

Three out of ten interviewees cited using students' names when addressing them in class as an important technique related to building a connection with them. The overwhelming majority of participants, however, prioritized fostering an emotionally and intellectually "safe" classroom environment, marked by warmth, and free of excess anxiety, as conducive to connection. Fostering a "safe" classroom environment, as described by interviewees, can be characterized by minimizing harsh judgment and excess stress, while maximizing fairness and encouragement. Rebel touched upon the first point when explaining that:

"I try to not put my opinion…or judgment on them. Not so much like, hey, you're doing lousy, what's wrong with you? But more like, I see that you're falling back…is there something going on? Do you need some help? Less judgmental, right?"

While Gonzalo shared how:

"I tell them things like, you know, when I was in college, I had instructors where it might have been a great class, loved the instructor, but then you got the test…and you had no idea where this stuff came from! They know that I'm trying to keep it as fair and transparent as possible. My experience in college and what I didn't like, you know…I try to avoid that."

Walter, likewise, observed that:

"The best is…when they feel like there isn't pressure to have to learn this material because they're enjoying the process of it. When they don't feel like they have to stress too much on the exams so they don't play games…you know, trying to cheat, or whatever, because the exams aren't uncomfortable…they know that they're still have a safety net below them. So I try to help them realize these things and recognize that it's okay that this or that exam didn't go well, or that it's okay to have a bad day. I'm open with them about that."

Assuaging students' anxiety over assignments and assessments figured prominently in Salvador's experience of connecting with students as well; here, he describes his encouraging, growth-centered approach:

"One of the things I've noticed with students is that…there is some anxiety that comes with writing. Specifically, when it comes to writing a research paper for an exam. So I have them write several drafts, I provide a lot of feedback...maybe too much feedback. I encourage them. And for the most part, they improve. And we see the change. I tell them, 'look, there's growth', or 'hey, that's great'. So I'm constantly looking at those dynamics about growth: Reading skills? Growth. Writing? Growth. Research skills? Growth."

Minimizing stress and anxiety is a fundamental in fostering a positive classroom relationship between faculty and students. The quality of these relationships takes on a more complex aspect, though, with the introduction of personal disclosures.

Disclosure and Connection

Many PT instructors rely on disclosure of personal information to build rapport with their students – a task which requires mutual trust, good judgment, and a nuanced understanding of what is "professional". Interviewee's narratives reveal that this territory can be challenging to traverse, but if done so successfully, can be one of the most rewarding aspects of their classroom FSI. Elements of both instructor and student disclosure surfaced in these narratives, and most of the faculty expressed some level of understanding that such disclosures can foster trust, can humanize them in the eyes of their students, and can be a highly-effective tool for building rapport. Self-disclosure, according to Hosek & Thompson (2009),

> "…offers students insight into their teachers' personal and professional lives in an authentic way…[and] represents a rich personal source of student-teacher communication…[while it] illuminates a teacher's personhood to students…Therefore, teachers can construct a sense of personhood by disclosing autobiographical accounts, which can be used to illustrate how teachers apply the course content and skills in their own work and lives." (p.328)

Authenticity, autobiographical accounts, and the experience that comes with years behind the podium all showed up in participants' disclosure-related anecdotes. Max expressed both the positive effects of experience, and a resulting shift toward increasing openness:

> "If you had asked me years ago, it might've been a different answer. But at this point in my career, I share a lot. When I'm with students, you know, I'll talk about my personal life if they ask, or if I think it will help me relate to them....I want to build trust. I want them to know, hey, if you work really hard, you can trust me to do right by you. That's only fair."

Rosemarie's account echoed Max's, going into greater detail on the nature of that shift towards more open discourse on personal matters:

"I would say that I'm more relaxed. I'm actually much more able to connect with students now than when I first started teaching…I think this is pretty natural. When you first start, you're so terrified of doing something wrong, or, maybe, like, being too open with students. You feel like, oh, I have to keep this really hard boundary between myself and my students…but now, I feel more comfortable. I'll chat with students about my garden, or other things in my life. I'm sure I'm much more personable…a little more relaxed. I still have high standards, but I'm more aware of bigger things that are going on in [students'] lives that can affect their ability to get the work done."

Nicki clearly explained the role of disclosure in connecting with her students:

"It's about willingness to connect to my students. Yeah, opening up that conversation. I always tell my students, when we go over the Syllabus that first week…this isn't me being an authority figure, issuing commands…I let them know that, hey, I was sitting in that seat where you are only 10 years ago. I guess I'm opening up the conversation for them to open up to me. I share a lot of my personal stories…in terms of my struggle to get where I am now…"

Nicki's account also provides an entrée to the other side of disclosure's coin – that of fostering a classroom environment conducive to students feeling comfortable enough to share details about themselves. Providing students with the conditions for (and opportunity to) disclose their own stories is a vital component to many adjuncts' self-perceived role in classroom FSI. Rebel confided that:

"…I connect with students really well, so I have a lot of them coming to me with their personal problems…you know, this and that. I'm available via email pretty much anytime, and I tell them I'll check my email at least once every 24 hours. So, if they need to reach out, I'm usually there."

Much of what it means to connect with students requires the ability to coax sub-text out of a discussion, as explained by Elizabeth, who's grasp on this has helped in her effort to connect:

"…maybe they're having a hard time with a deadline, or what have you. They'll come after class and we'll have a conversation, and they'll open up to me about what's really going on. And a lot of times, it's not about the deadline…it's about personal matters…their workload…adjusting to college life. So, a lot of the most productive conversations I've had where I get to know students are because they are coming to me

about something else…to apologize for not turning something in, or because they're asking for an extension. And then, I don't pry, but I'll kind of…turn it into a conversation and get my idea of what's going on. And so those have been a pretty fruitful."

Mentorship and Connection

Another aspect of adjuncts' perceived roles in crafting a connection-rich classroom environment is fulfilling students' need for a caring mentor, supportive guide, and/or a positive role model. The majority of interviewees, in fact, mentioned one or more of these while discussing their teaching experiences, and it's no surprise, given what the literature suggests. There are likely as many teaching styles as there are teachers, but *role modeling*, according to Falvo et al (1991), "…may have a greater impact on the student than other teaching methods…for example, [it may]…be educationally more effective than lecture or discussion sessions in enhancing the students' ability to [grasp the discipline]…" (p. 228). Gonzalo alludes to much of this while sharing that:

> "I tell them from the beginning of the class…look, I don't like to test. I like to teach. It happens to be [Gonzalo's discipline], and that's what I'm here for. For you. I'm a teacher, not a tester, but the way the world works, I've got to give you grades, and they have to be based on your performance. That's the world, but I'm here to help."

What Gonzalo alludes to in the excerpt above, Max spells out, taking into account a profound, albeit somewhat uncomfortable truth for some educators – that much of the content we teach our students will probably go by the wayside. What will endure, however, from the perspective of instructors pursuing connection with their students, can only be conveyed through those experiences related to high-quality FSI:

> "...the most important thing is the pedagogy...even more than the discipline. The students will forget the material (and no one cares more about the material than I do)…I love what I teaching…I'm passionate about it. I think it's important, like deeply in my bones, you

know, but like, they're gonna forget most of the details, so that's not what it's about. But, you know, teaching…being a good educator will rise above any material. Like, you could have the worst class, worst material, but a great teacher? You're going to like it. Honestly…I'm an educator before I'm a [content expert].

Nicki confirmed the sentiment rather succinctly:

"I love teaching them [her discipline], but for me, it's as much about being a mentor for them, if that's what they're looking for."

The importance of faculty as role models and mentors in the classroom is understood, intuitively, by many conscientious educators. Falvo et al (1991) reminds educators that, "…mentorship is less about reviewing the student's performance in a [given] subject or an examination and more about a wider view of issues relating to the student" (p. 230). Both teachers and students are creatures of habit, so the value of digging a bit deeper into the self-ascribed roles that CC adjuncts identify with lies in the chance that by naming and accounting for such high-impact phenomena, the classroom practitioner can develop a more effective set of pedagogical habits – and the interpersonal skills with which to forge stronger connections in the classroom.

Interpersonal Skills, Connection, and FSI

As a set of classroom tools and capacities that support connection, strong interpersonal skills were referenced, directly or otherwise, by all interviewees. Reflecting on FSI, Morrissette (2001) suggests that, "...to improve faculty-student communication...faculty can exercise fundamental interpersonal skills and work toward speaking with rather than speaking at students" (p. 6). Amiability, patience, and good listening were noted by several interviewees; three additional interpersonal skills that featured even more prominently in participants' recollection

of classroom experiences were reading body language, a capacity for empathy, and a willingness to be vulnerable.

Posture, movements, and facial expressions were among the most frequently cited examples of the non-verbal cues participants watched for in reading students' body language. Staying attuned to such messaging helped these instructors gauge student engagement, and shift instructional approach, where appropriate, to maintain connection in the classroom. Speaking on the subject of reading body language, Gonzalo observed that:

> "...if somebody is tapping their foot or shaking their leg, I notice it. That doesn't always mean a negative thing, but I'm always paying attention...like, I look at their faces. I can tell, you know...the last thing I want to do...I actually tell the classes...I've said my worst fear is that I don't want to do sit here and bore people. I'm sensitive to that."

James, too, picked up on just how much students can "say" without speaking a word:

> "I would say it's important to get a sense of who they all are without actually having to ask a lot of questions. You can generally gauge where a student is, in terms of their response to class, or to the professor, by their body language. What are their facial expressions? How early did they show up to class, or how late did they show up? You can generally get a sense of where most people are in relation to the class even if they don't say anything."

Students who perceive their instructor as high in empathy, extant literature suggests, have a significantly better chance of scoring high on a variety of learning measures (Chang et al, 1981). When asked about the relationship between interpersonal skills and classroom FSI, interviewees often identified empathy as an important capacity for instructors. As a busy, multi-institution educator herself, Marcia understands the difficulty her students meet with in fulfilling the demands of a full schedule:

"I think empathy has been really key for me...that empathy has come from the shared experiences of, you know...what it was like to have been in those shoes...hearing about the kind of schedules many of them are maintaining in order to balance school and work commitments..."

By extending his empathetic impulse toward his students, Salvador demonstrated the outlook of an optimist in trying to assume the best of them:

"Well, you've got to give people the benefit of the doubt. You never know what a person is going through, and I'll tell them, you know, we are all in the same boat here. It's just that some of us are paddling different ways..."

Various working conditions associated with PT teaching can disincentivize adjunct faculty from being vulnerable in their classroom interactions with students (Cutri & Whiting, 2015), yet the trend toward doing so emerged among many participants' narratives when questioned about which interpersonal skills they most often employed. The phrase "I don't know" can be difficult for most anyone to utter; nonetheless, many interviewees faced this classroom situation head-on, as in the case of Walter, who explained that, "I try to just let them know that it's okay to be flawed. They see my flaws. It's okay to be friendly with your professor." It was Max who put a fine point on it, when he shed light on the fact that in most CC classrooms, there is already quite a lot of vulnerability present: "I just always feel like showing that vulnerability is a useful tool for connecting with students...because they're vulnerable, too." Other participants provided specific examples of how this plays out in their classrooms. Without citing vulnerability per se, Elizabeth was candid in sharing the following anecdote, which still illustrates the points made by Walter and Max in greater detail:

"I've gotten more comfortable when a student asks me a question and I don't know the answer...I'll take it as an opportunity where I can help empower them. I'll tell them 'let's work together to find the answer...I'm not sure...let's look it up. How should we look up

question? Where can we find that information? What's a reliable source for that information?' I've brought that into the classroom more, and I think it's effective for teaching. I think it's helped with rapport, where it sort of opens up this relationship a little bit...where I'm a human, like them."

In recounting a similar hypothetical, Nicki clearly shows how the relationship between instructor vulnerability and connection to students plays out in the classroom:

"I'm not afraid of getting corrected. So, if I say something, and a student responds with...well, my other teacher said it's such-and-such...I'll say to them, alright, let's look it up and let's break this down...we'll figure it out. And, so, I want them to feel comfortable challenging me...and [to have] the confidence to speak up. Being vulnerable with them, I think, is really what drives my relationships with them. I don't close off my personal life to them, I guess, which I know people do in the classroom, which, I'm not saying everybody has to, but at least for me, that's what works. The crux of my kind of teaching method is just...just being vulnerable...with myself. And with my students."

Like other interpersonal skills discussed in this section, the willingness to be vulnerable expressed by these adjuncts reflects a seemingly-paradoxical relationship between two states: the ability to significantly scale back one's relational defenses on one hand, and a concomitant (and equally significant) demonstration of confidence on the other. Speculation on this led me to more deeply interrogate the transcripts, resulting in the following rhetorical question: "Where, in light of frequently challenging workplace conditions and often-overwhelming schedule demands, do adjuncts find the confidence to be vulnerable with their students? Reference to their professional narratives provided clues to one of several possible answers: conscious acknowledgment of one's subject area expertise can facilitate adjuncts' efforts to foster meaningful classroom FSI.

Acknowledged Expertise and FSI

We've looked at various attitudes PT faculty report regarding the inherent faculty / student power differential in their classrooms; after reviewing respondents' narratives in light of

extant literature on this subject, it becomes clear that *how* instructors deploy power in classroom interactions is, perhaps, even more relevant to students' learning outcomes than *how much* power those instructors actually have. One example is the use of coercive power, which, according to Gold (1958), has been found to be negatively associated with students' self-reported learning, as opposed to the use of power derived from instructors' subject area expertise, which has been linked positively with these same learning outcomes. Interviewee Salvador explains that:

> "...I have a better command of [the subject] than I did when I first started. [Content mastery] has allowed me to open up more and explore other ways of teaching and coaching...it's allowed me to engage students more...I'm free to have a more open dialogue in the classroom."

The following comments by Max build on Salvador's insight, and they reveal the self-trust that contributes to this interactional phenomenon – an experience reported, in one form or another, by nine out of ten interviewees:

> "...it's become clear that [students] want to hear from me. They want to know my opinion...what I think. They usually have great questions, so I'm not as hesitant to just say, hey, we're going to have a long, 'old-school' lecture today, cause' I think it's a really important topic. So, I guess I'm saying that I trust myself a bit more to...just *teach*. At the beginning, I was all about 'let's all learn together'; now, I understand that I need to trust myself."

Issues of power and control in classroom interactions are woven throughout the intimate stories shared by participants in this study, suggesting that whatever decisions instructors make in navigating the ever-present power differential between students and themselves, both the quantity and quality of their classroom FSI will be affected.

Navigating the Power Differential

Classroom FSI is influenced by an instructor's perception of faculty/student power dynamics, and, in turn, by the ways those perceptions inform the instructor's reported classroom behaviors. Two distinct trends emerged regarding instructors' accounts of their approach to navigating the classroom's inherent power differential: Professional narratives that reflect a focus on establishing *connection* via interactions that *deemphasize* the power differential, and those reflecting a focus on establishing *boundaries* via interactions which *emphasize* that differential. Long-standing literature on classroom power differentials and attendant issues of situational control suggests that this dimension of the faculty/student relationship accounts for a significant proportion of the interaction that occurs between instructors and their students (Millar & Rogers, 1976). "The control dimension," according to Millar & Rogers, "is concerned with who has the right to direct, delimit, and define the actions of the [classroom environment]" (p. 91). This "control dimension" plays out in the communication between students and teachers who, traditionally, "...hold most of the power and control in the classroom and typically have greater status than students" (Millar & Rogers, 1976, p. 92). The choices instructors' make in how to navigate this aspect of their relationships with students have clear implications for what it means to foster a classroom environment conducive to high-quality FSI.

Deemphasized Power, Connection, and FSI

Nearly half of interviewees shared accounts of classroom experiences which suggest an approach to student engagement characterized by a generally "egalitarian" attitude, as reflected in efforts aimed at relating to students as their social, personal, or intellectual equal, and,

perhaps, even their *friend*. Two anecdotes stand out in this respect – the first of which was shared

by Salvador:

> "I tell them…'we are a community…in this classroom, we are a community.' And one of
> the things that I remind them of at a couple of points during the semester…I'll mention
> that 'although I'm on this side of the podium', right, 'I used to be on that side…where you
> are, and that, really, you're my boss. I work for you. My job is to teach you…my job is to
> help you with your writing and your reading…to help you improve and sharpen your
> skills. So, I work for you. You're my boss."

Salvador's experiences and choices mirror an observation made by Schwartz (2011), who noted

that some professors have "…attempted to…minimize their authority and the existing hierarchy,

hoping to diminish the power differential and alter the boundary dynamics" (p. 364). This notion

finds further expression in the words of Max, who, like Salvador, discussed his efforts to

deconstruct the classroom hierarchy, in the service of connecting with his students:

> "I'm not here to just walk in, teach, and walk out…for me, those moments where I
> connect with students are powerful. I come at them from a, sort of…human level…just to
> kind of break down that hierarchy a little bit. I like having students question my
> authority…I like that, and I want it, because they have different experiences than I have.
> I'm just trying to kind of demystify [our relationship] a little bit…especially at, uh, the
> community college level…where I think they sometimes run into that intimidation factor
> in [the classroom]."

It's helpful to set these anecdotes more fully into the context of extant literature which suggests

that:

> "…[some] educators argue that creating excessive distance in relationships with students
> serves to diminish the relationship, [and that the resulting] increase in the professor's
> power…can have the effect of withholding from [students] much of what makes a
> [classroom] relationship the rich, rewarding, and valuable relationship that all hope it to
> be" (Schwartz, p. 365).

These accounts shed some light on the conceptual and philosophical grounding behind choices

geared toward deemphasizing the classroom power differential. One example of a classroom

behavior that instantiates these concepts and philosophies can be found in one of the most common elements of each interviewee's typical class meeting – that of how their students address them directly.

Deceptively quotidian in frequency, and seemingly minute in social function, classroom practices associated with title and address actually reveal profound insights into how the faculty-student power differential influences classroom FSI. Several participants reported using title or address as a means to connect with their students, as in the case of Rebel, who indicated that:

> "Sometimes, I'll let them come up with nicknames...like one [student] last semester called me [an endearing nickname]. It doesn't really matter...some will call me 'Mrs.', or if they don't know what to choose, a lot of times they'll just call me 'Ma'am'. I'm pretty open."

Recent studies suggest that forms of address in the West have, in general, been getting more informal with the passage of time, and that:

> "...address forms in American English have been undergoing some major changes toward informality where first name usage, in particular, has become increasingly common....It appears that another place where address forms are changing is in academic settings, where informal address is becoming more common between students and their professors" (Wright, 2009, p. 1080).

Such blurring of traditional boundaries may, as some scholars have suggested, aid in bringing instructors and their students closer during classroom interactions. It's worth noting, however, that such boundary-crossing carries potential risks as well – especially in terms of maintaining the sort of classroom environment that supports high-quality FSI, as described by Schwartz (2011), who warns that:

> "...this attempt to minimize authority and power [is] a denial response: the professor inherently has an evaluative and institutional role, as well as disciplinary expertise, and thus definitively holds power. Buck et al., (2009) in exploring teaching as a relational

process, attempted to replace the teacher role with that of supportive friend or colleague, listening and encouraging rather than instructing. However, the role experimentation between an education professor and her students resulted in conflict" (p. 364).

The clear distinction between *egalitarianism* and *hierarchy* in a classroom is as relevant to this discussion as the somewhat less obvious difference between faculty *being friendly* with their students and *being their friend.* Further exploration of interviewee's comments will illuminate the nuanced relationship between power dynamics, establishing boundaries, and fostering high-quality FSI.

Emphasized Power, Boundaries, and FSI

A majority of interviewees shared stories of classroom experiences which reflect an approach to student engagement marked by a generally "hierarchical" attitude, as evidenced by efforts aimed at relating to students as their subject area *educator*, with whom it's appropriate to be *friendly*, as opposed to a *friend*. Schwartz (2011) provides some context for this strong trend among respondents:

> "In the course of an academic year, faculty members set boundaries regarding their availability to students, the locations of their meetings with students, and the degree to which they self-disclose in the classroom. These questions are not only questions of relationship and perimeters, but also of power and positionality; how do we as teachers acknowledge, define, and regulate our authority and position in relationships with students?" (p. 363).

Many interviewee responses offer clues on how to answer these questions, and their professional narratives centered on the importance of setting clear boundaries and leading classroom interactions in ways that bring into high relief the power differential between themselves and their students. Elizabeth, for example, explained that:

"I'm very clear on the first day with my policies, and I'm very clear because...the thing that comes up with me...I think I come across as pretty sympathetic because I do show that I care about students learning. If I'm not careful, though, I seem to come off...I fall into them seeing me as a buddy, or they see me almost like a nurturing kind of character. So, setting boundaries politely and firmly...yeah it's been kind of an interesting thing. Sometimes, I've noticed students will get kind of chummy with me, and it hasn't really hit a point where it's inappropriate, but, like, it reminds me that there might be something about me that they're picking up on...where they feel that I could be a buddy. So, it's important that I politely reinforce those boundaries."

Additionally, the following comments by James highlight the possible relationship between clear classroom boundaries and improvements in students' academic outcomes:

"...the personal connections...the rapport with my students on a personal level...has not really increased over the years. I would say when I first started teaching, I had a lot more personal connections with the students. Absolutely. I think it was tied to the fact that as a younger instructor, they were viewing me as a peer...you know what I mean? But as I've gotten older and more rigid in my approach...there is less personal connection with students. The thing is...the outcomes...you know, students' grades and what-have-you...they've improved. The personal connection may be less, but I know I'm getting through [to students] in terms of their academic preparation...and my retention rates are going upwards."

In light of these comments, it should be no surprise that James was among the interviewees which expressed a preference for being addressed as "Professor" or "Mr.", as opposed to those participants who handle the question of classroom title and address in a more relaxed fashion. So we're presented, once again, with the Bard's challenge: what's in a name?

In much the same way that some of the adjuncts in this study told of making efforts to use title preference and personal disclosure as a means to deemphasize the classroom power differential and connect with students, a higher proportion of those interviewed reported using these same relational elements to emphasize that differential, in the service of establishing and maintaining clear boundaries. Healthy boundaries, many of them suggested, are at the heart of

high-quality FSI. Commenting on some instructors' awareness of these boundaries, and the

social distance they necessitate, Schwartz (2011) asserts that:

> "Seeking to avoid what some consider to be "the slippery slope" wherein boundary
> crossings more than likely lead to boundary violations, some professors establish an
> extended distance between themselves and their students" (p. 366).

Elizabeth shared her thoughts on the subject of using title and address as what I call *boundary*

maintenance tools that help socialize and acculturate students to the structure of a college

learning environment:

> "Personally, I prefer 'professor'...it clarifies the relationship, as well as what it is we're
> doing here. So, it's not even that much about me or my preference... it's about the fact
> that if I'm your professor, then I think that you will take this arrangement, and this class,
> seriously...that you'll take *yourself* seriously as a college student. For a lot of [community
> college] students, there's a transition from high school or from the workplace where, I
> think, if you're calling your instructors "professor", then you're taking things
> seriously...like, at a college level. It's not just about you [the instructor]; it's
> about...[students] understanding the whole structure, and how to behave, and how to
> engage in it."

As theses excerpts suggest, a slight majority of participants reported varying degrees of

power-differential awareness, as well as approaches to student engagement marked by a

"hierarchical" attitude. High-quality FSI, according to this sub-set of interviewees, is best

supported when relating to students as their amiable, expert *educator*, as opposed to their warm,

personal *friend*. As with title and address, instructors' disclosure of personal information carries

potential as both a means of forging meaningful classroom connections, and a strategy for

establishing and maintaining constructive boundaries.

Disclosure and Boundaries

Several interviewees reported using selective personal disclosure as a way of building

constructive boundaries between themselves and their students – a task which calls on faculty to

share enough to relate with students, without crossing over into unprofessional over-sharing. The interpersonal conditions for this include the same mutual trust, good judgment, and nuanced understanding of what is "professional" as we found in the narratives of adjuncts more focused on *connection*, with a slight but significant shift in respondents implied definitions of "professional", and shared stories that reflected a clear focus on *boundaries* as the operative device through which they cultivate meaningful classroom FSI. This sub-set of interviewees expressed clear limits on just how "personal" disclosures should be, and often cited the importance of connecting those disclosures directly to the course material at hand. Rebel's hypothetical reflects aspects of these patterns:

> "... as far as sharing my own personal life with them, I tell them, 'look...I've been there, done that...' I'll share little tidbits here and there, like little stories that, kind of, connect to what we're reading or whatever...but I try not to share too much. Like, they don't know where I live, or other personal things like that. I don't give out my cell phone number, and I'm quite open in saying 'no, I have my personal space'."

Nicki's experiences reflect both the importance of grasping the useful limits of faculty disclosure, as well as an awareness of the *social* nature of learning, thus, the explicit linkage of personal anecdotes with the course material being presented:

> "...when I'm sharing during lecture, there has to be a tie into the material...so, I try not to cross that line...of telling a story just for the sake of telling the story. Sometime I'll catch myself and I'll say, 'you know what, let me tell you guys that story at the end of class.' It's something I've been working on really hard...to hone in on what stories are actually relevant [to course material], and what stories are really just for entertainment purposes...I'm more precise in terms of what I share...I've become a lot more strategic in what I share."

Many of the boundary-centric anecdotes interviewees shared reflect the point made by Schwartz (2011) that:

"In the course of an academic year, faculty members set boundaries regarding their availability to students...and the degree to which they self-disclose in the classroom. These questions are not only questions of relationship and perimeters, but also of power and positionality" (p. 364).

The narratives provided by this study's participants suggests that in lieu of abundant opportunities for out-of-class interaction with students, adjuncts who wish to foster high-quality FSI in their classrooms often use selective personal disclosure as a way of establishing boundaries between themselves and their students that – far from distancing the two parties – serve to draw on the faculty-student power differential in forging bonds with students that facilitate learning without unprofessional boundary-crossing.

Summing up Adjuncts' Roles in Fostering FSI

This section has highlighted the roles that PT instructors perceive for themselves in fostering high-quality classroom FSI. In the absence of frequent opportunities to interact with students outside the classroom, interviewees narrated the ways they draw on interpersonal skills, content expertise, and an awareness of the faculty-student power differential to establish a balance of connection and boundaries between themselves and students. The tools they employ to these ends include personal disclosure and mentorship, often guided by a desire to press upon and negotiate classroom boundaries to build rapport with students, as noted by interviewee Elizabeth, who stated that, "... I play with the traditions...you know, the boundary. I hope that's true...it's certainly a goal of mine."

Adjuncts' awareness of these classroom factors mirrors the view from the other side of the podium, as noted by Gold (1958), where students' awareness of and attitudes toward faculty-student power differentials can be major factors in those students' self-reported learning

experiences. Avoiding extremes while negotiating connection, boundaries, and classroom power dynamics emerged as a key to interviewee's efforts, reflecting Tom's observation that "...a professor who maintains significant distance from students increases her or his position power and fails to equip students to deal with power differentials in relationships" (1997, p. 57), and bookended by interviewee Nicki's succinct recollection that, "I went to that extreme of trying to be their friend...and that didn't really work." Determining and maintaining inter-personal boundaries with students, asserts Schwartz (2011):

> "...is an ever-present yet rarely discussed element of [college] teaching...where to meet students for advising appointments, how much to self-disclose in the classroom...these are typical of the challenges that [faculty] encounter regularly..." (p. 363)

In the next section, I'll present my findings on the challenges that participants reported encountering in their efforts to support high-quality FSI in their classrooms.

RQ 2A: Institutional & Interpersonal Barriers to FSI

Adjunct instructors reported institutional and interpersonal barriers to fostering high-quality classroom FSI, including insufficient time to build rapport with students, and instances of students, themselves, expressing or exhibiting a disinclination for engagement by the instructor. Foremost among the institutional barriers reported by participants was insufficient time to connect with students, often due to the teaching assignment schedules frequently allocated to adjuncts. This was especially true in cases where the class meeting schedule was based on a once-per-week basis – course often assigned to and taught by PT faculty at community colleges. The most common interpersonal barrier cited by interviewees was student disengagement.

Participant narratives reflected a keen awareness of barriers to classroom FSI that center on students themselves, the most significant of which to emerge being the challenges of connecting with students who are shy or otherwise don't wish to be engaged. This section will present findings related to the institutional and interpersonal barriers cited by interviewees, and will touch on a few of the notable response strategies they shared.

Adjunct Teaching Schedules and FSI

Frequent student contact and deep institutional knowledge go a long way to supporting students' academic success, and both require considerable investment of time and energy on campus – a daunting prospect for many adjunct instructors. An instructor's employment status, whether PT or FT, has an impact on their level of interaction with students, asserts Cox et al. (2009), whereby PT instructors are significantly less likely to engage with students, as compared to their FT colleagues (p. 770).

This assertion supports Eagan and Jaeger 's (2008) earlier finding that student persistence rates are negatively related to students' level of exposure to PT faculty, as these instructors often lack the time or availability associated with high-quality FSI. Much of the difference, in fact, between PT and FT faculty interaction with students can be attributed to the respective amount of time each category of instructor spends on campus. Simply put: adjunct instructors "…interact less frequently with students, but they do so precisely *because* they are part-time employees" (Eagan and Jaeger, 2008, p. 785)

Several such schedule-related barriers to high-quality classroom FSI were reported by participants. These included insufficient time to connect with students in the class due to the

need to "get in, teach, and get out," especially in cases where, for example, courses that operate

on a once-per-week basis are often taught by PT faculty. Both Marcia and Gonzalo outlined, in

basic terms, the institutional / schedule-based challenges they face:

> Marcia: "I think one of the challenges for me, as an adjunct, is never really having the time on one campus or another to be able to stick around long enough to have those kinds of interaction with students...you know, to do that kind of work."

> Gonzalo: "I would love to have office hours, you know, but I don't, and because of my other job [at another campus], I don't have much time after class to meet with them."

The theme of juggling multiple teaching assignments on several area campuses emerged among

the reports provided by many interviewees. James, for example, expressed the exasperation of

attempting to stitch together a livable income through teaching up to eight classes per semester,

spread out across three, even four campuses in a single term. This, in comparison to the norm

among FT faculty, who, barring release time for special projects, grant writing, or extensive

committee work, typically teach no more than five course per term. Not all participants found

themselves as "spread thin" between multiple campuses as James, however. For others, the

challenges arise in the thin margins of time that pass between one class and the next, especially

when they are assigned back-to-back classes. When asked about the challenges she encounters to

building rapport with students in her classes, Nicki explained that:

> "It's more of an institutional thing...they only allow 10 minutes in between each course, so if I'm finishing up with one class, and trying to talk with students there, then...like, trying to pack up and get over to the next classroom, it's tough..."

Max echoed elements of this quandary, citing both the snug time frames between classes, and the

inherent limitation of only being on campus once or twice a week as a part-timer:

> "there are challenges like time management...you know, you can't just walk out the classroom and leave...and as an adjunct, you're not always there the next day, or whatever...you're only on campus twice a week, you know. I want to be there for the students, but you know, it's tough sometimes when I'm not there every day. .. so it's hard, you know?"

Gonzalo explained that, "...when I have a once a week, three-hour lecture, just by the structure of the class, alone, you're going to have to do a lot of talking...you know, to cover the material. It doesn't leave a lot of room for the...open discussions." Recalling the pre-class chit chat discussed in a previous section, Elizabeth stated that, "I always start with a little chit chat to see how things are going with them, especially because it's a once a week class." Several interviewees shared the strategies they use to meet the schedule-based challenges they face in connecting with students, including using email, text messaging, and other techniques during after-class time. Rebel, for example, resorts to a simple, long-held device – that of the 3x5 card:

> "I give them a three by five card at the beginning of class and ask them to tell me a little bit about themselves if they like...if they don't want to, that's ok, too. And I ask for a phone number that I can reach them at. I might reach out and give a cell phone call...but I don't have any blocking feature, or anything...I just tell them, okay, this is how you reach me, and don't give out my number...I usually use email, I do call, or take calls, once in a while, especially if they're having a problem with the class or something."

One counterpoint that arose, though limited to two out of ten interviewees, was that the once or twice per-week schedule was actually a helpful factor, albeit to their efforts at balancing the rest of their schedules, as opposed to facilitating classroom FSI. This was true of two participants who maintained other jobs or even careers entirely outside higher education, and who taught at the college for the joy of doing so, as opposed to the majority of respondents, who reported a reliance on PT college teaching as their sole source of income. Elizabeth, for example, observed that:

> "...I know adjuncting has many issues as far as labor goes...underemployment and people having to piece together a full-time load and such. At this point in time, it works perfectly for me, because I usually only have one, maybe two days open away from [her other employment] to teach."

Institution-centered challenges were one of two key themes that arose on the subject of barriers to high-quality classroom FSI; the other can be characterized as student-centered, in that each revolves around one or another circumstance or interpersonal factor that originates with or pertains to students themselves.

Student Disengagement and FSI

Interviewee narratives reflected a keen awareness of barriers to classroom FSI that center on students themselves, the most significant of which to emerge being the challenges of connecting with students who are shy or otherwise don't wish to be engaged. When contextualized against extant literature on the nature of the faculty-student relationship, the data suggest that this factor can have an impact on both the quantity and quality of classroom FSI. The socializing differences between introverted and extroverted students may account for some of these narratives, as with Rebel, who shared her recollection of, "...a few students that I've run across over the years...they're either super shy or their closed off, they don't want to talk about anything. So, I just respect that." Citing the ways trust, boundaries, and respect come together in how she engages students who appear to be shy, self-conscious, or withdrawn, Rosemarie pointed out that:

> "Some students don't really want to engage with you. They would rather be left alone, at least initially. I think there's...the feeling like, 'I don't know if I can trust you'...so I very much will give people their space...the boundaries. You have to pay attention...students will basically indicate, 'hmm...I don't really want you looking at my work or talking to me right now'...I try to respect that."

Along similar lines, Gonzalo shared that:

> "I respect that some people don't want to talk that much...they want to sit and listen, and do their work. For some reason, they're shy. And that's OK...I don't have to bother them. They aren't going to lose any points for it. But if they want to [engage] at some point, you know, hopefully they see how I interact with others, and hopefully, they'll feel comfortable when they see that I'm, you know, amiable. Some just take a few lectures to warm up."

Gonzalo's account reflects the previously discussed role of leveraging interpersonal skills to gauge the interactive tone of the room or a particular student, as well as providing entre to an important follow-up to respecting those students who prefer not to interact directly with the instructor – the positive impact of reminders throughout the term that the door is, so to speak, always open. Again, Rebel shared the way she tries to balance respect for students' communicatory boundaries on the one hand, with a consistently signaled message that the student is always free to take up the invitation on the other. Here, she notes:

> "...some students are not interested in connecting that way, or they're too shy to do so. But usually within, I'd say...three to four weeks...they kind of start opening up, and I just keep reminding them. I keep an eye out for that question mark written on their face. And I tell them, 'You don't have to talk to me...you can put a note in the homework folder, you can email me, whatever! You don't have to come up and talk to me face to face if you don't want to...'"

Summing Up Institutional and Interpersonal Barriers to FSI

In summary, participating PT instructors shared narratives describing both institutional and interpersonal barriers to fostering high-quality classroom FSI, including insufficient time to build rapport with students, and instances of students, themselves, expressing or exhibiting a disinclination for engagement by the instructor. In many ways, these accounts confirm Dobransky & Frymier's (2004) assertion that "...students do have power in the class-room," and

the majority of interviewees shared anecdotes that reflect the notion that negotiated "control is...an important dimension of teacher-student relationships" (p. 212).The most significant institutional barrier reported by participants was insufficient time to connect with students, often due to the teaching assignment schedules frequently allocated to adjuncts. This was particularly evident in cases where the class met on a once-per-week basis. The most common interpersonal barrier cited by interviewees was student disengagement. Participant narratives reflected a keen awareness of barriers to classroom FSI that center on students themselves, the most relevant to have emerged from the data is the challenges associated with connecting with students who are shy or otherwise don't wish to be engaged. The next section will feature a discussion of findings on the extent and nature of adjunct participation in professional development activity aimed at improving instructors' ability to support classroom FSI.

RQ 2B: Extent and Nature of Adjuncts' PD Activity

Inquiring into the extent and nature of adjuncts' professional development activity revealed that they participate in on-campus professional development activity at substantially lower rates than their FT counterparts. When they do engage in PD activity, it often centers on improving pedagogy and FSI-related skills development, and typically occurs off-campus, at the instructor's own expense. This section will discuss quantitative elements of the PD engaged in by part-time instructors, as well as present quantitative findings related to that PD. A brief discussion of the relatively rare on-campus professional development opportunities for adjuncts will be followed by presentation of the off-campus alternatives that better suit many PT faculty.

Adjuncts and PD Activity: Quantitative Discussion

Previous research suggests that adjuncts interested in improving their capacity for high-quality teaching can benefit greatly from participation in PD programs, but these opportunities are not always available to them. Contractual obligations on most community college campuses bind FT faculty to participate in a minimum amount of PD activity, and the institutions, in turn, provide such learning opportunities to support the professional growth of their FT faculty. Data collected in this study confirmed that these national trends obtain at local level, as shown in Figure 2 below, which, for comparison to PT data, illustrates survey responses among FT faculty at South Bay College when asked about various aspects of their professional development activity:

Figure 2. Full-Time Faculty Responses to Survey Item #12, left to right: "Funded workshops focused on teaching skills development", Incentives to implement interventions for struggling students", "Incentives to integrate instructional technology into your classroom", "Resources to integrate culturally-competent practices into your classroom" (No "Not Available" responses recorded for this specific item.)

When asked if they'd participated in "Funded workshops focused on teaching skills development", 86% of FT faculty indicated "Yes", while 14% indicated "No". For training related to "Incentives to implement interventions for struggling students", 67% of FT respondents answered "Yes", with 33% responding "No". When asked about PD geared toward "Incentives to integrate instructional technology into your classroom", 76% answered "Yes", and 24% "No", and to the question on workshops related to "Resources to integrate culturally-competent practices into your classroom", the "yes" response rate was 76%, while "No" came in at 24%. It's worth noting that none of the FT respondents indicated that such training was unavailable – just one of several differences that emerged between FT and PT responses.

Both extant literature and data from this study suggest that professional development opportunities for PT faculty (and, thus, associated rates of participation) are much lower than those of their FT counterparts. While many community college campuses provide PD programs geared toward improving FSI and other high-quality teaching practices, various issues associated with contingent employment, (budgetary constraints of the institution and schedule constraints of the multi-campus adjunct, etc.), make PD a serious challenge for many adjunct faculty (Wallin, 2004). Wallin's assertion is confirmed by a sub-set of responses collected from part-time participants in this study who, when asked the same questions as FT faculty about their professional development activity, responded in patterns that reflect little-to-no opportunity for such activity, and subsequently low levels of reported participation therein, as illustrated in Figure 3 below:

12) Have you taken advantage of any of the following professional development opportunities?
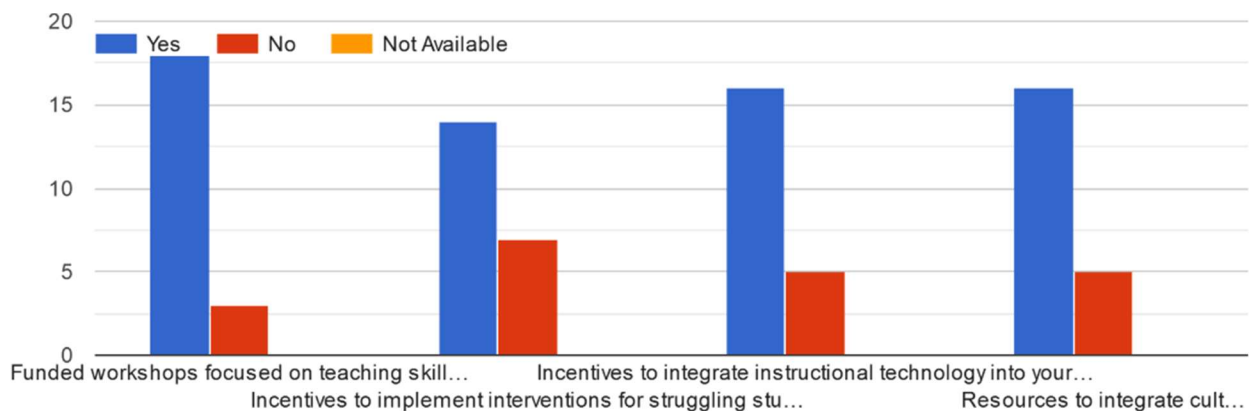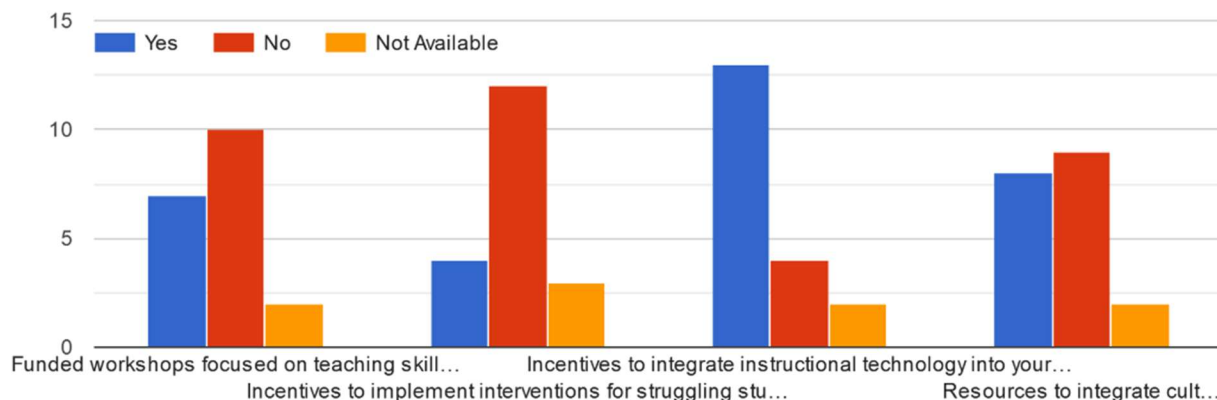

Figure 3. Part-Time Faculty Responses to Survey Item #12, left to right: "Funded workshops focused on teaching skills development", Incentives to implement interventions for struggling students", "Incentives to integrate instructional technology into your classroom", "Resources to integrate culturally-competent practices into your classroom"

When asked if they'd participated in "Funded workshops focused on teaching skills development", 37% of PT faculty indicated "Yes", 53% indicated "No", and 10% answered "Not Available" (NA). For training related to "Incentives to implement interventions for struggling students", 21% of PT respondents answered "Yes", with 63% responding "No", and 16% replying "NA". Responses to the question on PD geared toward "Incentives to integrate instructional technology into your classroom" garnered the highest rate of "Yes" responses among adjuncts, with 68% in the affirmative, with 21% answering "No", and the remaining 11% with "NA". To the question on workshops related to "Resources to integrate culturally-competent practices into your classroom", adjuncts' "Yes" response rate was 42%, "No" at 47%, and "NA" came in at 11%. These quantitative elements shed light on the question of *how much*

and *what kinds* of PD do part-timers engage in, and, as it turns out, *where* that PD does (or does not) take place; now, a look at the qualitative findings will help fill in an overall understanding of these questions.

Adjuncts and PD Activity: Qualitative Presentation

Extant literature suggests that when colleges design and offer PD programing that considers issues unique to PT faculty, benefits accrue to both those adjuncts that take the opportunity to participate, and, by extension, to their students. In fact, some studies have found that when adjunct instructors participated in PD workshops similar to those made available to their FT colleagues, no significant difference in learning outcomes for students taught by either faculty group can be found (Bolge, 1995). Likewise, Gerhard (2013) asserts that PD which goes beyond "the delivery of new content to include [faculty/student] relationship building" both improves the adjunct's own learning, and strengthens their capacity to foster high-quality faculty-student interaction (p. 208).

On-Campus PD Activity

Despite the dramatic differences in on-campus institution-funded PD activity reported by PT instructors compared to their FT colleagues, several patterns emerged in terms of the PD activities that adjuncts *did* report engaging in, whether on or off-campus. On-site training participation was remarkably low, and tended to center on two types of development: training on using educational technology to blend face-to-face teaching with online elements, and ADA or other access-related elements of the classroom environment, as in the case of Gonzalo, Nicki, and Walter, who, for himself, shared that, "...one of the things I did...was the class they offered

on closed captions for video excerpts I use in class. I didn't realize, at first...that I have them on the videos I use when teaching." For Gonzalo, the extent of his on-site PD activity consisted of a training course on how to incorporate the campus online platform into the blended class he was developing at the time: "If I've done anything through the college, it was, like...when they offered training on how to use [the online course management system] for my classes."

Off-Campus PD Activity

Interviewees who *did* report engaging in professional development activity were substantially more likely to have participated in such training off-campus, citing activities including secondary source research, local seminar/lecture/conference attendance, and critical self-reflection. The content of training that attracted many respondents centered on improving pedagogical practices and strengthening FSI-related skills.

Self-Directed Research on Pedagogy

Half of all interviewees reported engaging in self-directed secondary source research on various aspects of pedagogical theory and/or practice. Sources included books, scholarly journal articles, and bulletins distributed by state and national-level higher education associations. Marcia recounted the point in her self-directed research when she realized that certain pedagogical concepts that had occurred to her years previously were brought into finer focus upon discovering that they were actual subjects of scholarly research:

> "I started to realize, oh hey, there's a lot of research that's being done in terms of 'teaching style' and 'pedagogy'. So, I started to read some of the books and look into different approaches. I really liked what I saw...I had a vision."

Like Marcia, Max, too, had taken it upon himself to delve into "the research" on topics including

pedagogical theory and practice:

> "...studies have shown, time and time again, that if students are motivated to learn, they perform better in the classroom. Teaching...it's an art, not a science...one of the earliest places I learned that was <u>The Art of Critical Pedagogy,</u> my favorite book ever!"

Citing various sources for information on improving her classroom connection with students,

Rosemarie, like Max, explained that:

> "Well, the research shows that being more connected to students...more involved with them personally...leads to better outcomes. It's usually newspapers, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, various other online publications. And I've read a few books on pedagogy."

Seminars, Conferences, Etc.

Participation in off-campus pedagogy-centered activities like seminars, lectures, and

conferences is a popular form of professional development activity for several interviewees.

James, for example, finds such activities an opportunity to strengthen his subject area expertise,

which, itself, has positive implications for the FSI he tries to foster in his classrooms: "I usually

go with looking for lectures about particular topics [within his discipline]. So, I'll go online to

see if there are any lectures or seminars on topics that will help me relate the material to my

students..."

Self-Reflection as PD

Unlike self-directed secondary source research or off-campus seminars and lectures, a

third form of professional development mentioned by half of participants requires no travel, no

internet, and no outside materials: self-reflection. In Rebel's case, she stated that, "...every

semester, I look at what worked and what didn't, and I try to learn from [my students], and the

ways they react to what I tried in class." Likewise, Max expressed a similar sentiment in confiding that, "...honestly, every semester, I wind up with a laundry list of things to change with the course itself, and, you know, the ways I presented material."

Summing Up Adjuncts' PD Activity

In exploring the extent to which adjuncts teaching at SBC participate in employer-hosted teaching-related PD activity, several clear patterns became clear. These part-time faculty participate in all categories of on-campus professional development activity included in this study at substantially lower rates compared to their FT counterparts. These data confirm, from a local perspective, trends that previous research have identified at the national level. When adjuncts *do* engage in PD activity, it tends to consist of secondary source research, local seminar/lecture/conference attendance, and critical self-reflection on various elements of pedagogical theory and/or practice. The majority of adjuncts' PD activities occur off-campus, almost entirely at the instructors' own expense. Under such conditions, what motivates these faculty to make the effort? To answer this question, we'll turn to a presentation of findings on adjuncts' incentives and barriers to PD activity.

RQ 2C: Adjuncts' Incentives and Barriers to PD Activity

What do adjuncts say are the incentives and barriers to their participation in professional development activities? Desire to develop pedagogical skills and improving chances for FT employment were the two most prevalent themes that emerged from participants' reports. In terms of barriers to participation, the most often-cited examples revolved around limited time on

campus due to schedule conflicts associated with inconveniently timed teaching assignments, commute issues, and/or coordination with other employers.

Extant literature suggests that instructors' capacity for effective teaching practices like high-quality classroom FSI can be improved significantly by participation in PD programing (Davidson, 2015; Fishman et al., 2003). Adjuncts' working conditions, however, often limit their access to meaningful PD opportunities. A college campus may offer professional development programing oriented toward improving high-quality teaching practices, however issues related to contingent employment (e.g., budgetary constraints of the institution, and schedule constraints of the "freeway-flying" adjunct, etc.), make PD participation a challenge for many PT instructors (Wallin, 2004). This section will present findings related to interviewee's reported incentives to participate in PD activity, as well as the barriers they say they typically encounter.

Incentive: Intrinsic Desire for Pedagogical Improvement

Adjuncts' motivation to participate in PD activity, according to 80% of interviewees, is the desire to improve their classroom teaching skills, including those related to high-quality classroom FSI. Walter's comment on a series of workshops he'd attended provides an approach to this category of incentive, "...those kinds of things were done truly with the intent to be a better professor and to be able to ensure that all students have equal access to the learning in my classroom." Echoing previous themes of connecting with students, Nicki explained that:

> "...usually, the professional development courses that I lean towards are courses that are aimed at trying to help you gain more connection with students...especially with the amount of diversity that we have [on our campus]."

To account for what motivates his professional development activity, Max stated that:

"I just always try to be better. I enjoy the mental challenge of trying to be a better educator. And I'm sure it sounds cheesy, but, I mean...we have students' lives in our hands...this is important, I believe this is such an important role that we hold in society. So if we're going to do it, we need to do it well. I believe that it's not just a job, you know...I've never believed that with education."

Incentive: Perceived Improvement in Chances for FT Employment

The perception of job insecurity cited by 50% of interviewees is likely related to the equal proportion of participants who acknowledged their hope that investment in professional development would increase their chances of securing a full-time teaching position in the future. As Salvador stated, "It's become evident to me that it's very difficult to make a living as an adjunct." When asked about what incentivized his pursuit of PD, Walter was candid:

"The answer's twofold. There's an...idealistic answer...and, well, they are both true, but...part of it is idealistic, part of it is realistic. The idealist in me wants to be a better teacher, whether full time comes along or not. I want to be better...for my students. The realist in me is, like, if I want a full-time job, I should show engagement on campus and show that I want to make this my home, that I want to be here for the long term."

Nicki, too, expressed a similarly clear-eyed sentiment:

"...at the end of the day, I'd like a full-time position somewhere, so I see it as an investment so I can hone my skills. When the time comes that a full-time spot opens up, I want to be the best candidate I can be at that moment. I want to be well prepared. And if I can become a better instructor, it's worth it. Also, it may sound a little cliché, but the monetary rewards aren't going to be that important if it makes me a better instructor."

As these comments suggest, interviewees were frank in expressing their feelings about the "idealistic / realistic" dichotomy that several associated with their motivations and incentives to participate in PD activity. As the following section will discuss, engaging in such training can be toughest to arrange for those faculty who want and need it the most.

Barrier: Schedule Conflicts

The most frequently cited barrier to professional development participation among adjuncts was the lack of sufficient time on campus and schedule conflicts stemming from inconveniently timed teaching assignments, commute issues, and/or coordination with other employers. James recounted experiences common to many part-time faculty:

> "...in relation to not fully engaging in professional development...well...yeah. This is where the time thing comes in, because it's flying. When its Monday through Friday, and I've been working all those hours in the classroom, at so many campuses...back and forth on these crowded freeways...like...I'm tired! You know what I mean? My non-commitment to professional development is really just based off the schedule."

Elizabeth put it rather succinctly: "The biggest barrier has just been my schedule." Salvador was similarly frank in expressing why two of the three campuses he teaches at are off the list for attending PD programming: "It's because the campus is so close to me...it's convenient. Maybe only a 20-minute drive, whereas [WBC and another local college] are much further out, it's just too hard for me to get out there."

Summing Up Incentives and Barriers to PD Activity

Cultivating pedagogy that supports improvements in students' learning outcomes requires what Dede (2006) identified as targeted, high-quality, professional development that is ongoing; such training, as has been illustrated by interviewee's narratives, be prohibitively challenging for many part-time faculty. The most prevalent themes in adjuncts' reports on incentives to participate in PD activities are desire to develop pedagogical ability and improving chances for FT employment, while the greatest barrier to PD participation was reported as limited time on campus due to schedule conflicts related to inconveniently timed teaching assignments, commute

issues, and/or coordination with outside employers. An exchange with Nicki revealed one source of the dedication that would no-doubt resonate with a good many adjuncts in her position: "I have a responsibility to my students...and I guess there's this faith that at some point, it will all pay off."

Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

  This study was, in part, a response to previous scholars' calls for more qualitative

research on the roles of adjunct faculty in community college classrooms, and their impact on

students' outcomes. The chapter will begin with a short study overview, followed by a discussion

of my findings' highlights, along with a tour of the study's value and limitations. Next, I'll

address issues of validity and credibility, before moving on to recommendations for community

college instructors and administrators alike. I'll close with a brief mention of possible directions

for further research and a few closing reflections on the study at large.

Study Overview

  Part-time instructors constitute a majority of faculty on most community college

campuses nationwide, and research suggests that their high proportion has an impact on students'

academic outcomes. Adjuncts now account for approximately two-thirds of community college

faculty in the U.S. (Yu and Mendoza, 2015). College administrators often cite the flexibility this

employment trend affords the institution in responding to fluctuations in enrollment (Umbach,

2007; Christensen, 2008). This flexibility, however, comes at a price, as studies have shown that

adjuncts are significantly less likely to engage and interact with students outside the classroom

compared to their FT colleagues (Cox et al., 2009). Given the converging trends of increasing

proportions of PT community college faculty and many students' growing reliance on two-year

institutions as a gateway to higher education, Yu et all (2015) argues that more research is

needed on adjuncts' interactions with their students, including instructors' perceptions of

classroom FSI, and the extent to which their PD experiences have shaped their teaching

practices. This mixed-methods phenomenological study was designed, primarily, to be a descriptive (as opposed to interpretive) examination of classroom FSI, as reported by adjunct faculty. The study's secondary aim was to describe the extent to which these PT faculty have access to, participate in, and benefit from PD activities focused on instructional improvement. The two research questions that guided this study centered on identifying how adjuncts perceive their in-class FSI, and inquiring into the barriers and supports that influence their classroom interactions. I administered online surveys to roughly equivalent samples of PT and FT faculty (39 total), then conducted semi-structured interviews with a sample of ten of those adjuncts.

Findings Highlights

This study resulted in a combination of expected and surprising findings. A community college instructor, for example, plays many roles beyond the "provider of information" that Harden (2009) enumerates, along with that of role model, mentor, assessor, course planner, and study guide producer (p. 336). Of these, the role model and mentor relate closely to this study's most significant findings. These answer the first of two research questions, which focused on how part-time community college faculty perceive their classroom FSI. The study's most significant finding centered on part-time instructors' self-reported roles in fostering high-quality classroom FSI, which were focused on selective personal disclosure, employing social skills & subject expertise to mentor students, varying attitudes toward faculty/student power differentials, and the degree to which their FSI is marked by a balance between building connections and negotiating boundaries. In some respects, these findings were expected, especially in light of

previous research on The Big Five Personality Test and the impact of instructors attempting to connect with students and subsequent improvements in students' outcomes (Kneipp et al, 2010).

In other respects, the findings revealed surprises, as with the degree to which faculty were willing to push traditional classroom boundaries in their attempts to connect with students. A pattern of personal disclosure emerged from interviewee's narratives, and most of the faculty expressed some level of understanding that such disclosures can foster trust, can humanize them in the eyes of their students, and can be a highly effective tool for building rapport. While the role of personal disclosure in teaching and learning has been explored by Hosek & Thompson (2009), adjuncts' working overall working conditions often impede the ideal conditions for disclosure described in previous research. One interviewee, Elizabeth, expressed a sentiment which gets at the heart of this finding: "...there's a clear difference between showing your investment in [students'] learning, their success, supporting them...and being their friend."

Another consistently supported finding pertained to adjuncts' descriptions of classroom FSI. Interviewee's narratives highlighted the importance of practices which include engaging students in non-academic pre-class *chit chat* to bond socially, moderating inclusive class discussions to ensure that students are "heard" and have a degree of "say" in the nature and direction of those discussions, and the use of classroom management techniques aimed at reinforcing positive relationships with students while upholding class conduct policies. Given extant literature on the social nature of teaching and learning, as, for example, discussed by Jarvis (2012), this was among the study's expected findings. Max, a participant whose anecdotes were laced with evidence of emotional investment and self-reflection observed that "...maybe the

best teaching happens once you figure out, you know, when to listen, and when to talk." Few interactions, whether in or out of the classroom, would not be improved by a recognition of the truth in Max's speculation.

The second of my research questions sought to identify and describe the various barriers and opportunities that influence those interactions and the PD that would support them, with finding that were, variously, both expected and surprising. Though findings related to the second research question were less robustly-supported by data compared to the first, they still offer insights into the lived experiences of those who participated in this study, and, by extension, may shed light on similar classroom experiences of adjuncts at similar institutions. Highlights on this account included findings on the barriers to classroom FSI, incentives and barriers to adjuncts' PD activity, and the extent/nature of that activity.

Adjunct instructors reported institutional and interpersonal barriers to fostering high-quality classroom FSI, including insufficient time to build rapport with students, and instances of students, themselves, expressing or exhibiting a disinclination for engagement by the instructor. These findings were expected, based on previous research establishing that PT instructors often lack the time or availability associated with high-quality FSI. Much of the difference, in fact, between PT and FT faculty interaction with students can be attributed to the respective amount of time each category of instructor spends on campus. As Eagan & Jaeger (2008) assert, adjunct instructors "…interact less frequently with students, but they do so precisely *because* they are part-time employees" (p. 785).

Many of adjuncts' incentives and barriers to PD activity were anticipated by reference to extant literature, with the most prevalent themes in adjuncts' reports reflecting a desire to develop pedagogical ability and improving chances for FT employment. The greatest barrier to PD participation is limited time on campus due to schedule conflicts. This confirms some of the issues addressed by scholars like Davidson (2015) and Fishman et al (2003), who, for example, argues that instructors' capacity for effective teaching practices like high-quality classroom FSI can be improved significantly by participation in meaningful PD programing, but that adjuncts' working conditions frequently hinder their access to such training opportunities.

Several findings associated with the extent and nature of adjuncts' PD activity were unexpected. While there is ample documentation confirming that part-timers participate in on-campus professional development activity at substantially lower rates than their FT counterparts, it turns out that when they *do* engage in such activity, it usually centers on improving pedagogy skills development related to FSI, and that adjuncts are willing to seek these forms of PD off-campus, usually at their own expense. This was especially surprising, because while many community college campuses provide PD programs geared toward improving FSI and other high-quality teaching practices, various issues associated with contingent employment make this type of training a serious challenge for many adjunct faculty (Wallin, 2004). In the context of previous research, this study's findings reflect both expected and unexpected outcomes.

Value of the Study

This study's findings reflect tangible benefits for participating faculty, and potential value for community college adjuncts more broadly, administrators who can support them, and most

importantly, the students these professionals serve. Many interviewees expressed sentiments

regarding the positive effects of their participation in this study. Marcia, for example, replied to

being thanked for her time by saying, "...honestly, it was pretty cathartic. I actually really

enjoyed [giving the interview]...I had a chance to kind of reflect back on things," while Elizabeth

shared her feelings on the prospect that the inquiry may help in the development of more

effective PD programming for adjuncts:

> "I'm glad you're doing this study...I'm curious to see what direction it may go. We can learn a lot from each other, and I'm always trying to learn the best way to improve my teaching. I think it's great that this project is happening."

In very concrete ways, aspects of this study's value are reflected in the cathartic sharing of

professional narratives that bespeak the challenges of PT teaching, as well as in meaningful self-

reflections on professional practice.

The majority of those pursuing higher education in the U.S. do so on a community

college campus, employment of PT faculty continues to grow despite evidence suggesting the

limited capacity for contingent faculty to interact with students outside the classroom, and,

therefore, that the vast majority of community college students' interactions with their

instructors, by default, occur inside the classroom. It follows that out-of-class interactions

between PT faculty and their students occur too infrequently to adequately meet most

commonly-accepted benchmarks for an effective learning environment (Cox & Orehovec, 2007).

Thus, by focusing on the ways in which PT faculty establish connections in the classroom, and

the extent to which PD programming can enhance these efforts, this study aimed to provide

college faculty and higher education leaders with additional insights on how to develop the skills and tools that will increase adjuncts' capacity for high-quality classroom FSI.

The broad issue of part-time instruction in higher education has, in recent years, garnered increasing attention from researchers interested in the causes, conditions, and consequences associated with an ever-growing proportion of adjunct faculty on campus. This scholarly landscape, as noted by Kezar, A., & Sam, C. (2011), is often portrayed in rather overcast tones:

> "Many researchers frame studies of non–tenure track faculty in a deficit perspective—non–tenure track faculty as a negative to the higher education enterprise. They are assumed to have less commitment and engagement, to be less productive, and generally to be a poor fit for the academy. These underlying assumptions/preconceived notions shape the theories researchers decide to apply." (p. 1420)

In view of these scholarly trends, where are dedicated practitioners to turn in the search for a constructive, growth-minded path forward? While echoing Kezar & Sam's acknowledgment of the *deficit perspective* so often adopted by those studying adjunct-related issue in higher education, Schwartz, H. L. (2011) hints at one key element of the investigative niche I've aimed to help fill with my study:

> "Existing research and theoretical literature has addressed faculty and student perceptions of boundary violations...while [this] literature has...prescribed strategies for avoiding such violations, less has been written about professors and students who successfully navigate interpersonal boundaries. What do these healthy and ethical relationships look like from the perspective of teachers and students?" (p. 363).

By investigating the ways in which contingent faculty establish connections with students in their classrooms, and the extent to which PD programming can enhance those efforts, this study sought to further two main objectives: Meaningful contribution to the growing literature on issues related to adjuncts in higher education generally, and, more specifically, to provide

community college faculty and administrators with recommendations that may be of use in fostering both high-quality classroom FSI and the professional development opportunities that support it. Currently, adjunct instructors constitute an overwhelming majority (as much as two-thirds) of faculty positions at most community college campuses across the nation (Yu and Mendoza, 2015). Several decades worth of research on the ramifications of this employment trend strongly suggest that high proportions of PT faculty have had a substantive impact on a variety of college students' academic outcomes. College administrators frequently cite the benefits associated with relying heavily on adjunct faculty, pointing to the specialized expertise adjuncts often bring from fields outside academia, as well as the ways an adjunct-rich faculty can enable rapid responses to fluctuations in budgetary allowances, enrollment numbers, or other fluid institutional conditions (Umbach, 2007; Christensen, 2008). This flexibility, however beneficial from an administrative perspective, often comes at a cost for its PT instructors and the students they teach. In a 2009 study, Cox et al found that adjuncts are significantly less likely to engage and interact with students as compared to their FT colleagues. Beyond the question of "how much" when looking at FSI between community college part-timers and their students, the issue of "what kind" emerges as equally significant.

Extant literature on *high-quality* (i.e. student-centered, frequent, and intense) FSI has shown a link between such interactions and improvements in students' academic achievement, sense of satisfaction, and personal growth (Lamport, 1993). Much of the literature that supports a correlation between high-quality FSI and improved student outcomes focuses on interactions that take place outside the classroom, as illustrated in meta-analyses conducted by Pascarella and

Terenzini (1991, 2005). Engaging students outside the classroom is clearly vital to their

academic and personal success, but a variety of factors surrounding the typical PT teaching

experience often make opportunities for such out-of-class interaction rare (if not impossible) for

a good many adjuncts. It follows that outside interactions between PT faculty and their students

occur too infrequently to meet the most commonly accepted benchmarks for an effective

learning environment (Cox & Orehovec, 2007), leaving few venues beyond the classroom for

adjuncts to cultivate such engagement. Interviewees' narratives reflected the challenges that

come with such working conditions, and my findings, while more suggestive than definitive,

could have a meaningful impact on future inquiry, adjunct faculty wishing to improve their

classroom FSI, and the possibility of future PD programming at SBC which is better suited to the

silent majority of PT instructors employed there.

Limitations

As is often the case with qualitative research, this study required collecting, analyzing,

and reporting on data that are not easily measured or expressed numerically. Anderson (2010)

explains some of the limitations frequently associated with studies of this type:

> "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. 1)

Of these limitations, I was best able to track and address those related to bias, reliability, and the

balance of validity / credibility that my study's methodology called for.

Appropriate methodology and identification of deviant cases helped to mitigate the bias

that potentially limits a study of this type. To shape research that explored the nuance of

adjuncts' classroom FSI while acknowledging and managing the possible effect of my own professional experiences and biases, it became clear that conducting a phenomenological study would be the best approach to answering my research questions (Groenewald, 2004). Such studies usually take one of two forms – either *interpretive* or *descriptive*. Reiners (2012) explains:

> "Interpretive phenomenology is used when the research question asks for the meaning of the phenomenon and the researcher does not bracket their biases and prior engagement with the question under study. Descriptive phenomenology is used when the researcher wants to describe the phenomenon under study and brackets their biases" (p. 2).

Given that research quality can depend heavily not just on the abilities of the individual researcher, but on their personal biases as well, the descriptive phenomenological approach I chose helped me to acknowledge my own potential bias, and to bracket my observations from those biases. Likewise, my practice of noting deviant cases as I collected and analyzed the data provided contradictory evidence aimed at ensuring that my biases interfered with my perception of that data as little as possible.

In the context of this study, reliability refers to the stability and/or reproducibility of my findings, which required an awareness of both my positionality, and the inherent limitations of inquiry which relies on answers that must pass through the lens of my subjective perception. This study presented me with the responsibility of role management, which helped establish a degree of reliability. From the first, this study had to rest on an honest and accurate expression of my own study-related perceptions. As a PT instructor studying other PT instructors, there were challenges in using, as a starting point, literature that suggested a negative relationship between adjunct instructors and student outcomes. On a personal and professional level, reviewing this

literature required thorough reflection on my part, and careful – at times critical – consideration of my own experiences and feelings regarding instructors' perceptions and practices associated with classroom FSI. Insider qualitative research of this sort called for vigilant self-awareness of my own biases to help ensure sound research methodology (i.e. not engaging interviewees with leading questions, etc.), while, more generally, contributing to the collection of reliable data. Beyond bias and positionality, I tried to address the limitations of relying on perceptions – both my own and those of my interviewees – as the grounding for my study. Just as "...the classroom atmosphere theme appears to be influenced by the perception of instructor behavior in the classroom," (Kendall & Schussler, 2012, p. 197), so, too, were the thickly detailed professional narratives I collected. These factors required an awareness of the limitation inherent to subjective perception, which itself, was kept in check by a combination of efforts aimed at a balance between validity and credibility.

Though *validity* is typically associated with quantitative research, and *credibility* with qualitative, I've attempted to account for a degree of both wherever possible. The validity of research findings, according to Noble & Smith (2015), refers to "...the extent to which the findings are an accurate representation of the phenomena they are intended to represent" (p. 34). In the context of my descriptive phenomenological study, validity relates, specifically, to the genuineness and honesty of data that's been substantiated via triangulation techniques, including respondent validation and constant comparison. By facilitating respondent validation at various points in the survey and interview processes, I was able to challenge my assumptions as a researcher, check for inconsistencies in my data collection / analysis, and clarify/confirm that I'd

recorded participants' narratives accurately. This minimized my *interpretation* of those narratives and maximized my *description* of the phenomena they expressed. Likewise, my use of constant comparison, during collection and analysis cycles, helped contain the resulting narratives as wholes, as opposed to collections of disparate vignettes. Cross-checking instructors' theories-in-use against their espoused theories as they appeared in different data sources, for example, was time consuming, but was also vital to discerning which findings were more or less valid. Such comparison was made between participants' survey responses and their interview reports, at various points within a given interview, and between the reports of different interviewees, lending to both the identification of valid, emergent study-wide themes on one hand, and confirmation of clear description (again, with as little interpretation as possible on my part) on the other.

Establishing credibility, or others' positive *perception* of my trustworthiness, depended on accuracy and transparency in how I presented my overall inquiry, as well as an open, neutral tone in how I interacted with participants. Credibility, for example, involved careful consideration of my research design and methodology, addressing potential reactivity on the part of my interviewees, and how I chose to frame my findings. Lincoln and Guba describe the sort of *confirmability* that I strove for in my study, i.e. taking measures to foster a high degree of neutrality, such that my findings were shaped not by my own biases, interests, or motivations, but by those held by my survey respondents and interviewees.

Triangulation between multiple data sources helped address this issue, as did my improvement as an interviewer with each interview. To avoid my participants altering their

viewpoints or narratives to reflect what they may have perceived to be the "right" responses, or those that may have fallen outside of their actual experience, I worked to engage participants in a manner that avoided communicating any expectations, either subtle or overt, on my part. Using neutral, non-judgmental terminology, avoiding stereotypical references in the wording of my questions and probes, and the employment of member checks helped establish credibility.

Recommendations

Participants' reports on FSI-related notions and practices comport with much of the previous literature, lending to recommendations for other adjuncts and their administrative leadership. A brief review of how previous scholars defined and refined the notion of high-quality FSI will help situate this study's findings, and will contextualize the recommendations that follow. Early research into the signals instructors send to students highlight examples of what Wilson et al. (1974) describe as psychosocial accessibility - interpersonal receptivity, in other words, and an openness to dialog. This may occur, according to Wilson, by means of obvious behaviors, as with reiterated invitations for students to ask questions during class discussions. Later studies have found that such signaling operates on a more subtle level as well. An instructor's facial expressions, according to Cox et al. (2009), may characterize "a genuine interest in helping students learn," and that greeting students upon entry to a classroom, and taking time to learn and use students' names fit this definition as well (p. 768).

High-quality FSI is as much about the quality of interactions as it is the quantity. Students tend to be encouraged by faculty members who have "friendly personalities and strong interpersonal skills," and who express an interest in students' well-being through a "student-

centered philosophy of education and [a belief] that teaching is a critical part of their role as professors" (Cox et al., 2009, p. 769). Related research suggests that both obvious classroom behaviors on the part of the instructor, as well as more subtle, often non-verbal cues, contribute to an integrated student experience, with implications for academic outcomes. McKay and Estrella, for example, suggest that meaningful, high-quality FSI tends to support students' integration into the campus environment and to positively influence their retention rates (2008). These positive student outcomes have also been associated with FSI that focuses on student development issues (e.g., Astin 1993; Ishiyama 2002). Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) take this notion a step further in concluding that the topics and themes discussed during faculty-student interaction may be just as important as the frequency of such contact. Set against the backdrop of previous research, this study's findings reflect adjuncts' perceptions of their classroom FSI, and the barriers and opportunities that influence it. It follows that the phenomena most clearly illuminated were participants' descriptions of classroom interactions with students, the self-reported roles they play in fostering those interactions, and the PD programming most likely to attract adjunct participation. A brief look at previous literature linking PD activity among adjuncts with improved student outcomes will contextualize the recommendations that follow.

Context for Faculty and Administrators:
Adjunct PD and Student Outcomes

The importance and potential impact of PD programming that improves instructors' capacity for high-quality teaching practices like FSI is borne out in the literature. As regards PD geared toward PT faculty in particular, Greive and Worden (2000) prescribe a program which addresses issues including understanding of the institutional mission, characteristics of the

student body, institutional policies, adjuncts' sense of belonging, and, crucially, pedagogical technique. This last component – pedagogical technique – is one approach to focus on in improving adjuncts' classroom FSI.

Quality interaction is, among other things, a process, and PD programs that focus on *how* students learn have had significant impact on classroom learning outcomes (Fishman et al, 2003). That such instruction requires targeted, ongoing PD is the conclusion that Dede (2006) arrived at after finding that improvements in students' learning outcomes through engagement requires "high-quality, sustained professional development for educators…" (p. 237). Going forward, Newmann (1992) argued that "... advances in student engagement and achievement will depend on…the content of professional development…" (p. 9). Institutions, Cox (2007) observed, are searching for more effective ways of fostering better teaching practices like high-quality FSI: "…it is our hope that future research will identify specific personal and institutional tools that can be employed to bring students and faculty members together in meaningful ways…" (p. 359).

Those tools, I would argue, should be what adjunct-oriented PD programming centers on, especially in light of the at-risk student populations so often served by the community college. Many of the participants in this study cited a concern for the under-served student populations they work with in their classrooms, including first-gen, students of color, academically under-prepared freshmen, and a variety of other student categories. Writing on the issues of faculty approachability referenced above, Cox (2009) found that many students do not know how, or even why, to interact with faculty, and that first-gen, freshmen, and other students who are, in

general, unfamiliar with college norms may be particularly interacting with faculty. This makes

it doubly-important that the faculty they are most likely to encounter – adjuncts – thoroughly

equipped to meet the pedagogical challenges inherent to such a classroom. Fuentes et al (2014)

suggest that: "...early interaction with faculty serves as a socialization process in college that

leads students to have more meaningful interactions with faculty later in college, in the form of

mentorship." (p. 288). Most discipline-specific graduate programs do not include coursework in

pedagogy/andragogy, however, so. In describing her graduate preparation, interviewee Marcia

explained that:

> "...there never seemed to be any classes or requirements or workshops or anything that
> was geared towards teaching you how to teach. It just was kind of the assumption that if
> you got educated enough in your discipline, you would be able to teach it."

Marcia's professional narrative echoes previous research, including Burns et al's (2015)

observation that "adjunct teaching faculty who are expert practitioners in the field do not

necessarily translate to expert teachers...professional development is critical" (p. 235)." A look

back at Tinto's (2005) work on the topic illustrates that scholars have long understood the issues

adjuncts still face today:

> "...faculty in higher education are the only faculty in education who are literally not
> trained to teach their own students...[colleges] should do so for new faculty and do so in
> conjunction with promotion and tenure systems that take teaching seriously. At the same
> time, institutional policy must provide for incentives and rewards for faculty...to
> construct educational settings that promote the active involvement and learning of all
> students" (p. 5).

Within the context of extant literature on the links between PD activity among PT instructors

with improved student outcomes, my findings underpin a variety of recommendations for adjunct

faculty and the administrators tasked with supporting them.

Instructional Recommendation:
Self-Awareness and FSI

Cultivating accurate self-awareness of one's own classroom persona and developing

effective use of social skills / content expertise helps facilitate high-quality FSI. Instructor

behaviors include clearly signaling what Wilson et al (1974) identified as "psychosocial

accessibility'' to students (p. 74). Instructor behaviors that encourage high-quality FSI may be

obvious, as with reiterated invitations for students to ask questions during class discussions.

Signaling one's psychosocial accessibility can assume more subtle forms as well, encompassing

an instructor's facial expressions or speech patterns, including cadence, tone, or volume. Other

forms of accessibility include expressing what Cox et al (2009) characterize as "a genuine

interest in helping students learn" (p. 795), which was addressed repeatedly by participants in

this study. Greeting students upon entry to a classroom, Cox goes on to assert, and taking time to

learn and use students' names both fit this definition as well, as reflected in this study's findings.

High-quality classroom FSI is further encouraged by faculty members who have "…friendly

personalities and strong interpersonal skills…" and who "…have a student-centered philosophy

of education and believe that teaching is a critical part of their role as professors…" (p. 769). It's

worth noting that a pattern of distinction between "friendly" and "being friends" emerged from

interviewee narratives, and that an appropriate degree and type of personal disclosure is as

important to meaningful classroom interactions as demonstrating one's content expertise. This

confirms what Feldman (1976) observes as two of the most important factors in students'

perception of a positive classroom environment: "...the instructor's concern or respect for students (including friendliness) and the instructor's knowledge of subject matter" (p. 254).

Instructional Recommendation:
Interpersonal Connection and FSI

Building interpersonal connections with students can foster rich, meaningful classroom interactions. Strategies include addressing students by name, engaging them in in non-academic pre-class *chit chat* to bond socially, moderating inclusive class discussions to ensure that students are "heard" and have a degree of "say" in the nature and direction of those discussions, and providing students with explicit statements of desire to see them succeed, and intent to support that success. Feldman (1976) argues that, "...the instructor's availability and helpfulness, the instructor's encouragement of questions and discussion (including openness to others' opinions)" have a significant impact on students' perception of their learning outcomes (p. 255).

Subsequent inquiry, as conducted by Kim and Sax (2007), further develops the notion that the *type* of interactions that occur between faculty and their students is of signal importance, and many of my interviewees' accounts confirm this as well. My findings, for example, strongly suggest that explicit statements of support and encouragement are vital components of high-quality classroom FSI can have considerable influential on students' academic outcomes as the frequency of such interactions. One interviewee urged that, "they have to know that you care about them...it's a delicate balance," while another explained how she tells students that "...I don't teach you guys anything that I don't think is important... I would never want you guys to be misinformed." A third participant confided that, "I hope at the end of the day they'll say, hey...I know that he cares...I know that he's there for me." Such examples of faculty striving to build

interpersonal connections with students feature prominently in the "best practices" that emerged

from this study.

Instructional Recommendation:
Classroom Management and FSI

Planning for classroom management that fosters connection and boundaries conveys the

importance of structure without compromising the quality of faculty/student relationships. High-

quality classroom FSI relies on the instructor balancing efforts to connect with students on the

one hand, and establishing clear interactional boundaries on the other. Instructional strategies to

achieve this include selective personal disclosure, employing social skills & subject expertise to

mentor students, and the use of classroom management techniques aimed at reinforcing positive

relationships with students while upholding class conduct policies. Consider Evertson & Poole's

(2008) assertion that:

> "Proactive classroom management includes forethought concerning the many and varied
> interactions that take place once students arrive in a classroom. A teacher's anticipation
> of the relationships with and instruction of a class of students helps ensure a safe and
> smoothly run learning environment. Failing to anticipate these interactions promotes
> confusion for students" (p. 136).

A prime example of the proactive strategies referenced by Everston & Poole, and

likewise echoed by several of my participants, revolves around the instructor's awareness (and

use) of physical space, or their *physical immediacy*, in the classroom. One interviewee,

Elizabeth, shared how she arrived at her approach to physical immediacy in her classrooms: "So,

after some trial and error, I've found that the best way to connect with my students is just

circling around the room, especially when they're in these small group discussions." Another

participant, Marcia, incorporates into the practice of physical immediacy her sensitivity to when

one-on-one interactions will be more effective than group address: "I would come around and check for understanding in their groups...and anyone who was having specific trouble, I might sit with them, sort of individually, and personally guide them through it." Examining the effect of non-verbal instructor immediacy on perceived cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning in the classroom, Sanders & Wiseman (1990) argue that:

> "One factor which seems clearly linked to teaching effectiveness is immediacy [defined as] that communication which enhances closeness to another. Immediacy behaviors reflect a positive attitude on the part of the sender toward the receiver. [Immediacy behaviors] indicate approachability, signal availability for communication, increase sensory stimulation, and communicate interpersonal warmth and closeness." (p. 431)

As reflected in both previous research and this study's findings, there are a variety of strategies adjuncts can employ to plan for classroom management that fosters connection and boundaries, while conveying the importance of structure without compromising the quality of their FSI.

Administrative Recommendation:
Incentives for and Barriers to Adjunct PD

Providing adequate incentives and resources to help adjuncts overcome traditional barriers to PD activity may result in higher rates of part-time participation. The most prevalent themes to have emerged from this study with regard to adjuncts' incentives to participate in PD activities were desire to develop pedagogical ability and improving their chances for FT employment. The greatest reported barrier to on-campus PD participation is limited time on campus due to schedule conflicts. These findings are presented in light of previous research that points to the need for PD programming that takes these incentives and barriers in to account. Bosley (2004) found that when PT instructors are provided these types of training opportunities, they tend to take full advantage of them, and subsequently report higher job satisfaction and a

greater sense of efficacy in the classroom as well. These much-needed PD opportunities, though, are not always available to adjunct faculty, as intimated in Rogers' (2015) assertion that "if student success in the classroom is the desired outcome… resources might be better focused on [improving] the professional development of existing… part-time faculty" (p. 682).

The relative rarity of such programing has negative implications for adjuncts and, by extension, the students they teach. Conversely, their provision would likely improve the low morale that can result from real or perceived workplace exploitation – a perception expressed by several of this study's interviewees, and which has been noted by Pankin & Weiss (2011), among others. Programing that adequately incentivizes PT participation, and is designed and structured to fit the constraints of adjuncts' often limited schedules would carry positive implications for faculty, as well as contributing to improvement in a broad range of students' academic and personal outcomes – making good on the promise of equality of opportunity inherent to the community college's mission.

Training programs that account for adjuncts' professional experience, career goals, and personal growth is essential. This could begin by drawing on PT instructors' reported classroom experiences, as in this study, so as to include their valuable perspective in creating what Knowles et al (1984) called "... a model of faculty development which centers on a task inherently interesting to faculty and requiring new learning for its completion thereby creating the impetus for faculty can seek out [better] resources" (p. 143). This, in turn, could lay the groundwork for the sort of programming which Heie (1979) describes as an "individualized approach to faculty development," which combines the instructors' "personal and professional goals" (p. 147).

My findings largely confirm what extant literature suggests regarding the need for PD programs that aim to better socialize adjuncts within the community college's wider community. With regard to the particular needs of PT faculty in higher education, Greive and Worden (2000) prescribe a program that addresses issues related to improving participants' understanding of the institutional mission, highlighting characteristics of the student body, explaining institutional policies, increasing the instructor's sense of belonging, and, crucially, enhancing pedagogical technique. In light of the intimate connection between an instructor's pedagogical technique and their approach to classroom interactions, the link between making PT-tailored PD available and improvements in classroom FSI becomes clearer. One possible step that campus leadership could take in that direction would involve a mentoring program between PT faculty and their FT colleagues.

Administrative Recommendation:
Mentor-Based PD for Adjuncts

Professional development programming that includes mentoring between FT and PT faculty can lead to improvements in students' academic outcomes. My findings confirm previous studies' conclusions that community colleges can improve student outcomes by strengthening adjuncts' classroom FSI through better and more abundant PD opportunities. Scholars have found, in fact, that adjuncts' student learning outcomes do not differ in statistically significant ways from their full-time colleagues when controlling for their participation in PD activities (Bolge, 1995). Furthermore, Gerhard (2013) asserts that PD programs that go beyond "the delivery of new content to include relationship building" both improves adjuncts' perceptions of their own learning outcomes, and strengthens their ability to engage students with effective

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instructional practices, including expressions of interest in and openness to further engagement with students, both in and out of the classroom. Learning to facilitate high-quality FSI is, itself, a social process, and PD activities that focus on how this relates to student learning have had significant impact on classroom learning outcomes (Fishman et al., 2003).

Sixty percent of interviewees cited various forms of help from their FT colleagues as occasional aids to their improvement as instructors. Quick chats in the hallway before rushing off to the next class or campus, however, cannot take the place of intentional, structured collaboration with one's peers, and a full forty percent of participants made no mention of working with full-time faculty in their department. Spangler (1990), Zutter (2007), and Nolan et al (2007) make the case for developing a mentor program within each academic department, and demand for such programs surfaced in the professional narratives I collected. "Adjunct faculty members," observes Burns et al (2015), "seldom have opportunities to interact with other faculty members to discuss and share pedagogical alternatives" (p. 67). Thus, there is potential value in a FT/PT mentoring program – provided PT participation is incentivized by renumeration of some kind, as well as accommodation for adjunct schedule constraints. A mentoring program would also address some of the potential issues associated with separate PD programming for part-time and full-time faculty, as expressed by Burns et al (2015):

> "...separate development opportunities for full-time and adjunct faculty members are counterproductive...such activities should optimally include both groups of faculty members. By including both adjunct and full-time faculty members in faculty development, community can be developed while building a faculty body which possesses similar skills and abilities to provide continuity in the student experience" (p. 10).

The professional "community" building element Burns identifies is central to much of what participants in this study shared via their survey and interview responses. Thus, a mentorship component would likely be most effective when employed in conjunction with other measures PD programmers could take to address various conditions of adjuncts' workplace experience, including dissemination of institutional policies and procedures, adequate support services, and what Spangler (1990) identified as "a meaningful orientation process" (p. 23). Broadly-speaking, this study's findings confirm Rogers' (2015) assertion that "if student success in the classroom is the desired outcome…resources might be better focused on [improving] the professional development of existing part-time faculty" (p. 682). This is thoroughly reflected in the patterns that emerged from my interviewees' narratives, which highlights the clear connection between investing in adjunct faculty and improvements in student outcomes.

Further Research

This study broached far more questions than it answered, and the routes for further research it initially pointed to were not, ultimately, the ones that wound up being most important. For example, a sizable amount of data was collected on subjects including the use of humor and game-based learning to foster FSI, instructors' perceptions of students' own strategies for negotiating the classroom power differential, and issues related to student disclosure and the instructor's role as a mandatory reporter. All of these topics are important to classroom teaching, warrant further study, and, yet, turned out to be beyond the scope of this study. One inescapable and inviting lead, however, appeared in silhouette repeatedly, most often in the hinterland of interviewees' off-hand comments regarding job insecurity, inadequate pay, and the perception of

a two-tiered class-system among faculty, where the benefits of FT status are matched only, in magnitude, by the challenges that accrue to those classified as PT. At the end of the day, better PD, itself, cannot be the solution to the workplace problems that many interviewees expressed. A pathway to stable, equitable employment, however, might be.

Thirolf (2013) found that over the course of an adjunct's career trajectory, they are likely to experience an initial period of positive feelings related to their teaching and other interactions with students. Over time, though, professional pride gives way to increasing feelings of disappointment and disconnection, especially when that part-timer compares their circumstances to those of full-time colleagues. My findings, in many cases, confirmed the prevalence of this pattern, suggesting that a clear path to full-time employment could, itself, be a sufficient incentive for many part-time instructors to more fully engage the PD opportunities that are (or could be) available to them. In the short-term, professional development that is better-suited to adjuncts' needs and working conditions is a step in the right direction; for the long-term benefit of students, faculty, and the institutions that employ them, I strongly urge further research, development, and piloting of effective models for PT-to-FT pathways.

Closing Thoughts

With increasing proportions of adjunct community college faculty on the one hand, and at-risk students' growing reliance on these institutions as a gateway to higher education on the other, this study was, in part, a response to scholars like Yu, et al (2015), who signaled the need for more qualitative research on the roles of adjunct faculty in college classrooms, and their impact on students' outcomes. Previous studies had charted some of the classroom's relational

landscape, as with Hosek & Thompson (2009), who assert that "...viewing the teacher-student relationship as an *interpersonal* relationship highlights the...communication that constitute this relationship, and...it is incumbent upon teachers to create a positive relational climate, as this is important to student learning" (p. 340). The centrality of social skills awareness to high-quality teaching, as it emerged from my findings, builds on this literature, as well as on Kneipp et al's (2010) observation that:

> "...becoming mindful of how our personality traits impact our interactions with students may create a more positive environment for students; resulting not only in more meaningful learning, but also in retention and graduation rates. Additionally, faculty may also benefit from a degree of self-awareness in terms of their respective life endeavors. Hopefully, if more awareness is developed with regard to our personality and the behaviors we exhibit, benefits will be achieved in multiple areas of life -- not only in the classroom" (p. 45).

It's well-documented that the adjunct majority among college faculty has been associated with negative effects on a variety of students' academic outcomes (Eagan & Jaeger, 2008; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Jaeger & Eagan, 2009). The dearth of high-quality FSI that appears as a symptom of this employment trend *can* be mitigated in the short-term, according to scholars like Newmann (1992), who argues that "... advances in student engagement and achievement will depend on…the content of professional development" (p. 210). This is particularly important to the choices community college administrators make in supporting the PT instructors that often work with at-risk student populations, as is the case at SBC. Paul Astin, speaking on the challenges of creating change in educational institutions, opined that:

> "Relationship building has a positive impact on all young adult students; it has a disproportionately positive impact on those students who come to us from at-risk communities…you almost see an inverse relationship between the growth of intimacy and depth of those relationships, and declines in various risk behaviors…"

One interviewee, Max, shared a sentiment that carries Astin's comments to their logical end, with the succinct (yet no less profound) assertion that "...we have kids' lives in our hands. This is important...I believe this is such an important role that we hold in society." Pathways to more stable and equitable employment will be an important part of long-term solutions to the pedagogical and administrative challenges confronted in this study; in the meantime, adequately equipping PT instructors for building stronger classroom relationships with their students should be a central pillar of any community college's professional development program.

* * *

Appendix 1: Recruitment Email Template

Hello,

My name is Dustin Black, a doctoral student with the Graduate School of Education and Information Systems at the University of California, Los Angeles. Because you are an instructor with the English, History, or Mathematics Department, I would like to invite you to participate in my research study. I believe your unique perspective and experience with classroom instruction can contribute to a better understanding of the factors that shape beliefs and practices associated with high-quality classroom interaction between students and faculty. I am looking for voluntary part-time and full-time faculty participants who fit these criteria:

1) Have taught transfer-level courses in the English, history, or mathematics department at El Camino College or Compton College.

2) Have at least one year experience teaching at the community college level.

As a participant in this study, you will be asked to answer questions as a respondent in an online survey lasting no more than one hour, and you may choose to participate in a follow-up interview lasting no more than one hour. You will also be asked to engage in study-related emails, phone calls, and informal discussions totaling no more than one hour. Participants in this study will, thus, be asked to spend up to (but no more than) three hours of time participating.

My goal as a researcher is to protect you from any harm as a result of participating in this study. Any information you provide will be protected and not identified or connected to you. You will be assigned a pseudonym rather than using your name to further protect your identity. You would be under no obligation, whatsoever, to continue with the study, and may cease participation at any time, and for any reason. This study is independent of my employment at El Camino College or Compton College. Furthermore, your participation would have no bearing whatsoever on your current or future employment at either institution.

The information gained through this study will help deepen our understanding of the unique contribution that part-time and full-time instructors make to student success on community college campuses, and may contribute to improved outcomes for both instructors and their students.

If you meet the criteria listed above, and would like participate, please follow the link below to complete the online survey by 00/00/00. If you have any questions now or in the future, please contact me at [email] or by mobile at [(555)555-5555].

Informed Consent link: www.consentdoc.com   Survey link: www.simiansurvey.com

Sincerely,
Dustin Black

Approved by El Camino College IRB from May 23, 2018 to May 22, 2019.

Appendix 2: Informed Consent

INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Part-Time Instructors and Faculty-Student Interaction: A Study of Perception and Practice in the Community College Classroom

Dustin Black at the University of California, Los Angeles is conducting a research study. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you currently teach in the English, history, or mathematics department at El Camino College or Compton College, have at least one year of experience teaching at the community college level, and are over the age of 18 years old. Your participation in this research study is voluntary and confidential.

Why is this study being done?

Part-time instructors constitute a majority of faculty on most community college campuses, comprising approximately two-thirds of such faculty nationwide. Most interaction between part-time instructors and their students occurs within the classroom context, and both scholars and practitioners alike have identified the need for a deeper, more nuanced understanding of the nature and quality of these classroom interactions. As such, I am conducting a qualitative study of how instructors' own narratives can contribute to our understanding of the factors that shape beliefs and behaviors associated with high-quality classroom interactions between such instructors and their students.

 What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, your experience will include the following:

- You will be asked to respond to email and/or voicemail on matters related to the study.
- You will be asked online survey questions about faculty-student interaction.
  Description of survey content: survey questions will include items that inquire into your classroom interactions with your students and the factors that have influenced these interactions.
- You may be asked to participate in one one-on-one interview that will be recorded.
  Description of interview content: semi-structured interviews will include items that inquire into inquire further into your classroom interactions with your students and the factors that have influenced these interactions.
- The interview would take place in a private location near the campus, or via telephone.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in study-related communications such as emails, phone calls, and possible informal discussions will amount to no more than one hour. The survey associated with this study will take no more than one hour to complete. You may be asked to participate in an interview that will take no longer than one hour. I may contact you after the interview to clarify points raised during the interview. Likewise, you may contact me with any questions that arise regarding your participation in this study. If necessary, you would be contacted no later than one

year after the day you participated in the interview. Thus, total time spent participating in this study will amount to no more than three hours.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

Some reasonable foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences may include:

- Possible discomfort related to the time spent on emails, phone calls, informal discussions, and/or the interview associated with this study.

- Any possible discomforts will be minimized by the fact that all participation is voluntary, by adherence to stated time limits for participation-related activities, and the fact that you may cease participation at any time, for any reason.

      Again, participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you will be asked to discuss only what you feel free to share regarding your professional experiences. You may, at any time, request to skip a question, stop the interview, or withdraw from the study without explanation or consequences.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

      You may benefit from participating in my study through reflection on (and sharing of) your professional narratives and classroom practices. This may contribute to refinement and/or improvement in teaching strategies. Potential benefits to the field of education and society at large are a greater knowledge of the factors that shape perceptions and practices associated with high-quality classroom interaction between part-time community college instructors and their students.

Will I be paid for participating?

      You will receive a $10 Amazon gift card upon completing the online survey. If you are invited to (and choose to participate in) a subsequent interview, you will receive an additional Amazon gift card, redeemable for $20, upon completing the interview. You can also receive a copy of your results if you request it.

Will information about me and my participation in this research be kept confidential?

      Your participation this study will be kept completely confidential, as will any personal information (name, identifying details, etc.) you share in the course of participation. The content of any emails, surveys, phone calls, informal discussions, and interview recordings/transcripts, will be stored separately from any identifying information about you. A pseudonym (made-up name) will be substituted for your real name. Any audio files will be destroyed one year after completion of the study. Your responses will have no bearing on future employment at El Camino College or Compton College.

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

University of California, Los Angeles:
If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to my academic advisor:

    Dr. Kevin Eagan, Assistant Professor
    University of California, Los Angeles
    Graduate School of Education & Information Systems
    (310) 206-3448 or email to: keagan@ucla.edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):
If you have questions about your rights as a research subject, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers, you may contact the UCLA OHRPP by phone:

    (310) 206-2040; by email: participants@research.ucla.edu or by mail: Box 951406, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1406.

Institutional Research & Planning Office at El Camino College:
If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please contact:

    Irene Graff, Co-Chair & Director
    (310) 660-3593, ext. 3515 or email to: igraff@elcamino.edu

You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Consent to Participate
By signing this form, you are agreeing to be interviewed and have your interview audio-recorded.

I understand the procedures and conditions of my participation described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I affirm that I am at least 18 years of age and I agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this form.

SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT

_____
Name of Participant

_____   _____
Signature of Participant   Date

SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT

_____

Name of Person Obtaining Consent

_____   _____

Signature of Person Obtaining Consent   Date

Approved by El Camino College IRB from May 23, 2018 to May 22, 2019.

Appendix 3: Research Questions

1) How do part-time community college faculty perceive their in-class FSI?

    A) How do part-time faculty describe their classroom interactions with students?

    B) What do they say is their role in fostering high-quality interactions?

2) What institutional, departmental, and external barriers and opportunities influence classroom interactions according to part-time faculty?

    A) What institutional supports and challenges to classroom FSI do they identify?

    B) To what extent do they participate in employer-hosted teaching-related PD activity?

    C) What do they say are the incentives and barriers to their participation in such activity?

Appendix 4: Online Survey Instrument

Welcome, and thank you for participating. Please respond to each of the following items:

1) [Link to / acknowledgment of Informed Consent]

2) Approximately how many years have you taught at the community college level? (Fill in the blank)

3) Please indicate your current employment classification at El Camino College: (Select one)
> Part-time
> Full-time

4) Please select the highest degree you have earned: (Select one)
> Bachelor's (B.A., B.S., etc.)
> Master's (M.A., M.S., M.F.A., M.B.A., etc.)
> Doctorate (Ph.D., Ed.D., Psy.D., etc.)
> Other

5) What is your discipline and which transfer-level college courses have you taught? (Fill in the blank)

6) While interacting with students in your classroom(s), how often in the past year did you: (Frequently, Occasionally, Not at All)

> Address individual students by name
> Encourage them to ask you course content-related questions in class
> Invite them to challenge your lecture or discussion-related assertions
> Use humor to connect with them during lectures, discussions, or other activities
> Ask them about their progress in other courses
> Remind them that you recall what it was like being a student
> Incorporate information relevant to their declared majors, interests, etc. into class discussions
> Physically move around the classroom to talk with students
> Assure them that mistakes are part of the learning process

7) Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements regarding classroom teaching: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

> It is important to show students a genuine interest in helping them learn.
> A friendly personality is essential to being an effective teacher.
> Good teaching requires strong interpersonal skills.

It is important that students have opportunities to express their opinions in class.
An instructor should project confidence in the classroom.
Students should have a say in how class time is spent.
Mentoring students is a core responsibility for those who teach.
An instructor should express interest in students' problems.
Instructors should listen as much as they talk when interacting with students.

8) Please indicate the extent to which you agree it is your role to:
(Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

Prepare students for employment after college
Prepare students for graduate or advanced education
Help develop students' moral imaginations
Provide for students' emotional development
Help students develop personal values

9) Which institutional resources are available to you? (Select all that apply)

Professional development funds
Private office space
Shared office space
Use of a computer/printer
An email account
A phone/voicemail account
Employer-funded course material printing

10) Please indicate your agreement with the following statements: (Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, Don't Know)

Part-time instructors at ECC:
Are offered teacher-training before teaching
Have access to adequate instructional support services
Are compensated for advising/counseling students
Are required to attend Division / Department meetings
Are respected by full-time faculty
Have good working relations with administrators
Are paid fairly
Have a say in curriculum development / course design

11) In your time teaching at ECC, have you taken advantage of any of the following professional development opportunities? (Yes, No, Not Available)

Funded workshops focused on teaching skills development
Incentives to implement interventions for struggling students
Incentives to integrate instructional technology into your classroom
Resources to integrate culturally-competent practices into your classroom

12) Please share a bit about the ways you interact with students during an average class meeting: (Open-Ended)

13) May I contact you for an interview to follow-up / expand on your responses? (Yes / No)

14) Please enter your first and last name, and the best email and mobile number to reach you at. (Fill in the Blank)

Ending Statement)
Thank you, again, for participating! I will contact you within two weeks to confirm gift card delivery details. If you expressed interest in being interviewed, I may include an invitation and information regarding further participation.

Sincerely,

Dustin Black
Principal Investigator

Appendix 5: Interview Protocol

1) In your survey response, you indicated that you've been teaching CC for [XX] years; may I ask why you became a community college instructor?

2) Your survey responses suggest that connecting with students in the classroom is important to you; imagine a typical class meeting for the following:

    Follow-ups / probes:
    - Do you "chit-chat" with students before starting class, or jump right into course material? If so, which topics? If not, why not?

    - How do you show your students you have a genuine interest in helping them learn?

    - You agreed that good teaching requires "a friendly personality" and "strong interpersonal skills"; can you share a bit about what those look like in your classroom?

3) How would you describe your teaching style?

4) What challenges have you encountered in building rapport with students in your classroom?

    Follow-up / probe:
    - How have you overcome these challenges?

5) How has your ability to connect with students in the classroom evolved as you've gained teaching experience?

    Follow-up / probe:
    - What training or collaboration has most influenced this evolution?

6) You indicated that you [have / have not] participated in PD activities provided by [WBC]; If so, what motivated you to do so? If not, why not?

    Follow-up / probe:
    - Has anything else influenced how you interact with your students in the classroom?

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