Perceptions and Expectations of the Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction

Outside of Class at a Community College

by

Glyn E. Bongolan

A dissertation submitted to the faculty of

San Diego State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree
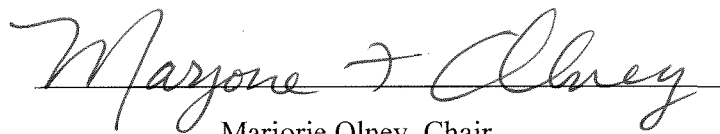
Doctor of Educational Leadership

June 28, 2012

SAN DIEGO STATE UNIVERSITY

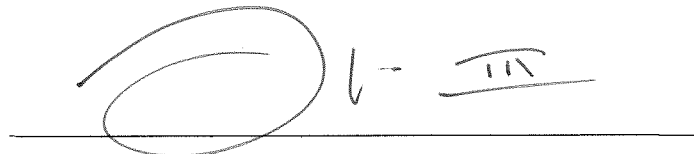The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Dissertation of Dr. Glyn E. Bongolan:

Perceptions and Expectations of the Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction
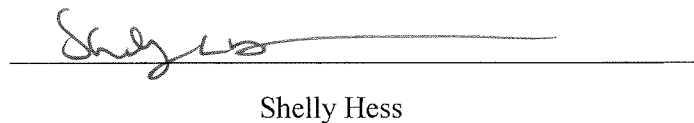
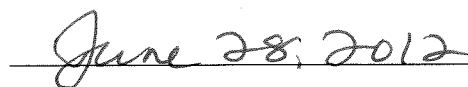Outside of Class at a Community College

_____
Marjorie Olney, Chair
Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education

_____
Frank Harris, III
Administration, Rehabilitation, and Postsecondary Education

_____
Shelly Hess
San Diego Community College District

_____
Approval Date

Copyright © 2012

by

Dr. Glyn E. Bongolan

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the context of the different levels of initiation in student–faculty interaction outside of class for community college students and faculty members. The researcher examined the meanings constructed about the initiation of interactions between faculty members and students and how those interactions contributed to the construction of the students' identities and academic experiences.

Constructivist grounded theory was utilized in this study. A total of 14 students were interviewed through one focus group and individual interviews. Five faculty members were interviewed individually. Grounded theory methods lead to the following four themes: (1) student attitudes toward initiation of student–faculty interaction, (2) faculty attitudes toward initiation of student–faculty interaction, (3) initiation of student–faculty interaction, and (4) perceptions of student–faculty interactions. An overarching theme of underutilization of student–faculty interaction emerged from the data.

Described in this study, reasons for low levels of interaction outside of class included the following: (1) underestimation of benefits of student–faculty interaction by both students and faculty, such as increased intellectual self identity and academic performance; (2) lack of intentional initiation of interaction by faculty; (3) lack of faculty knowledge of strategies for interaction outside of class; (4) student intimidation of faculty sometimes interpreted by faculty as an absence of interest; and (5) an absence of an equity-minded perspective that provides validation and empowers students through interaction outside of class. Recommendations for practice are discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to begin by thanking my dissertation committee for their support and endurance during this process. I would like to especially thank my chair, Dr. Marjorie Olney, for her confidence in me and for the countless hours she put into the careful review of my work. I would like to thank Dr. Frank Harris III for his keen insights and expertise in grounded theory. And finally, I would like to thank Dr. Shelly Hess for seeing me through my entire doctoral process from beginning to end.

I would also like to thank the participants in this study for sharing their perspectives on student–faculty interactions. I would like to thank my colleagues who supported me through this process and my cohort who made the past three years a fantastic learning experience.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my husband, Bernie, my children Berlyn and Gennalyn, and my parents for all their sacrifices they made for me during this process. Thank you for all the love and energy you have provided me. Without the relationships mentioned here, I would not be where I am today.

This is dedicated to my parents, Gregorio Ebba Sr. and Generosa Ebba, for the devotion,

love, and compassion they have always provided me.

CHAPTER ONE—INTRODUCTION

"For most students in two-year institutions, the choice is not between the community college and a senior residential institution; it is between the community college and nothing" (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008, p. 58). For many students, college is the gatekeeper to the opportunity for a better life. For many years, college was designed to serve the elite; but now, especially with the rapid development of the community college, students who traditionally never attended college currently have the opportunity receive a college education (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008). However, educational institutions largely have been designed for students who can attend full-time, who have passed certain entrance examinations, who have been top of their class, and who are well prepared for college. Now, entering that educational paradigm come the students with multiple life roles, who have not taken entrance examinations, who may not have finished high school, or who do not yet have the tools needed to navigate the current educational paradigm. While the student population has evolved and continues to evolve, educational practices, for the most part, remain unchanged and stagnant. With the lack of change in educational practices, educational institutions are failing this new crop of students.

In order for many community college students to persist, they typically have to overcome a variety of obstacles such as financial costs of college, working full-time, taking care of family, understanding the culture of college, facing their fears of not being smart enough, in addition to handling the amount of work that is required for college (Cox, 2009b). As these obstacles become more difficult, students begin to doubt their ability to balance college and their personal lives (Rendon, 1994). They begin to doubt

that the benefits of a degree will outweigh the amount of sacrifice that needs to be made to successfully complete college. Many students have a fear of failing (Cox, 2009b). Students tend to second guess their presence on a college campus especially if the student identifies barriers such as being first in the family to attend college, or the college culture appearing very different and intimidating to the student, or financial costs seeming inconceivable (Garcia, 2010).

A large majority of college practices have been geared toward the students who are typically middle to upper income status, full-time students, working part time or less, ages 18-24 (Gibson & Slate, 2010, Rendon, 1994; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000; Terenzini, et al., 1994). These students have been labeled the "traditional students" making those outside of this definition "nontraditional students." Consequently, this definition has inadvertently marginalized those who fall outside of the definition of a traditional student and has created an expectation and stereotype of what a student looks like. That image of a traditional student has unintentionally reinforced institutional prejudice in higher education (Karp, O'Gara, & Hughes, 2008; Santamaria, 2009). That institutional inequity may have contributed to the current achievement gaps in completion rates in education through the lack of variation in teaching and communicating styles of faculty across educational institutions.

Community college has created an avenue for greater access to a college education for diverse students. However, student outcomes indicate that access to education does not mean access to success. Completion rates are still very low (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009). In terms of degree completion, an achievement gap is evident among ethnicities. Many educators inappropriately blame the achievement gap

on student deficits such as lack of cultural capital, lack of financial resources, or worse, lack of ability (Tinto, 1975, 1993). What this student deficit model promotes is a justification for higher educational institutions to release themselves from the responsibility for closing the achievement gap, for providing the cultural capital to the students, and for providing the opportunity for the student to achieve their goals. In order to avoid marginalizing students, institutions need to take into account how their actions affect both traditional and nontraditional students for the purposes of not marginalizing students (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Kuh, 2009; Tierney, 1992). For example, institutions should examine how the responsibility for initiation of interaction between students and faculty is conceptualized. How can institutions create a culture that takes into account the different styles of communication, different cultures, and different personalities of students so institutions do not inadvertently penalize nontraditional students for being different than the traditional students? Most scholars agree that students' success and engagement with the educational institution is the responsibility of both the student and the institution. Yet, the dominant paradigm in education attributes success to individual student effort (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bensimon, 2007; Tierney, 1992) suggesting the responsibility for initiating interaction between students and faculty lies mainly with the student as does his or her own college outcomes.

The opportunity for a better life should not be regulated by an educational institution's assessment of students' abilities or deficits. Rather, the opportunity for a better life should be encouraged by the institution through the acknowledgement of the diversity of strengths and intelligences among the students. The potential of a student should be fostered and not squelched. Community colleges, especially, have the

opportunity to choose to see and encourage the potential in students. The fostering of potential begins with engagement of all students regardless of their level of preparation for college.

Background of the Study

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), a survey tool developed by the Community College Leadership Program at The University of Texas at Austin, is utilized by community colleges across the nation that pay for and administer the CCSSE at their campuses. The CCSSE measures the following five benchmarks of student engagement: active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student–faculty interaction, and support for learners (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], n.d., para. 3). This study focuses on the single component of student faculty interaction in student engagement. The researcher is thus able to methodically examine engagement from the students' and faculty members' perspectives and examine the factors that lead to or hinder the initiation of those interactions.

According to the 2009 CCSSE Report, personal connections with faculty, other students, and supportive family members combined to create the "unanticipated success factor—a critical variable that improves the odds of persistence" (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009, p. 3). For many successful students, especially students of color, a common factor in their success, as defined by degree completion, is a validating relationship with a faculty member, another student, or a supportive family member. Various studies support the idea of student engagement (Astin, 1984, Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, Whitt, & Associates, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Tinto, 1993),

and more specifically, the concept of the caring individual who can make the difference in a student's educational career (Bensimon, 2007; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Cox, 2009b; Rendon, 1994; Rendon et al., 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). The validation that occurs between students and their validating agents, such as faculty members, transpires through the development of a relationship, which can arise from a simple interaction outside of class.

Yet, these validating relationships and interactions outside of class occur at low levels in college institutions (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; B. E. Cox, McIntosh, Terenzini, Reason, & Quaye, 2010; B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hagedorn, Maxwell, Rodriguez, Hocevar, & Filpot, 2000). In many cases, faculty and students barely interact with one another outside of class. Therefore, the development of these validating relationships becomes a challenge when interaction outside of class is minimal at best. To better understand the reasons for this lack of interaction, the initiation of student–faculty interaction needs to be examined. The various contexts and different perspectives of the participants in the interaction need to be highlighted in order to understand the phenomenon of the lack of interaction between students and faculty outside of class.

The influence of the interaction between a faculty member and a student outside of class cannot be underestimated or ignored. A tremendous amount of research supports the idea that student–faculty interaction is related to positive student outcomes such as higher grade point averages (GPAs), higher retention, higher aspirations, and higher degree completion (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Cole, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Student–faculty interaction is also related to the amount of effort students put into their coursework (Harper, 2012; Helterbran, 2008; Thompson, 2001).

Research shows students reported feeling pressured to work harder in class to please or impress their professors after establishing a connection with the professor (Harper, 2012; Thompson, 2001). Student–faculty interaction encourages students to work harder for professors they believed to be invested in students (Helterbran, 2008; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). The influence of the interaction between a faculty member and a student outside of class cannot be underestimated or ignored.

Although the positive benefits of student faculty-interaction work for all students, such benefits may not be enjoyed equally. Certain groups of students seem to benefit more from the interaction than others when broken down by ethnic groups (Chang, 2005; Cole, 2008) or broken down into generational status and gender (Kim & Sax, 2007). Many nontraditional students may feel out of place in college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). For nontraditional students, approaching faculty is not necessarily a rite of passage as described by Tinto (1975) or a comfortable form of interaction to take. Whereas many traditional students consider student–faculty interaction to be a natural activity they have the prerogative to engage in, many nontraditional students do not.

Traditional students tend to be more familiar with the college culture, with college practices, and are cognizant of the expectations of being a college student. Students, who fall outside of the "traditional student" definition, tend to not take ownership of the academic worlds (Steele, 1997). Many times, these "socially produced, culturally constituted activities" such as student–faculty interaction, contribute to students' definition of their own identities in relation to higher education (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998, pp. 40-41). Without institutional agents empowering and validating nontraditional students' sense of belonging in higher education (Hurtado &

Carter, 1997; Rendon, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 2010), many nontraditional students expect to be discounted by professors and institutions simply because they do not fit the "traditional student" stereotype in literature (Steele, 1997). However, when the educational practitioner takes the responsibility to foster engagement with his or her students, the nontraditional student has the opportunity to greatly benefit (Bensimon, 2007; Kuh et al., 2005). A caring faculty member can transform nontraditional students into powerful learners when that caring faculty member provides encouragement, support, and reassurance to the students concerning their ability to succeed (Rendon, 1994; Rendon et al., 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2010).

Statement of the Problem

The problem under examination in this study is the low frequencies of student–faculty interaction outside of class at the community college level. The context of the initiation of the interaction needs to be examined from the student's perspective, from the faculty member's perspective, and from the institutional perspective, making student–faculty interaction a collaborative effort. While literature shows that student–faculty interaction is related to positive student outcomes, such as higher grade point averages (GPAs), higher retention, higher aspirations, and higher degree completion, and students working hard for their professors (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Cole, 2008; Harper, 2012; Helterbran, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), literature also shows these validating relationships and interactions outside of class occur at low levels in college institutions (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; B. E. Cox et al., 2010; B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hagedorn et al., 2000). Furthermore, if student–faculty interaction outside of class occurs minimally, then the opportunity for a validating and

empowering relationship between students and faculty also becomes less likely to occur. While the quality of interaction is more significant than the quantity of interaction (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), an initial interaction needs to take place before faculty and students can develop those more significant and meaningful interactions that can help students persist in college.

The type of student attending college, especially community colleges, does not match the literature's definition of a traditional student. The community college student is possibly first-generation, low-income, attending part-time and working full-time, ethnically diverse, older in age, and from a blended family (Keller, 2001). These nontraditional students are quickly becoming the majority of students at the community colleges. Literature shows that one of the key factors that aids nontraditional students to persist is meaningful student–faculty interaction through validation and empowerment (Bensimon, 2007; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Cox, 2009a; Rendon, 1994; Rendon, et al., 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Therefore, if colleges continue with status quo and current practices, which typically are geared toward traditional students, persistence rates will possibly reach new low levels, especially in particular demographics of students. As a result, the nation will have a larger uneducated population which will likely have an impact on widening the gap between the rich and the poor.

In order for education to keep up with the changes in student characteristics, faculty members and their institutions need to adjust their practices in teaching and communicating with their current students. Institutions need to take ownership of their students' persistence rates rather than attributing the low persistence rates to student circumstances which are purportedly outside of the colleges' influence. Rendon et al.

(2000) state taking an active role in encouraging, supporting, and reassuring students is the role of the institution, not just of the professor. Therefore, institutions cannot take a passive role in student–faculty interaction. The institution needs to foster and create a safe environment that encourages and supports initiation of interaction with students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Zepke & Leach, 2010).

Student–faculty interaction is a key element of student engagement which is linked to positive student outcomes. However, few faculty members have a full understanding of the impact their interaction with students can have on students. Consequently, faculty may have minimal interaction with their students (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; B. E. Cox et al., 2010; B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hagedorn et al., 2000). At the same time, students underestimate the importance of interacting with faculty and choose not to interact with faculty (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Many times, students do not see a benefit in interacting with faculty other than for assistance with homework (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Also contributing to the low levels of interaction, is an active avoidance of interaction amongst both students and faculty. Students avoided interacting with faculty because they were intimidated by faculty (Cox, 2009a) and felt faculty were not interested in interaction with students outside of class (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Faculty also avoided interaction with students due to their lack of comfort with initiating the interaction and with the interaction itself (Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Golde & Pribbenow, 2000). In summary, while student–faculty interaction is a key factor in the success of many students, that key to success remains a secret to most.

The impact of interaction between students and faculty is profoundly underestimated by students (Cotten & Wilson, 2006) and faculty (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009). Student–faculty interaction is not initiated sufficiently. The initiation of interaction, especially by institutional agents such as faculty, can greatly lead to positive student outcomes (Rendon, 1994; Rendon et al., 2000; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Therefore, this study underscores the importance of institutional responsibility in the initiation of interaction with students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the context of the different levels of initiation in student–faculty interaction for community college students and faculty using a qualitative design resulting in a grounded theory of themes and patterns, specific to perceptions of the initiation of student–faculty interaction. For this study, the focus was on the initiation of student–faculty interaction outside of class and not in class. This is in keeping with the literature which provides strong evidence that interactions outside of the classroom are especially beneficial for nontraditional students.

Significance of the Study

The examination of the initiation of student–faculty interaction will provide higher education practitioners a greater understanding of the roles students and faculty play in developing meaningful interactions. An assumption in the study is that the responsibility for the initiation of the interaction lies with the institution. Based on these findings, higher education practitioners will be able to take more proactive measures in assuring the success of their students. Because both student and faculty perceptions will be studied, the perceptions and experiences of each group can be compared and

contrasted to highlight discrepancies in expectations between students and faculty. The

study will provide institutions with a greater understanding of how to support and

validate its nontraditional students.

Basic Skills

The Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges adopted a

strategic plan in which one of the goals is to ensure the funding for and the development

of effective practices in regards to basic skills on community college campuses. Basic

skills coursework include remedial foundation skills in reading, writing, math, and

English at the community college (Boroch et al., 2007). A. M. Cohen and Brawer (2008)

describe students placing into basic skills coursework as coming from various

backgrounds such as:

> those who have done poorly in all subjects and those who are deficient in just one,
>
> older students who did well in their high school studies but whose skills have
>
> fallen into disuse, those with poor study habits who have learning problems, and
>
> recent immigrants [who are new to the English language]. (p. 290)

In the report of effective practices for basic skills by the Research and Planning Group

(Boroch et al., 2007), student engagement and interaction are discussed under the

Instructional Practices section and address the social and emotional development of the

student. Sociocultural aspects are also to be taken into consideration as an integral piece

of the success of students. One strategy for advancing social and emotional development

is to provide validation (Rendon, 1994) through institutional agents (Stanton-Salazar,

2010) for the students. Examining the initiation of interaction between students and

faculty will contribute to the support and validation of the student leading to the social, emotional, and academic development of the student.

Gaps in Literature

Student–faculty interaction has been researched extensively and is shown to have positive effects on students. While interaction has been researched (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Hubbard, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Wilson, Woods, & Gaff, 1974), the initiation of student–faculty interaction needs closer examination. At the same time, much of the research on this topic was conducted at four-year universities and research institutions. Little research has been conducted on student–faculty interactions on a community college campus.

While student–faculty interaction has been researched both quantitatively and qualitatively from the student's perspective (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Hubbard, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), there is limited qualitative research on student–faculty interaction from faculty's perspective (Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Wilson et al., 1974). Much of the existing research focuses only on student characteristics and behavior. Therefore, this study will provide useful insights about influencing student–faculty interaction at the community college level from the perspectives of both students and faculty. This study has the potential to influence community college structures and practices in hopes of increasing student–faculty interactions while increasing persistence as well.

Research Questions

This study examines student and faculty perspectives of how they think and feel about the initiation of student–faculty interactions outside of class. It also analyzes the actions that students and faculty take to initiate interaction. During the course of the study, students and faculty were asked about their perceptions of the impact of the interaction or the lack of interaction between faculty and students. The research questions for this study are as follows:

1. How do student–faculty interactions outside of class occur?

2. How do students' perceptions of faculty members shape student–faculty interactions?

3. How do faculty members' perceptions of students shape student–faculty interactions?

4. How do students and faculty members perceive the impact of the initiation of interaction on student performance and positive student outcomes?

Definition of Terms

The following are the definition of terms used for this research.

Empowerment social capital: provided by an institutional agent who can advocate for and empower students with low social capital by challenging the current social structure (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Such an action by an institutional agent may be providing access to scholarships, providing letters of recommendation, or introducing the students to someone in their field of interest.

Faculty: for the purposes of this study, faculty includes professors, instructors, and counselors in higher education.

Figured worlds: a socially and culturally constructed realm of interpretation that contains everyday events within it where the world has its actors, or agents, and those actors engage in various activities in response to specific forces that are socially and culturally constructed in time and space (Holland et al., 1998).

First-generation student: students who are part of the first-generation in their family to attend college in the United States (Gibson & Slate, 2010).

Institutional agent: a person in a position of status with access to social networks and knowledge of the resources for empowerment of students (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). For the purposes of this study, institutional agents refer primarily to faculty members but might include administrators and/or staff.

Nontraditional student: students who are older, of lower socioeconomic status, attend part-time, are of an ethnic background that previously constrained them from participation in college, and are typically inadequately prepared (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Positionality: positionality has to do with the relations of power, entitlement, social affiliation, and social distance with the social-interactional structures of the lived world (Holland et al., 1998).

Positive student outcomes: these include factors that lead to academic success such as increased motivation, positive influence on attitudes, interests, and values, higher levels of effort, studying with others, speaking to counselors, higher GPAs, better perception of campus climate (Chang, 2005; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; Cole, 2008; Cress, 2008; Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009; Thompson, 2001).

Sense of belonging: cohesion among diverse students. A student's sense of belonging in the college or classroom setting is fundamental to his or her identification with a group and contributes to how a student behaves with that group (Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

Social capital: resources for students where their social structures facilitate "the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). As used in this research, social capital refers to the interpersonal networks of [students] from "different social classes and status groups [that] usually translate into differential access to highly valued institutional resources, opportunities, and privileges [in college]" (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, p. 5).

Space of authoring: an abstract space of development where "arranging the identifiable social discourses and practices that are one's resource in order to create a response to others' standpoints in activity" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 272).

Student engagement: "represents the time and effort students devote to activities that are empirically linked to desired outcomes of college and what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (Kuh, 2001, 2009; Kuh, et al., 2005).

Student–faculty interaction: formal and informal, and social versus academic interactions between students and faculty (professors, counselors, tutors, mentors) associated with personal, social, and intellectual outcomes. For the purposes of this study, student–faculty interaction will refer mainly to interaction outside of class.

Traditional student: students who are White, ages 18 to 22, attend college full-time, do not work, and/or have few family responsibilities (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Validating agent: a person who confirms and supports students' academic experience (Rendon, 1994).

Validation: actions relating to academics initiated by a faculty member, friend, or family member that foster student attitudes and behaviors which in turn lead to academic development and validates the student as being capable of performing academic work (Rendon, 1994).

Limitations

This study is limited to community college students and faculty at one institution. The researcher assumed that the students and faculty have enough self-awareness to represent a true picture of what they actually think and do rather than representing a picture of what is politically correct to say and do. To address this, additional interview questions were asked to obtain a more accurate portrayal of the participants' actions. The sample for the focus groups and interviews may or may not be representative of the general population due to purposive sampling, nor is it a goal of qualitative research. This is by design as specific participants were selected for certain traits such as gender, experience, and membership in a minority group.

Role of Researcher

The researcher is a counselor at the institution where students and faculty were sampled. Student–faculty interaction outside of class was examined under the instructional division rather than under the student services division where counselors are housed, providing some separation. As a counselor, the researcher practices good listening skills and behavior analysis daily on the job which is a strength for qualitative research. As an advocate for students, the researcher is interested in improving access to

education and equity for all students. She is strongly in favor of interaction being initiated by faculty members as the literature plainly shows how much such initiation can benefit students. The researcher is also a female of color which influences how she experiences interactions with others. The researcher acknowledged the fact that her own cultural background and history, as well as her role as a counselor, may have played a role in the interpretation of the data.

These biases were minimized by the constant comparison of data (Charmaz, 2006). The researcher looked for corroboration of experiences between the students and the faculty. The researcher also followed up with the participants to make sure that she was correctly capturing their perceptions and experiences of the initiation of interaction through email and by phone after the interviews. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, the researcher's perspectives were kept private in order to avoid the risk of the modification of responses from the participants and in order to focus on the participants' perspectives (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005).

CHAPTER TWO—LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review begins with the evolution of student engagement in the college experience from involvement, to integration, to engagement. This study focuses on one component of student engagement which is student–faculty interaction outside of class. The theoretical frameworks of validation theory (Rendon, 1994), social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2010), and figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) are described as theories for examining student–faculty interaction. In addition, theories of validating and empowering agents are used to frame how the student–faculty interactions can lead to positive student outcomes (Rendon, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2010). The significance and nature of the interactions are discussed before going into the various dynamics that affect student faculty interaction. The perspectives of students and faculty members about interaction are also included. Finally, best practices of student–faculty interaction are reviewed in addition to elaboration of theories from an equity-minded standpoint where college outcomes across low-income, first-generation, and historically underrepresented students are equal (Bensimon, 2007).

Evolution of Student Engagement

Student engagement has been a subject in research for over thirty years. One of the earliest and most cited versions of student engagement was Tinto's theory of institutional departure. In 1975, Tinto developed his idea of student attrition and developed a model of institutional departure as a process of social and academic interactions that occur over time between the student and the institution. The model suggested individual student attributes contributed to levels of commitment to student goals and to the university. These levels of commitment influenced the students' levels

of interaction and integration which impacted student attrition (Tinto, 1975). Tinto suggested students who could adjust and integrate into the institutional culture would flourish, which implied that those who had difficulties integrating into the institutional culture would drop out. Tinto later added to his 1975 concept of integration stating that higher educational institutions have various communities which a student can choose to become a member of and not necessarily integrate into (Tinto, 1993). For example, students could be members of and participate in an academic club, yet still retain their individual values and culture—different from his initial theory suggesting assimilation. Through this addition, Tinto acknowledged the influence of the institution in the integration of students.

In 1984, Astin developed his theory of involvement which he developed after conducting a longitudinal study of college dropouts. In his work, he found his theory of involvement could explain each significant effect to dropping out. Astin (1984) defined involvement as the amount of physical and psychological energy that a student puts toward his or her educational experience. Activities of involvement include studying for more than twenty hours per week, attending professors' office hours and interacting with faculty, or participating in campus activities. Astin called attention to the connection between the amount of student involvement and positive student college outcomes such as student achievement, persistence, satisfaction with college, graduation, and benefitting in desired ways from his or her educational experience (Kuh et al., 2005). The theory of involvement states that students' college outcomes are positively affected by the amount of time the student is involved in both academic and social aspects of the college experience. Reinforcing that finding, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) found the "impact

of college is largely determined by individual effort and involvement in the academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings on a campus" (p. 602). Although student engagement is largely conceptualized as being an individual effort by the student, college institutions nonetheless have the potential and responsibility to foster the ways in which a student can engage in academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bensimon, 2007; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

Soon after the development of Astin's involvement theory (1984), Chickering and Gamson (1987) published the "Seven Principles for Good Practice for Education" developed by a task force supported by the American Association of Higher Education (a broad-based national organization), the Education Commission of the States, and The Johnson Foundation at Wingspread (a group that hosts meetings that have impact on the future of the community). The task force included scholars who conducted research on the impact of college as well as scholars of policy issues in higher education (Chickering & Gamson, 1999). Each item of good practice is a different dimension of student–faculty interaction, with the first point specifically identified as encouraging student–faculty contact. The remaining points include the following: developing cooperation among students, using active learning techniques, giving prompt feedback, emphasizing time on task, having high expectations, and respecting diverse ways of learning. While Chickering and Gamson (1987) placed the responsibility for improving education on both the teachers and the students, they suggested that educational practitioners, federal law makers, and accrediting agencies had the capacity to create an environment that fostered such interaction. These seven principles led to surveys such as the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the National Survey of Student

Engagement (NSSE), both of which have components for measuring faculty interaction with students. The NSSE survey of educational practices and student experiences provides a good measure for improvement in positive student outcomes (Pascarella, Seifert, & Blaich, 2010).

The problem with both Astin's (1984) and Tinto's (1975, 1993) theories is that a disproportionate amount of responsibility is placed on the student in achieving positive student outcomes while the accountability of the institution to foster positive student outcomes is minimized. These theories imply that students needed to assimilate or acculturate into the culture of higher education rather than an institution taking responsibility to accommodate the demographic diversity, especially in the community college population. Tierney (1992) took issue with Tinto's theory of departure and suggested institutions need to use a model of equity and embrace the differences of its students, in contrast to holding on to an old paradigm of a full-time, non-working, non-low socioeconomic status and culturally prepared college student. Astin's and Tinto's theories come from a deficit model where disproportionate outcomes are attributed to the students' personal characteristics. In contrast, an equity-minded model is more concerned with inclusiveness and intercultural communication and attaches responsibility for outcomes to faculty, administrations, and the institution rather than to the student (Bensimon, 2007; Pena, Bensimon, & Colyar, 2006).

The problem with the theory of involvement and the theory of institutional departure is that both theories are framed in such a way that a student's success is based on a student's individual effort. The theories excuse the institution from its accountability for the success or lack of success of its students. They allow a student's

lack of engagement, and consequent lack of educational success, to be attributed to the student's deficits rather than to the institution's deficits. Under these theories, lack of engagement is a problem of the student, not of the institution; therefore, institutional practices and services are allowed to remain unchanged.

According to Hubbard (2009), educational leaders need to understand the campus environment and faculty attitudes about educational practices in order to examine whether or not change can and should be implemented at the institution. Hubbard spoke of how institutional ethos, where administrators and faculty believe in the ability of all students to learn, can reinforce a student's academic self-efficacy, which according to Bandura (1999), can result in positive student outcomes. By using an equity-minded epistemology for studying student–faculty interaction, responsibility for the initiation of interaction is placed on the educational institution and its practitioners rather than solely on the student (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bensimon, 2007; Kuh et al., 2005). With the community college student population becoming more and more diverse ethnically, socioeconomically, and generationally, it becomes increasingly important for an institution to transform from a Euro-centric institution to a multicultural institution (Rendon et al., 2000).

Another shortcoming of the Astin's (1984) and Tinto's (1993) theories is that while culture plays a part in student engagement, the theories are based on color-blind paradigms. For example, in student–faculty interactions, both faculty and students are constantly negotiating their interactions from their own sets of cultural values and perspectives. These differences in communication styles "often operate in quiet ways to undermine the school performance of minority students" (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 452).

According to Rendon et al. (2000), Tinto's and Astin's research are based on a student deficit models and rely on an assimilation framework which ignores the cultural experiences of underrepresented students. These models validate Western values such as "individual achievement, rationality, exclusivity, and the subjugation of knowledge created by indigenous people and people of color" (Patton, Ewen, Rendon, & Howard, 2007, p. 45). Students from other cultures become marginalized. By using an equity-minded model, responsibility for student engagement is placed on the institution rather than solely on the student. As a result, the disproportion in student engagement amongst various subgroups of students is based on how the institution engages the students, not on how students lack characteristics of the dominant culture. Rather than viewing the students with low levels of engagement as having deficits, an equity-minded model allows researchers to view the students as simply different from students with higher levels of engagement (Nasir & Hand, 2006).

Significance of Student–Faculty Interactions

The relationship between student–faculty interactions and positive student outcomes is well documented in the literature. In general, the more student–faculty interaction, the more positive student outcomes are enhanced for students. Those positive student outcomes outside of class include, but are not limited to, academic performance such as grade point average, demonstrations of learning, satisfaction with faculty or the institution, motivation, and educational attainment (Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). At the same time, positive student–faculty interactions are shown to have a positive effect on students across all ethnicities, including underrepresented students. In a quantitative study on constructive criticism with African American and

Hispanic students, Cole (2008) found faculty support and encouragement significantly predicted grade point average. Cole stated faculty support and encouragement was "integral to the academic success of these underrepresented [African American and Hispanic] students" (p. 596). Cejda and Rhodes (2004) conducted a qualitative case study on the role of faculty in associate's degree completion among Hispanic students. They interviewed faculty members at a Hispanic Serving Institution in Texas on promoting degree completion amongst Hispanic students. The study was influenced by their previous research at the institution with students where they found faculty members were the most important influence on Hispanic students' educational goals. The researchers found interaction with faculty, especially through mentoring, was central for moving students through the transfer pipeline from community college to university.

Additional research shows faculty support and encouragement correlates significantly with students' grade point averages (GPA) and academic success. Students who felt they had more opportunities for student–faculty interaction were more likely to have a stronger GPA (Cole, 2008; Cress, 2008). In a random sample of 5,276 community college students in a study on student–faculty interaction and educational gains in math and science, Thompson (2001) found the relationship revealed that community college students who perceived higher levels of student–faculty interaction also perceived higher gains in math and science. The finding of the influence of the student–faculty interaction on academic gains was significant. Thompson's research reinforced Chickering's and Gamson's (1987) findings that student–faculty interactions have a significant influence on positive student college outcomes such as attitudes, interests, and values. In other

words, when a student interacts with faculty, the student's perception of their academic outcomes is higher.

Thompson (2001) also found students with higher levels of interaction with faculty reported higher levels of effort in their coursework. Higher levels of student–faculty interaction were significantly influenced the quality of effort of students. Students worked harder in class when they interacted with the professor more frequently. Helterbran (2008) had similar findings where she studied teacher education students' perceptions of faculty effective practices by gathering responses from the online student evaluation site *Rate My Professors*. Helterbran's findings fell into the following three basic groups: knowledge and presentation, personal qualities of the professor, and professional and instructional qualities. Helterbran found students expressed their willingness to apply for more effort to their coursework when faculty "invested in them as students and as human beings" (2008, p. 136).

The opposite is also true where students will avoid interacting with professors to avoid not meeting their professors' expectations (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Cotten and Wilson conducted nine student focus groups inquiring about dynamics and determinants of student–faculty interaction at a public research university. They found students chose not to engage in interaction with their professors as an effort not to be identified as the slacker in class. Interaction with faculty seems to improve accountability for students in their classroom behavior and their coursework while lack of interaction allows the students to maintain a level of anonymity in the class. That anonymity allows students to not be held responsible for their performance, or lack of performance, in class.

Student–faculty interaction seems to link with interdependence. Chang (2005) conducted a quantitative study on student–faculty interaction at a community college with a focus on students of color. Chang looked at a number of demographic and background variables in addition to behavioral and attitudinal variables and how they correlated with student–faculty interaction. The strongest positive correlations with student–faculty interaction were studying with students and speaking with academic counselors. The next strongest correlate was the perception that faculty encouraged the students in their studies. If interaction with faculty encourages help seeking habits of students such as seeking advice from a counselor or using a fellow student for moral support in studying, then a student can be encouraged to seek out resources and help to assist in their educational experience. Family responsibilities were also found to be positively related to student–faculty interaction in Thompson's (2001) work, although the effect size was small. Intuitively, family responsibilities would seem to interfere or compete for time with student–faculty interaction; but, this was not reflected in Thompson's study. A possible explanation is that students did not want to rank "family" high in the area of "interfering with schoolwork." Another possibility is that the students' families in the study were sources of support and encouragement. For these students, it is conceivable that interdependence is valued in their education and also more broadly in their lives.

Student–faculty interaction has been found to contribute to persistence (Barnett, 2011; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004) as well as to student motivation (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009). In Barnett's (2011) quantitative study of validation experiences and persistence among community college students, validation was broken down into the following four

main constructs: students were known and valued, caring instruction, appreciation for diversity, and mentoring. In a sample of 333 students, Barnett's findings indicated that validating interactions, such as students feeling valued and mentoring relationships, positively predicted increases in students' intentions to persist. Barnett also found validation moderately influenced students' sense of academic integration, which also influenced students' intention to persist. Student–faculty interaction is linked to many positive student outcomes (Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), but faculty may or may not realize that the key to student motivation rests in their hands.

Conditional Effects

After the development of various explanations of the relationship between student engagement and positive student outcomes, researchers began to recognize the focus on mainstream, traditional students rather than on underserved, nontraditional students (Kuh, 2009). While students, in general, benefit from the ideas in Astin's (1984) and Tinto's (1993) work, those benefits may not be as large for various subgroups within the student population. That difference is defined as the conditional effect by Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) where students benefit differently from the same experience.

In 1991, Pascarella and Terenzini published a synthesis of more than 2,600 studies on the impact of college on students. After completing their research, they realized that the studies, which were largely from the 1970's and 1980's, were not reflective of the changing demographics in education such as age, work responsibility, ethnicity, gender, or part-time attendance. Therefore, Pascarella and Terenzini integrated newer research developed in the 1990's and published a new book on how college affects students based on a review of over thirty years of research. In their synthesis, they

discuss the conditional effect amongst students in the same college that has to do with learning styles, student characteristics, student effort, and student involvement. In other words, they analyze the interaction effect between two independent variables such as ethnicity and student effort where the effect of student effort may depend on the student's ethnicity.

While student–faculty interaction benefits students overall, such interaction does not benefit students equally. For example, while positive correlates for student–faculty interaction include being an older student, having highly educated parents, and spending time on campus, they were not positive correlates for Asian and Pacific Islander American students (Chang, 2005). Asian and Pacific Islander American students tended to have the lowest levels of interaction in comparison to White, Latino, and African American students. While Asian and Pacific Islander American students reported the lowest frequency of interaction, African American students reported the highest frequency in student–faculty interaction (Chang, 2005; Cole, 2008; Kim & Sax, 2007). At the same time, while African American students had the most student–faculty interaction, they did not receive the same amount of benefits in comparison to other ethnic subgroups. Similarly, in Lundberg and Schreiner's (2004) quantitative study on quality and quantity of student–faculty interaction, they found African American students had more interaction, yet enjoyed fewer benefits of positive student outcomes. In other words, while the student–faculty interaction predicted positive student outcomes, that outcome was not proportionate in comparison to frequencies of interactions for African American students. Cole (2008) also found higher frequencies of interaction correlated with lower student outcomes for African American students. So, if African American

students engage in higher frequencies of interaction than students of other ethnicities, then why does that interaction not impact African American students in the same way as it impacts other ethnic groups of students? The answers may lie in the nature and quality of the interactions rather than in the quantity.

Nature of Interactions

Student–faculty interactions occur both in and out of the classroom. Research shows that student–faculty interaction is most frequent during class time versus during office hours or before or after class (Chang, 2005). The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) defines interactions in the classroom as emailing an instructor, discussing assignments or readings with an instructor in class, and receiving prompt feedback on assignments (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009). In general, minimal interaction occurs between students and faculty, especially outside of class (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; B. E. Cox et al., 2010; B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hagedorn et al., 2000). For purposes of this study, the focus is on student–faculty interactions outside of class. Interactions outside of class include participating in research with faculty, attending professors' office hours, seeing a counselor, or emailing the professor (Kim & Sax, 2007).

In a qualitative study on student–faculty interaction at a residential college, five levels of interaction outside of class were described (B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007). From the most frequent to the least frequent occurrence, the five levels include disengagement, incidental contact (unintentional contact), functional interaction (academically related contact), personal interaction, and mentoring. In broader terms, interactions outside of class are also seen as formal or informal, and academic or social

(Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Formal interaction can be considered as attending office hours or assisting faculty with research (Kim & Sax, 2007) while informal interaction can involve convincing a professor to change a grade (Halawah, 2006). Academic interaction can involve coursework or career exploration while social interaction can involve faculty mentoring activities such as acting as a role model or serving as guides to a field (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004).

Student–faculty interaction alone is not enough to influence positive student outcomes. The quality of student–faculty interaction appears to be more important than the quantity of interactions (Cole, 2008; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). Apparently, the type of interactions faculty members have with the students affects the type of outcome for various ethnic subgroups of students (Kim & Sax, 2007). For example, a quantitative study by Kim and Sax on differences in student–faculty interaction by gender, race, social class and generation, revealed that African American students had more frequent course related interactions than other ethnic subgroups. Although African American students had more frequent interaction, the high frequency did not predict higher GPAs for African American students. Quantity alone was not enough to induce positive student college outcomes. A quantitative study by Lundberg and Schreiner (2004) showed that the quality of relationship with faculty significantly predicted learning across all ethnic subgroups, not quantity of interactions.

From the student's point of view, interactions can be a positive experience or a negative experience. Cole (2008) conducted a study with a sample size of 1,422 African American and Hispanic students. He studied the effects of constructive criticism and negative feedback from faculty on students' GPAs and educational satisfaction. Cole

found constructive criticism in the form of faculty support and encouragement significantly predicted GPA and educational satisfaction for both African American and Hispanic students. Negative feedback was also negatively related to GPA (not significant); however, the coefficient for faculty support and encouragement was approximately three times as large, illustrating its significance. Faculty support in a student's development was also found to significantly predict positive interactions across races amongst African American and White students (Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007). Cress' (2008) research on student perception of their learning environments found students with more student–faculty interaction were less likely to report that campus climate was negative. Therefore, positive student–faculty interaction would be more imperative at a less diverse campus for minority students. Overall, a great amount of evidence exists on the relationship between student–faculty interaction and positive student outcomes.

Dynamics That Affect Student–Faculty Interaction

Little student–faculty interaction exists between students and faculty outside of class in higher education (Chang, 2005; B. E. Cox et al., 2010; B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hagedorn et al., 2000). Although research reveals that positive student outcomes are influenced by the student–faculty interaction, inadequate action has been taken to increase the quantity or quality of interaction. If the amount of meaningful interaction could be increased, then additional positive student outcomes could be attained for all students. Unfortunately, several factors contribute to the lack of student–faculty interaction.

Nontraditional Population

Community colleges in California have an open access policy for students and offer higher education at a lower cost. This policy allows access to higher education for many students who typically would not have the opportunity to attend college. Community colleges provide an educational opportunity for students who are not able to attend a university directly from high school. A. M. Cohen and Brawer (2008) described the students as:

> those who could not afford the tuition; who could not take the time to attend college full time; whose ethnic background had constrained them from participating; who had inadequate preparation in the lower schools; whose educational progress had been interrupted by some temporary condition; who had become obsolete in their jobs or had never been trained to work at any job; who needed a connection to obtain a job; who were confined in prisons, physically disabled, or otherwise unable to attend classes on a campus; or who were faced with a need to fill increased leisure time meaningfully. (p. 33)

At the community college level, many students have backgrounds that dramatically different from the definition of a traditional student. The traditional student is between 18 and 22 years old, White, middle-class, and attending college full time (Gibson & Slate, 2010; K. A. Kim, Sax, Lee, & Hagedorn, 2010; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). A nontraditional student, as described by Rendon (1998), does not consider his or herself college bound, earns poor grades in high school, is a single parent, is a gang member, attends college years after graduating from high school, lives in poverty, or is first in their family to attend college. Nontraditional students tend to come from the working class,

work full- or part-time, are predominantly students of color, and view attendance in college as uncommon (Rendon et al., 2000).

More college students are falling outside the conventional definition of a traditional student, especially in the community college system. The nontraditional student population is growing and needs more attention (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009; Keller, 2001; Pascarella, 2006). Many students need to work while taking college courses, while at the same time, many students have various responsibilities outside of college, for example, parenting (Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2009; Bryant, 2001; Giancola et al., 2009). In terms of student–faculty interaction on community college campuses, faculty may be basing their interaction strategies on the characteristics of the traditional student. If the community college student population is becoming more and more nontraditional, then there may be a disconnection between the expectations of students and faculty concerning satisfactory interaction, especially with who initiates the interaction. Community colleges need to examine whether or not their current services accommodate a diverse student body and meet the needs of the students who work full-time, attend college part time, are not necessarily 18 to 24 years old, and are not familiar with the college culture.

Researchers and educational practitioners need to determine whether or not the existing research and the existing practices accommodate or ignore the needs of the current student population at the community college (Keller, 2001). Keller spoke about changes in demographics in the United States that influence how higher education will operate, specifically in the accommodation of its diverse students. Such changes included an increase in the number of 18- to 24-year-old students, the aging of our

society, an increase in immigration, and shifts in family composition from traditional to blended or single parent households. In the next 10 years, the United States (U.S.) demographics are projected to change rapidly with the highest growth rate in the Hispanic and Asian American populations (US Census Bureau, 2011). With more students coming from non-Eurocentric backgrounds, and coming with little familiarity with the U.S. higher education system, community colleges will need to provide new styles of support systems and interaction models for students who do not respond to traditional teacher-centered models (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008). To reiterate, the community college population is quickly changing from a majority of traditional students to a majority of nontraditional students which should lead community colleges to examine their practices to assure that they are providing an equitable and accessible education to all who attend.

Culture and Interaction

According to Chang (2005), the effect and nature of student–faculty interaction for ethnically diverse populations needs more examination. Chang referred to a "cultural mismatch" between students of color and campus climate which can influence students' patterns of interaction. Students enter the community college with a set of cultural values that influences the level of interaction they have with the campus. The campus also presents students with a set of values that influence a certain level of interaction which can be dramatically different from the students' set of values and creates a cultural mismatch. "Racial/ethnic minorities and other marginalized groups (women, gays/lesbians, and the disabled) in our society live under an umbrella of individual, institutional, and cultural forces that oftentimes demeans them, disadvantages them, and

denies them equal access and opportunity" (Atkinson & Hackett, 1998; Jones, 1972, 1997; J. Laird & Green, 1996, as cited in Sue & Sue, 1999, p. 31). In terms of student–faculty interaction, faculty and students are constantly negotiating interactions which are guided by diverse cultural values (Cole, 1998; Nasir & Hand, 2006). Opportunities for interaction are not necessarily presented by the community college in ways that are congruent with the students' styles of interaction.

Communication and interaction styles can be described as high context or low context. High context and low context are expressions developed by Edward Hall (1976) to describe cultural differences between societies. High context communication is less explicit, requires reading between the lines and paying attention to non-verbal cues to fully understand the communication. High context communication styles have additional values and meanings to each interaction. An inside joke is an example of a high context communication. In contrast, low context communication styles are more direct with the message in the actual words of the communication. Because of the differences in meanings and context of an interaction, communication between faculty and students can be easily misinterpreted.

Addressing student–faculty interaction also includes addressing campus climate. Cress (2008) examined campus climate in terms of being a "welcoming and receptive, versus a cool and alienating learning environment" and the impact of student–faculty relationships on creating inclusive learning spaces (p. 96). She conducted a longitudinal study surveying 8,490 students at the point of college entry and again four years after entry focusing on cross-cultural understanding of ethnicity, gender, and sexuality. Cress found student–faculty relationships had a strong mitigating effect on negative perceptions

of campus climate. Hurtado and Carter (1997) conducted a quantitative study with 272 Latino students attending 127 different colleges exploring the relationship between a student's sense of belong on campus with academic activities and student's participation in student organizations. Similar to Cress, Hurtado and Carter found a significant effect between students talking to faculty outside of class and reports of higher sense of belonging in college.

Different interaction styles exist both in and outside of class. Institutions need to address their approaches to interaction to determine if their practices apply to a number of diverse students in ethnicity, age, and culture as well as keep up with the needs of the current student population (Kuh, 2009). Many institutions fail to take these differences into account in interacting with students, let alone in fostering a campus culture or campus climate that invites various cultures, points of view, and communication styles. Therefore, in order to foster the relationship between historically underrepresented students and faculty, institutions can begin by understanding the context of interactions from these underrepresented students' points of view.

Lack of Social Capital

Coleman (1988) described social capital in the form of expectations and obligations, information, and reinforced norms of a society. Coleman defined social capital as a resource for people where their social network and social structure facilitate particular actions for them. Social capital makes possible "the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would not be possible" (p. S98). In relation to education, social capital can help a student navigate higher education more easily with cultural knowledge of the understanding of higher education, through a social connection to someone in the

student's field of interest, or through a recommendation letter from someone of status. For students with less social capital, they may not have the same level of access to such resources which puts them at a disadvantage in comparison to others with more social capital. Stanton-Salazar (2010) described social capital as "resources and key forms of social support embedded in one's network or associations, and accessible through direct or indirect ties with institutional agents" (p. 5). In other words, community college institutional agents, such as faculty, can provide social capital for students and assist students in obtaining their goals. Wells' (2008) quantitative study on the effects of cultural and social capital on persistence reported students with greater social capital having a higher probability of persistence. The types of social capital that were found significant in predicting persistence from first to second year at both two-year and four-year institutions included parents' college education, students' expectations of college goals, importance of college to others, test prep tools used, and family study resources available. In terms of student–faculty interaction, an institutional agent is able to enhance the social capital of the students by teaching students how to interact with faculty as well as by teaching students what resources are available to them, which can lead to higher persistence rates.

Students with limited social capital may not have access to institutional agents and may be deprived of resources, privileges and opportunities that students with social capital have. And for students with little social capital, especially students of color, the accumulation of social capital is problematic because institutional social relationships tend to be based on a student's ability to acclimate to the campus culture, which caters to a the traditional student paradigm (Stanton-Salazar, 1997). At the same time, students

with low socioeconomic statuses face additional challenges such as poor quality

education, segregated communities, barriers to participation in mainstream settings, and

lack of access to resources. For students in lower socioeconomic classes, a substantial

accumulation of social capital, rather than only a simple connection to a resource, is

needed to increase positive student outcomes in college (Gonzalez, Stoner, & Jovel,

2003).

First-Generation Status

First-generation students are part of the first generation in their immediate family

to attend college with neither parent having attended college (Gibson & Slate, 2010).

Kim and Sax (2007) conducted a quantitative study on the conditional effects of student–

faculty interaction on various student outcomes such as GPA, degree aspiration,

integration, and satisfaction with college experience. They examined the conditional

effects across student gender, race, social class, and first-generation status. Low-income

students and first-generation students significantly had lower student–faculty interaction

rates than higher income students and non-first-generation students. The difference in

interaction was possibly due to a lack of familiarity with the higher education system as

suggested by Rendon and Valadez (1993). In a qualitative study interviewing faculty and

administrators at six community colleges, Rendon and Valadez discovered that

immigrant families' lack of knowledge of the college system inhibited students from

asking questions or making key appointments. Garcia (2010) reported on Hispanic

students' self-reported barriers to success in college. Garcia identified barriers first-

generation Hispanic students experienced which included lack of knowledge of dates and

deadlines, lack of understanding about financial aid, and the lack of familiarity that

college practitioners had about the students' "lack of skills to navigate the bureaucracy of the college system" (p. 843). Being a first-generation college student lowers the amount of social capital the student has in comparison to their counterpart who has parents who are more familiar with college and are able to better support their child through the navigation of higher education. College practitioners may be working with the assumption that most students understand the culture and expectations of college and are comfortable with engaging in interaction with faculty. On the contrary, many students, especially immigrants, are not familiar with the culture of higher education and are intimidated by the college system.

Students' Perspectives on Interaction With Faculty

Students did not necessarily believe that the benefits of student–faculty interaction outweighed their fear of interacting with faculty outside of class. Therefore, students often avoided interaction with faculty. The next few paragraphs discuss students' avoidance of interaction as well as their fears of the college experience.

Avoidance of Interaction

Students avoided interaction with faculty for a number of reasons. Anderson and Carta-Falsa (2002) conducted a qualitative study about what students sought in their relationships with other students and instructors. They interviewed 24 instructors and 400 university undergraduates and graduates. Themes that emerged from their data included the teaching and learning environment, the exchange of information, and the mentor and peer association. The researchers found students and instructors tended not to think about working together outside of class. Students did not see a need for interacting with faculty. On the other end of the interaction, instructors did not find a need to work

with students. In Cotten and Wilson's (2006) nine student focus groups, they found

students were ignorant of the benefits of interacting with faculty. Students made

comments such as, "There's not really a point in seeing teachers. . . . it's not in your best

interest to take time to produce a relationship," (p. 497). Students did not understand the

benefits of interacting with faculty such as networking, enhancing the understanding of

subject matter through discussion, receiving encouragement, or validation of their

academic self-efficacy. Students were inclined to think about relationships with

professors only as a means for help with their homework.

Students also avoided interaction with faculty because they were intimidated by

faculty (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). Students were uncertain about faculty members'

receptiveness to interact with them. The students perceived faculty to behave abruptly

and attributed the abruptness to a lack of interest in interacting with students rather than

to time constraints. Wilson et al. (1974) found time constraints did not play a role in

faculty's decision to interact with students. They conducted a study on the indicators of

the amount of interaction faculty have with students outside of class. The study included

surveys from approximately 1,000 faculty participants from six different colleges and

universities. They found social-psychological characteristics, such as faculty attitudes

that support a view of education as an interactive process and faculty behaviors that invite

discussion, were associated with the quantity of interaction outside of class. While

existing literature (Wilson et al., 1974) provided evidence that some faculty behavior

appears to invite students into interaction outside of class, other literature (B. E. Cox et

al., 2010) found classroom pedagogies such as soliciting students' views in class or not

encouraging active participation did not predict the frequency of initiation of interaction between students and faculty.

Lastly, another reason for avoiding interaction with faculty is that students want to avoid disappointing their instructors. Students do not want to risk not measuring up to their instructors' expectations. At the same time, the students may maintain their anonymity (Cotten & Wilson, 2006) by not interacting with their professors. With their anonymity, students do not have to worry about disappointing their professors with low performance and need not be accountable to the professors. For example, if a student who had not interacted with his or her professor were to fail a test, that student could remain anonymous and would be identified as the student who failed a test. At the same time, the student would not have to confront their failure.

Although many students tended to be unaware of the importance of student–faculty interaction, the students who did interact with faculty reported that the interaction was beneficial. Rugutt and Chemosit (2009) conducted a quantitative study with 2,190 students on the relationship between student motivation and student-faculty interaction, critical thinking skills, and student to student relations. They found all three variables were statistically significant predictors of student motivation. In a study by Helterbran (2008) with students who were interested in becoming teachers, the researcher examined perceptions of effective instructor practices using student evaluations from the Rate My Professors website (www.ratemyprofessors.com), an online database of professor ratings voluntarily submitted by students. Helterbran found students were willing work harder for the professors who were invested in them as students and as people.

College Fear Factor

Cox (2009b) conducted qualitative research to explore students' goals, expectations and orientations toward college. She conducted a semester long study in six community college English composition courses with students, instructors, and through observations. While there were no questions in her study about student anxiety in college, anxiety and fear were common themes in the students' answers. Students struggled with the fear that they were not going to succeed in college or that they were not going to achieve their goals. The findings from Cox's research revealed that students in the study believed that the likelihood of success in college is low, as if success is for students other than themselves. This belief came from the students' cultural and social conditions including coming from lower socioeconomic backgrounds and being first-generation college students. Fear undermines the students' success because they begin to doubt their own ability to succeed. This, in turn, becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for lower income and first-generation college students. Cox went on to suggest that students will continue to undermine their own success if community college personnel do not initiate interaction to validate the student. "How students view themselves as learners can greatly influence how they participate in educational activities and settings and, conversely, how teachers and institutions participate can come to greatly influence how students view themselves as learners" (Nasir & Hand, 2006, p. 467). Again, interaction cannot be a passive occurrence for students or for faculty, and faculty need to facilitate the occurrence of interaction outside of class by initiating it.

Cress (2008) found while students felt faculty treated students relatively equally, student-to-student interactions were less equal. Of the various subgroups of ethnicities

and of both genders, African Americans males perceived the lowest levels of positive campus climate. African American males felt they were singled out in class because of their ethnicity. The feeling of being singled out was more about being visually singled out in for being the only African American in the class. For example, a lone African American student in a predominantly White classroom is likely to feel singled out even without verbal recognition of the fact by professors. The Cress' study also found gay and lesbian students perceived the highest amount of hostility in terms of campus climate. Campuses attempting to foster a campus climate that was welcoming for all types of students still had students feeling unwelcomed. Cress suggested that while discrimination may not be everyday or overt, fear of discrimination can psychologically affect students negatively and hinder interaction with faculty.

Faculty Members' Perspectives on Interaction

Faculty often underestimate the potential impact they can have on students. "Without knowing and understanding how teacher-student relations influence motivation, teachers may limit their abilities to improving instruction" (Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009, p. 18). In a study by Einarson and Clarkberg (2004), faculty members' personal values and beliefs about interactions with students as well as interpersonal knowledge and abilities were related to the amount of involvement a faculty member had with students outside of class. Einarson and Clarkberg conducted a quantitative study with 901 faculty members in a large and highly selective university. They found time constraints and lack of institutional rewards had little explanatory power as factors that inhibit student-faculty interactions. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) conducted another study with 15 faculty members who were involved in learning communities at a residential university. They

explored the motivation of faculty members to stay involved in such interactive programs. Similar to Einarson and Clarkberg (2004), they found faculty who valued student interactions and were more committed to teaching tended to have more student–faculty interaction (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000).

Kim and Sax (2007) conducted a quantitative study examining the effect of student–faculty interaction on a range of student outcomes such as degree aspiration, satisfaction with experience, integration, critical thinking and communication, cultural appreciation and social awareness, and college GPA and whether or not they varied depending on gender, ethnicity, social class, and generational status. The researchers recommended that faculty utilize different interaction techniques for different students based on the unique attributes of each student. Kim and Sax found for some types of interaction, there were different levels of benefit and satisfactions for different groups of students. For example, when students were disaggregated by gender and ethnicity, male and White students typically received more benefits from interaction with professors in terms of degree aspiration. While both genders and all ethnic subgroups benefitted from the interaction in terms of degree aspiration, Kim and Sax (2007) suggested that educational practitioners may want to be more intentional about discussing degree aspirations with female and non-White students due to the disparity in degree aspirations with males and White students. Faculty members need to examine their methods of interaction with various students to see if they are harboring an unintended and hidden bias.

Lastly, some faculty may intentionally avoid interaction with students outside of class. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) explored explanations of why some faculty avoided

interaction with students and discovered that some faculty lacked the interpersonal skills needed to interact in unstructured, out-of-class exchanges with students. Some faculty were uncomfortable interacting with students outside of class because they were less familiar with opportunities for interaction outside of class. Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) measured faculty perspectives relating to interpersonal skills on dimensions such as "Not familiar with opportunities (of interaction outside of class)" and "Difficult to go beyond small talk (with students)." These responses were significantly related to lower levels of interaction outside of class. Their results suggested that faculty avoid initiating interaction with students outside of class because of their discomfort with interpersonal interaction with students.

Best Practices for Student–Faculty Interaction

George Kuh played a major role in the development of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) which "provides the kind of information that every school needs in order to focus its efforts to improve the undergraduate experience" (Kuh, 2001, p. 12). In the following paragraphs, Documented Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) will be introduced as it relates to student–faculty interaction (Kuh et al., 2005). The best practices in higher education typically include intentional actions that are initiated by the institution or by an institutional agent who not only assists the students, but also advocates for them. Success is not defined as an individual goal but as an institutional goal. Therefore, student success is conceptualized as the responsibility of the students, the institutional agents, and the institution.

Institutional Responsibility in Student Engagement

Several researchers use equity-minded paradigms in their research by placing responsibility for student success with the institution, not simply with the student (Barr & Tagg, 1995; Bensimon, 2007; Kuh & Hu, 2001; Kuh et al., 2005; Rendon, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). These researchers identify involvement, integration, and engagement as important concepts to student success. However, such ideas are not without flaws. These theories attribute lack of involvement and integration to student deficits rather than to institutional deficits, minimizing the responsibility of the institution. Bensimon (2007) pointed out that marginalized (nontraditional) students typically attribute successful outcomes to supportive relationships with faculty and staff in higher education, while the dominant paradigm attributes success to individual effort (Barr & Tagg, 1995). However, many institutions seem to be operating from the standpoint that student success is attained through individual effort. Kuh and associates (2005) describe engagement in association with purposeful student–faculty interaction and collaborative learning that takes into account the actions of the students and the actions of the institution. The authors emphasize the importance of linking student behaviors and Documented Effective Educational Practices (DEEP) where student–faculty interactions are intentional and initiated by the institution (Kuh et al., 2005).

Kuh and Hu (2001) described the need for institutions to create a "welcoming, supportive, affirming environment" (p. 328). Kuh and Hu also explained the importance of faculty members, in their interactions with students, to steer casual interactions toward substantial amounts of interaction focusing on application of coursework or validation of students' educational abilities.

Intentional Interaction

Kuh et al. (2005) studied campuses that Documented Effective Educational Practices (DEEP). The colleges were named "DEEP" colleges for short. To select these DEEP colleges, the researchers focused on student engagement and graduation rates. At these DEEP colleges, faculty and staff were generally accessible and responsive to students' needs, they provided extensive feedback to students in a timely manner, and they worked closely with students. Faculty took the initiative to work with students outside of the classroom. Student–faculty interaction was intentional and initiated by the campus in contrast to leaving interaction up to the students. Interaction at the DEEP schools was not casual and was "expected, nurtured and supported" (p. 280).

In Thompson's (2001) quantitative study of student–faculty interaction amongst math and science majors, he found faculty needed to be more accessible to students outside of the classroom. Thompson suggested that faculty spend more time with students sharing personal values and interests as they relate to their field in math and science in order to build better relationships with students. For example, office hours provided an opportunity for the students to go to the faculty member's office to interact and ask questions. These office hours alone were insufficient in creating opportunities. Some students, who needed personal instruction, especially in math and science, were unable to make the limited times allowed by the faculty member due to family and work responsibilities. Li and Pitts (2009) found similar results in relation to office hours. They conducted a quantitative study at a public university comparing five classes in the discipline of management information sciences with face-to-face office hours and virtual offices. Li and Pitts surveyed both daytime and nighttime classes. They found both face-

to-face and virtual office hours were underutilized with 66.3% of the 89 students reported that the office hours were not convenient for the student. Other issues included students not having time to attend office hours (51.7%) and professors not being available during office hours (22.4%). Although the virtual office hours were underutilized, students had higher levels of satisfaction with the classes that provided the option for virtual office hours.

Another opportunity to increase student–faculty interaction outside of class is to change the physical space where faculty and students reside on campus. At DEEP schools, space was arranged for both student and faculty use. There were no zoning areas. For example, tables and chairs were set outside of faculty offices. The space allowed faculty and students to run into each other creating opportunity for interaction (Kuh et al., 2005). Faculty can encourage interaction by going into the students' spaces which can lead to more casual student–faculty interaction, and maybe lead to more significant interactions. The quality of the student–faculty interaction is very significant (Cole, 2008; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004), but quality interactions and supportive relationships cannot develop if opportunities for interaction are not available.

In making student–faculty interaction intentional, faculty members need to pay attention to how they interact with students. Kuh and Hu (2001) suggested that faculty members guide small talk outside of class with students toward substantive matters such as application of what students are learning in their lives. Kuh and Hu (2001), along with Cole (2008), also suggested that faculty members provide constructive criticism as opposed to negative feedback. Faculty need to be aware of the approach they take with

students in providing that criticism. Cole (2008) and Kuh and Hu (2001) found for some students, the negative feedback had negative effects on student satisfaction.

Institutional Agents

Rendon et al. (2000) suggested that caring adults, or institutional agents, transformed nontraditional students into powerful learners when they provided encouragement, supported the student, and reassured the student in his or her ability to succeed. Connecting with students in an encouraging and personal manner seemed to work across cultures. Chang (2005) found students' perceptions of faculty members who offer encouragement are a positive correlate of student–faculty interaction; and, this was true across all racial subgroups in her quantitative research on student–faculty interaction at the community college. Saenz et al. (2007) conducted a longitudinal study looking at positive interactions across race at nine public universities. They surveyed 4,757 students in their first semester and again at the end of their fourth semester in college. The researchers found faculty's interest in students' development was a significant predictor of having positive interactions across race for African American and White students. They also found intensive dialogue in classes was a significant predictor across all races. From their findings, they concluded that improving faculty skills in facilitating intense dialogues and in supporting students' development can enhance learning environments on a multicultural campus. This faculty support provided a "validating campus experience for all students" (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 35). Cejda and Rhodes (2004) reported that in a review of 30 interviews of Hispanic students who completed an associate's degree, a number of students credited faculty members as the primary influence in pursuing a degree.

As described earlier, if faculty members interact with students in an affirming way both inside and outside the classroom, faculty members can create a positive learning environment and positive campus climate for students (Cress, 2008). Students performed better in school through stronger interpersonal validation in and outside of the classroom from professors, counselors, and other caring adults. These institutional agents who provided encouragement and support in college produced positive student college outcomes across subgroups.

Theoretical Framework

The research questions were examined through the theoretical frameworks of figured worlds (Holland et al., 1998) and with the equity-minded perspectives of validation theory (Rendon, 1994), and social capital theory (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2010). A summary of the three frameworks follows.

Figured Worlds Framework

In order to fully understand the initiation of interaction between students and faculty, the development of the participants' identities and how they navigate in and out of social and cultural situations needs to be understood. Holland et al. (1998) described the concept of figured worlds in relation to theories of self and identity developed by Vygotsky, Bakhtin, and Bourdieu. Figured worlds, which are also described as narrativized or dramatized worlds, contain everyday events within them where the world has its actors, or agents, and those actors engage in various activities as moved by specific forces that are socially and culturally constructed in time and space (Holland et al., 1998). These worlds are conceptualized as "frames of meaning in which interpretations of human actions are negotiated" (Holland et al., 1998, p. 271). For

example, in the world of Alcoholics Anonymous, alcoholics engage in activities such as 12 step programs or giving up drinking in order to receive chips for periods of sobriety which are valued in that world. In the world of community college education, the actors are students and faculty members, and they engage in activities such as student–faculty interaction outside of class which may include avoidance, small talk, or functional interaction. Their activities may be guided by comfort, intimidation, or cultural beliefs.

Urrieta (2007) summarized Holland et al.'s four characteristics of figured worlds well:

1. Figured worlds are cultural phenomenon to which people are recruited, or into which people enter, and that develop through the work of their participants.

2. Figured worlds function as contexts of meaning within which social encounters have significance and people's positions matter. Activities relevant to these worlds take meaning from them and are situated in particular times and places.

3. Figured worlds are socially organized and reproduced, which means that in them people are sorted and learn to relate to each other in different ways.

4. Figured worlds distribute people by relating them to landscapes of action; thus activities related to the worlds are populated by familiar social types and host to individual senses of self. (p. 108)

Along with figured worlds, Holland and associates incorporate the concepts of positionality and spaces of authoring to describe human behavior and the development of identity. Positionality has to do with the relations of power, entitlement, and social affiliation. A person's perception of social position may depend on others who are

present and has to do with entitlement to social and material resources, such as

institutional agents or such as financial aid. Other voices, such as stereotypes, can play

into a person's perception of social position as well. With the space of authoring, an

individual created meaning of the world and has the free will to choose his or her actions

and behaviors in a figured world. An individual's social and cultural discourse influences

how people behave in any given situation, for example a student interacting with a

professor outside of class. While that person's response may be shaped by their

positional identity and sociocultural background, his or her response is not necessarily

predetermined by their background (Holland et al., 1998). Therefore, the individual can

choose a response that may lead the formation of a new identity or even formation of a

new world; or, that individual can choose a response that perpetuates the existing figured

world's positional identities of agents.

The concept of figured worlds may provide a deeper understanding of contexts in

the initiation of student–faculty interaction. The students' and the faculty members'

different positional identities and actions taken in community college can be explained by

Holland and associates' concept of figured worlds. Due to the difference in social

positioning of students in comparison to professors, students may create figured worlds

of learning where they do not possess skills to succeed in college and identify as not

being college material. Rubin (2007) described a situation in her study where

interactions between students and teachers created a figured world of learning where

intellect was narrowly defined as following daily routines in assignments. In this world,

students developed identities with a lack of academic self-efficacy and highlighted social

inequalities amongst students. Rubin argued that few students in this figured world

would be able to gain the skills necessary to succeed in higher education. The concept of figured worlds is a powerful tool for highlighting how activities and interactions become a part of students' identities and vice versa. Figured worlds provide an explanation for the need for validation in students' educational careers as well as provide the context for interaction.

Validation Framework

Rendon's validation theory (1994) uses an equity-minded paradigm in evaluating student success and accredits successful outcomes to supportive relationships. Validation refers to a confirming and supportive process created by validating agents in a student's academic experience especially for students who feel lost, out of place in college, or who have a fear of failure (Rendon, 1994). Validation is important in a student's first year of college and especially through the first weeks of college. The validation of students who doubted their ability to succeed in college, typically African American students, or first-generation students, or returning students, helped the students recognize their potential in college and helped them to feel valuable as a scholar. In addition, the "role of the institution in fostering validation is active—it involves faculty, counselors, coaches, and administrators actively reaching out to students or designing activities that promote active learning and interpersonal growth among students, faculty, and staff" (Rendon, 1994, p. 44).

Validation was Rendon's response to Astin's (1984) theory of involvement and suggested that involvement was not necessarily easy, or even natural, for nontraditional students. Many students, especially those unfamiliar with the college culture, are not accustomed to taking advantage of college activities and opportunities for interaction and

involvement. For example, in terms of student–faculty interaction, students from lower

socioeconomic statuses and first-generation college students often had the lowest

frequencies of student–faculty interaction (Kim & Sax, 2007). Rebecca Cox (2009b)

found fear and anxiety as a common theme in student surveys although the focus of her

study was more about what facilitated students' success in an English class. However,

when students were validated by faculty, other students, family, or friends, students begin

to believe—as they became validated—that they could be successful in college (Rendon,

1994). When professors in Cox's study addressed the students' fear about college with

the students, the students were able to accomplish challenging work which also led to

stronger feelings of academic self-efficacy (Cox, 2009a). Validation had the power to

assist apprehensive students in making the transition to higher education. Validation may

be a missing component from student–faculty interaction that moves a student from being

uninvolved to being involved in his or her academic experience. In other words, a

student's involvement can be encouraged by faculty through interaction, or more

specifically through validation.

Social Capital Framework

For students from lower socioeconomic statuses, from underrepresented ethnic

groups, or who are first-generation students, social capital plays an important role in their

social development, school success, and status attainment. Social capital is defined as

resources for people where their social structures facilitate particular actions for them.

Social capital makes possible "the achievement of certain ends that in its absence would

not be possible" (Coleman, 1988, p. S98). Stanton-Salazar (1997) introduced the concept

of an institutional agent who can facilitate the access to social capital in higher education.

An institutional agent is a person in a position of status with access to social networks and knowledge of the resources for empowerment of students. Stanton-Salazar (2010) augments the social capital framework by adding a process of empowerment and identifying it as empowerment social capital. Empowerment social capital includes an institutional agent who can advocate for and empower students with low social capital by challenging the current social structure. In other words, it is not enough for an institutional agent to provide connections and knowledge of the world of higher education. That institutional agent must provide enough resources and knowledge to empower students who do not normally take advantage of those resources.

Educational practitioners need to take on the role of empowering agents. The difference between a regular institutional agent and an empowering agent is the intent to not only provide institutional support, but to also alter social structures for the underrepresented and provide students with an empowering sense of academic self-efficacy (Stanton-Salazar, 2010). According to Gonzalez et al. (2003), considerable amounts of social capital were needed to improve students' positive student outcomes in higher education. Students typically had access to low volumes of social capital, but those low volumes did not necessarily make a difference in their opportunities in college.

In summary, the traditional educational paradigm needs to be challenged because the community college population is changing. Students are increasingly becoming more and more nontraditional and are likely to be first-generation, part-time, have multiple life roles, older in age, and of a non-White ethnicity (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Giancola et al., 2009; Gibson & Slate, 2010; K. A. Kim et al., 2010). The traditional education paradigm seems to marginalize large groups of students and contribute to the lack of

equity within education. If community colleges do not incorporate equity-minded

practices, such as validation and social capital through student–faculty interaction,

society may face a future with a largely uneducated population where the supply of

professionals cannot meet the demands of the workforce. This study was designed to

address specific issues of improving access and opportunity for nontraditional community

college students through student–faculty interaction.

CHAPTER THREE—METHODOLOGY

Student–faculty interaction has been examined quantitatively (Chang, 2005, Cole, 2008; Cress, 2008; Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Halawah, 2006; Hubbard, 2009; Kim & Sax, 2007; Laird & Cruce, 2010; Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004; Rugutt & Chemosit, 2009; Thompson, 2001; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005), and qualitatively (Anderson & Carta-Falsa, 2002; Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Cotten & Wilson, 2006, B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007). Extant research connects positive student outcomes to the interaction between faculty and students (Cejda & Rhodes, 2004; Cole, 2008; Kuh et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), revealing that very little interaction occurs outside of class (Chang, 2005; Cotten & Wilson, 2006; B. E. Cox et al., 2010; B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Hagedorn et al., 2000).

Research Design

This study was designed to deeply explore the experiences of both students and faculty members in a community college. The research design for this study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative methods allowed for a deeper understanding of participants' perceptions, behaviors, feelings, and thought processes about the initiation of interaction through interviews and observations; therefore, a qualitative study utilizing grounded theory methodology (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) was conducted. The researcher examined the meanings constructed about the initiation of interactions between faculty members and students and how those interactions contributed to the construction of the students' identities and academic experiences. The objective was to elucidate the context of the initiation of the student–faculty interaction outside of class while taking into

consideration the social and cultural backgrounds that influence the members'
perceptions and expectations.

Grounded theory and social constructivist methods were used. The qualitative
research strategy, grounded theory, provided systematic guidelines for collecting and
analyzing data to construct theories or conceptual frameworks which enhanced the
understanding of interactions (Charmaz, 2006). "Grounded theories, because they are
drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a
meaningful guide to action" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 12). Grounded theory was
appropriate for this study because it allowed the researcher to understand why low levels
of student–faculty interaction existed and what the impact of this has on students and
student performance. The researcher of this study used grounded theory to (a) examine
the ways students and faculty initiate interaction with each other, (b) make clear what led
to the initiation or lack of initiation of the interaction between faculty and students
outside of class, and (c) speculate on how student and faculty thought, felt, and acted in
relation to student–faculty interaction.

Social constructivism presumes that participants, as well as researchers, construct
the worlds in which they participate. Social constructivist researchers begin with open-
ended questions to understand and interpret individuals' multiple subjective meanings
about interaction (Creswell, 2009). According to Charmaz, researchers acknowledge that
their own interpretations are also constructions of reality as are all phenomena. In
constructivist grounded theory, multiple viewpoints of a phenomenon are studied to
interpret how participants construct meaning out of that phenomenon, as opposed to an
objectivist approach where the researcher focuses on the data and discovers a theory.

Constructivist grounded theory depends on the researcher's interpretation while objectivist grounded theory uses the researcher as a conduit for discovery Charmaz, 2006). According to Creswell (2009), social constructivist researchers focus on the processes of interaction among individuals, on the meanings that are constructed as people engage in that interaction, and on the context of the interpretations as shaped by individuals' cultural backgrounds.

Research Questions

The following are the overarching research questions:

1. How do student–faculty interactions outside of class occur?

2. How do students' perceptions of faculty members shape student–faculty interactions?

3. How do faculty members' perceptions of student shape student–faculty interactions?

4. How do students and faculty members perceive the impact of the initiation of interaction on student performance and positive student outcomes?

Setting and Context

This study took place in a large, single college district on the west coast of the United States. West Coast Community College (a pseudonym), is an urban, public, two-year community college serving some rural communities. West Coast College offered over 200 associate degree and certificate programs. According to the Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC) 2011 report, 52.9% of first-time students completed an outcome of transfer, certificate, or associate's degree at West Coast Community College. Of the first-time students enrolled in a transferable math or English

course, 56% transferred to a university within six years. West Coast Community College

had a persistence rate of 67.5% from fall 2007 to fall 2008. The entire state community

college system completion rate, transfer rate, and persistence rate is 52.3%, 40.9%, and

68.7% respectively.

Student Population

At the time of the study, the student population taking courses for credit consisted

of approximately 50.6% White, 29.9% Hispanic, 5.6% Asian or Pacific Islander, 3.3%

Black, 2.9% Filipino, 1% Native American, 3.2% multiple ethnicities, and 3.6%

unknown ethnicity students. In terms of gender, the student body was about 49.3%

female, 50.2% male, and .6% unknown. Approximately 61% of the students were

traditional students of 18 to 24 years of age. Sixty-two percent of the students were

enrolled part-time in credit courses with less than 12 units while 29% were enrolled full-

time in credit courses. The percentage of students enrolled exclusively in non-credit

courses was 8.8%, and all non-credit students were enrolled part-time. Therefore the

total campus enrollment of part-time students was approximately 71%. Student ethnic

representation and age distribution is illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Ethnic Representation of Students

Filipino 2.9%

Multiple 3.2%

Native American 1%

Black 3.3%

Asian/Pacific Islander 6%

Unknown 3.7%

White 50%

Hispanic 30%
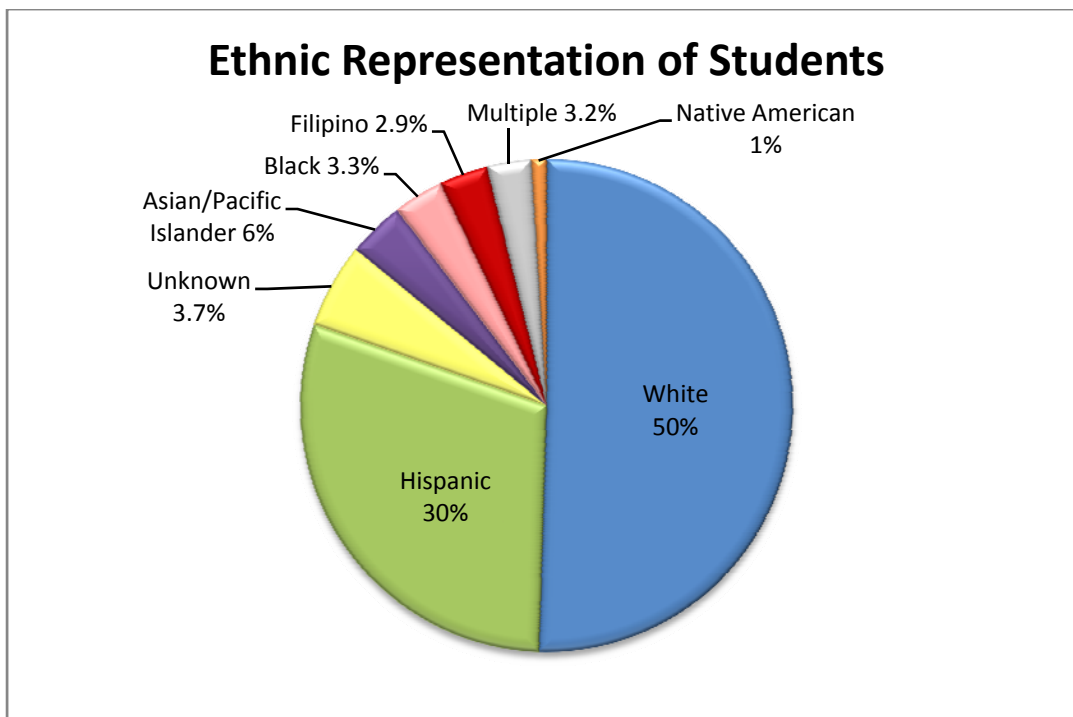
Figure 1. Population of West Coast Community College students by ethnicity.

Age Representation of Students

17 and under	18-20 years	21-24 years	25-29 years	30-34 years	35-39 years	40-44 years	45-54 years	55 and over
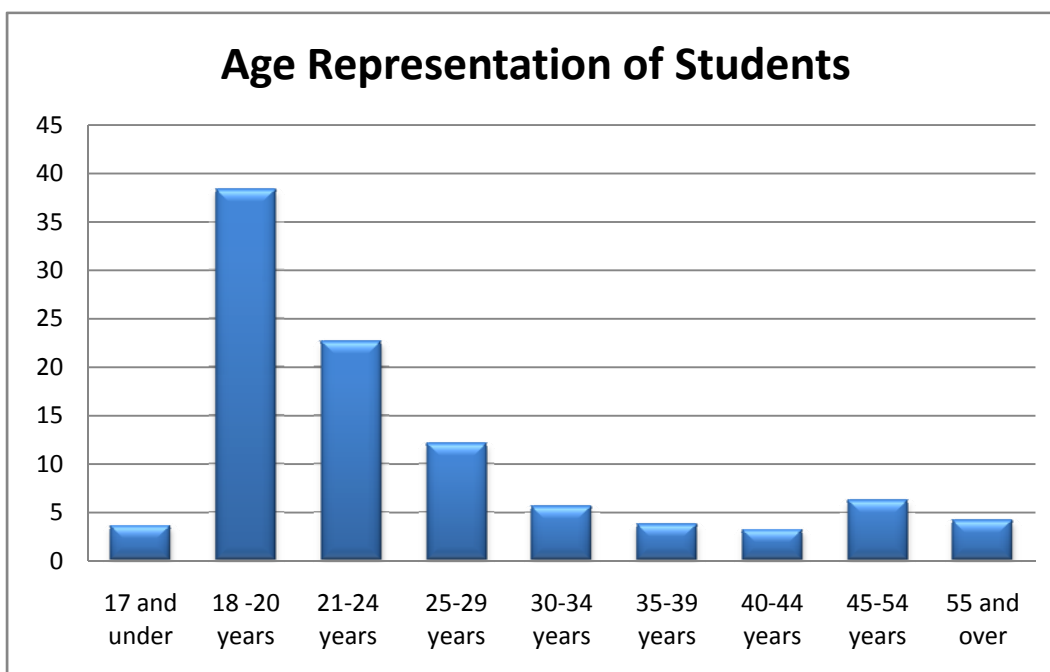
Figure 2. Population of West Coast Community College students by age.

Faculty Population

At the time of the study, ethnic representation of full-time faculty consisted of 80.7% White faculty, 12.7% Hispanic, 4.2% Asian and Pacific Islander, 1.8% Black, 0.4% Filipino, 1.4% Native American, and .7% Unknown. Part-time faculty groups by ethnicity were similar to the full-time faculty. Gender was distributed as 48% female and 52% male. In terms of employment status, faculty was comprised of 24.7% full-time faculty and 75.3% part-time faculty. A majority of the faculty were between the ages of 45 to 64. Combined, 38.6% or 444 of the entire faculty population of 1144 members were age 55 or older and eligible for retirement. Combined full-time and part-time faculty ethnic representation and age distribution is illustrated in Figures 3 and 4.
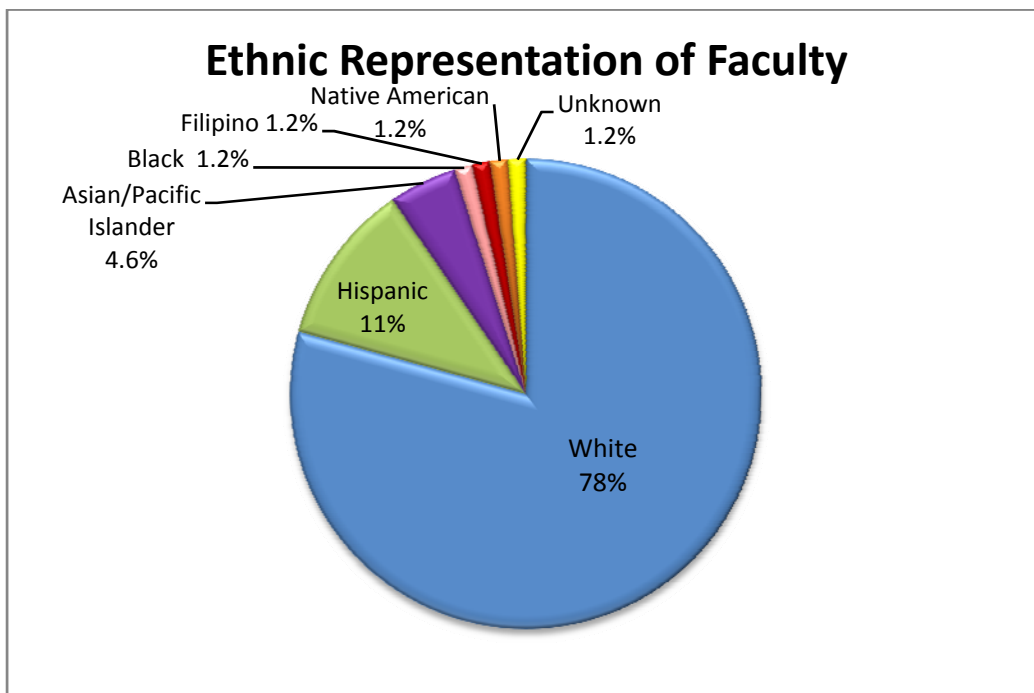
Figure 3. Population of West Coast Community College faculty by ethnicity.

Age Representation of Faculty
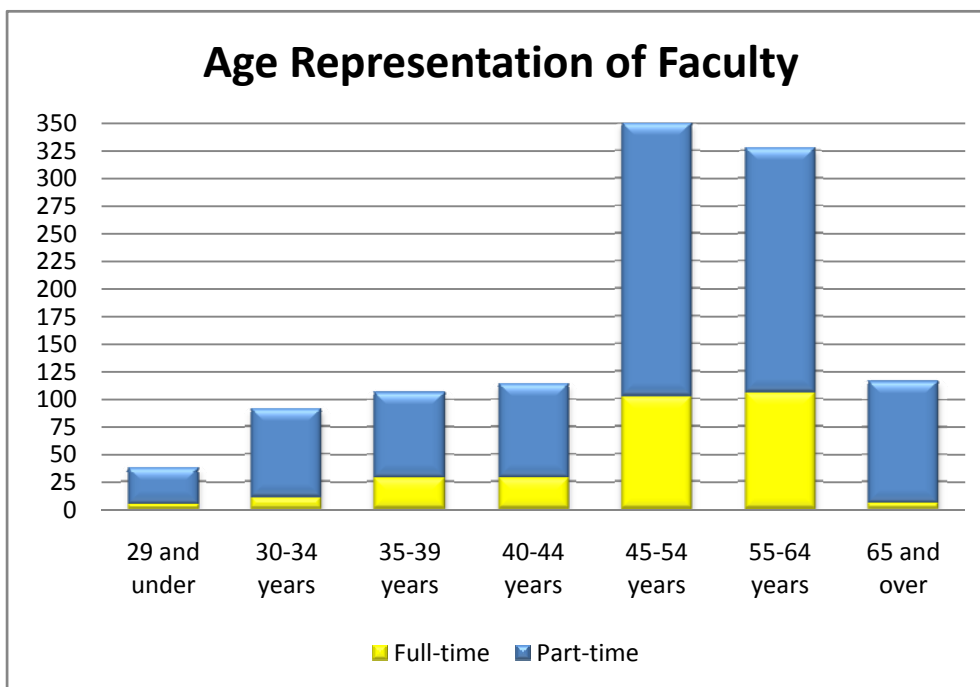
Figure 4. Population of West Coast Community College faculty by age. Yellow sections represent full-time faculty and blue sections represent part-time faculty.

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE)

West Coast Community College participated in the 2011 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). Related to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) for four-year colleges and universities, the CCSSE was designed specifically for technical and community colleges. Established in 2001, the CCSSE is a survey instrument that community colleges across the nation pay for and administer at their campuses. Participation in the survey is optional, and colleges may choose to participate every year. The survey was taken by all students present during administration and inquired about "institutional practices and student behaviors that are correlated highly with student learning and student retention" (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], n.d.). The purpose of the CCSSE was to

quantitatively assess institutional quality in terms of student engagement. "Student–faculty interaction" is one of the benchmarks of effective practices measured in the survey. The CCSSE inquired about various items pertaining to student–faculty interaction which included interaction inside, as well as outside, of class. The items relevant to student–faculty interaction outside of class included frequency of engagement in email communication, talking about career plans with faculty, discussing readings outside of class, participating in community-based projects, working harder to meet an instructor's expectations, and working with instructors on activities other than coursework (Community College Survey of Student Engagement [CCSSE], n.d.). Each item was quantified and compared to similar sized colleges in the CCSSE results.

The college's Office of Institutional Research and Planning provided the researcher with the following results from CCSSE. Benchmark scores were standardized to have a mean, or average, of 50 and a standard deviation, or dispersion, of 25 for all community colleges that participated in the survey that year. For the student–faculty interaction benchmark, West Coast Community College scored 44.7, which was 5.3 points below the benchmark. The top 10% of community colleges on that same benchmark scored 58.1, which is 13.4 points above the college. The average for colleges similar in size to West Coast Community College was 48.3, which is still 3.6 points above the college. The college's highest scored areas related to student–faculty interaction outside of class included (1) discussing ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class and (2) the frequency of student use of career counseling. The lowest scored areas related to student–faculty interaction outside of class included

(1) talking about career plans with an instructor or advisor and (2) the college helping the student cope with non-academic responsibilities such as work and family.

The CCSSE also inquired about the students' perceptions of the quality of their relationships with instructors. Out of the 436,668 students surveyed in the cohort, 82.7% rated their relationships a five or higher on a scale of one through seven with one representing "unavailable, unhelpful, unsympathetic" and seven representing "available, helpful, sympathetic." While a majority of the students marked the relationship positively, the remaining 17.3% of students still represented about 75,543 students who marked the relationships more negatively.

Participants

A purposive sampling strategy was utilized to select information rich student and faculty participants who were diverse in order to gain a wide range of perspectives. Purposive sampling is a sampling strategy where participants, who may provide rich amounts of data for research, are purposefully, versus randomly, selected (Creswell, 2009). Purposive sampling is often used in qualitative research because it allows the researcher to select participants with various traits and experiences in order to get meaningful data. This is especially important because sample sizes are generally quite small in qualitative designs.

Student Recruitment

Students were recruited though the learning communities at West Coast Community College. In the learning communities, students took two or more courses that were linked together for registration, and students were required to sign up for all the courses in that learning community. Therefore, in one learning community, the same

group of students, also known as a cohort, was enrolled in the same classes together. Math, English, reading, and counseling/personal development courses were combined to create the learning communities. In these learning communities, professors, tutors, and counselors worked together with the students and often required additional interaction outside of class between faculty and students. Learning communities had a higher expectation of engaging students both in and outside of class (Boroch et al., 2007). Therefore, there was an expectation that greater interaction outside of class would occur with students and faculty involved in learning communities.

Due to the increased levels of opportunity for student engagement in learning communities (Pike, Kuh, McCormick, 2008), student participants were initially recruited from the first year experience (FYE) learning communities at the college. The researcher spoke to counselors teaching in learning communities and requested time to speak to their class to recruit student participants. The researcher visited two daytime class sections and one non-learning community evening class section in order to include input from full-time working adults. A condensed and modified version of San Diego State University's (SDSU) approved consent form was used as a handout for students (see Appendix A). At the bottom of the handout was a question inquiring about the student's interest in participation along with name and contact information. At the end of the verbal recruitment, all students in the class were asked to complete and return the bottom portion of the handout to the researcher for future contact.

Full- and part-time students were selected for participation in the study. Because part-time students enrolled in credit courses made up approximately 62% of the student population at West Coast Community College, the inclusion of part-time students was

appropriate. The researcher required that students be minimally enrolled in two courses with a minimum of four units (credit hours) or more. Part-time students enrolled in one course, or in less than four units, were not considered for the study due to the minimal opportunity for interaction outside of class. By design, the learning communities met the minimum enrollment requirement for the study.

The initial recruitment of students contained a homogenous group of students. Therefore, an additional student was recruited based on ethnic representation and gender in order to further examine experiences of nontraditional students. An African American male student was selected from the campus' Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) program and was recommended by the STEM Supervisor as an information rich participant. He was recruited by email and the informational handout was sent to him electronically. Participation of students from underrepresented populations allowed the researcher to explore the context of the student–faculty interaction while considering how student perceptions were shaped by participants' historical and cultural backgrounds. No additional characteristics, such as age or generational status, were considered in the selection criteria of student participants.

A total of 14 students volunteered for the study. Five students from the first class volunteered to participate in a focus group in lieu of another class activity with their instructor's permission. The focus group was conducted during class time in the classroom while the rest of the class completed an activity in another part of campus. In the second class, students were given an opportunity for extra credit in the counseling component of the learning community for participation in interviews. Extra credit was determined by the professor and was minimal in comparison to the overall points for the

course. Alternate options for extra credit were provided for those not interested in participating in a study. Five participants volunteered from the second class. In the third and final class, which was not part of a learning community, three additional students volunteered from the class. The final student recommended through the STEM program was offered $20 cash for participation.

Faculty Selection

Approximately 76% of the campus' 1200 faculty members are part-time. In order to obtain a sense of the climate in terms of student–faculty interaction, part-time faculty members needed to be included in the study. Therefore, three full-time and two part-time faculty members were selected. The three faculty members, from the classrooms in which the students were selected, were invited to participate in the study. One faculty member who was partnered with one of the learning community counseling classes was also invited to participate in the study. By interviewing students and faculty members who had direct contact with one another, the researcher was able to explore whether or not perceptions of the initiation of interaction were communicated between students and faculty. Learning community faculty members were from counseling and math. The fifth faculty member, who was not part of a learning community, was invited to participate because he was identified by a student participant as a faculty member who interacted with students outside of class. That professor taught in multicultural studies. Faculty participants were notified individually by phone and/or by email about the time, date, and location for the interview. No incentives were given to faculty to participate in the study. Instead, $10 coffee gift cards were presented upon conclusion of the interview as a token of appreciation for their participation.

General Characteristics of Participants

The students' ages ranged from 18 to 33. The five-student focus group consisted of one Asian female, one Latina female, one Latino male, and two White males one of whom had cerebral palsy. Of the remaining nine students who were individually interviewed, there were five Latina females, one multiple-ethnicity female (Arabic and Japanese), one White male, one Latino male, and one African American male. Five of the students were in their first semester of college, and all but two of the participants were first-generation college students. Six of the 14 students were enrolled in less than 12 units and attended part-time. For each of the seven Latino students, Spanish was their first language. Three students worked 30 or more hours per week. One student was a full-time mother, and another was a part-time father. Four students were returning students, meaning that they previously attended college and stopped out. One student was a military veteran. All of the students encompassed at least one, if not more, of the characteristics of a nontraditional student. Figure 5 displays general characteristics of students with additional descriptors in the order of data collected.

Faculty participants' ages ranged from 30 to 50. The participants included one White female, one White male, two multiple-ethnicity females (part White/part Latina, part White/ part Asian), and one Latino male. Three faculty participants were counselors/professors. One of the counselor/professors was employed part-time while the other two were full-time counselors. The other participants included a part-time math instructor and a full-time multicultural studies professor. Figure 6 displays general characteristics of faculty participants.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	First-Generation	Part-Time Student	Additional Information
Lisa	18	Asian			(Focus group) First-year student.
Andrea	21	Latina	✓		(Focus group) First-year student. Works 20 hours per week.
John	19	White			(Focus group) Had disability.
Rubin	18	Latino	✓		(Focus group) First language Spanish.
Tim	19	White			(Focus group) Works 20 hours per week.
Charina	29	Arabic/ Japanese	✓	✓	Returning student.
Fatima	33	Latina	✓	✓	Returning student, first language Spanish, works 40 hours per week, attends in evenings, single mother.
Jesse	35	White	✓		First-year student, works 40 hours per week, attends in evening, part-time father, former alcoholic, takes public transportation
Rufino	20	Latino	✓	✓	First language Spanish, works 30 hours per week, attends in evening.
Michael	23	African American	✓		STEM student, works 4 hours per week, military vet.

Figure 5. General characteristics of student participants. Additional descriptive information is included.

Name	Age	Ethnicity	Part-Time Faculty	Additional Information
Christine Cooper	31	White	✓	Math, learning community
Leilani Borja	33	Latina/White	✓	Counseling, evening class
Danny Xavier	50	White		Counseling, learning community
Kirsten Lane	30	Asian/White		Counseling, learning community
Gregorio Santiago	44	Latino	✓	Multicultural Studies

Figure 6. General characteristics of faculty participants. Additional descriptive information is included.

Participant Rights

The researcher carefully followed the protocol for recruitment, selection and data analysis that was developed in conjunction with the San Diego State University Institutional Review Board. Participation in the study was completely voluntary, and participants were able to opt out of the study at any point in the research. Student and faculty participants were fully informed about the purpose of the study, and participants were given the opportunity to ask extensive questions about the research processes and outcomes. Participants were informed that, if they were interested, they could have access to the results of the study and were given the researcher's contact information. Expectations of participation were clearly defined along with the option to withdraw at any point in the research process. Participant expectations included the completion of an initial intake form, an approximately 60 minute group or individual interview, and possible follow-up interviews.

Protecting the privacy of the participants was extremely important. Confidentiality of subjects was ensured by the use of pseudonyms in transcripts. All records pertaining to participant identification were stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher's home. Initial intake forms were shredded after the completion of the study. Data stored electronically was stored on a password-protected cloud drive. Each transcript was also password protected individually. Access to the aforementioned transcripts was limited to only the researcher; these transcripts will be destroyed within 90 days of publication.

Before conducting the focus groups and individual interviews, the San Diego State University Institutional Review Board (SDSU IRB) informed consent document was reviewed with each participant to assure that participants knew their rights as research participants before signing the consent form (see Appendix B). The consent form explained the purpose of the study and the extent to which the participant was expected to participate. The consent form also included an introductory statement, biography of the researcher, a description of the interview, responsibilities of the researcher, and the possibility for follow-up interviews.

Data Collection

After reviewing the informed consent document with all of the participants, students were given a brief one-page questionnaire, or initial intake form, to collect demographic data including number of semesters in college, ethnicity, gender, number of units the student was currently enrolled in, number of hours working per week, age, and generational status of college graduates in the family (see Appendix C). Information from the initial intake form was used to describe whether or not patterns existed based on

differences in demographics and positionality. Faculty participants were also given an initial intake form, to collect data about their experience as a faculty member (see Appendix D). Information collected from the initial intake form was used to describe faculty members' level of involvement in the college and supplemented the interview transcript.

Both the focus group and individual interviews were audio-recorded. Each lasted approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The researcher followed the interview protocol developed for student and faculty interviews, adding follow-up questions related to perceptions and expectations about initiating interaction. A post-interview statement was read by the researcher upon completion of the interview:

Thank you for participating in the study. From here, I will transcribe and begin to analyze the data. For verification, I may contact you again for additional clarification or an additional individual interview. (For students) Again, you will be compensated for your time for a *second* interview with $10 cash. If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call me at (555) 555-5555.

Do you have any questions?

The researcher asked each participant if he or she had any questions. This procedure was conducted with all faculty and student participants.

Data was collected from students and faculty members using a semi-structured interview method. The study began with a student focus group of five students. Seven additional interviews were conducted with students, with two students in two of the interviews for a total of 14 students. Finally, five individual faculty interviews were conducted. Student and faculty interviews were conducted as needed until data saturation

was achieved as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1998) where "no new properties, dimensions, conditions, actions/interactions, or consequences are seen in the data" (p. 136).

Student Focus Groups and Interviews

Data collection began with the student focus group. The focus group was conducted to allow group dynamics to stimulate conversation amongst the participants (Mack et al., 2005). The focus groups allowed for peer support amongst the students in answering the interview questions. The focus group took place in the classroom of the students during their class time as this was the most convenient time for the entire group to meet. The classroom was private, quiet, and well-lit and was conducive to a good-quality taped interview.

After the focus group, nine individual interviews with students were conducted. The relationships and connections discovered in the transcribed focus group document were used to refine questions for use in the individual interviews. Interviews took place in the office of the researcher which again was private, quiet, and well-lit and was conducive to a good-quality taped interview. In a failed attempt to form additional focus groups, two of the individual interviews were conducted with two students at one time for a total of seven individual interviews with nine students. Individual interviews allowed the researcher access to perspectives, feelings, and experiences of the participants (Mack et al., 2005). Individual interviews also allowed for a deeper level of inquiry.

Faculty Interviews

Finally, data collection with five faculty participants was conducted through individual interviews. Data from the student focus group and interviews informed the

interview questions for faculty interviews. Individual interviews were conducted in order to allow faculty to feel more comfortable while discussing a topic that might cause them discomfort. Individual interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow up questions which encouraged the faculty participants to delve deeper into their thoughts and feelings about student–faculty interaction. Additionally, individual interviews allowed faculty members explore issues that may not have been covered in the interview protocol which led to additional rich data. All the interviews, with the exception of one, took place in the researcher's office. The final interview took place in the office of the participant.

Instrumentation

Instruments used include an initial intake form for students and faculty (see Appendices C and D), and initial interview questions generated from the research questions (see Appendices E and F). Data collected by the college's Office of Institutional Research and Planning for the CCSSE provided campus wide descriptive statistics for patterns of interaction outside of class. Results from the CCSSE were used to develop specific questions about specific interactions outside of class for group and individual interviews for both students and faculty.

Initial interview questions for students were aimed at what students and faculty do, think, and feel about the initiation of interaction with one another. Assumptions and expectations were explored in addition to description of the value of the initiation of the interaction. Initial interview questions were developed from questions asked on the CCSSE specifically pertaining to student–faculty interaction outside of class. These questions had more to do with specific methods of interaction such as frequency of engagement in email communication, discussion about career plans with faculty, working

harder to meet an instructor's expectations, working with instructors on activities other than coursework, how much the college emphasizes providing the support students need to succeed, helping students cope with nonacademic responsibilities, and using career counseling services (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2009). Additional questions based on the theory of figured worlds, identity, and positionality (Holland et.al, 1998) and on validation (Rendon, 1994) were included to further elucidate the relationship between students and faculty. Additional interview questions were generated and revised after each interview as data emerged from the constant comparison process. The constant comparison method allowed the researcher to examine data as it was collected. Constant comparison required the researcher to frequently compare data categories to other data categories toward the development of a ground theory (Charmaz, 2006).

For faculty interviews, additional questions were developed based on the responses of the students in the initial interviews. While initial student interview questions were developed from the overarching research questions and CCSSE results, initial interview questions for faculty participants were developed based on student interviews in addition to the research questions and CCSSE results. Faculty interview questions were also revised and refined after each interview as data emerged from the constant comparison process. Interview questions were aimed at understanding the similarities and differences in students' and faculty members' perceptions and assumptions about initiating interaction outside of class.

Data Analysis

According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), the major components of qualitative

research include qualitative data obtained through interviews or observations,

conceptualizing and reducing that data, elaborating, relating, coding, and writing memos.

The focus group and individual interviews were recorded and transcribed by the

researcher resulting in 112 single-spaced pages. Recordings were transcribed word for

word using Express Scribe which is free downloadable software designed to make

transcription easier. In order to support the researcher's recollection of non-verbal

communication of the participants, analytical memos were written after each interview.

Brief descriptions of the participants and observer comments were included in each

analytic memo. Analytic memos included hunches and perceptions, tracked the

nonverbal behavior of participants, and reflected upon ideas as they "record the progress,

thoughts, feelings, and directions of the research and researcher" (Strauss & Corbin,

1998, p. 218). Additional memos were created after each transcription as well as

throughout the analysis process in order to make comparisons and further analyze the

data. Analytic memos were used as part of the data to define relationships between

categories and to identify gaps in the developing theory (Charmaz, 2006).

After data collection, the data was coded, sorted, analyzed, and ultimately,

reconceptualized to form a grounded theory. Coding of the data went through several

phases: initial, axial, and selective. During the initial coding phase, data was hand coded

line-by-line using action words for initial codes in order to focus on actions versus

concepts. Data was "broken down into discrete parts, closely examined, and compared

for similarities and differences" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 102). Data was then recoded

using Saturate, a web-based program for qualitative research, for a more thorough understanding of the main categories in the data. The coding performed on the data yielded 66 different codes. Axial coding took place by relating categories to subcategories and determining relationships between categories. Axial coding required the researcher to ask why, where, when, and how in analyzing the interactions in order to uncover relationships among categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through the constant comparison of data, abstract categories were developed. Using this method, the researcher was able to collect and analyze data simultaneously, giving her maximal insight and flexibility. The constant comparison method required the researcher to frequently compare data categories to other data categories toward the development of a theory grounded in data. Comparisons were facilitated through the use of Saturate which allowed the researcher to code and sort with relative ease.

In the later phases of coding, selective coding took place. Selective coding involved the integration and refining of categories by searching for core categories and relating other categories to the tentative core categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through each phase of coding, the central focus was asking questions and making comparisons in the data. There were two major categories which were "student experience" and "faculty experience." The other categories were created around these major categories. During this stage, the development of a theory began. As is common in grounded theory research, illustrations and diagrams were created to further develop the various categories and the relationships between categories and subcategories. The constant comparative method of making comparisons between data and categories took place during all coding phases (Charmaz, 2006). Relationships between categories were

identified to form a theory. The reorganization of themes and categories went through

four revisions for a total of five attempts in the understanding of emerging themes. The

final overarching themes included experiences, attitudes, and perceptions.

Role of Researcher

The researcher is a counselor at the institution where students and faculty were

sampled. Student–faculty interaction outside of class was examined under the

instructional division rather than under the student services division where counselors are

housed, providing some separation. As a counselor, the researcher practices good

listening skills and behavior analysis daily on the job which is a strength for qualitative

research. As an advocate for students, the researcher is interested in improving access to

education and equity for all students. She is strongly in favor of interaction being initiated

by faculty members as the literature plainly shows how much such initiation can benefit

students. The researcher is also a female of color which influences how she experiences

interactions with others. The researcher acknowledged the fact that her own cultural

background and history, as well as her role as a counselor, may have played a role in the

interpretation of the data.

These biases were minimized by the constant comparison of data (Charmaz,

2006). The researcher looked for corroboration of experiences between the students and

the faculty. The researcher also followed up with the participants to make sure that she

was correctly capturing their perceptions and experiences of the initiation of interaction

through email and by phone after the interviews. Throughout the interviews and focus

groups, the researcher's perspectives were kept private in order to avoid the risk of the

modification of responses from the participants and in order to focus on the participants'

perspectives (Mack et al, 2005).

In this study, open ended questions allowed the participants' points of view to be

at the center of the research. In all kinds of research, the researcher's experiences,

values, identities and beliefs must be accounted for. By being fully aware of her role in

every aspect of the research process, the researcher maintained the self-awareness needed

to listen carefully, question her own assumptions, and allow the voices of the study

participants to come through clearly.

CHAPTER FOUR—SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the context of the initiation of student–faculty interaction in a community college setting. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with students and faculty members. Some students and faculty participants were selected from the same classrooms while other participants were from independent classrooms. Four major themes emerged from the data. The themes include (1) student attitudes toward initiation of student–faculty interaction, (2) faculty attitudes toward initiation of student–faculty interaction, (3) initiation of interaction, and (4) results after the student–faculty interaction. Figure 7 provides an overview of the categories and themes that emerged.

Grounded Theory

A number of concepts arose from the participants in terms of their experiences and perceptions leading up to the initiation of student–faculty interaction. While interviews with students and faculty members were separate from each other, each group seemed to speak on similar issues but from slightly different perspectives. In examination of the circumstances that led to the initiation of student–faculty interaction and the actions that took place toward interaction, the following categories naturally emerged: (1) before initiation of interaction; (2) during initiation of interaction; and (3) after the interaction. These categories evolved into the attitudes, experiences, and perceptions as described in the themes chart in Figure 7. While examining the participants' shared beliefs and meanings about initiating interaction, the researcher uncovered three components that led to initiation. Student and faculty attitudes and perceptions (Themes 1 and 2) were contributing components to the initiation of interaction. Attitudes included students' and

Theme 1: **Student Attitudes Toward Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction**
• Valuing of Interaction • Ambivalence • Time Constraints • Defining the Relationship • Observing Faculty • Ways of Being
Theme 2: **Faculty Attitudes Toward Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction**
• Faculty Valuing of Initiation of Interaction • Faculty Ambivalence • Faculty Time Constraints • Faculty Defining the Relationship • Faculty Observing Students • Faculty Ways of Being
Theme 3: Initiation of Interaction
• Student Experience • Faculty Experience
Theme 4: Results After Student–Faculty Interaction
• Student Perceptions of the Interaction • Faculty Perceptions of the Interaction • Positive Outcomes From the Interaction • Student Suggestions

Figure 7. Summary of themes and categories.

faculty's ways of being such as personality, communication style, and value of

interaction. Perceptions included observations and assumptions that students and faculty

had about each other. A third component containing the purposes for, as well as

availability for, interaction also contributed to the initiation of the interaction. These

three components were shaped, or filtered, by social dynamics. Social dynamics included

participants' views of the social structure, as well as participants' social capital. Once the

initiation of interaction took place using various methods employed by the participants,

perceptions of the interaction were created which fed back to the participants' initial perceptions going into the initiation of interaction. Figure 8 illustrates a conceptual model of the grounded theory.

Social Dynamics Filter

Student Attitudes and Perceptions

Faculty Attitudes and Perceptions

Purpose for Interaction; Availability for Interaction

Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction

Perception of Student–Faculty Interaction
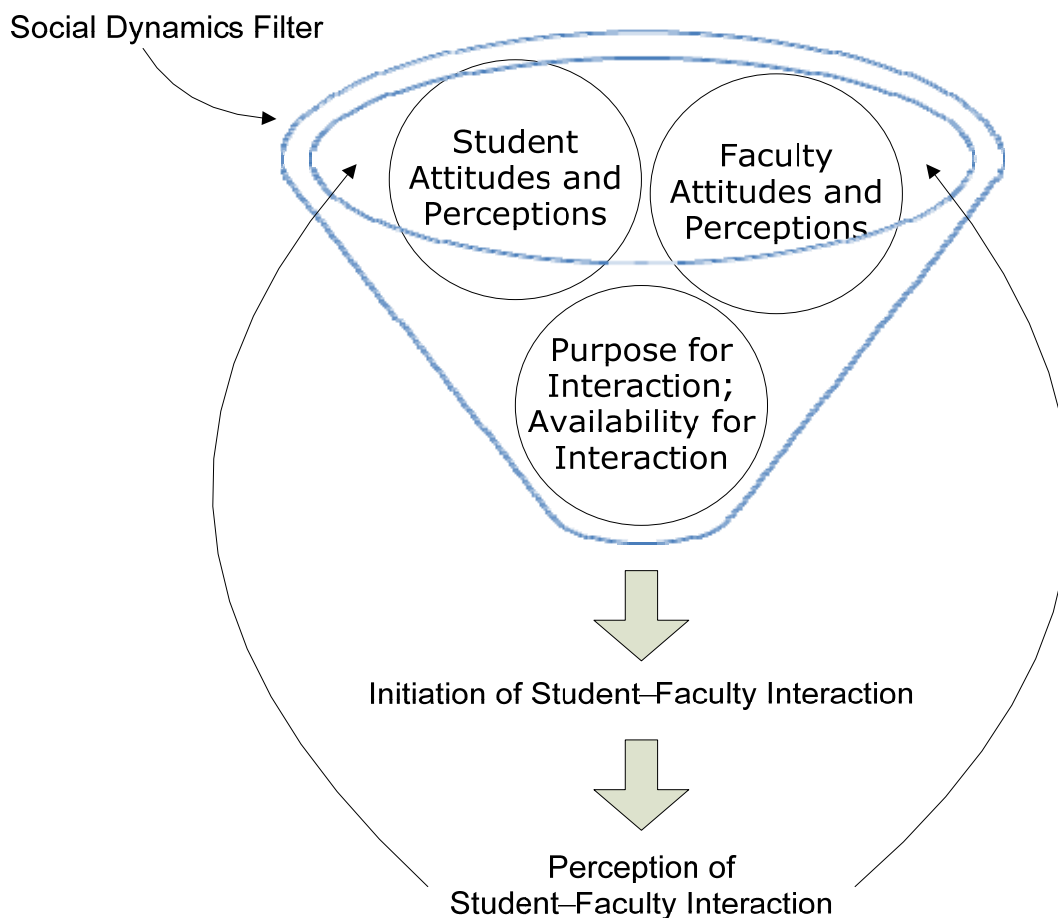
Figure 8. A conceptual model of the factors that shape the initiation of student–faculty interaction. Social dynamics frame the phenomenon of the initiation of interaction.

Theme 1: Student Attitudes Toward Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction

Students seemed to have a number of impressions about faculty and whether or not students should initiate interaction with faculty. Many times those attitudes had to do

with the students' assumptions while other times their impressions were influenced by their observations of faculty behaviors.

Students Valuing Interaction

Upon initially answering the question about how important students and faculty thought interacting with one another outside of class was, both stated they valued the interaction. From the students' perspectives, several noted the importance of interacting with their instructors for the purposes of getting a good grade in the class. They saw interaction as a way to understand what the professors expected of the students in class. Fatima, who used to be actively involved in the student cultural club Movimiento Estudantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA) stated:

> I think students should interact with their instructor and get to know them. That way you get a better feel of the class and the instructor and how they work and how they could both work together. And you know a student can accomplish a class a little easier.

Fatima saw interacting with professors as a source of support for completing the class. Several students also saw the benefit of initiating interaction with the professor for the purposes of getting noticed or gaining favor from the professor:

> But, I also think it's better because then they [the professors] actually know who you are. They have so many students that they don't even know all of them. But, if you take your time and go talk to them, they actually know you. And also, my other teacher told me that most of them like it when you go talk to them because it shows you care about the class and how to pass it.

Students expressed the view that they did not want to be just another student in the class and saw the interaction as a way to stand out. They understood that professors had several classes with many students in each class.

Student Ambivalence

While students stated they valued the interaction with faculty, they expressed ambivalence about the value of initiating interaction. Students agreed about the importance of initiating interaction, but they were not able to express the reasons they felt it was important. They simply stated they thought it was important. Many students compared their experience with their professors in college to their experience with their teachers in high school. When asked about their attendance at professors' office hours, students indicated that their attendance was minimal if even at all. "It's not mandatory to go to their office hours. It's different from high school and here you just come." So, while this student saw the value in interaction, she did not see the value in initiating that interaction during office hours. Jesse, who worked full-time and attended college part-time, recalled his ways of being in high school and his ways of approaching school now. He spoke about his difficulties in approaching his professors after class for clarification on assignments in high school. "I'm trying to break my old way of thinking, and it takes some time." Again, while he stated he saw the value in initiating the interaction, his actions did not show it. Eleanor, a first year student, stated, "Well, I know that at the beginning that it's hard for you [the student] to decide if you want to go talk to a teacher. But, I know I still have to work on it too." Rufino, a first-year, 20-year-old student, spoke about how he wrestled with the decision to initiate interaction with his professors, "I'd kind of be juggling in my mind I guess about whether I should or shouldn't [make

contact with my professor]. But, most likely I would." Rufino had yet to ask questions

of his professors outside of class.

The students also talked about a sense of shame they had about not performing

well in a class which often prevented them from approaching their professors. They

often expressed feeling scared along with feeling that shame about having a bad grade in

the course, which deterred the students from initiating interaction with professors.

Nevertheless, the students still articulated that meeting with a professor would be

valuable. Natalia, a first-year Latina student, spoke about her English professor, "That

one is the only class that I'm not doing so well in, so like, that's why I don't want to talk

to him [the professor]. But I think I should. But I'll fight it mostly." And again, while

the student did not want to confront her professor about her grade, she still wanted to

meet with her professor. A male student from the focus group explained part of her fear

as going through the trouble of meeting with the professor and not having a resolution to

his academic issue. "You're scared and you feel like you're gonna approach them, and

it's not gonna make a difference." Shortly after, the student expressed ambivalence about

whether interacting with the professor might make a difference by stating, "That could be

wrong." Doing poorly in a class was embarrassing to students.

Student Time Constraints

Students noted the time needed to interact with professors outside of class.

Fatima, a full-time working, single mother, said initiating interaction was "time

consuming" but did not mind interacting with professors outside of class. She noted that

interaction was time consuming for not just for the professor but also for the student.

While students did not mind spending the extra time to work with professors, they did

talk about how the time competed with other activities in their day. Fatima described the roles she juggled in her life and how she appreciated when faculty acknowledged those roles, "They know what we're going through. They've been in our shoes. . . . You have your personal life; you have your education, and your family and your career." Jesse, who had a busy schedule attending college full-time and working full-time, talked about an instance when he wanted to negotiate with his professor to have a writing assignment topic modified for him. The professor was open to discussing his options, but the student was not able to meet with the professor. "He [the professor] said meet with me after class, but I had to catch the bus and I had to get to work in the morning, so I didn't get to talk to him yet." Many students, like Jesse, took public transportation and were bound by the bus schedule. Missing the bus could mean another two-hour wait because of missing the subsequent connections in transit. For students who took evening courses, being on time to catch the bus was even more imperative because they were typically taking the last bus route of the night.

Additional time constraints for students were related to the amount of work needed to succeed in college. Jesse also participated in a behavior modification program which required meetings and additional homework. He also worked full-time and took public transportation. He described the best use of his time as putting it towards completing homework for college. Jesse had other responsibilities that competed with the ideal amount of student engagement or involvement in college. A male student from the focus group talked the difficulty in taking additional time to work with professors outside of class, "College is so busy, if you have work and you have classes, or if it's finals time, you get slammed to the ground. You can't go take the time to go see a

professor." In the same breath, he continued to say that going to a professor's office hours might also help in that same situation, again expressing ambivalence about interaction with professors.

Students' Defining Their Relationship With Faculty

Students reported that they perceived faculty members to be on a higher level of status or authority than themselves. Some referred to their instructors as those "in power" or compared instructors to their "elders" who commanded respect. The students often talked about the respect that needed to be given to the professors. Fatima pointed out "I've noticed if you're speaking in English, sometimes you're so blunt and rude sometimes and you don't notice it. But if I go back to speaking in Spanish, you have to show respect when you speak, I've noticed." In the Spanish language, a formal form of conjugation exists for addressing an authority figure versus addressing a peer, unlike in the English language where there is no distinction between the two. She was conflicted about how she addressed her instructors through the different languages.

Students constantly evaluated where they stood with their professors while at the same time evaluated where their professors stood with them. Students continually analyzed whether or not their professors deserved their respect based on the professors' interactions with them. For example, students constantly defined and redefined the student–faculty relationship by observing the professors' behaviors, interactions with students, and body language. Michael described how he determined whether or not he would initiate interaction with professors by the type of "vibe" he received from them:

> How the person is, or how their demeanor is. You go into class. I'll wait that
> first week out and say okay, maybe this is somebody that I can talk to if I have a

problem. And if I don't feel that way, I'll still approach them, but I'll approach

them with a way like . . . I don't need any help, and I don't want to end up failing

your class. And from that point, I'll see how they treat me from there. If I respect

them.

This quote illustrates the student's thought process about the amount of respect the

professor earned based on his own feelings about the professor's interactions with the

students.

Natalia, also a first-generation student, described the way she understood her

relationship to her professors in comparison to friends:

Different from like a friend. You don't want to cross boundaries with them. It

would be easier to talk to a friend about anything. But then with a professor, it's

like hmmm? What are the limits that I could ask or just talk about with them?

This student was not sure about how to interact with the professor. More specifically, she

was not sure about what to say to the professor. She made a distinction between how she

would behave with a professor and how she would behave with a peer. The students

determined where they set their boundaries with their professors while at the same time

interpreted where their professors' set their boundaries with them.

The students also referenced the amount of education that the professors had and

the respect that education commanded from the students. Fatima, who was in her early

thirties, described how she perceived faculty member's position in relations to her own

position. "They have more education than me. So, we might be close in age, but to me,

they're my superior because they have more education behind them." To many of the

students, education commanded respect. The amount of education that a professor

possessed often made interactions seem more intimidating. Michael, a Science

Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) major, explained how a professor's

doctoral degree could change how the student may interact with a professor:

> I don't say they think they're smarter than you, but obviously, that can be
>
> intimidating for a student. One of your professors has a doctorate degree. It
>
> might be harder for a person to talk to them than with someone with a master's
>
> degree. Especially in the science major, I'm doing this chemistry problem, and
>
> the person is a doctor, you're like—oh, you're going to think I'm stupid. It
>
> affects the psyche of a student.

The amount of education the professors possessed contributed to the distance between

students and faculty in terms of social status.

Students Observing Faculty

As mentioned earlier, students were constantly evaluating professors' behaviors,

body language, and interactions with students and forming assumptions about their

professors. Student participants talked about interpreting the professors' moods. They

talked about the professors' "grumpy" moods, the "attitudes" they presented in class, and

judgments such as being "mean" or "nice." The impressions of their professors played a

role in whether or not the students were going to initiate interaction with faculty outside

of class. "Depending on the teacher how they said it or how they treat you, it just decided

whether you are going to come to them more often or not." Michael, an African-

American student who grew up in Washington D.C., talked about the differences in the

teaching styles on the East Coast and West Coast:

And the teachers, it's a lot different than it is in D.C. It's a little bit different. I

don't want to say it to sound like a racial thing, but in a class with African

Americans, or Blacks, I'm being honest with you, usually the class is more

upbeat. The teacher is more edgy. They say things to make you laugh. They

keep your attention like that. Out here, it's like, you're learning. This is what we

have to do, so do it.

For Michael, the professor's way of being in class and communication style contributed

to his interest in initiating interaction with the professor outside of class. Students often

cited the professors' ways of being as a determining factor for whether or not the student

decided to initiate student–faculty interaction.

Age difference. Michael also pointed out the difference in age and life

experience between students and faculty. He made assumptions based on those

characteristics:

You're like 45, and I'm 23. You have a totally different mindset by now. What

you saw when you was 23 is not the same thing when you are 45 now. I know

we're not going to talk about the same thing.

The student saw the professor as not having the interest to relate to the student based on

age. Therefore, the student had no interest in initiating interaction with a professor

outside of class other than for academic reasons. Also commenting on age, Gabriela, an

18-year-old student, talked about how she saw herself when she interacted with people

older than her. "I get really quiet with older people. Like with the teachers especially. I

get really quiet and I don't say anything. I don't really try." Again, the student was not

interested in initiating interaction with professors due to the age difference. Michael,

who talked about older professors having a different mindset that the younger students, had additional assumptions about older professors. When asked about his perceptions of initiating interaction with professors, he commented:

> It depends on the faculty member. If you have that connection with them, and I can kind of see them going beyond their status of duty and actually try to work with you outside of the classroom. But, a lot of the professors are more egotistic. This is more for the older ones. I think that if they've been teaching for a long time, they think you know. It's no longer learning for them. It's more repetitive. It's not a new learning experience for them. I'd say the newer ones of the middle aged ones are still learning. They're like—you can talk to them.

Michael had a predetermined assumption that he could not relate to older and more experienced professors and that they could not relate to him.

Comfort level. Students wanted to get to know their professors. For example, students reported that they enjoyed hearing about their professors' personal experiences. They described the professors' stories as humanizing. A member of the focus group stated, "I guess it would help because you don't just see them as a teacher. You see them as a person." Several students talked about professors being "human" after speaking to them or after hearing about their personal lives. Before the students became familiar with their professors, students did not see professors as human, but rather as indifferent authority figures. Once the students had the opportunity to become more familiar with their professors, the students were more open to initiating interaction with them. "I find it valuable because when you need help, you're comfortable going to ask them." The

initial interaction with faculty seemed to make subsequent interactions less intimidating, and students found those interactions valuable.

The students also stated the opposite—that they would not approach their professors if they were not familiar with them. Natalia commented, "When you don't really talk to your professor, you like find a way not to like talk to them. So you find someone else you're more comfortable with instead of going to them." She turned to tutors for help and/or used other resources instead of approaching the professor whom she did not have an established relationship with. Several students commented on seeking help from tutors instead of from their professors. Gabriela, who worked with tutors often stated, "For English class, I prefer to go to the tutors because I think they're nicer. I can go talk to them." Students expressed being "scared" and "nervous" about seeking help from their professors. Michael also sought help from tutors and sought help from his professors as a last resort. He explained:

> I try to get a tutor, and then I go to [the professor]. So, it's like my last line of defense to go to the professor for help. Just to make sure. Now, if I have an "A" average and I'm trying to keep it up, I go there [to the professor] to say what I need to do to keep on top and everything like that. I don't want no speed bumps going through. . . . Why [is it my last line of defense]? Because as an adult, you got a problem you gotta solve for it. I can't say in the real world oh, I gotta find this then I go to my boss. You can't always do that because if you keep going to your boss, your boss is going to fire you. They see you as incompetent. So, you need to work around it with your surroundings first. It's like last, like a chain of command. So, if I don't understand it, I'm going to go to someone that works

with me. If they don't understand, then we work it together. If none of us can

understand it, I'm going to go to the higher up and that would be the professor

and would be the point.

For Michael, who was also a recent veteran, chain of command was important.

Exhausting his resources before going to the professor was a way for him to obey the

chain of command which was a process he was comfortable with.

Perceived professor time constraints. Many times, faculty gave students the

impression that they did not have time to interact with students. The professors would be

brief in their responses with students, giving students the impression that the professor

did not have time for the additional questions. "They don't have time for you. They're

too busy. Or, class is over early, but let's all go home," Fatima stated as she snapped her

fingers as she said the word "home." Other times, the professors were rushing into class

and out of class eliminating the opportunity for students to approach the professor before

or after class. Natalia described her experience of her professor, "She's just in and out.

She'll just come and lecture. At the end, she just rushed everything because she doesn't

have time. And then she leaves." Students also reported that some professors informed

students of their office hours but did not necessarily encourage attendance during office

hours. Some professors held office hours by appointment only. A female student in the

focus group described her experience with her attempt to attend her professor's office

hours as discouraging:

They're like it's better for you to make an appointment. They say, "You can

come to my office hours, but I don't think that you're gonna get any help because

I have other things." I'm like, okay. So, you're not having office hours, and

that's basically it.

In her attempt to make an appointment to attend the professor's office hours, the

professor was not able make him or herself available to the student. Rather than thinking

of how to help the student in another way, the professor simply discouraged the student

from meeting outside of class.

Student visibility. Almost half of the students interviewed stated they felt

invisible to their professors at one point or another. Natalia, a strong but quiet student,

spoke about several moments when she felt invisible or "faded away" in front of the

professor:

And I see it as the only [student–faculty] interaction [outside of class] that does

happen is with the students that stand out during class, so like if they see the

student that stands out during class. Like if they stand out during class, they

remember them, so if they see them, they would go and talk to them. And the

people that fade away, if you see them in the hall, they wouldn't even know that

you're in their class.

At another point in the conversation, the other student, Gabriela, described her viewpoint

and added, "They see you kind of differently. 'Cause if you're just sitting down there,

they don't really care about you." Gabriela also noticed the disparity in the patterns of

interactions of the professors.

Other times, student received the impression that professor did not see the

potential in them as a student. Students felt invisible to their professors and as a result,

they felt invalidated as a student. Natalia described her experience of feeling invisible to

one of her professors despite her strong performance in the class. She described a specific moment when she felt invisible while attending her professor's office hours. "If someone else comes, she won't pay attention to me, and she'll talk to that student because she just happens to talk to them more." As she described her experience, the other student in the interview, Gabriela, agreed with her and stated she witnessed the professor giving preference to the other students and not to Natalia. The lack of attention from the professors was interpreted by the students as the professors seeing a lack of potential in them as students. In another interview, Eleanor, a first-year student commented, "I've noticed that the teachers see—invest more time in the students—that they see more potential in the students. He gives more attention to them. And then, the rest, it's just like, okay, you guys are average students." Students noticed the different interaction patterns of professors. While the professor subconsciously paid attention to certain students, the students who felt invisible interpreted the lack of attention as a lack of validation of them as scholars.

Michael, who was African American, felt singled out. When asked about campus culture and whether or not he felt as if he stood out as an African American, he overwhelmingly agreed:

Here? Oh hell yeah. My high school was 99.9 % Black. I come out here, and it's like what the hell? It's like hey—welcome to the mixing pot! And I'm like 1 or 2 people [who are African American] in the classroom. So it's a big change.

While Michael did not feel invisible physically, that did not mean that he did not feel invisible academically. At the same time, being the only African American in a classroom made him feel alone.

Students' Ways of Being

Several students commented on their level of shyness and how it affected the initiation of interaction. Some proclaimed themselves to be shy, while others described themselves as "people persons" or "outgoing." Both the shy students and the not so shy students talked about how students owned the shyness. Rufino, a male Latino student who prefers to not engage in interactions with professors shared, "I'm still kind of shy every now and then. That's just me though." Another student, Charina, who described herself as not shy, put the ownership of being shy onto the student. "The thing that I'm getting at is that some students are shy, but I don't think that it has to do with the faculty. So it's pretty much the students." Students did not see how faculty could assist with a student's shyness. Moreover, students took ownership of their shyness.

The students recognized similar insecurities about their peers' intimidation with going to counseling. Because the student participants were enrolled in a counseling class, they already made a connection with a counselor and were familiar with counseling services. When they encouraged their peers to see a counselor, the student participants could see the reluctance in their peers. Students in the study talked about the act of seeing counselors as an easy process for them because they were familiar with someone in counseling. But for their peers who were not in a course taught by a counselor, they were unaccustomed to the idea of seeing a counselor and did not have an exclusive connection to a person in counseling.

The shy students expressed how their shyness impeded their ability to initiate interaction with faculty. Jesse, an older student, commented about himself, "I'm not very social by nature as well. I'm pretty quiet. Reserved." He went on to talk about how his

way of being made asking questions more difficult for him. He stated, "It just makes my

learning a lot harder. That embarrassment to ask questions." Jesse student went on to

describe how he would eventually ask the professor questions after class, but the act of

doing so required a great deal of emotional effort on his part. Much of that shyness had

to do with the possible embarrassment of not knowing an answer or asking the wrong

question. Gabriela, a self-proclaimed shy student, described how she students who spoke

up in class, "But then people who are not the shy ones, they start talking to him [the

professor]. They answer all of the questions and stuff, even if they get it wrong."

Gabriela explained her hesitation in approaching faculty as not only about being shy, but

also about being embarrassed about possibly not having the right answers.

Student also expressed being nervous about interacting with professors, hence

affecting whether or not they initiated interaction with faculty. Students worried about

whether or not their professors would be mean or nice to them. Gabriela shared her

thoughts about being nervous around her English professor and how she did not approach

him for help outside of class:

> I don't go with him because again, I'm really nervous to go talk to him, the
>
> English professor, Mr. Schmidt. . . . that's why I don't want to get to know him
>
> better because what if he's mean to me when I go talk to him.

Gabriela had witnessed the English professor acting in ways that she interpreted as mean

to other students. Students described their nervousness with professors as fear as well.

One student stated professors were "scary or something." Students worried about not

knowing what to say to their professors. Gabriela, who was a first-generation student,

expressed her anxiety about having an appropriate conversation with her professors:

Am I going to do something wrong? What am I going to talk about? Is it too

much if I ask about their personal life? Maybe they don't have kids or a husband,

and they're upset about it, and I don't want to make them upset.

Students worried about "messing up" when asking questions and trying to talk to their

professors. They also talked about how they felt embarrassed after saying what they

perceived to be the "wrong things" to professors. Rufino expressed that his mood

affected whether or not he would initiate interaction with his professors:

I'm kind of like, mad, so I just don't want to be rude or say the wrong thing. Or

sound like, um—mean. . . . If I'm like mad or something, I really don't want to

talk to anybody because I don't want to be rude or anything. But, if I'm like

happy, and I'm like fine, then it doesn't bother me.

From Rufino's perspective, his reason for not interacting with his professor was more

about sheltering his professors from his anger. He was anxious about getting angry with

his professors. So, rather than addressing his professors about a bad grade, he would just

avoid them.

Along with being shy, students were not familiar with how to interact with their

professors and what to say to them. Similar to the previous students who felt

embarrassed about asking questions, another student felt embarrassed about possibly

saying the wrong thing. Natalia state, "You know if you say the wrong things when you

approach them, there's the awkwardness." This student was worried about not knowing

what to say to the professor although she knew she wanted help from the professor.

Another student became nervous with her professor when she attended his office hours.

"I was so nervous when he started talking to me. He was asking [me] how do I like the

class, and I didn't know what to say." The students become nervous around their professors and that nervousness interfered with their ability to interact. During the interview, Gabriela also displayed and expressed her nervousness with the researcher. She felt a lack of words and stated, "I should get a thesaurus to look up the words because I can't explain myself." Several students commented on not knowing how to communicate an idea correctly and not knowing how to ask questions.

Some students were not shy and were comfortable initiating interaction with professors. Fatima, a self-described outgoing student, felt very comfortable in approaching faculty because of her previous interactions with faculty through work study in the multicultural studies department. When asked if she would still initiate interaction with faculty without that previous familiarity with the faculty, she stated she would still approach them. "I'm pretty outgoing. I'm not shy. So, if there's something on my mind, and I have more questions for clarification, then I'll go ahead and initiate." Fatima talked about how faculty members were engaging and how their interaction with students helped her to initiate interaction with professors outside of class. "Coming to West Coast Community College and experiencing how engaging the professors are has made me open up. . . . You're going to automatically initiate faculty interaction with them because I saw the reciprocation of how engaging they were to their students." This student received personal support from her professors and expressed a tremendous amount of gratitude for their validation of her as a student.

In summary, students expressed discomfort with initiating interaction with faculty. Students had a number of preconceived notions about faculty and about interaction with faculty. Their assumptions came from their lack of familiarity with

higher education as well as from their fears about college and about the people in college.

Students also took cues from faculty's behaviors in class as an indication of how

interactions with the professor would result. The assumptions and impressions students

had about college shaped how they perceived their interactions, or lack of interactions,

with faculty. While their attitudes were not set in stone, faculty needed to be aware of

these attitudes so that faculty could directly address some of the assumptions made about

them and put students at ease. The next theme focuses on faculty attitudes.

Theme 2: Faculty Attitudes Toward Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction

Faculty participants generally had positive attitudes toward initiation of

interaction. However, when asked to describe how they executed the initiation of

student–faculty interaction, the participants' actions and values seemed incongruous.

Faculty Valuing Initiation of Interaction

Faculty members were asked, "How important to you is interacting with students

outside of class?" Faculty saw initiating interaction with the students as a way to help the

students in their coursework and on class material. Professor Xavier described his

attempts to keep students engaged in the material even when they were not in class:

> You ask me how important it is, it is important. I think if I only communicate
>
> with them on Tuesday and Thursday, it's not, it won't be as effective. I think it's
>
> important outside of class to stay in touch with them, just a gentle reminder, a
>
> little bit of a prod.

He typically emailed the students or sent out announcements on Blackboard for

reminders or clarification about the class.

Faculty members also expressed enjoyment in interacting with students. The math faculty member held one-on-one sessions with her students to get to know them. She began implementing the one-on-one sessions in her course that was part of a learning community which pays for additional interaction time with students outside of class:

I really enjoy that because it gives me a chance to get to know my students and know the different needs. It's going to be different every semester and every student is going to be different. And I get to know them better, and I like that.

The professor developed this strategy in a learning community with a counseling course where a counselor also held one-on-one interviews with students for the purposes of educational planning. In the educational planning sessions with a counselor, students are able to inquire about academic, career, and personal issues and make plans for the purposes of completing their goals. The math professor continued to hold one-on-one sessions with her students after she was no longer part of a learning community.

The faculty participants who were interviewed all had a genuine desire to help their students to be successful. More specifically, each of the faculty participants was open to, and valued, faculty initiation of student–faculty interaction outside of class. One full-time faculty member pointed out, "I could go to class and leave and whether my students fail or pass—but that's not the point. We're trying to make something positive happen. So, I don't mind initiating the conversation." Again, all of the faculty participants wanted their students to do well and expressed that that was why they were in a teaching and helping field.

Faculty Ambivalence

While faculty thought initiating interaction with students was important, they also struggled with the realization that their actions may not support their thoughts. Professor Xavier contemplated his answers about his value of interaction. While stating that he valued interacting with students, he questioned whether or not his actions supported what he stated:

> How important is it to me? Right away, the answer you want to come up with on a scale of one to ten, is ten, being it's very important. But then, you have to look at your actions. It's one of those things where I say it's important, but do my actions, convey that?

Once interaction outside of class was defined as including email and Blackboard communication, he was more comfortable saying that his actions were representative of his stated value of initiating interaction with students. But when addressing his behavior in initiating interaction face-to-face with students, he felt his behavior of initiating interaction would fall to a five on a scale of one to ten. Through the interview, this participant struggled with knowing the importance of faculty initiation of interaction with students, yet also knowing that his face-to-face interactions with students were limited.

Later in the interview this faculty member made a distinction between his thoughts and his actions. He spoke about creating an opportunity for interaction outside of class through service learning or field trips:

> There's what I'd like to do and what I actually do. I've thought of doing a service learning project with my students. I haven't done it yet. I haven't put it into place. I have thought of maybe going to—actually I have done a field trip.

He continued to speak about a time when he took his class on a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance in Los Angeles when he taught the course a few years back. But in his current class, while the thought about field trips and thought about involving the students in service learning, he had not turned his thoughts into actions.

One more point that Professor Xavier addressed about the initiation of interaction is that students may be invited to interact outside of class but might not follow through with the request. As he processed his thoughts about his hesitancy to initiate interaction outside of class, he expressed ambivalence again:

> Part of my . . . hesitancy . . . when it comes to setting up anything outside of the classroom face to face may be . . . the time factor [and] my own social anxiety and whether or not it's relevant or not or if enough students will show up. It's sort of like having a party and you're afraid who might not show up.

Later in the interview, he came back to his thoughts about his hesitation in initiating interaction with students and restated his concern about students not showing up to a meeting outside of class:

> The other one is the thing of that not all the students will show up. But once again, if I believe that students benefit from interacting with instructors, I shouldn't allow the fact that not all of the students will be there deter me from setting something up.

This professor was very self-aware and honest about his actions not matching his thoughts about the initiation of student–faculty interaction outside of class.

Ms. Lane questioned her role in interaction with students outside of class. For her, the concern was not only how much she initiated interaction with students outside of class, but also how that interaction may cross into her personal space.

> I think the biggest thing is I know everybody's comfort level is different in regards to interacting with students. But, I think maintaining professionalism is really important. I think that's key. Interaction is extremely important, and I feel like I do that a lot. But, in the back of my mind—that's on my mind is that—what my role is. And my role is to support them and to be there for them and have that support for them, but not to a point where it's crossing any boundaries.

Ms. Lane talked about her boundaries as professor always, never a friend. She was very interested in supporting her students but in a professional manner rather than a social one.

Although the faculty participants supported initiating interaction with students outside of class, they also pointed out some reservations about the initiation of interaction. One major reservation, brought up by Professor Xavier, a male, was the appearance of inappropriate conduct such as sexual harassment:

> Another dynamic, frankly, is even gender. When it comes to a male professor interacting with female students outside of class, it's gotten to the point now in today's society, there's that fear that from a male's perspective, that you never want to put yourself in that position . . . and as a male professor, I don't even want to put myself in a position where it might even be perceived that way.

The topic of sexual harassment was not raised by the female faculty participants.

Professor Santiago expressed his ambivalence was expressed in a different way. He frequently initiated interaction with students outside of class through advising student

clubs, creating opportunities for students and families to come to campus, to even initiating conversations with students he did not know while walking around campus. As he spoke about the value he saw in initiating interaction with students outside of class, he also touched upon how others in his department did not see it in the same way:

> I'm also aware of the fact that there's faculty who don't believe or think that it's part of our job. I know that, and I've had discussions with some of our colleagues and they teach and they leave at two o'clock. And sometimes I go, "I wish I was going home." But, I know I got to stay here for three or four hours just waiting for one of our meetings for one of the student organizations. But again, I also know that's how I see it. And I respect their views.

This professor spoke about the desire to go home versus staying on campus and his competing commitment to stay and work with students.

Faculty Time Constraints

Each faculty participant touched upon time constraints when talking about student–faculty interaction outside of class. Two of the faculty participants were part-time faculty. In the community college system examined, part-time instructors were not paid for office hours outside of class beyond three hours total for the entire semester depending upon how many units were taught. Therefore, part-time faculty members were not required to hold office hours. Ms. Borja described how she handled office hours:

> I'm very open to rearranging my schedule to meet with [students] when we can. So, it's not a problem to me to meet with them on campus outside of a designated time or maybe outside of an office hour which I don't have as a part timer. So, I'm able to do that on my own schedule and what fits with them.

Ms. Borja's office hours for students were to be arranged as opposed to having a set time for office hours. A few moments later in the interview, the faculty member added, "One of the difficult things that I find as a part-timer is that I'm not on campus a lot," and that further complicated the process for her and her students to find time to interact outside of class. In addition to that, part-time faculty members typically have other jobs to create a full-time salary. Ms. Cooper, another part-time faculty member, had other commitments which limited her availability to students outside of class. "I teach on base, and I also teach here, and I also have my own business where I have a tutoring service. So, I'm kind of all over the place."

Regardless of whether the faculty member was part-time or full-time, initiating interaction outside of class with students meant giving up time for other activities outside of work. Professor Santiago, the professor who frequently initiated interaction with students outside of class commented on how he balanced his time in his personal life and professional life:

> I have young children at home. In terms of emotional involvement, I'm not just teaching about [history]. I think that a lot of our students have other needs. To be listened to. I had another young lady here and was asking about her major and had some opinions. So, it can be taxing, but at the same time, it's also very rewarding.

He explained that he brought his children to some of the events he held for his students. This professor saw his involvement with students as important to the community, and he wanted his children to witness his involvement in the community. Again, he repeated his

description of the initiation of interaction occasionally being "taxing" in which he

commented on the importance of "having that moment to yourself."

In relation to time constraints, Professor Xavier, another full-time faculty

member, talked about his concern with the best use of his time with students outside of

class. He understood the value of initiating interaction with students outside of class but

was more apprehensive with connecting with one student at a time as opposed to several

students at once:

> Part of it is also diminishing returns. I don't know if you know what I mean by
>
> diminishing returns. As you're wondering, how much bang for your buck. If I'm
>
> spending an hour outside of my class, is there a better use of my time? Maybe,
>
> I'll reach out to maybe ten out of my thirty students. But is there a better way
>
> with that one hour of time I can reach all thirty?

Professor Xavier also referred to the capricious behavior of students and the probability

of their follow through with one-on-one meetings as somewhat of a deterrent for

initiating interaction outside of class. Interestingly, in the semester we spoke, he was

meeting with each of his students twice one-on-one. To reiterate, all the faculty

participants saw the value in initiating interaction with students outside of class, and they

all wanted to see their students succeed.

Faculty Defining the Relationship

Faculty participants were asked what image of themselves they wanted to portray

to their students and how they communicated that image. Professor Santiago stated:

> Everything is communication. Even the way I dress. So I try to—from the way I
>
> dress to the things that I talk about before class starts. . . . So I'm not just teaching

history, but I'm also trying to create consciousness with our students and

hopefully also political activism. But I find that almost everything is

communication.

This particular professor presented a professional image to his students from his collared

button up shirt and khaki pants to the way he lectured in class. His goal was not only to

communicate the lessons in history but to also communicate a way of being for the

students.

In defining their relationship, students and faculty members were constantly

defining their social positioning, or evaluating where they stood with each other. As

Professor Xavier put it:

There's always the jitters the first few weeks of the semester, and they're trying to

figure out what kind of professor you are. It's almost like they want to know

what they can get away with—not get away with—but what are their boundaries.

Professors saw the initial class meetings as an opportunity to set the tone for the class and

to establish the boundaries. For example, Ms. Borja talked about how she presented

herself on the first day of class:

The first night, I think it's a very important night of the class because they are

feeling you out, and you are feeling them out. I go in there a little bit tougher than

what I probably end up evolving to as the semester goes on. The first night, I

definitely am a little bit more—come across with a little bit—definitely more

boundaries to the relationship with me.

Professors recognized the weight of first impressions and how those first impressions set the tone of the class for the rest of the semester. However, they may not fully realize to what degree their students scrutinize those impressions.

Professor Xavier set guidelines for interaction, which also reinforced the traditional social position of a student in relation to a professor. He explicitly stated how he wanted to be addressed in class:

> So, I think it's important for professors within their first week to go, "This is how I like to be addressed." In part of my student data [questionnaire at the beginning of the semester], I ask them what's their name, what's their nickname or any other name that they like to be called. So, say your name is Jacqueline, but you like to be called Jackie. I'm going to call you Jackie. So, my name is Danny Xavier. I preferred to be called Mr. Xavier. Or Professor Xavier.

As the faculty participants talked further about how they defined their relationships to their students, their comments fell into the following categories: faculty roles, authority or approachability, and respect.

Faculty roles. When faculty participants were asked if they saw the initiation of interaction by a professor outside of class as having a role in student success, they agreed and began to describe how they saw their role in the students' success. They saw themselves as listeners, guides, mentors, teachers, advocates, coaches, counselors, cheerleaders, and as someone who can validate the students' experiences and abilities in college. Professor Santiago compared the process of validating a student to a parental role. "I've had to become in some ways a parent—pushing them. I've had to become a

cheerleader [saying], 'You can do it! You can do it!' I call my students scholars. I try to

empower them." Professors also see themselves as role models to the students:

> I'm here to be fully a part of this campus. I will approach students and often
>
> introduce myself, and certainly as a mentor to MEChA, to Encuentros, to Ballet
>
> Folklorico, and to Ritmo Latino—four different groups on campus. I do see
>
> myself as a role model to especially my students, especially as a Latino with a
>
> Ph.D. Unfortunately, there are few of us. And I think that it's important.

Professor Santiago highlighted the importance of students seeing role models who

reflected them ethnically and culturally. On a campus with approximately 70% White

faculty, Professor Santiago tried to make his presence as a professor of color known to

the students, especially Latino students.

Professor Xavier spoke about the role of being a friend and went on to clearly

state that his role was not to be a student's friend:

> At the same time, I'm not a friend. Because the connotation when you're a friend
>
> is sort of, when you're with a friend, there's a certain amount of lack of
>
> accountability sometimes. There's a certain—I can get away with this cause
>
> we're friends. No. I'm just like your coach. I'm going to make you do things
>
> you don't want to do, but I know it's going to make you better in the end. I'm
>
> going to make you do these exercises even though you think you don't want to do
>
> them. And I'm going to push you through these exercises you think you can't do
>
> and in the end, it will make you, in this case, a better athlete, but a better student.
>
> So, no. I am not their friend.

Professor Lane shared a similar sentiment of how she related to students. When asked

about the boundaries she saw between students and professors, she stated:

> I think there's a fine line between [the role of being a friend or a professor]. And
>
> I think as counselors we have that role too. Sometimes we can be so relatable and
>
> make students feel so comfortable that they feel that they can turn around and do
>
> that. But there's a really strict form of professionalism. And I think Facebook is
>
> a perfect example. Students will always ask me to be their friend on Facebook,
>
> and I don't respond. And sometimes they'll come up to me in class—Ms. Lane, I
>
> asked you to be my friend on Facebook. How come you didn't respond? And I'll
>
> say, "It's very important for me to keep my professional and private life
>
> separate." And they leave it at that and respect that.

Professor Santiago had no concerns about blurring the lines between being a friend and a

professor. He stated, "I don't worry too much about my students. They know that I can

be their friend, but I'm their friend that can fail them if they don't do their job." His

position is that he could be both, but he was a professor first, then a friend.

Authority versus approachability. In terms of boundaries, one of the concerns

of the professors was that they maintained authority in their classes while at the same

time being "relatable" and "approachable" to the students. Professor Borja explained:

> I want to be relatable. However, I also want to be—I'm still the instructor for the
>
> class. So, sometimes it's a grey area in the class. If I come across too relatable, I
>
> can lose that structure in the class. And then that's hard to get the tasks done with
>
> the class if I lose some of that structure. So, I want to be relatable and
>
> approachable in a safe environment, but I also need to maintain that structure.

The professors spoke about approachability and authority as if the two concepts were in conflict with one another. Professor Lane explained:

> I think that if I present myself as an authority figure, that will make [students] shy as well. But if I'm more approachable to my students, and can relate to them, and can share my own personal experiences as I relate to them, I think that's more beneficial.

Faculty members saw professor approachability as a competing quality with authority or management of the class.

The amount of education a professor had was another contributor to the social structure between students and faculty. Professors at the community college typically possess master's degrees. One professor commented on his observation of how some professors, with doctoral degrees or with master's degrees, use their degrees to expand the social space between themselves and their students. After talking about how he preferred to be called Professor Xavier, this faculty participant stated, "At the same time, I have to be aware that there are professors out there whom I would call academic bullies. Because of their degrees, they feel as if they are unapproachable, or they talk down to students." Again, similar to the previous example, Professor Xavier is concerned about boundaries and approachability, preferring to be more approachable and less of a bully.

Two of the faculty participants in the study held doctoral degrees. Professor Borja recognized that her title of doctor created distance between her and her students:

> Some students call me professor, and I'll say you can call me Leilani. I think that the title can create a distance between a relationship, and I don't want to have that with the students where they feel this distance interacting or relating to me. So, I

don't push it on a student to call me Leilani. I offer it, and if they feel more

comfortable calling me professor, or Dr. Borja, that's fine.

Professor Santiago, the other professor with a doctoral degree, did not specify to his

students what to call him nor does he offer his first name as an option. He was typically

addressed as "professor" or as "Dr. Santiago" or "Dr. S." Rather than focus on his title,

he tried to make himself relatable to the students by telling them about his background:

I think I have to demystify, and deconstruct a little bit, myself to them. And I

think that's a big impact . . . that I grew up as a farm worker, that I was homeless

for a couple of years. I pass a picture of me as a janitor around to the students

because I want them to see that it's not easy, but it's doable. And I think that

when they see that when that I publish book and I have this Ph.D., and they'll

Google my name on the Internet, they'll find something about me. They're

excited about that. Especially because I come from a background like theirs [of

Latino decent].

While the faculty participants acknowledged creating boundaries between them and the

students, and while they held close roles with their students, Professor Santiago also

acknowledged that the social positioning between a professor and a student affected how

some students interacted with faculty. In this professor's example, he was aware of the

intimidation factor of his doctoral degree. Therefore, he actively worked demystify what

it meant to have a doctoral degree. He made himself approachable to the students.

Respect. No matter what or how the boundaries were set, the main goal of all the

faculty participants was that respect was present in the interaction. One faculty member

stated:

I think that there's a way to maintain your level of respect. I think that's a big piece too is that the students still need to respect you because you are their instructor. I think you can relate to them and have that level but at the same time you need to establish a level or boundary of respect and that goes from the first day of class and it should continue throughout.

Professor Xavier explained his expectations of student–faculty dynamics. He spoke about his perception of the level of respect that students needed to give to their professors:

There's a certain level of respect that goes with being a professor. That you've gone and got your Bachelor's and your Master's. And it's almost like talking to an elder in a sense where you kind of earned their respect—a certain level of respect. And I think that's a societal thing for me. It's the way I was raised or whatever, but, I think when you, me personally, when you first meet me, I prefer to be called Professor Xavier or Mr. Xavier.

The same faculty member gave an example about interactions he had with some students who would speak to him in an informal manner with a certain lack of respect for authority:

It actually makes me uncomfortable when they talk to me like a peer. When I have a 20 year-old and I'm 50, and they approach me, "Ay Danny. What do you think?" The certain level of informality to that. All of a sudden I have to step back, and my point is it's not a case of so much uncomfortable with it, it's where are they coming from where they feel as if we're—that they can address me in that manner at that time.

In summary, professors wanted to be treated with respect and focused on ways to preserve the students' respect.

In terms of respect for students, Professor Santiago spoke about respecting where the students came from in terms of the various levels of preparation for and exposure to college that the students possess, especially at the community college:

> I think that we have to be very respectful and aware of cultural differences and perspectives. They are young people. . . . It's more about finding the language of communication and also respect for our students. . . . That's the thing that I am careful to respect and know who they are.

Rather than viewing the students' levels of preparation as deficits, he saw them as points to respect. And finally, Professor Xavier commented on respect for both the student and the faculty member, "I want the respect, but at the same time, I don't want to demean or look down upon this. I want to also respect the students from where they are coming from. So, there's a certain level of respect for each other." Respect was a given for both faculty and students.

Faculty Observing Students

Faculty participants made some observations of the students which included differences between a university student and a community college student, and the background or cultural history that the students brought with them. Faculty also noticed that some students from certain backgrounds were not inclined to approach faculty. Several professors related to that observation.

Nontraditional students. Community colleges typically have more nontraditional students on campus than universities (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008).

Professor Santiago previously worked at a university before coming to the community college. He saw the differences in student populations between the two systems:

> It's been, for me, an adjustment. Because whatever was working at the previous employment that I had was not working here. And that was very successful, and here, sadly, that was not the case. . . . And that has been a change for me dealing with the upper division students to our lower division at the community college. Even in past, there are things or topics that maybe they haven't addressed yet. Maybe being more politicized or critical thinking. Things that they might find uncomfortable in fact. Visualizing history and immigration issues. Vocabulary. I've had to not change my vocabulary, but explain it. I noticed that if I say the "discourse of immigration" nobody will ask what discourse is but I can see in their faces that nobody knows what I am talking about. It'll be followed by what is discourse type of thing.

The professor admitted to changing his ways of approaching a lesson. For example, in addition to explaining his vocabulary, he spent extra time teaching his students how to answer a short essay. Another example is that he needed to bring a stapler to class because many students did not have a stapler at home. At the same time, he also emphasized that he did not change his standards as a professor or lower his expectations of his students as "scholars." With the expectation of students behaving like "professional students," faculty members may make assumptions that students also are aware of how to initiate interaction with professors. The assumption about students is that they understand that they can ask for help as well as understand how to ask for help.

Not only did the community college have a different population than the university, but the community college also had a very diverse population in terms of preparation for college:

> Here, I have very beautiful students from drastically different backgrounds. I have students who are barely learning to write next to another student who is going to UCLA, AB 540 students. And I have all different types of backgrounds [in my classes]. . . . So, when I ask my students about their background, a vast majority of my students did not go to high school. I ask for average GPA, "C" average. I ask who has a computer at home. They don't even have a computer at home. Even less have Internet access, right? Those are things you are coming to college with things against you [the professor].

The professor saw the students' varying degrees of preparation as a challenge not for the students but for the professors. Rather than framing these challenges as student deficits, Professor Santiago framed these challenges as student needs and challenges for the faculty. With this frame of reference, he placed faculty in control of addressing the challenges of nontraditional students instead of blaming students for their lack of preparation.

Students' cultural histories. Each of the faculty participants recognized the variance in their students' levels of familiarity with college. They recognized that the students came from different cultural backgrounds in terms of ethnicity, of history, of experience, and of preparation for college. Professor Santiago commented:

> We're trying to meet them half way. We're not their parents, but I also know that we have students who are coming from backgrounds where this [culture of

college] is completely new. I always tell my students that it's almost like a whole new frontier, a whole new border that's being crossed. Many of our parents crossed the border physically, legally or illegally for that matter. Therefore, there are things that are known to us. And simply put, I know that the idea of the professional student we will find at the university level. Here [at the community college] you will not. We are trying to create that [professional student].

Because of the different experiences that students brought with them to college, each of the faculty participants mentioned that they attempted to understand who their students were. Four of the five faculty participants spoke about their method of gathering background information from their students. They either had one-on-one interviews with their students or had them complete a personal questionnaire in which the students had the choice to remain anonymous or to identify themselves. Their goals were to recognize each student as an individual.

Because of the different cultural backgrounds between students and professors, professors had to be cognizant of how they communicated with the students. For example, Professor Xavier commented on how he monitored his communication to other students for sarcasm or jokes that might be taken literally:

So, I have to be careful sometimes when I make remarks, informal remarks. And when I don't know the student fully. Because something that is just off the cuff remark for me as far as—and we're talking about hierarchy [in status between the student and professor]—will have a long lasting effect on the student if you say something that undermines them. You think you're kidding, but you don't realize that they have 18 years of history that you're not aware of.

In moments similar to this one described above, there is a higher likelihood of miscommunication. Typically, that miscommunication is to the student's disadvantage. This professor, along with some of the other faculty participants, recognized that students brought with them a history that added a component to their way of being in the classroom. While faculty members recognized that who they were to the students inhibited their interactions with students, they also underestimated how much their social status in relation to the students affected their interactions with students outside of class.

The invisible students. Faculty participants also recognized that some students would not initiate interaction with their professors. Professor Santiago believed that students did not interact with professors if they did not feel welcomed in college. And because he knew that of some students did not feel at ease, he felt that initiating interaction with students was important:

> I'll tell you why it's important to me. I think that there's a lack of a sense of academic ownership and academic spaces in our community. . . . I really feel that the Latino community that's here in West Coast Community College doesn't feel a sense of ownership and that this belongs to them. And I think it's better for us to make them feel welcomed whether it's a mural in one of our rooms, or cultural events, or me going out to them.

Later in the interview, he returned to his idea of "ownership" in academia referencing the underrepresentation of Latinos in education. This faculty participant further explained that students will not be engaged in the campus if the campus is not doing its part to engage the student:

> I think the idea—ownership—if they don't feel that, they're not going to come to us. That's really how I feel. You can have any program that you want to have and any support mechanism you want to have. But if the student in general does not feel invited or really that they are welcomed, that the help is genuine, then I think that they will shy [away].

He brought up the point that students do not always feel welcomed on a college campus or in campus programs because they do not see faculty or other students who represent them. At the same time, the college experience was necessarily an experience that was common amongst the students' circle of friends and family. Therefore, the idea of "ownership of an academic space" for many students was a foreign concept.

Several of the faculty participants referenced their initiation of interaction with students outside of class with students who were at risk of failing the course. This was a common reason for initiating interaction outside of class. But, not many professors took the time to acknowledge students who were doing well in their classes, especially those who were generally shyer students. Professor Xavier touched upon the acknowledgment of students who were doing well in his class:

> At the same time I have to remember, this is actually harder to remember, to acknowledge the students who are doing well. As faculty members, I've noticed we tend to focus on the ones who are struggling and they get our attention. And not as much "that a boy's" to the ones who are showing up on time, are doing the work, and acknowledging them more than just giving them a good grade.

Initiation of interaction by the professor with students who were doing well in the class was discussed in the interviews with much less frequency than initiation with students who were at risk thereby creating an "invisible" population.

Relating to the students. Each of the professors recalled their own experiences and feelings in initiating interaction with faculty members outside of class. And because of their experiences, they attempted to make adjustments in their own actions for the students whose positions they once had been in. As they talked about their own experiences, they validated why they thought interaction initiated by the professor was important to them. A few of the faculty participants mentioned that they were scared to approach their professors when they were in college. Professor Borja recalled, "For me when I was a student, I had a hard time approaching faculty or counselors. And I was intimidated by that process. So, in turn, I try to be the instructor that they can turn to or come to." Professor Xavier explained the logic behind his fear of interacting with faculty as a student:

> I will tell you my own personal story. When I was a student, I was deathly afraid of approaching professors outside of the classroom. And part of it I always felt that when it came to the hierarchy, they are so far above me. And it had to do also with I had issues regarding authority figures, that I always felt less than. I was very insecure, so why would I approach someone who was higher up on the hierarchy just to reinforce my own insecurity. Why validate my own insecurity? Why would I want to go there? And I understand that students go through the same thing.

Both of these professors took into account how a student might have felt when it came to student–faculty interaction.

The faculty participants also talked about how someone along the way in college helped them get through college. They talked about the impact those individuals had on them. Professor Xavier remembered his experience with one of his former professors, "I didn't approach my professor almost like a mentor-mentee level until I was twenty-five. And I was going to the University of Florida in Gainesville. It was a sociology professor, Dr. Hepler. I still remember the guy." Professor Santiago explained how he had "tremendous limitations" and how he was "very shy" when he was a student. He remembered faculty going out of their way to help him complete his education, and he was grateful for that. Again, like the other professors, he wanted to do the same for another student. He recalled:

> I can tell you that I had no idea where I was going along the way—community college, and the Ph.D. program. There was always someone that took the time to sit down and say, "Hey, you need help and this is where you need guidance," and both the Master's and the Ph.D., there were times that I were to drop out and step out, and maybe there was a line that they [the faculty member] crossed, but they did it to help me in that direction. So, here I am.

Lastly, Professor Cooper talked about how office hours were what helped her:

> Just being a student myself and having my professors always do that [office hour] for me and knowing what I got out of that—because I always went to office hours. . . . I transferred to UCLA, and I went to office hours every chance I got at UCLA. . . . and I got so much out of office hours outside of class.

This participant talked about her viewpoint on the importance of having an office hour

for students to ask questions and interact with the professor. Professor Cooper was a

part-time faculty member and was not required to hold office hours for her students under

her contract. Despite that fact, she held office hours for her students.

Faculty Ways of Being

Another factor that played into the initiation of interaction was faculty members'

comfort levels and attitudes about initiating interaction. Some professors were more

receptive than others to student–faculty interaction outside of class. For Professor

Santiago, initiation of student–faculty interaction was a natural occurrence for him:

> I don't want to say it's part of my job, but it's part of who I am. I'm a very social
>
> person. I do believe that I'm here not just to teach the one hour and fifteen
>
> minutes, but I'm here to be fully a part of this campus. I will approach students
>
> and often introduce myself. . . . I think that's the kind of thing that's the nature of
>
> our department.

For this professor, he repeatedly commented on the importance for him of interacting

with students beyond the classroom. Professor Lane talked about her learning style as a

reason for her proclivity towards interacting with students:

> I think it's really important [to interact with students]. It may be my own style.
>
> My personal learning style is a feeler. So for me, I go off of personal interactions
>
> with students. I feel more comfortable being able to get to know my instructor
>
> outside of class on a one on one basis. I felt more comfortable in the class and
>
> safer in the class. For me as a faculty member, it's the same thing for me.

Professor Cooper expressed that she felt comfortable discussing students' issues as they

related to math:

> When you do a lot of tutoring, you get into almost the psychology behind all the
>
> math issues. And you just get used to talking about these kind of things with
>
> people, and I just kind of got comfortable talking about [personal issues such as
>
> math anxiety].

She came across the same issues with so many students that the conversations became

familiar. Therefore, she was comfortable with interacting with students outside of class

because she knew what to expect.

For other professors, their own personalities played a role in their comfort with

initiating interaction with students outside of class. Professor Santiago stated "I'm a

talking kind of person. I'm not the kind of person that just sits. I'm the kind of person

that talks in an elevator and makes conversation." Some professors were naturally more

social while others were naturally more private. In general, the professors were

comfortable working with students, but each had different levels of anxiety when

interaction became more social and less formal. To illustrate the opposite end of the

spectrum, a less social professor stated:

> I do have a certain level of social anxiety. So, for me to meet with students on a
>
> personal level, it's not comfortable for me. There's a certain level of discomfort
>
> for me. . . . I'm a shy person anyway, even though I don't appear to be. . . . For
>
> me personally, it takes more energy for me to do it.

This professor was open to interaction with students outside of class and had even

thought about formalized interactions outside of class such as service learning. But for

this professor, more energy was needed to interact with students outside of class because of his social anxiety. He further explained his thought process:

> What happens is when you go to an event, you sort of become the ring leader by default. And I'm not super comfortable being in that role. I play that role when I'm in the classroom, but then outside . . . I'm even less comfortable because there's less structure going on outside of the classroom. So, that could play a role in another reason why I don't initiate contact.

For the faculty participants, interaction with students outside of class was valued, but the initiation of that interaction varied from faculty member to faculty member based on their comfort level with social interaction outside of class.

In conclusion, the faculty participants were content with their levels of student–faculty interaction outside of class before they interviewed with the researcher. Their interactions with students outside of class did not concern them as much as their interactions inside of class. Therefore, the participants hardly thought about their methods of interaction outside of class, let alone their patterns of interaction. And as a result, faculty often unintentionally increased the distance between themselves and their students. However, each participant was interested in learning more about interactions outside of class because they were each interested in the success of their students. After the interviews, the faculty participants' eyes were open to the possibility of increasing their levels of interaction with students and improving upon their relationships with students.

Theme 3: Initiation of Student–Faculty Interaction

Both students and faculty members initiated interaction with one another at different times. Much of the interaction had to do with the students' success whether it was from the point of view of the faculty member or of the student. But when asked whose responsibility the initiation of the interaction belonged to, the answers varied and reluctantly seemed to point to the other party. In this theme, who initiated interaction, how they initiated interaction, and why that interaction was initiated will be discussed.

Student Experience

Students acknowledged their role in taking responsibility for the initiation of interaction while at the same time suggesting that faculty initiate interaction as well. For a majority of the interactions, students inquired about assistance with work in their classes as opposed to interacting for career exploration purposes, networking, or for research opportunities.

Responsibility for initiation as seen by students. From the students' points of view, most believed that the responsibility fell upon both the student and the faculty member to initiate the interaction, but some students saw the responsibility as belonging to the students. Most of the participants were recruited from a college success skills course where personal responsibility was a component of the class. Many of the students acknowledged the student's responsibility in taking charge of their success in college and in initiating interaction with their professors. Charina, a self-identified people person stated, "You have to initiate that contact [with a professor]. You got to be proactive. So, I think in terms of who should, to answer your question, actually I think it should

definitely be the student." Another student, Michael, a U.S. Marine Corp veteran, echoed

Charina's sentiment in a separate interview:

> I think we as people should be more supportive of ourselves because there's
>
> nothing that builds a society more than a person that can take care of themselves
>
> and then look after other. So, you should work for the foundation of you, and
>
> then help others.

Michael was taught the concept of making sure that the individual takes care of his or

herself before assisting others in the Marine Corp. This was a lesson especially executed

in medical emergency situations. Michael carried this attitude of personal responsibility

into his schoolwork and into his overall way of being in life. Interestingly, Michael later

spoke about the few moments he thought the responsibility for initiation of interaction

fell upon the professor. But in general, he saw the responsibility as the student's

responsibility because the interaction was about the student's education.

Like Michael, several students believed that the responsibility fell upon both the

instructor and the student. Several students saw the initiation of interaction as a

collaborative effort. Another self-identified people person, Fatima, explained:

> I think it should be on an equal level. If they approach me, it's okay. And I
>
> should be able to approach my instructor as well. They should be available for us
>
> to talk to and have time to talk with us and stuff like that if we need to interact
>
> with them.

In another interview with Eleanor and Jeanette together, both self-identified as shy

students, they designated the responsibility as belonging to both the students and

professors. Jeanette pondered, "Both. Isn't it? Like a little help from the professor and

the students." Almost directly after that comment, Eleanor chimed in, "Well, in a way yah, but more from the professor because they know like from the course and all that, and they can help you a lot on it. Yah, that's my view." After her comment, the student giggled as if she was embarrassed to tell a faculty member that she thought more of the responsibility fell upon faculty. She was also ambivalent about who the responsibility to initiate interaction belonged to. Similar to the ambivalence the students felt about the value of interaction, this student felt the ambivalence about the responsibility for the initiation. While trying to take responsibility for her education, Eleanor also felt that the faculty member needed to take ownership of the initiation process. Michael also spoke about shifting the responsibility from the student to the professor:

> Interaction is more of a student thing, but it is your life. But as a professor, you
> need to know when to interact with certain students and when to not. Because
> I'm not going to interact with a student that has a "B" or an "A" because you're
> doing fine. But if a borderline you know like a "C" or a "D" you need to see
> more interaction. So, like 50/50.

While many students saw responsibility for initiation of interaction as the student's job, they also expressed their desire to have faculty initiate interaction with them.

How students initiated interaction. Students typically approached their professor before and after class instead of during office hours. When the researcher inquired about attendance in office hours, one student replied, "No, not during office hours. Just after that class is over." Even the faculty members noticed that the students tended to choose interaction times around class rather than during office hours. This faculty member stated, "I do have students who will stay after class to ask questions. . . . I

haven't had any ask to meet me outside of the few minutes before or after a class time."

Most students simply ask their professor a question for clarification on homework, but

some have a more specific plan of action. To give an example, Charina explained how

she initiated contact with a professor:

> I will go up to them the beginning of class, introduce myself by shaking their
>
> hands, and what I try to do is I try to send them an email before the class starts
>
> just letting them know, 'Hi. I'm Charina. I'll be in your class. I'm really looking
>
> forward to taking your class.' So that way, when I introduce myself to them, they
>
> kind of know that oh, this is the girl that emailed me.

Charina was also the student who believed that the responsibility for initiating interaction

between students and faculty fell solely upon the student.

Student reasons for initiating interaction. The main reason students initiated

interaction with professors outside of class is for the purposes of performing better in the

class. Rarely was the interaction about career exploration, assisting in research,

networking, personal support, or anything social. As a matter of fact, when Michael, the

veteran, was asked about what reasons he interacts with professors, he simply put, "It's

academic. It's nothing social or anything like that." When followed up with a question

asking whether or not he thought about socializing with a professor, he exclaimed,

"Never. I don't think I ever thought about it like that. I don't think it's professional at

the same time either." Other students were open to the idea of having coffee with the

professor but the conversation would be on an academic level rather than on a personal

level. Fatima explained, "If I were to see them on campus, yah, I'd probably start a

conversation and say, 'Hey! How's it going?' and talk about the class and so forth and

the material that we're covering." Again, the interaction would be academic in nature and related directly to the class.

Most of the students cited "the need to get a good grade" as the main reason for initiating interaction with faculty. Natalia declared that she only attend the office hours of her biology professor and not any other professor because she was satisfied with her performance in the other classes. "That's why I only go to my bio one because I need help." When students approached their professors, they typically had a specific item they wanted help with in the class. Some students stated they approached faculty because they did not understand the material and they needed additional clarification, while others stated they went to their professor's office hours for assistance on homework such the organization of a paper. One student from the focus group explained how he approached all his professors at the beginning of the semester to explain to them that he has a disability:

> I like to go see my teachers after class or during their office hours just to tell
> them, like before school starts, I tell them I have cerebral palsy, and I need some
> help on some stuff. And they'll work around my disability a little bit. And then
> I'll go in their office hours.

Again, the students' objectives in initiating interaction were narrowly defined as assistance with homework when they did indeed approach faculty.

A couple of students had additional motives other than gaining assistance with homework. Charina stated, "I want my professor to know who I am not just because I'm trying to get the grade in the class, but mainly I think building the relationship with them [professors] is super important." She had the motivation of getting a good grade in the

class, but her main reason for initiating interaction with faculty was not only for assistance on assignments but for personal reasons as well. Michael stated he initiated interaction with his professors because it helped him to become engaged in the class and to learn. He explained:

> I really want to have some sort of mental or emotional connection with them because I do think that if plays a role when you get your grade. Because it's like I know this person [the student] tried, and this person is not trying to 'F' me or anything like that. So that's how I interact. I think for me to learn, I got to do the hearing and the feeling part. So, I have to interact with the people that's teaching me. I don't' want to go through the class with 40 kids, and I'm just another number to them.

He saw interaction as an opportunity for him to let the professor know that he was a serious student who was not going to take advantage of the professor. He also wanted to have a connection with the people he was going to learn from.

Faculty Experience

Faculty saw the initiation of student–faculty interaction as a positive matter. While faculty initiated interaction with their students outside of class, they were not necessarily intentional about interacting with students.

Responsibility for initiation as seen by faculty. From the faculty members' points of view, some saw the responsibility for the initiation of interaction as a collaborative effort between student and faculty. Professor Cooper explained, "And that's how it usually starts. Just by expressing it in class that I'm open and free and that I'm here for them, they generally initiate me at that point. So it kind of goes back and

forth." Professor Borja saw the initiation of interaction not only as a collaborative effort but also as a way to teach the students how to take more responsibility for their own education:

> I want to make sure that I'm providing the opportunity but not to their
>
> disadvantage. So, I don't want to take their responsibility away either. If I over
>
> accommodate, that may help them short term, but then long term, they could
>
> repeat this pattern in another class. Then, I haven't helped them for the following
>
> class. In my class, I'm trying to teach them responsibility or where we go over
>
> self-responsibility so I want to provide that environment where they're able to do
>
> that. But not, carry them through the class.

This professor, who was also a part-time professor, stated she made sure the environment is a safe place for students to approach her, but she did not necessarily initiate interaction outside of class. For her, the initiation of interaction began inside of class. As for the responsibility for initiation of interaction outside of class, that was left to the students.

Circumstances when professors expected students to initiate interaction with them included schedule changes, missing class, and questions on assignments. Several professors commented on the responsibility for the initiation of interaction outside of class being left to the student, particularly when the student was struggling in the class. Professor Xavier stated:

> I expect students who are having difficulty [in the class to take responsibility for
>
> initiation of interaction]. Let's put it in context. My expectations is if a student is
>
> having difficulty in the class, that I'm not aware of based on test results or

something like that . . . if they have any concerns, I expect that they will initiate

contact with me.

Professor Lane saw responsibility for interaction as belonging to the faculty member

when the student appeared to not be engaged in the class or with the professor, "We don't

know where our students are coming from and what their cultural backgrounds are, so I

think it's important for us to make that initial contact if we know that the student isn't

making that with us." In this quote, the faculty member took responsibility for initiation

of interaction, but in this particular instance, the initiation was in reaction to the student

not engaging in the class.

Many times, professors did not take a proactive role in the initiation of

interaction. Several times, faculty participants were not sure where they stood with

initiating interaction outside of class. Professor Cooper stated, "I'm trying to think. I

guess I initiate and then they initiate me. I'm okay with them doing that. But do I expect

it from them? I don't think I expect or not expect it." Similar to this faculty participant,

several faculty participants did not necessarily initiate interaction outside of class, but

were also not opposed to interacting with students outside of class if the students

requested a meeting. Faculty participants also described themselves as initiating

interaction inside of class for the possibility of interaction outside of class. Professor

Borja stated:

I'll offer opportunities to interact, and then I wait for them to take the invitation

because I think it's then their responsibility because I've opened up the invitation,

then their responsibility as a student is to grab that invitation and say, "Yes, let's

meet at this time."

Again, initiation of interaction by faculty members was not necessarily proactive, and at other times, not deliberate, although some may have invited such interaction. Professor Cooper stated, "I offer. If they come, they come. If they don't come, I might mention it again. But, I don't force them to meet me. It's up to them."

While the actions of the initiation of interaction were not proactive across all participants, faculty participants did see initiation as faculty's responsibility. All the faculty participants took responsibility for initiating interaction with students whether it began inside the classroom or outside the classroom. Professor Santiago stated he saw his job as a professor as going beyond the classroom. He stated, "I think that's the kind of thing that's the nature of our department. . . . And we really feel that it's not just the one hour lecture, but that we have to go out there and really be involved." For Professor Santiago and his colleagues in his department, student–faculty interaction outside of class was part of their teaching style.

How faculty initiated interaction. Many of the faculty participants initiated interaction with their students electronically with the most common method being email. Professor Cooper stated, "So, it could happen through email. It could happen through— mostly email. Not really phone so much." Other modes of communication included phone, Blackboard announcements, and texting. Texting seemed to not be as common amongst the professors, but the most efficient method. Professor Xavier declared:

> I can text them. I'm finding out that is the way to go. If I need to get a message out to them sooner, I should text them. Even nowadays, they barely check their personal emails, never mind [West Coast] emails. So, I find that quickest way to communicate with them is text messaging.

Topics included, but were not limited to, career information, scholarships, assignment related items, campus resources such as workshops or referrals, and compliments to the students on their work.

In terms of face-to-face methods, a variety of actions were performed by various professors. Aside from office hours, several of the participants scheduled one-on-one meetings with their students outside of class. As mentioned earlier, Professor Xavier took his students on a field trip to the Museum of Tolerance. All of the faculty participants reported approaching students in person when the students seemed to be struggling in class. And, other than the casual incidental contact such as seeing students in the hallways and greeting the students, these were the typical methods of initiation of interaction with students outside of class.

Professor Santiago had a different attitude towards initiation of student–faculty interaction outside of class. He reported taking less common, even unexpected, actions to initiate interaction:

> The other thing that I have done that may be strange to some of my colleagues is every Thursday, I'll take one of my books or whatever I am working on, and I will sit on the student room, the club room, SU-19. I'm in there because usually Ballet [Folklorico] is practicing or MEChA has a meeting at four. But, I'll go there for at least an hour and a half and sit there every Thursday. Students will be all around me, and they'll ask me what am I doing, and I'm just sitting there reading my books and studying.

In essence, he conducted some of his preparation time for his classes in the student room where students had access to him as opposed to working in his office. He also liked to

introduce himself to students who were sitting by themselves. From Professor Santiago's point of view, he was trying to let students know about his presence as a faculty member of color, as well as his department's presence, on campus. He sat at the tables with the student clubs he advised during events when the clubs would conduct outreach in the student union. In those instances, he was supporting his students in the clubs and introducing himself to new students who approached the table. And finally, he also held an event for his students on campus which he called "Familias," meaning "families" in Spanish. For these events, he invited his students and their families to campus to familiarize them with the process of higher education:

> I was thinking that when you're 18 or 19 years old, you want to be away from your parents, and yet, we're asking them to bring their parents to this campus. And the reason for that is to creating ownership of the academic space. But more importantly, we are aware of the fact that our parents, and they don't know much of the fact about college because they've never been here, right, as students or any other capacity. And we wanted them to come on campus, and it wasn't enough for us go give them a sheet about financial aid in Spanish, but we really had to talk with them and not to them. So, we thought of this Familia, an event that we can have our parents and our students and we bring food. . . . And so, we're talking about this and in the process, we're educating them, you know we're educating each other, about financial aid or how to transfer to the universities.

Throughout his interview, Professor Santiago emphasized that he wanted to become a part of the campus and expressed that desire through his interactions with students.

Professor Xavier described his experience with passively initiating interaction with his students outside of class in past classes. In previous years, he allowed students to sign up for a one-on-one meeting with him outside of class. He left it up to the students to make their one-on-one appointments. He discovered that being more explicit and proactive with his requests to meet yielded a better outcome:

> One of the differences before, when it comes to interaction, first semester I did this, I would tell them these are the times I'm available to meet [one on one for a counseling appointment] with me. And please sign up to meet with me. I found that that is not as successful as saying, "Okay, I've looked up your schedule. So I see you have some free time. I've actually scheduled you to meet with me on this day at this time." And so what I've done for this semester, and I did last semester, is I meet, I block out time in my schedule specifically for my . . . students and I'll say to them ok, Jaime, you're meeting with me at 1:00, Nancy you're meeting with me at 1:30 on Tuesday this date.

The professor also expressed surprise in the lack of resistance in the students to meet with him outside of class.

Faculty reasons for initiation of interaction. Initiating interaction with students outside of the classroom was not necessarily seen as part of the faculty members' job. While full-time faculty were required to hold office hours, how they recruited students to their office hours was left up to the faculty member. But, for faculty members teaching in the learning communities, part-time or full-time, initiation of interaction outside of class was expected. Out of the three learning community faculty participants, Professor Xavier stated:

I'm fortunate with the learning community that I'm in right now that I am

compensated to meet with my students 16 hours a semester. I'm fortunate

because this semester, I have a small class of only 15. I have actually had each of

them meet with me [outside of class] twice this semester.

For these professors, part of the reason for the initiation of interaction was because they

were being paid for their time outside of class.

Reasons for initiating interaction outside of class included scheduling issues,

referrals for student resources, and clarification of assignments. In some cases, faculty

also reported acknowledging students who were doing well in their classes although not

often as they acknowledge those who were struggling in the class. Some professors saw

themselves in a mentor-mentee type of relationship and were more inclined to initiate

interaction with potential mentees rather than with the students who simply asked

questions about their assignments:

There's a difference when the student comes to you because they want to do

better in your class versus the student who comes to you [and] says can you help

me find direction. Can you assist me in finding my way. So what motivated me

[to initiate interaction with some students] is the person who comes to me for

advice, listens to my advice, goes out and does my advice, follows it, goes back

and reports on it. They follow the advice and this was the result. . . . So, all of a

sudden now, I might think of that John Smith when a scholarship comes up. I

might think of that John Smith when I see a particular program for when his

major comes up because John Smith showed attention in class, he's come to me

on a personal level as opposed to how can I get an "A" in your class. So, another

[instance] that's motivating is when the student takes it to a personal level,

approaching me not as only as a professor, someone who is expert in their

discipline, but as someone, a person as an older person, who has more experience

in the world, and they're seeking advice of how can they reach a certain level of

maturity. So all of a sudden, that takes on a different dynamic. So when a student

approaches you as a mentor role, you go ok, I'm a little more invested in this.

For this professor, students who came to him for advice stood out in his mind. So, when

resources came up that were relevant to the student, this professor would remember the

student because of the interaction they had. To add to that, the faculty participant also

explained that student interest in the course material encouraged the professor to initiate

interaction with the students after class. "As professors, we're human beings, and when

someone shows just a little bit of attention or interest in something that I have to say, then

you reciprocate and that might even include talking to the person after class." In this

instance, the professor let the student dictate who he interacted to outside of class by

allowing the students' outward expression of interest guide him.

The faculty participants also mentioned the fact that not all students would initiate

interaction with professors outside of class. One professor addressed the importance of

noticing the nonverbal communication between the student and the professor. For

students who seemed to be at risk of failing the class, the professor would initiate a

conversation with the student to understand the position of the student:

Now, I understand that some [students] won't [initiate interaction]. So, as an

instructor, I need to be aware of how everybody else is doing in the class based on

their verbal or nonverbal communication in the classroom. So, if I see someone

that's kind of checked out in the classroom, maybe showing up late, not

participating in the classroom, even though I haven't given any tests yet, I might

want to pull that person to the side.

All the professors discussed initiation of interaction with students who were struggling in

the class, submitting substandard work, or turning in assignments late. One professor

stated:

I'll approach students that I feel are struggling. I'll approach students who seem

to be having issues that are interfering with their coursework. You'll notice that

with individuals who are either show up late or miss a class, or seem to be

distracted during class or disruptive in class. So, for a number of reasons—

academic or personal—I'll approach them.

Professors used interaction outside of class for negative reasons rather than for validation.

In addition to approaching students who were struggling, faculty participants

talked about approaching students who seemed to be disconnected or alone. As Professor

Lane described:

I always find myself going more towards the students who aren't so open to want

to talk. For me, I want to connect with those students, and I feel like maybe

there's a reason why maybe they aren't. And it's usually those students that

there's something going on, and I'm happy I made that connection with them.

But usually, I gravitate more towards that because usually the students who do

want to talk and are more open, they will come up to me and that's not an issue.

So, for me, I gravitate more towards the ones that aren't going to, that are more

quieter in class.

Professor Santiago would approach students who were sitting by themselves. He stated some students seemed "sort of lost." Therefore, he would initiate a conversation with the students in hopes of making them feel more comfortable. Some faculty participants consciously reached out to students, especially those who seemed less likely to reach out to faculty.

Lastly, another main reason why faculty initiated interaction with students outside of class was to create ownership of an academic space, especially for historically underrepresented Latino students in education. In talking about students who may not feel welcomed in college, Professor Santiago commented on the "lack of a sense of academic ownership and academic spaces in our [Latino] community." For him, the initiation of interaction with students was extremely important because he felt that he needed to change the "sad situation in the Latino community in education" in terms of completions rates. For him, interaction with students was not only about helping students succeed but also about changing the social structure for Latinos in education.

Theme 4: Perceptions of Student–Faculty Interaction

The students perceived the interaction, whether initiated by students or by faculty, in a variety of ways while the faculty members perceived the interaction as a generally positive experience. In this section, the students' perceptions of interaction, results of the interactions, and students' suggestions for ways faculty can be more supportive of them are discussed.

Student Perceptions of the Interaction

Students described both positive and negative experiences in interactions with professors. Charina, who interacted with faculty outside of class often, stated her

experience was "very positive and very helpful and supportive." She talked about how grateful she was to have this support and validation from faculty in her interactions with them. She stated:

> It's like every avenue that you go through, whether it's counseling or professors, it's like everybody has an open door. And you don't have to worry about being shunned away because they'll support you. And if they can't support you, they'll find somebody who will. It's kind of like no student left behind.

Charina was more than happy to express her gratitude for the experience she had with the college. Other students also relayed having positive experiences with the initiation of interaction by faculty outside of class. One student recalled:

> Yesterday, I had this Photoshop assignment, and I had to make these issues and stuff like that. And I saved over one of my pictures, and it was just devastating. My professor was there outside of class, and she totally helped me fix everything, and now my assignment is done.

This student reported that she would not have turned anything in for her Photoshop assignment had the professor not offered her help. Another female from the focus group talked about getting help from her professor before submitting a writing assignment. "My English teacher last semester helped me on my paragraphs. I would type them, and she would correct, show me what I did wrong, and I would correct them and get a good grade." These students valued their professors as resources and did not hesitate to initiate interaction with professors outside of class once the professor initiated interaction with them.

Other students anticipated having a negative experience but had a positive one instead. Natalia, a high performing first-year and first-generation student, shared her experience of asking her professor why she had a lower score than she expected on an essay. When asked how that experience was for her, she stated, "Not bad because he'll tell [you] and he's really funny. He's like some are just careless errors, and you just worded them wrong. And not like you did this wrong, this wrong, this wrong." She appreciated the encouraging words of the professor. At another point in the interview, Natalia stated, "He actually put in the time to explain to me why he didn't like my essay. And I was like, okay then. And he also writes everything." Natalia did not expect that the constructive criticism would be communicated in such a positive and helpful manner.

Although many positive experiences were reported by the students, negative experiences were also reported. For some students, professors were not as helpful as the students anticipated they were going to be. A female from the focus group described her experience with a professor, "Like if you ask for a question that you're stuck in and they leave you worse, like they didn't answer your question. Like they left you more confused than you were." For another student, the professor was trying to be helpful by approaching the student when he was struggling in the class. But rather than the student feeling supported, the student felt invalidated by the professor. Here is Michael as he described his feelings:

What? What is this [professor trying to say]? Like they don't care about me. That's how you feel at first. Then you feel like, I'm an adult, so I have to build some type of confidence for me to pass forward. Then you got to get out of being shy.

Although the faculty member was trying to help Michael, Michael felt as if the faculty member approached him because he could not see the potential in him as a student and not as a proactive way to keep the student from dropping the course. For both of these students, there was a missed opportunity for more meaningful communication.

Other students reported feeling "stupid" during the interaction with their professors. The students talked about the expectations of their professors. When the students did not meet the professor's perceived expectations of being a student, the students felt bad. As Eleanor expressed:

Well, you feel like, I don't know. If you did an essay or something and you have a question, and she [the professor] feels that you know every detail form the book and all that. Like I feel bad. I don't know how to explain it really. Like I feel bad to go and ask her because she thinks that you know how to do a thing. I don't know.

In the focus group, an Asian female student stated, "So you try to ask a question, and they like dumb you down. And they're like why don't you know it. And it's like, well, I'm here to learn. I hate that when they do that." Another participant was a first-year student who began college three years after she graduated from high school. During those three years, she worked and was not enrolled in any type of schooling. She chimed in on the previous student's comment and talked about how her professor had certain expectations of her level of knowledge at the community college:

I think it's kind of dumb when they expect you to know what the hell they're talking about. It pisses me off especially when they say it in a smart way too. They're like, shouldn't you know that? I'm like, no. That's why I'm here to

learn. You're teaching me. Just because I'm in college doesn't mean that I know

everything right off the top of my head. They need to understand that. I think

they have these high standards because they know a lot of truth so they expect oh,

you know, if you're out of high school already, you should know this by now.

Yah, I graduated from high school three years ago, and I kind of forgot some of

the things, so it's like not everyone is fresh out of high school.

In the situation this student described, the faculty member seemed to have an expectation

of the student being a traditional student who was prepared for college. Another student

in the group added, "You automatically come off as stupid to them." The students felt

that their confusion was seen as stupidity.

Some students were often confused by the faculty member's sarcasm during

interactions. The older first-year female student recalled, "Sometimes, you don't

understand. And to them, they're like joking around. But, when you don't really know

them, you're kind of like, 'Are you joking around or are you being serious?' You know?"

Another male student continued the conversation above, "I've had teachers like that. The

teachers were like, I don't know if he was acting like a smart ass or just joking around.

After I got to know him better, he was just joking around." When the professors made

sarcastic remarks to the students, some students became confused.

Faculty Perceptions of the Interaction

Overall, faculty participants spoke about interaction favorably. Some spoke

specifically about how they initiated interactions. The part-time math instructor,

Professor Cooper, who taught in a learning community talked about her experience with

setting up one-on-one appointments with her students:

I really enjoy that because it gives me a chance to get to know my students and

know the different needs—you know. It's going to be different every semester

and every student is going to be different. So and I get to know them better, and I

like that.

Professor Santiago saw the initiation of interaction as his responsibility. For him,

initiating that interaction with students was rewarding but also more about helping the

community:

So, it [interaction outside of class] can be taxing, but at the same time, it's also

very rewarding. I think that those of us who teach Chicano/a Studies in our

discipline itself, it's about working with the community whether it's within the

campus or outside of the campus. And I know that I see my colleagues and Cruz

is working with the gangs. Guzman is everywhere trying to change the world.

That's what we do. Like I said, I brought my kids with me, one-and –a half, four,

and nine year old because I want them to see what I'm doing. And that is helping

our community out.

For Professor Santiago, the initiation of interaction by professors was needed and

important from his point of view.

Faculty participants also spoke the positive outcomes from interaction and how

those outcomes justified the additional effort to initiate interaction. Professor Cooper

expressed, "And it seems to be really helpful to them. It's a positive experience for them,

which I can feel, and that's worth it to me." Professor Xavier reinforced the idea of

initiation of interaction in describing his perceptions of it, "So back to the question of my

feelings about [initiating interaction]. I think that more interaction with instructors, the

better students do. So I do encourage it." And lastly, Professor Cooper also stated, "I

like having those interactions and relationship with those students. So, to me, it's kind of

a benefit of the job."

Positive Outcomes From the Interaction

From the students' viewpoints, they reported feeling more connected to the

college after interacting with faculty outside of class. Typically, the contact would be

more than a quick question after class and more than incidental contact. Eleanor

commented on how her connections with her classmates in the learning community kept

her going to college. "The more people you know in school, then, I guess it reflects on

their—on you to stay . . . because if you show up to class, and you don't know anybody,

you don't feel like something's attaching you to stay." This particular student saw

connections with people on campus as reinforcement for her staying in college.

Fatima worked on campus through a federal work study program. When asked if

she would feel differently about interacting with faculty if she did not have the

experience of working on campus, she stated she would not approach faculty so easily.

She elaborated, "I worked on campus before. So, I'm not so shy in approaching faculty.

I've known some of them, so I'm pretty open to talking to them and interacting with

them." Faculty also noticed that students were more comfortable in approaching them

after the initial one-on-one meetings with the students.

Gabriela attended her professor's office hour to interview the professor for an

assignment designed to allow the student to get to know the professor outside of class.

After an interview with the professor, the student described how her anxiety about

interacting with her professor disappeared:

I was really nervous, but after I went, I saw a change [in me] around her. I wasn't

nervous anymore and I had to do better in the class because she expects me to do

good work. So, that's what kept me motivated to try harder in her class.

For this student, the conversation she had with her professor allowed her to both feel

more comfortable with her professor and work harder in the class.

Students also reported putting more effort into the class after interacting with

faculty. For Gabriela, a self-described shy student, a faculty member acknowledged her

positive performance in the class which motivated her to keep up her grade in that class:

And also my Reading 50, Ms. de los Santos, in the middle of the semester if there

are students are doing good, she would send them emails like you guys are doing

good. Keep up the good work! And that made me oh, I'm doing good, so I'm

gonna keep doing good for the rest of the semester. So I think that helps. Like it

helped me you know. After reading that email she sent us, I was like okay I have

to keep doing my work so I can keep that good grade. She sent those emails to

students that were doing good.

Similar to Gabriela, Michael also stated he would work harder for his professors after

being acknowledged by them:

You really do [work harder for your professors after interacting with them]. How

can I say. It's like a parent. You don't want your child to fail anything. So if a

professor sees you're messing up and the professor initiated that contact, most

likely that student is going to work harder than at first because they know they's

coming by.

Michael also talked about how negative criticism from a professor also motivated him to work harder in a class. He continued:

> And the other way around, as students, like the child in this scenario, you feel embarrassed or dumbfounded that they've come personally to you so you need to make up your grades. So, like "F" you! I'm gonna do it anyways. Make [my grade] go higher because you're so mad and you're like I'm not gonna fail this class. They [the professors] don't believe in me, so like it's more like you gotta motivate. It's motivation on both sides.

Michael saw positive, as well as negative, attention from the professor as an incentive to work harder in the class.

Faculty also recognized a difference in students after interacting with them. A faculty participant, Professor Borja, commented on the students' interactions in class as a result of initiating individual meetings with each of her students outside of class:

> I observe that they are a little bit more comfortable in class. They might speak out a little bit more in class. They might raise their hand or take a risk to do a little more activity. So, I think building that relationship helps them perform differently in class.

Professor Cooper noticed that the students seemed to be more engaged in the class. In talking about what motivated her to work with her students during office hours that she was not paid for, she stated, "Just the positive results, I guess, and the students being more connected to the class, I find, and more connected to the school and the other students." And lastly, Professor Santiago stated he saw greater retention in his classes related to student–faculty interactions.

When faculty members invited the students for one-on-one meetings to talk about themselves, faculty members were surprised to hear how much the students wanted to share with their instructors. One faculty member stated:

> Sometimes they'll tell me every personal detail because that's what they want to talk about—their own things going on on top of all the math and goals and it ends up going very personal which is fine with me if that's what they want to talk about.

Professor Xavier requested that his students complete a three-page questionnaire about their background so that he can prepare for his one-on-one meetings with his students. He stated, "Frankly, I'm always kind of a little bit surprised about how honest they are in their responses. You can see that people really took the time and effort to fill out some of them." When given the opportunity, some students openly disclose information about their personal lives, their goals in college, and their plans for the future to their professors.

Another positive outcome for students was validation from the faculty members. Students tended to see interaction with faculty members solely for academic related issues. When Charina discovered from a counselor that she was able to talk about personal issues, she took advantage of the opportunity to get help from both counselors and instructors so that she could focus on her studies. Charina went on to say, "To have faculty and professors support me is a big thing," especially because she was experiencing a difficult and emotional situation in her personal life which interfered with her concentration on her studies. The student expressed her gratitude about the faculty

members she interacted with and was especially grateful for the counselor who invited her to speak about her problems.

Finally, the positive results from student–faculty interactions led to students informing other students of the value of initiating interaction with faculty outside of class. "My experience has been very positive and very helpful and supportive, and I want to let people know." At the same time, those students are educating other students about who to talk to and for what purposes. "She doesn't know what classes to take, and I'm like you should go make a counseling appointment." The students provided peer support by encouraging other students to take advantage of non-peer support resources such as counseling and speaking to instructors.

Student Suggestions

Students were asked how faculty could better support them in their education process. One suggestion was that faculty interact with them on a personal level instead of on a group level. For example, Jesse, a self-described shy student, stated he would appreciate if the instructors would personally ask if the students needed assistance with anything rather than asking the entire class at the end of the period. Michael, who is not shy, suggested that professors call students when students were struggling:

> It's yourself and the professor too. In one way, if I had the professor call me, that shows that they still care. Not a lot of professors do that. I know for a fact that they won't. But it'd be nice if they did.

Gabriela liked the fact that the professor set up appointments with each student individually. She wanted to see one-on-one meetings in all of her classes.

A few students touched upon the availability of their professors during office hours. They expressed a desire for flexibility for the meeting time or even mode of meeting, such as email or phone. Some students were not able to attend the professor's set office hours due to class schedule conflict. Michael stated, "They should be willing to work with you. And some just don't." In the focus group, a student mentioned that her professor "made it abundantly clear" that he had office hours as a technicality of his job and not for the students. This student stated, "As far as making students feel like they can actually go to their office would be great. That would definitely help." Not only were some students not able to attend office hours during the offered time, but they also felt as if attendance would be an imposition upon the professor.

Students also suggested that professors be more understanding of their personal situations. Students wanted more patience from professors as they learned their professors' teaching styles:

> Sometimes there's teachers that teach different, and they don't teach you things. And I have a teacher that wants things her way. It's like, ok, we have to adjust to that so you kind of need to learn how to be patient. That's one thing that they need to do and to understand.

Other students wanted the acknowledgement from professors that the professors remembered and could relate to the challenges students faced. Fatima, a single working mother stated:

> Just expressing to us that they have their own personal life too, and they know what we're going through and they've been in our shoes as an, "I've been there and

done that. I've been a student; I know what it's like." You have your personal

life, you have your education, and your family, and your career.

The same student stated she would like the professor to spend the allotted number of

hours for class in class. As she balanced family, work, and school, she wanted to make

the most of her time in class:

If class if over early, it shouldn't make you know. 'Cause class is set from 6:00 to

8:50, and if we finish early, we should have time to interact with students and go

over work, and give us that time because people do pay out of pocket for their

units. . . . So they should spend that whole class time with their students.

Other suggestions from students involved how professors interacted with them inside of

class. Students wanted less lecturing in class, more repetition of main points, and more

leeway with assignments.

Summary of Findings

In summary, findings presented fell into the areas of attitudes about the initiation

of student–faculty interaction, experiences of initiation of the interaction, and perceptions

after the interaction. Students were constantly trying to understand where they stood with

their professors. They wanted to know whether or not the professors saw potential in

them as scholars, whether or not the professor would be helpful if the students had

questions, and whether or not the professors were worthy of their efforts in college. At

the same time, faculty were concerned with maintaining a certain level of respect with

students. While they understood the importance of recognizing each student as an

individual, they seemed to underestimate the impact of their own actions upon the

student.

Both students and faculty valued interacting with the other, but they each underutilized interactions outside of class. Both parties needed guidance in initiating interaction. Students needed to learn how to ask for help and what to say to their professors while professors needed to learn how to initiate interaction outside of class and what to be aware of when initiating interaction with students. Mostly importantly, faculty needed to be more active in the initiation of interaction with students. While students were more concerned about initiation of interaction and whether or not to do so, faculty were more concerned about their level of initiation of interaction and whether or not they were over-initiating to the detriment of the student. In most cases, faculty were not over-initiating interaction and may have been actually under-initiating interaction with students.

Finally, when faculty were validating and supportive in nature with their interactions with students, the results were positive. Students were motivated to work harder for their professors, and they felt connected to the campus through their professors' recognition of them as individuals. At the same time, when professors were not cognizant about how they interacted with students, students had negative experiences where they felt belittled by professors. In the next chapter, a discussion of these findings will be presented. Implications for theory and practice will be explored.

CHAPTER FIVE—CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community colleges are grappling with how to transform their campus climates into welcoming spaces (Cress, 2008; Hubbard, 2009) that take into account diverse groups of students, learning styles, interaction styles, goals and ideas. In a period when learner-centered strategies are necessities, faculty members need to realize that interaction with students needs to be student-centered rather than faculty-centered (where students are expected to conform to the faculty member's style of communication, preferences for certain types of interaction, and time schedules). This research supports the findings of researcher George Kuh and his colleagues (2005) that faculty should no longer passively wait for students to approach them. Faculty members need to be proactive in approaching the students. At the same time, the institutions as a whole need to support and help create more opportunities for the initiation of interaction outside of class by faculty members (Bensimon, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2009; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). The transformation of a community college campus cannot occur without the understanding of faculty in the value of student–faculty interaction outside of class. Once the support for student–faculty interaction outside of class is garnered, the next step is for faculty, as well as administrators, to take the roles of caring individuals, validating agents, and empowering agents who engage students by initiating interaction with them.

Tinto (1975) suggested that students who can adjust and integrate into the institutional culture will flourish, which implied that those who have difficulties integrating into the institutional culture will drop out. Tinto (1993) later added to his 1975 concept of integration stating that higher educational institutions have various communities which a student can choose to become a member of and not necessarily

integrate into. In both concepts, students are expected to mold into the institution's idea

of what a student is and how a student behaves. Unfortunately, Tinto's theories did not

take into consideration the value in various ways of communicating, interacting, and

ways of being. Rather, fitting into the institution's culture was presented as the

appropriate way of being and other ways of being were discredited.

In the current study, some students did express challenges with integrating into

the college culture. For example, Natalia, the first-generation Latina, expressed that she

preferred not to speak up in class or challenge her professor or classmates in class. She

often felt disregarded by her professor when asking for help and believed the disregard to

be a result of her introversion. In this example, the professor may have appreciated the

more expressive students over the more reserved students. Speaking up and sharing their

opinions in class was difficult for students whose culture taught them not to challenge

authority, who were not naturally expressive, who felt uncomfortable speaking in front of

people, who felt out of place in college, or who felt that their opinion would not be

valued (Nasir & Hand, 2006). For Natalia to integrate into this college classroom, she

needed to challenge her constructs in this figured world of class participation and author a

new identity. In other words, Natalia would have to change her way of being, change her

value of group harmony, challenge her cultural upbringing, and face her discomfort in

doing so.

Astin's (1984) involvement theory stated the level of involvement the student has

with the institution is related to student learning and development. In other words, the

more time and energy that the student invested into the educational process, the more the

student benefitted from the educational process which implied the student determined the

degree of involvement. While the current study supported the idea that more involved students generally have more positive student outcomes, the study did not support the idea that students bore the responsibility for determining their degree of involvement in college. Rather, the student's involvement was also dependent upon how the faculty member intentionally engaged the student, not only whether or not the student chose to engage with the college. While Astin suggested institutional practices needed to be created based on the idea of increasing student involvement, he also focused more on the behaviors of the student, such as time spent on homework, and not the behaviors of the faculty member or institution to determine those practices. Involvement theory assumed that students became involved when they had the opportunity to get involved. In this study, simply offering office hours to students was not enough to increase attendance or involvement. Faculty needed to take proactive roles such as personally inviting students to office hours or even requiring a meeting during office hours or during another time in order to encourage students to take advantage of office hours. While Astin put the students in an active role in their education, he unintentionally put the institution and its faculty members in a more passive role in the involvement of students in their education.

This study found intentional initiation of involvement by faculty through student–faculty interaction increased students' involvement with the college. In the current study, faculty participants reported behaviors toward student–faculty interaction that fell between the student deficit model, where student outcomes were attributed to the students' personal characteristics, and the equity-minded model, where outcomes where attached to faculty as well as to students.

Student–faculty interaction through validating and empowering agents is an equity-minded strategy that works for both traditional and nontraditional students (Coleman, 1988; Rendon, 1994; Stanton-Salazar, 2010). Currently in the community colleges, the traditional student population, defined by Gibson and Slate (2010) as consisting of majority White, middle income, aged 18 to 22 who are attending college full-time, is no longer a majority. The nontraditional student, defined by Rendon et al. (2000) as coming from the working class, working full or part-time, and predominantly of color, are quickly becoming the majority, especially in the community college setting. The transformation in demographics continues (A. M. Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keller, 2001), while the transformation in college practices are slow to change (Barr & Tagg, 1995). Despite the changes in the student demographics, many of the practices and strategies implemented at the colleges are geared toward the traditional students; and as a result, the colleges are unintentionally marginalizing the nontraditional students (Karp et al., 2008; Santamaria, 2009). Therefore, in order to keep up with the changes in demographics in the student population, community college practices will need more attention.

Three Theoretical Constructs

The purpose of the study was to explore the context behind the low frequencies of student–faculty interaction outside of class at the community college level. The themes in the study included student and faculty attitudes before the initiation of interaction, experiences of initiation of interaction, and perceptions of the initiation of interaction from both students and faculty at a community college. The themes fell in line with the research questions. The overarching research questions included the following:

1. How do student–faculty interactions outside of class occur?

2. How do students' perceptions of faculty members shape student–faculty interactions?

3. How do faculty members' perceptions of students shape student–faculty interactions?

4. How do students and faculty members perceive the impact of the initiation of interaction on student performance and positive student outcomes?

The research questions were examined through the theoretical frameworks of validation theory (Rendon, 1994), social capital (Stanton-Salazar, 1997, 2010), and figured worlds (Holland et al, 1998). The researcher looked for the presence of validation in the reported interactions, and looked for how faculty acted as institutional agents who provided access to social capital to students who normally did not have access to such resources and networks. For example, were faculty members reinforcing the current social structure by being more encouraging toward students who were more talkative in class? Were they more encouraging of students who were members of historically underrepresented groups in education? Were faculty members aware of the potential impact of their methods of interaction outside of class? Validation and social capital theories provided the equity-minded perspectives in the examination of the initiation of interaction outside of class.

Figured worlds provided a framework for understanding how students interpreted and also constructed their positional identities (social positions) within a figured world. In the figured world of interaction outside of class, students constructed their own identity according to how they saw their position in relation to the professor. The

construction of their own identity was influenced by ethnic and cultural discourse, and personal experiences. For example, first-generation African-American students may see themselves as outsiders in education. They may feel as if they are out of place in the classroom in terms of styles of communication, representation in the class, and unfamiliarity of the higher education system. They may see themselves as insignificant to their professors and, as a consequence, not approach professors. The framework of figured worlds provided a useful framework that is used to describe the connections between feelings, thoughts, and behaviors of both students and faculty.

Both students and faculty in the study seemed to constantly define and author their positional identities in the figured world of higher education. In other words, students and faculty developed their social status in relation to one another in the structured social space of community college education. In the authoring of those spaces, where students can choose to transform the social constructs in education or can choose to perpetuate the current social structures, students seemed to accept the historical positional identities. This was true for low performing Latino students, who rather than rejected or negotiated their identities when it came to the initiation of student–faculty interaction, accepted the status quo. To illustrate, many of the students were too intimidated by the instructor to approach them after class because of the privileged positional identity of the instructor. That privileged positionality implied to students that the professor's time was more valuable than the student's time. Most of the faculty participants seemed to also accept the historical positional identities of the students and faculty and did not necessarily assist the students in the rejection of, or renegotiation of, their identities in the figured world. For example, although faculty understood that

students came into the college with different expectations and understandings of higher education, faculty still expected students to know how to approach them and to feel comfortable with initiating interaction with them. This situation led to a mutual misunderstanding. Students saw faculty as intimidating and unapproachable while faculty saw students as uninterested in course material.

Overarching Theme of Underutilization

Student–faculty interactions were profoundly underutilized. While faculty and student participants stated they valued and were open to student–faculty interaction outside of class, the participants did not regularly engage in student–faculty interaction. When interaction did occur, interactions were brief and to the point. Before participating in the study, faculty members seemed to be content with their levels of interaction outside of class. Faculty saw student–faculty interactions outside of class as part of their job as instructors, yet at the same time, spending time with students outside of class beyond office hours was considered above and beyond their job descriptions. Therefore, faculty participants did not give much scrutiny to their practices in student–faculty interaction outside of class. After participating in the study, faculty seemed more interested about student–faculty interaction outside of class and the role it played in their own practices.

Contributing to the underutilization, students and faculty had a limited scope of what student–faculty interaction comprised. Most of the reasons for interaction for students and faculty were related to academics. Faculty initiated interaction when students were at-risk of failing the class. Students initiated interaction when they had a question about lecture or needed clarification on assignments. Student–faculty interactions outside of class were not considered as a means to learn about or teach social

development. For example, students did not consider approaching faculty as a way to learn networking skills or as a way to learn how to navigate through higher education. Similarly, faculty did not consider interaction with students as a conduit for teaching students how to develop self-esteem. College, in general, was seen as a teaching ground for academics not social development. The role of social development in student success was often underestimated and overlooked. Faculty underestimated the impact they had on students when they validated the students as scholars and empowered them with connections to social capital and resources on campus.

Research Questions Revisited

The following describes specific issues to address, as well as recommendations, for increasing student–faculty interaction on community college campuses. The importance of faculty members taking more intentional roles as validating and empowering agents with community college students is discussed through a review of the research questions.

Research Question 1: Occurrence of Interaction

The researcher found that the participants in the study perpetuated the existing positional identities of the students and faculty members rather than challenged the current social constructs. The major findings of this study highlight the impact that student–faculty interaction outside of class can have on the persistence of nontraditional student and the missed opportunities between students and faculty for communication.

Student ambivalence. Students stated they valued interacting with their professors, but their actions did not necessarily reflect their statements. Ambivalence was present in the students' responses on initiating interaction with professors outside of

class. The students reported they thought student–faculty interaction was valuable, but they struggled with the decision on whether or not to approach their professors outside of class. They recognized they needed additional support from their instructors, but they hesitated to seek the help because of feeling intimidated by the instructor, their fear of not knowing how to approach the instructor, or their anxiety about being unsure of what to say to the instructor. For example, four out of six Spanish speaking students from the individual interviews reported not being able to express themselves with the correct words in English. Their anxiety about miscommunication through a loss in translation added to their ambivalence in the decision to interact with faculty.

Students also had ambivalence about being recognized by the professor in the class. Students reported not wanting to be identified because they were not performing well in the class. They reported feeling ashamed and embarrassed about not doing well in the classes of the professors who could identify them. Charina, a returning student, stated she talked to other students during the professor's lecture. As a result, she was afraid the professor would chastise her for talking in class which discouraged her from interacting with the professor. She did not want to identify herself as the student who was talking during the professor's lecture. This finding is supported by literature indicating students did not want to disappoint their professors with their poor performance, especially the professors who personally knew the students (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). While students knew the interaction with their professors would help them in their studies, they were paralyzed by their ambivalence in initiating such interaction. As a result, interaction outside of class often did not occur. The lack of faculty's recognition of the students' ambivalence about interaction consequently became

a missed opportunity for faculty members to provide support and encouragement in order to help students navigate through their ambivalence.

Students' assumption of imposition upon faculty. For some students, their lack of initiation of contact with their professors was based on respect. They did not want to upset their professor and interpreted interacting outside of class as wasting the professor's time. The military veteran student, Michael, saw interaction with the professors as a "last resort" after utilizing all of his other resources. He did not want to appear as if he was being unresourceful in obtaining an answer to his question. He wanted to exhaust his resources before he approached his professors so that he would not appear academically lazy. Michael wanted to demonstrate that he had put in the effort to understand the coursework and was not asking the professor for an answer that was clearly written in the book or in the notes. This was all in an effort to not waste the professor's time by possibly asking a trivial question.

Other students saw the act of asking the professor for extra time outside of class as an intrusion of the professor's personal time. When asked if the student would ask for time to meet with a professor who seemed to be abrupt with students, Natalia stated, "I don't think I would. In a way, it seems rude because if they don't have time, then I'm like well make time! I don't want to say something . . . that they don't like, and I don't want to do that." The students described the faculty as busy with a lot of students. Thus, asking the professors for individual time seemed selfish to some students. Again, the students interpreted their need for support outside of class as wasting the professor's time. Therefore, out of respect for the professor, students resisted asking for additional help. A majority of the students in the study were not comfortable in an academic space

and were unfamiliar with faculty's roles in their education. For that reason, they rarely questioned their own perceived boundaries between students and faculty outside of class.

The feeling of imposition upon the professor seemed to stem from the students' sense of self-worth and a feeling that they were not entitled to additional attention from their professors. This was true of Natalia, a first-generation Latina student who did not want to upset her professors by asking for personal attention. So, while students wanted to interact with their professors, they may have subconsciously felt unworthy of their professor's attention. Another reason may have been a projection of the students' own feelings of imposition on their own lives; students may have felt that faculty members were intruding on their personal lives. Some of the students who mentioned the feeling of imposition also had multiple commitments outside of college such as children and work. Jesse, who was an older student, had a child, worked full-time, and voluntarily participated in a program for ex-offenders (although he was not an ex-offender), expressed the view that his time was better spent completing homework.

Initiation of interaction. When the participants were asked about who they thought was responsible for initiation of interaction, both the students and the faculty nominated themselves in their initial responses. However, as the interviews progressed and the participants had to support their viewpoints with reports of their actions, the researcher began to see the notion of responsibility slightly shift to the other party. Many students saw the responsibility for initiation as belonging to the student, but described their "internal struggle" with taking responsibility.

In the counseling classes taken by 13 of the 14 student participants, students were learning the lesson of personal responsibility, a concept in the book *On Course* by Skip

Downing, in their success skills course. The students were examining the "creator" role versus "victim" role in their lives. As a creator, they were choosing to take responsibility for the events in their lives. By being a creator, students believed that their choices create the outcomes and experiences of their lives and consciously create the future they desired. As a victim, they were blaming the events in their lives on forces external to them and out of their control. By being a victim, students absolved themselves of personal responsibility and complained about the outcomes in their lives.

In the interviews, students were attempting to apply their personal responsibility by taking creator roles in their own initiation of interaction with their instructors. Eight of the nine individually interviewed students answered as if they were convincing themselves of what the appropriate behaviors should be and not how they actually viewed the responsibility making comments such as, "But if you're trying to be a creator, you should try again." Later in the interviews, students talked about how responsibility for interaction belonged to both the students and the instructors. Only one student thought that the responsibility for initiation of interaction completely fell upon the student. None of the students saw the responsibility as belonging to only the professors. Cognitively, the students knew that they needed to take responsibility for their own education, but emotionally, they wanted their professors to take the initiative to initiate interaction with them. They seemed to want some, but not complete, relief from that responsibility. Students subtly expressed the preference that faculty initiate interaction outside of class with them rather than them having to initiate interaction with faculty. They did not absolve themselves of the responsibility for initiating interaction with faculty, but they did indicate they needed help and did not know how to ask for it at times.

All the faculty members saw the responsibility for initiation of interaction as falling to the faculty member, especially at the first point of contact. However, they also expressed the view that they expected the students to initiate interaction on their own after the first point of contact. Therefore, from the faculty point of views, responsibility for initiation of interaction outside of class did not always fall to the faculty. All the faculty participants initiated interaction with their students outside of class at least once, but most did not continuously create opportunities to interact outside of class throughout the semester. The exception was Professor Santiago who was more conscious of his interactions with students, especially underrepresented Latino students. Faculty participants saw their ways of being in class as their open invitation to initiation of interaction outside of class. While the faculty members' behaviors were an important determinant of their approachability from the students' perspectives, it was not enough to encourage the interaction outside of class. Faculty's passive roles in the initiation of interaction outside of class contributed to lower frequencies of student–faculty interaction.

The initiation of interaction was curtailed because neither student nor faculty took full ownership for interaction outside of class. Both parties seem to passively wait for the other to approach them. This lack of accountability for initiation of interaction outside of class seemed to contribute to the low frequencies of interaction. It appears that faculty need to make intentional efforts for student–faculty interaction outside of class in order to increase the frequency of interaction. In addition, faculty members need to create more opportunities to be available to students outside of class for student–faculty interaction. While the quality of interaction has a greater impact than the quantity of interactions,

those quality interactions cannot develop without the quantity of interactions occurring first (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). In this study, faculty participants reported being available before and after class, but they also reported not being on campus outside of those times due to their part-time status or other responsibilities. Professor Santiago made himself available to the students by going to the students. He read his literature in the student union or sat with the students during student fairs and events. He provided more opportunities for his students to interact with him outside of class by simply being present with the students.

Faculty role management. Faculty also experienced ambivalence in the initiation of interaction with students. Faculty worried about blurring their role as a facilitator in the students' learning and personal development versus a role as an enabler who did too much for students to their detriment. Finding a balance between being a facilitator or enabler seemed difficult for professors as they encountered so many different learners, with different styles of communication, at different stages of academic development. However, what many faculty members may not understand is that what they see as an enabling interaction may be an empowering interaction. For example, Professor Santiago spent an hour teaching his students how to answer a short essay in his multicultural studies class. For some professors, instruction on how to write a short essay belongs in an English class. Professor Santiago did not see the teaching of some basic skills as perpetuating the lack of preparation of students. He saw his teaching of the construction of an essay as empowering his students. Professor Santiago recognized the differences in his students' academic needs and, rather than penalizing them for their differences, he provided support where it was needed.

Several faculty participants expressed the importance of faculty initiating interaction, but their methods of initiation of interaction were more passive than active. For example, after some professors invited students to their office hours, their next action was to wait for the student to approach them. But, many students did not respond to this passive invitation for interaction outside of class. Li and Pitts (2009) reported this phenomenon where students rarely took advantage of professors' office hours. In this case, faculty members did not need to worry about being an enabler; rather, they needed to focus more acutely on their role as an empowering agent who provides social capital connections to those students who historically do not have that cultural capital. The need for faculty to help increase students' social capital in regards to education is confirmed by Gonzalez et al. (2003) and Stanton-Salazar (2010).

When defining the relationship between students and faculty, Professor Xavier, a male faculty member, expressed that the word "relationship" made him uncomfortable due to the connotation of an intimate relationship. This is probably why much of the literature refers to the student–faculty relationship as student–faculty interactions. Faculty participants made a distinction between being the students' professor before being a friend. First and foremost, the faculty participants held professional positions as professors. They were professors who could behave casually with their students without crossing the social line into being a peer of the student. For some of the faculty participants, that line was ambiguous and not easy to define. As a result, some faculty participants struggled with the amount and type of student–faculty interaction they should facilitate outside of class. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) found some faculty members were uncomfortable with interactions that dealt with the process of socializing the

students into education and with the process of the development of self-esteem. Because of this the researchers suggested that more circumscribed interactions geared toward academic purposes helped to encourage student–faculty interaction outside of class. That allowed for faculty members to lessen the anxiety about the uncertainty or lack of control of interactions with students outside of a structured classroom setting.

Another area of concern for faculty participants was how to determine their demeanor during student–faculty interaction. Again, the faculty participants referred to the importance of a balance between being seen as an authority in the classroom and being seen as an approachable professor. The faculty members seemed to understand that their interactions inside of class were related to the amount of student–faculty interaction that occurred outside of class. Therefore, their goal was to provide a welcoming and safe environment for the students to be able to approach the professors. At the same time, the faculty members struggled with approachability and its implication of flexibility in coursework or class rules. The professors wanted to adhere to the rules in the syllabus while staying sympathetic to the students' needs. They wanted to maintain control in the class, but at times, they felt their exercise of control may have interfered with their approachability. Again, faculty members' concerns about the ambiguity between being authoritative and being approachable often reduced the faculty members' invitations for interaction outside of class. A number of researchers reported similar findings that faculty who were approachable in class had higher frequencies of interaction outside of class (Einarson & Clarkberg, 2004; Wilson et al., 1974).

Students' purposes for interaction. Consistent with the literature, students saw the primary reason for interaction with faculty outside of class was for academic purposes

(B. E. Cox & Orehovec, 2007; Kuh et al., 2005; Nadler & Nadler, 2001). Students reported approaching professors for clarification about the lecture or assistance with homework. Michael and Rufino stated they "never" thought about socializing with the professors. Interestingly, this standpoint narrowed the scope of interactions to only class work. Students often did not see other purposes for interaction such as career advice, networking for future jobs or internships, or for moral support. When Jesse was asked about whether or not he sought career advice from faculty, he stated he would not ask a professor for career advice, but that he would ask a counselor for career advice. His response was consistent with the CCSSE results for the institution. "Talking about career plans with an instructor or advisor" was one of the lowest scored aspects of student engagement for the college. According to the literature, student–faculty interactions contributes significantly to career preparation (Walker, Pearson, & Murrell, 2010) and students in this study were clearly not aware of that fact. Initiation of interaction by faculty is doubly important because students do not understand this critical potential contribution to their career exploration.

Students saw counselors on campus as only providing academic support even though they also provide personal, career, and academic support to students. Student participants in the study referenced only seeing counselors for academic plans, not for assistance dealing with stressors outside of college which, of course, interfered with their concentration in college. For example, Charina, the returning student, was not aware she could speak to a counselor about issues not related to academics even though she had previously attended college. When invited by her professor/counselor to discuss items not related to school, she went to her professor's office and "balled [her] eyes out."

Without an invitation from her professor/counselor to discuss her personal issues,

Charina stated that she would not have been able to complete the rest of the semester.

Because of the students' limited knowledge of all higher education had to offer, many

students did not take advantage of the resources available to them. Clearly, interaction

with an empowering and encouraging agent is crucial to expanding the students' notions

of what higher education can do for them.

Because of the students' limited views of interaction outside of class, they often

did not realize the potential benefits of interaction with faculty. When they felt the

professor was unapproachable or had a negative attitude, the students sought other

sources for help. For example, two first-year, first-generation, Latina students, Eleanor

and Gabriela, preferred to ask the tutors for assistance on their homework because they

"think they're nicer." In addition to seeking help from tutors, the students also stated

they would go to the library or ask friends for assistance. They did not see interactions

with faculty as a means to navigate through the bureaucracy of college, nor were they

aware of the lessons of social development that could be learned through those

interactions. Stanton-Salazar (2010) described the concept of social capital as students

needing a "networking skill-set that enables young people from historically-oppressed

communities to enter into resourceful relationships with these actors . . . to accomplish

meaningful goals through their access to resources *not* their own" (p. 39). Students saw

support from their professor not only as limited to academic support, but also limited to

assignment-specific academic support. If students and faculty can recognize how

student–faculty interaction can help shape students' identities and social development,

then opportunities for meaningful interactions will help students build social capital and

not be limited to academic questions. If faculty can recognize that students are unaware of this potential, then they can take these incidental opportunities to personally invite the students into more substantial and meaningful interactions.

Faculty patterns of interaction. Students noticed when faculty interacted more with other students and less with them. As students examined the patterns of interaction of their professors, they often came to the conclusion that when the professor did not interact with them, it was an indicator of personal rejection. For example, Professor Xavier and Professor Lane reported they typically approached students who were at risk of failing, seemed disengaged, or who were disruptive in class, in an attempt to catch potential issues early on as an effort to retain students. While this was a proactive measure taken on the part of the faculty members to benefit the students, students reported that they interpreted critical feedback of this sort as either punishment or as an indicator of the faculty member's lack of confidence in their ability or intelligence. Michael stated that he would interpret the professors' proactive efforts as a personal attack. Fortunately, Michael has not had this experience in college. This type of student response is reported in the literature (Kuh & Hu, 2001), particularly with African American students (G. L. Cohen, Steele, & Ross, 1999; Cole, 2008). Cole (2008) found negative feedback from professors had a negative effect on student GPA, thus defeating the purpose of the student–faculty interaction. Therefore, when giving students critical feedback, also providing positive messages validating the students as scholars, is something for faculty to keep in mind. This is especially important for historically underrepresented students who have a cultural history that prevents them from feeling as if they belong in an academic figured world.

Faculty patterns of interaction made some students feel invisible to the professors. Students reported faculty being abrupt in their interactions with them. The abruptness on the part of professors communicated to students that the professors did not have time for the students and that the students were not important enough for the professors to allow them the time they needed outside of class. When professors did interact with students outside of class, students noticed interaction time was largely directed toward more talkative students. Consequently, students who were more comfortable speaking up in class received more attention from the professors, and students who were not as comfortable speaking up in class became "invisible." The students equated the lack of attention to the professor's lack of recognition in the student's potential to excel in class. The "invisible" students interpreted the lack of attention from the professor as an indication of their own lack of ability to do well in college, lack of ownership of the academic space (feeling as if they do not belong in college), and invalidation as a student. This feeling of insignificance reinforced students' self-doubt about their own academic abilities. As a result, students became less, not more, engaged in the classroom.

Faculty participants in the study reported they did not often acknowledge the quieter students who performed well in class. Self-aware Professor Xavier acknowledged it was harder for him to remember to acknowledge quieter students although he did so occasionally. Another faculty member who was reported by the students as "ignoring" quieter students in the class was completely unaware of her unbalanced attention in the class. Subconsciously, this professor may have interpreted the student's quietness in the class as disinterest in the material when in fact the student was actually performing well in the class and was genuinely interested. The students gave this particular professor

mixed reviews about her methods of interaction with students. Another faculty member, Professor Lane, stated she gravitated toward the students who tended not to speak up in class because she wanted to understand why those students were not engaging in the class.

None of the faculty participants intended to pay attention to students unequally thus creating a feeling of invisibility for some students. Interestingly, students who typically felt "invisible" were students of color. Some of faculty's methods of initiating interaction outside of class marginalized certain students due to their dissimilar cultures, communication styles, and learning styles. Had faculty focused more on the recognition of the needs of each individual student, rather than on the retention of students, faculty approaches would have been guided differently with the focus on the success of the student and not on retention strategies. Santamaria (2009) underscored the fact that instruction techniques, such as differentiated learning (DI) and culturally responsive teaching (CRT), were developed to meet the needs of marginalized students. She noted that instructors needed to pay attention to the diversity of needs of the learners in the classroom such as "academic, cultural, linguistic, socioeconomic, or otherwise" (Santamaria, 2009, p. 215). Therefore, faculty need to acknowledge students' differences in communication styles as well as learning styles. They also need to avoid the tendency to assume that a student's silence in class equates to disinterest in the class or in interaction with them outside of class.

Students' avoidance of interaction. While all students saw student–faculty interaction as a given inside of class, the interaction outside of class was not considered beyond quick questions before and after class. Students stated that they valued initiating

interaction with faculty outside of class but also seemed during the interviews to be

undecided concerning whether or not they wanted to be the initiators. While they thought

that interaction with faculty was valuable, either the interaction was not valuable enough

for them to initiate interaction with faculty, or their fear was sufficient to prevent them

from initiating. However, when asked if faculty were to approach the students outside of

class, the students seemed open to the interaction with faculty if initiated by faculty.

Students provided rationalizations about why they did not initiate interaction while, at the

same time, attempting to take responsibility for initiating interaction with faculty.

Students felt vulnerable when discussing course material with their professors.

The student participants did not want to appear unknowledgeable in front of their

professors by stating course-related details that were incorrect. The male student

participants seemed to need to keep up more of a façade about what they understood or

did not understand about the class material—especially when they did not trust the

professor. For Rufino, a returning 20-year-old Latino student, talking to the professors

made him nervous because he was not as familiar with the course material as the

professor obviously was. He stated:

> I don't really talk to them 'cause I don't really understand, like, the material yet.
>
> And they know everything. . . . It's like you want to seem like you know what
>
> you're talking about basically. And that's the whole thing with you don't want to
>
> say something wrong.

Thus, Rufino would avoid talking to his professors in order to conceal his lack of

understanding of the material. Michael, a military veteran, shared that if he perceived an

instructor to not be supportive of students, he would still approach the professor, but he

would not reveal whether or not he was struggling in the class. These two male participants seemed to conceal their academic struggles in order to avoid criticism or judgment from the professor. They did not want to reinforce their own insecurities about their own intelligence.

Appearing incompetent in front of a professor seemed to affect the male students' self-confidence more than it did the female participants. Students feel a certain level of vulnerability when they attend college. As a result, when students choose to initiate interaction with their professors, they are choosing to make themselves even more vulnerable to the professors' comments and judgments which they often anticipate will be disparaging. Therefore, for a student to initiate interaction with their professor, many times they must overcome a number of internal challenges.

Research Questions 2 and 3: Perceptions That Shape Interaction

A common topic amongst both faculty and student participants was ambivalence. Students were ambivalent about whether or not they wanted to initiate interaction with faculty. Faculty were ambivalent about defining their role in the initiation of interaction with students. There seemed to be a constant push and pull between the students and the faculty members in a subtle, undefined way.

Students' perceptions of college. Some of the students' preconceived notions of faculty had to do with their perceptions of higher education. Almost all of the students in this study were nontraditional or had at least one characteristic of a nontraditional student. Most nontraditional students do not have a history of family members before them attending college. They do not necessarily have equitable access to cultural resources such as the know how to navigate the bureaucracy in college or the

understanding of the structure of higher education. Student participants repeatedly stated they knew they wanted to attend college but did not know how to accomplish that goal. The concept of college and how to navigate through it was abstract to the students. Therefore, the students' lack of familiarity with the system of higher education, as well as the college institutions' lack of ability to effectively inform students of the number of protocols within the system, created multiple barriers for students who were simultaneously trying to understand the system and navigate through it.

All the student participants in this study referenced their high school experiences and compared them to their college experiences. In high school, students reported having the opportunity to develop trust with their teachers. They shared meaningful interactions because many of them spent a number of hours together over the span of four years. High school teachers were thought of as more accessible to students because of the structure of their work week with shorter days where students only attended half of their classes for longer periods of time to allow for student–faculty interaction. Students were not familiar with the duties of community college faculty such as campus committees and shared governance. The student expectations of student–faculty interaction were abstract. While they knew student–faculty interaction was going to be different than in high school, the students did not understand in what ways interaction would be different. Students in the focus group stated they were told in high school that professors would not be available to them for help. This idea damaged the students' conception of what student-faculty interaction was about and what it could be. Thus, they were not sure what to expect from student–faculty interaction and their only reference was their high school

experience. In comparison to high school, student–faculty interactions in college fell

short of expectations.

      Students' perceptions of faculty. Student participants' impressions of faculty

played a large role in influencing their decisions to initiate interaction with their

professors. Students' impressions of faculty were largely based on nonverbal cues such

as body language, facial expressions, and behaviors in class. Students seemed to have

preconceived notions of faculty as being intimidating, unavailable outside of quick

questions, and superior in terms of social status. Students did not see faculty as regular

people who did ordinary things but as higher authorities who seemed to have higher

standards of behavior. When talking about their professors, students used words such as

"superior" or "authority." Professors with doctoral degrees seemed to intensify the

students' feelings of intimidation. Due to the doctoral professor's social status, the

professor's words seemed to carry more weight with the student, and their perceived

judgments about the student's academic ability seemed more severe. Interestingly,

professors did not recognize the impact of their academic achievements on their students.

      The students' perceptions of faculty were shaped by faculty being different from

them culturally and socioeconomically. Differences in ethnicity or socioeconomic status

were not brought up directly by the student participants as a factor in the social distance

between them and their professors. While they often mentioned differences in level of

respect, they never mentioned differences in race. Only Michael, the African American

student, talked about differences between his professors and his African American

teachers in Washington D. C. He was also reluctant to bring up differences in ethnicities

stating, "I don't wanna say it to sound like a racial thing." While racism is not as overt as

it was in the past, racism can still present itself through hidden biases that are manifested in people's actions.

Faculty seemed to underestimate the distance students saw between students and themselves, and at times, they inadvertently increased the distance by being private and not sharing personal experiences and lessons as they related to academics. While faculty thought they were creating their first impressions with the students, they were unaware that they needed to counter the already preconceived impressions of being intimidating and unavailable to students. Hence, faculty needed to not only create their impressions upon the students, but they also had to deconstruct the students' preconceived impressions of them. Four female student participants in the study who were in Professor Lane's class, provided positive feedback about their interactions with her outside of class. They appreciated her sharing her personal experiences as examples of learning with the class. The personal sharing humanized the professor to the students, which shortened the distance between their positional identities. That shortened distance made interaction less intimidating. A number of student participants wanted to get to know their professors, not necessarily on a personal level, but as human beings. They wanted to know what kind of a person they were doing their homework for and whether or not this person was worthy of their efforts and also worthy of their trust.

Trust and vulnerability. Students examined cues from their professors such as moods, interaction styles in class, and body language in order to determine whether or not the faculty members were worthy of their trust. Students gauged professors on their degrees of helpfulness when the students had questions. In terms of pedagogical practices inside of the classroom, one student stated, "Depending on the teacher, how

they said it or how they treat you. It just decided whether you are gonna to come to them more often or not." The faculty's demeanor not only influenced the students' impressions of the professor but also influenced the students' degree of trust with the professor. Jaasma and Koper (1999) found trust, as well as positive verbal and non-verbal actions of faculty, significantly correlated with student satisfaction. Therefore, by increasing students' levels of trust, levels of students satisfaction with college will also increase.

Both students and faculty saw interaction outside of class as an opportunity to introduce themselves and get to know one another. The interactions were not only opportunities for students to get noticed in the class in hopes for a better grade, but were also opportunities to determine their level of trust with the professors. The students evaluated the professors and made decisions about whether they could trust their professors with their academic egos. The students wanted to know what degree of vulnerability they could have with their professors—how much they could share with them about what they did not know in class without the professor forming a negative opinion about their intelligence. The initial one-on-one meetings with professors students described in the study were opportunities for students to gauge their instructors' treatment of students and whether or not they "cared" about students. For example, a student observed a professor rolling his eyes when someone asked him a question. Upon that observation, the student decided he was not going to ask the professor any questions. The students' levels of trust with each professor were shaped by every observation of student–faculty interaction inside and outside of class, as well as personal one-on-one

interactions. The students' levels of trust with each professor played a large role in the professor's approachability.

Faculty's perceptions of students. Both students and faculty had preconceived notions about each other. Unfortunately, each party saw the other as part of a group rather than as individuals. Faculty typically interacted with students as a class rather than individually. As a result, faculty often behaved the same way toward all students rather than individualized strategies for each student's different needs. Faculty also seemed not to differentiate between ethnicities of the students. While this lack of discernment implies that faculty were not prejudiced, it also implies that faculty may not have been aware of how their hidden biases manifested in their practices. For example, if reading issues are not addressed in a word-problem based math class, then students whose first language is not English may be disadvantaged because they have weaker English and reading skills. Clearly, by applying a universal interaction technique, the professor may be marginalizing certain students in the class.

The faculty seemed to expect prepared students, such as those screened for the universities, who were familiar with the demands of college. But at the community college, the student profiles and levels of college preparation spanned a wider range of preparedness. While the faculty participants were familiar with the demographics of community college students, much of their practices were geared toward students who were screened for a university. Professor Santiago, a former university professor, brought up the idea of a "professional student" who is found at the university level but not necessarily at the community college level. The idea of the "professional student" overlaps considerably with the definition of a traditional student, but not completely. The

professional student found at the university has gone through a selection process for admission; therefore, the student is more familiar with the expectations of habits needed to obtain a strong grade point average such as coming to class with homework already stapled, or with the understanding essays are double-spaced and typed, not hand-written, or being prepared to come to class with paper, pen, and supplies. These expectations were not necessarily implicitly understood needed to be explicitly communicated at the community college. Many community college students, especially those who did not do well in high school, were unfamiliar with the habits of a professional student. Additionally, the culture of higher education is may be new to students, especially first-generation students.

Along with the expectations of the idea of the professional student are the expectations of a traditional student who is typically middle to upper income status, attending full-time, working part time or less, and ages 18-24 (Gibson & Slate, 2010, Rendon, 1994; Rendon et al., 2000; Terenzini et al., 1994). Many community college students are not recent high school graduates. In this study, some students were returning students who took a hiatus from college and returned after a number of years. Other participants were students who decided to attend college a few years after graduating from high school. So, for many of these students, high school curricula such as construction of an essay or basic algebra was not fresh in their minds and review was often needed. A number of student participants expressed frustration and embarrassment when they did not meet their instructor's expectations concerning what they needed to already know for the class. Again, the student felt "stupid" for not having the expected skills for the class, in additional to already feeling unintelligent for not knowing the

material related to the class and not knowing how to communicate with a person with a higher level of education. In order to avoid that embarrassment and feeling of stupidity, students avoided interacting with their professors. Thus, when students needed the most help, they would not seek it out.

Research Question 3: Perception of Impact

Students and faculty participants reported greater satisfaction in college after student–faculty interaction outside of class. Students reported feeling more connected to the class itself, and some saw how that connection related to their motivation to stay in college. Students also reported being motivated to work harder for their professors. The students' feelings of connection and motivation, which were developed from student–faculty interaction outside of class, are evidence of the impact faculty can have on their students. During the student–faculty interaction outside of class, faculty were unknowingly assisting students in working through their insecurities about college. During these meaningful interactions with students, students felt validated as scholars and no longer felt invisible. Interactions with faculty influenced students' decisions to persist in college and return the following semester.

Another impact of student–faculty interaction was that students felt validated as individuals through sharing their personal stories. In addition to fighting fears about their own academic abilities, students were also battling worries about their social and emotional abilities. Charina, the returning student, was extremely appreciative of being able to discuss personal issues with a professor. She saw the support as invaluable and anticipated that without the emotional support from her counselor/professor, she would not have been able to do well in her studies. She not only needed the validation of her

abilities as a scholar but also the emotional support as a person. Three students from the

individual interviews also shared personal stories with the researcher revealing the

various matters students are constantly working through while they are in college.

Balancing of multiple stressors, responsibilities, and roles of the students creates a greater

need for additional support academically, emotionally, and socially. Faculty can provide

this type of support in the area of student–faculty interaction outside of class.

It is noteworthy that from the students' point of view, not all student–faculty

interactions were positive interactions. Students reported feeling scared, shameful, or

belittled by faculty. Regardless of the number of positive student–faculty interactions a

student had, it seemed as if one negative student–faculty interaction made it more

difficult for the next interaction to occur. As students experienced negative feelings

during the perceived negative interactions, the emotional distress strengthened their

ambivalence about student–faculty interaction. The negative feedback which triggered

fear, self-doubt, and hurt carried more weight than the positive interactions in the

students' decisions to initiate interaction with faculty. This effect, especially for students

who already did not feel a sense of belonging in college (Hurtado & Carter, 1997), or

who were facing a number of challenges in attending college, such as work and raising a

family (Giancola et al., 2009), or who were not familiar with the bureaucracy of college

(Garcia, 2010), made student engagement through student–faculty interaction more rare.

Because most community college students are from an underrepresented group, have

multiple life roles, or are first-generation college students, then these negative

interactions, which are correlated with negative outcomes (Cole, 2008), unintentionally

perpetuates low performance. These unhelpful interactions can negatively impact

retention and persistence, especially for Hispanic and African American students. In order for student-faculty interaction to contribute to positive student outcomes, negative or critical feedback needs to be transformed into "constructive criticism." Cole (2008) described "constructive criticism" as an effective method for student–faculty interaction. "Constructive criticism" is a balance between negative and positive feedback that is encouraging. When faculty purposefully calibrate their feedback to students, the results can be remarkable.

Faculty underestimated the weight of their words and actions upon students and how they affected them. Students fabricated reasons for professors' disparate patterns of interaction with different students. For example, when students in the study did not receive the same attention as their classmates from the professor, the "invisible" student interpreted the action as the professor's prerogative to only invest in students worthy of becoming a scholar. Another example included sarcasm from the professor. Students questioned whether or not a professor's sarcastic remark was out of seriousness or frivolity, and they often felt dim-witted for not understanding the meaning of the remark. They often reported feeling belittled by their professors when they did not understand what the professors were saying. Students were constantly interpreting their professors' behaviors and often personalized reasons for the professors' behaviors. These interpretations often featured the students as incompetent, unworthy and lacking potential.

Recommendations for Practice

Institutional and faculty intent is vital to implementing equity-minded approaches to educational practices that adapt to the dynamic needs of students entering the

community college. Marginalization and achievement gaps will continue to grow in

higher education if practitioners do not adopt approaches that are effective for a broader

range of students. Focusing on student–faculty interaction that is intentionally initiated by

faculty is one equity-minded approach that can be modified to meet the needs of each

student. Based on the research presented here, six recommendations for increasing

student–faculty interaction outside of class have been developed.

Recommendation 1: Educate Practitioners About the Impact of Institutional Agents

Administrators and faculty need to understand the significance of student-faculty

interaction outside of class and its impact on positive student outcomes. Indeed, both in

this study and others, interaction was reported as a major aspect in the success of many

nontraditional students. This research confirms that increasing student–faculty

interaction is not about developing programs for students to engage in, but more a matter

of changing the attitudes and intentions of the faculty concerning the initiation and

perpetuation of interaction with students outside of class. Faculty buy-in is critical for

the transformation of attitudes and campus culture to occur. Therefore, faculty must

understand the impact of validating and empowering students through interactions

outside of class.

Strategies for education of administrators and faculty include presentations of

articles and research during faculty orientations, celebration of student–faculty interaction

research by the college's own faculty, continued participation in the CCSSE (or similar

surveys) including both the student and faculty viewpoints, and through student

presentations on how interaction outside of class affected them. Other possible strategies

for education include creating a campus faculty newsletter focused on faculty's role in

student success, creating faculty inquiry groups (FIGs) focusing on the improvement of student–faculty interaction, and inviting researchers such as George Kuh, Laura Rendon, and Ricardo Stanton-Salazar to speak to the faculty. Once buy-in is created, student–faculty interaction would ideally be incorporated into the objectives of the college's strategic plan in order to support the strategies mentioned above.

Another method for educating administrators and faculty is to encourage faculty to conduct research in the area of student success. As Estela Bensimon (2007) suggested, convert the educational practitioner into a researcher on equity and student success so that the practitioner can transform into the institutional agent for change described in this study. The purpose of this study was not only to understand the impact student–faculty interaction has on students, but to also determine how a faculty member's practices and viewpoints may or may not be marginalizing various groups of learners. A strategy to support the practitioner as a researcher may be requiring administration to facilitate the process of conducting research through the institutional research office, as well as through individual doctoral programs.

Recommendation 2: Provide Professional Development Opportunities for Faculty

Once faculty and administrators understand the research supporting student–faculty interaction outside of class and the theory behind validating institutional agents within the community college, they can begin to develop strategies to increase quality student–faculty interactions outside of class. Development of strategies specific to the community college is important because the types of interactions outside of class described in the literature relate to the university system and may not be appropriate for the community college system. Indeed, this study was designed and carried out to

establish research on this topic that is specific to community college settings. Activities more commonly found at a university include participation in research with a professor, service learning, or participation in a residential program. Although some community colleges have the activities mentioned, those opportunities are not typically available or utilized at community college. As a result, faculty members are unfamiliar with how to engage students outside of class other than through office hours, quick questions before and after class, and incidental contact. Clearly, professional development focusing on student–faculty interaction techniques at a community college needs to be created.

Important changes that need to be developed at the community college level are the facilitation of interactions toward socializing students into the community college experience, the development of their self-esteem, and the building of trust and community amongst students. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) confirmed that faculty experienced discomfort with interactions dealing with the process of socializing students into the community college experience such as developing student self-esteem and building trust and community amongst students. Many faculty members are also uncomfortable with unstructured interactions with students outside of class; therefore, strategies need to be created for faculty members to ease their anxiety and increase their comfort with these interactions. However, faculty need to understand the importance of student–faculty interactions that deal with the socialization of students as those interactions serve as a gateway into learning.

Faculty in this study felt uncomfortable with the possibility of blurring professor–student boundaries with students through interaction outside of class. Therefore, framing interactions with students in a way that relates back to academics, but not necessarily

exclusively academics, can help alleviate some of the anxiety in student–faculty interactions outside of class (Golde & Pribbenow, 2000; Wilson et al., 1974). In other words, faculty members need to focus more on being empowering and validating agents for the students and not dwell on defining the boundaries between being a professor and a friend to the student. In fact, it is clear from this study that students do not think of their professors as friends or peers in any circumstance.

Strategies for providing professional development for faculty may include workshops focusing on the following: (1) actual methods for student–faculty interaction outside of class, (2) learning how to navigate through the college bureaucracy, (3) learning more about counselors' jobs and what they can do for faculty and the students, (4) learning about campus resources, and (5) learning about the protocol for suicide and what to do when a student is in crisis.

Recommendation 3: Examine Current Patterns of Interaction

Faculty members need to be intentional with student–faculty interactions outside of class by actively approaching students and by paying attention to which students they interaction with. A faculty member's intention for interaction outside of class is an important aspect for the success of students, especially nontraditional students. When faculty members can take into consideration a student's social identity and how their identity and social positioning contribute to the student's behaviors, they can begin to understand how some students self-sabotage their own success in college. This is why "meeting the students halfway" similar to Professor Santiago's style is so important. Faculty may even need to meet the students *more* than halfway in terms of interaction outside of class due to the difference in positioning between students and faculty. Once

the student and the faculty member have engaged in interaction outside of class, they can

teach each other how to maintain healthy and productive communication between them.

While the student is empowered by the faculty member through encouragement and the

sharing of social capital, the faculty member is also learning about how to interact with

different students with different communication styles and backgrounds. Figure 9

illustrates this concept of the faculty member meeting more than halfway toward

interaction. The arrow connotes the new direction of the interaction that the two take

together in continuing more meaningful future interactions. This new direction is neither

towards the student nor towards the faculty member but rather in a new direction created

together.
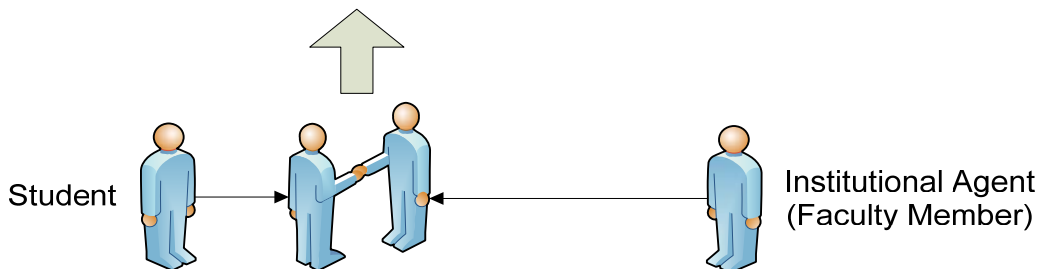
Figure 9. Model of initiation of interaction by faculty. Horizontal arrows represent the

symbolic distance a faculty member travels toward interaction with the student. Once

student and faculty interact, they both move in a new direction together as they determine

the protocols of interaction.

To assist in countering the students' insecurities and fears of college, faculty

members need to take the initiative in interacting with students, especially nontraditional

students, and intentionally invite students into interactions designed to lead to the

development of supportive relationships on campus. As reported by the students in this

study, most interactions that take place outside of class involve the student approaching

the professor for a quick question about an assignment. In order to increase the frequency of interactions outside of class, faculty members need to actively approach students instead of waiting for students to approach them. By approaching the student, the faculty member can ensure, and increase, the frequency of interactions outside of class. At the same time, the student will be more comfortable with approaching the faculty member after the faculty member has established a personal and open line of communication.

Faculty members need to be intentional with not only the initiation of interaction with students, but also with whom they initiate interaction. Are they interacting with only students who speak up in class? Are they ignoring higher performing students? How about those who tend to be more reflective in class? Are they only paying attention to certain students when they are doing poorly in the class? Are they interacting more with students who are similar to them in terms of culture, behavior, and mannerisms? Community college faculty demographics rarely reflect the student demographics; therefore, the cultures of the middle to upper income administrators and faculty typically clash with the cultures of lower income to middle income students. Because people tend to gravitate toward people who are similar to them, faculty may tend to gravitate toward students who are similar to them in communication style and in culture. Students who are less similar to their professors may be marginalized or left out of interaction with the professors. As a consequence, professors may see students' lack of engagement in and outside of class as an indication of disinterest in the course material when in fact the students' behaviors may be a reflection of their cultural upbringing, personality, and communication styles. Again, these students may feel invisible. That marginalization

could unintentionally send a message to the student that she is not worthy of the professor's attention due to her lack of potential in the class.

While faculty members need to initiate interaction outside of class, faculty also need to create more opportunities for students to approach them casually. By simply being available, faculty can create a presence on campus that demonstrates they are available to students. This can be viewed as deliberate incidental contact. A strategy for increasing intentional interaction begins with administration and faculty assessing of the quality and quantity of student–faculty interactions outside of class from the points of view of students and faculty. The assessment will give the college an idea of which areas, especially in initiation of interaction, need improvement or change. At the same time, periodic surveys will keep the institution moving by tracking the dynamics and needs of the most current population of students. With social media quickly changing how people interact, periodic checks with the study body become important to make sure student–faculty interaction practices are changing with the students and are not falling behind or jumping too far ahead of their needs.

Additional strategies for intentional interaction may include faculty doing the following: (a) the scheduling of one-on-one time outside of class with each student at least once early in the semester, (b) sending emails acknowledging the students who are doing well in class, and sending emails as check-in points for all students regardless of performance in class, (c) teaching faculty how to incorporate service learning into their classes, (d) encouraging class visits to campus events (e) conducting class field trips, and (f) conducting small groups outside of class to discuss journal assignments for personal development.

Strategies for increasing student–faculty interaction include actively inviting students into student–faculty interaction and going to places on campus where faculty can interface with students. For example, rather than holding office hours in an office which is typically secluded from student traffic, the faculty member can opt to hold office hours in student centers, tutoring spaces, or laboratories. Similar to Professor Santiago, faculty members can conduct a portion of their preparatory hours in student spaces as well. By creating these opportunities for incidental contact, although intentionally planned, the probability for developing more meaningful and supportive interactions increases. Students in this study suggested that personal invitations from the faculty member to the students to engage in student–faculty interaction rather than an open invitation to the entire class would encourage them to interact with faculty. Lastly, administration needs to create a campus hour in the middle of the day and possibly in the evening when classes are not held. This open time can be used for student events as well as opportunities for interaction.

Recommendation 4: Develop Trust and Rapport With Students Early

Professors in this study relied on their activities in the first few weeks of class to establish class guidelines and to create the impressions they wanted the students to have of them. Some struggled with the balance between being authoritative, yet approachable. However, what the professors should have concerned themselves with was gaining the students' trust and developing rapport. To the students, the title and social position of a professor was similar to someone wearing a coat of armor that represented their importance and concealed their identity. Under that coat of armor, or that title of

professor, the students did not know who the faculty member was or whether or not that person could be trusted.

Student participants reported wanting to get to know their professors, not necessarily on a personal level, but as human beings. Students often commented on their surprise at faculty appearing "human" to them. They wanted to know what kind of a person they were completing their homework for and whether or not this person was worthy of their efforts. Several students reported working harder for their professors after they interacted with them individually and had a chance to get to know their professors as individuals. Students appreciated their professors more when the professors shared their personal experiences and lessons, especially about being a student.

Strategies for developing rapport with students include the following: (a) humanizing faculty through sharing personal experiences and life lessons as they relate to academics (b) relating to students through empathy for the purposes of breaking down barriers between students and faculty, and (c) allowing students to gain some insight about who the faculty member is as an individual.

Recommendation 5: Empower Students to Become Professional Students

The idea of the professional student is exactly that—an idea. As described earlier, a profession al student is one who is familiar with the expectations of being a successful student. Institutions and their institutional agents need to accept the students for who they are and what they bring to the table. Institutions need to worry less about labeling the students as "at-risk" or "having deficits" or "underprepared" and more about meeting each student where he or she is. While it is important to understand the demographic patterns of the students and the students' academic backgrounds in order to be equity-

minded, institutional agents need to be aware of how their labeling may be harmful to students.

In this study, while faculty expected students to behave as "professional students," they did not seem to take into consideration the multiple life roles, as well as various identities, many students had. Faculty were well aware that students were also employees, partners, and parents, but seemed to underestimate the hardships and stressors that many of the students had on top of their roles as students. Some of those roles and identities shared in the interviews included single mother, recovering alcoholic, and military veteran with multiple deployments. Student participants reported there were many times when they neglected their role of being a professional student because of the stressors of other roles in their lives. Clearly, faculty need to be reminded of the number of challenges that students have, especially those in lower socioeconomic groups. For many students, their failure as "professional students" is a reflection of the chaos and challenges in their adult lives and not an indication of their apathy or immaturity. Faculty need to provide students with encouragement to become a professional student as opposed to penalizing the student for not fulfilling that role.

Once a bond of trust is formed between the student and the professor, the two can work together in the formation of a supportive and meaningful relationship. By incorporating Rendon's (1994) theory of validation and Stanton-Salazar's (1997, 2010) theory of empowering agents and social capital, faculty can begin to help students conquer their ambivalence about interacting with faculty outside of class. For example, through encouragement and support, the faculty member can assist students in addressing their fears about college, as well as the stereotypes about who is and is not college

material. With the support and encouragement of the faculty member, the student can author a new identity as a successful college student.

Another part of helping students to become professional students is empowering them by teaching them the importance of networking and utilizing the resources around them. Community colleges have a wealth of resources to assist students accomplish their goals in college, but many of those resources are underutilized. Michael, the student participant, was informed by the Veteran's office about all the resources available to him and compared it to football. "They don't tell you [when the ball is coming] but they throw a pass at you and then you got to catch it. That's how it is." In other words, he was made aware of resources available to him, but he was not made aware of when and how to use those resources. In helping students, throwing a pass at students may not be as effective as handing the ball off to the students. In other words, taking students to the resource and showing them how to use the resources, such as tutoring or counseling, may be much more effective than simply telling them about the resources.

In order to help students become a professional student, institutional agents need to empower them by not only informing them about resources but by also being the institutional agents that connect them to the resources. Figure 10 displays an illustration of how the three theoretical concepts combined can be used to assist a student toward fulfilling the role of a "professional student" as well as challenge the social structures they enter into. When taking figured worlds into consideration with validation theory, an institutional agent can support a student by addressing the student's fears about college, the stereotypes they carry with them to college, and their ambivalence about entering into interactions with faculty outside of class. While keeping in mind that figured worlds are
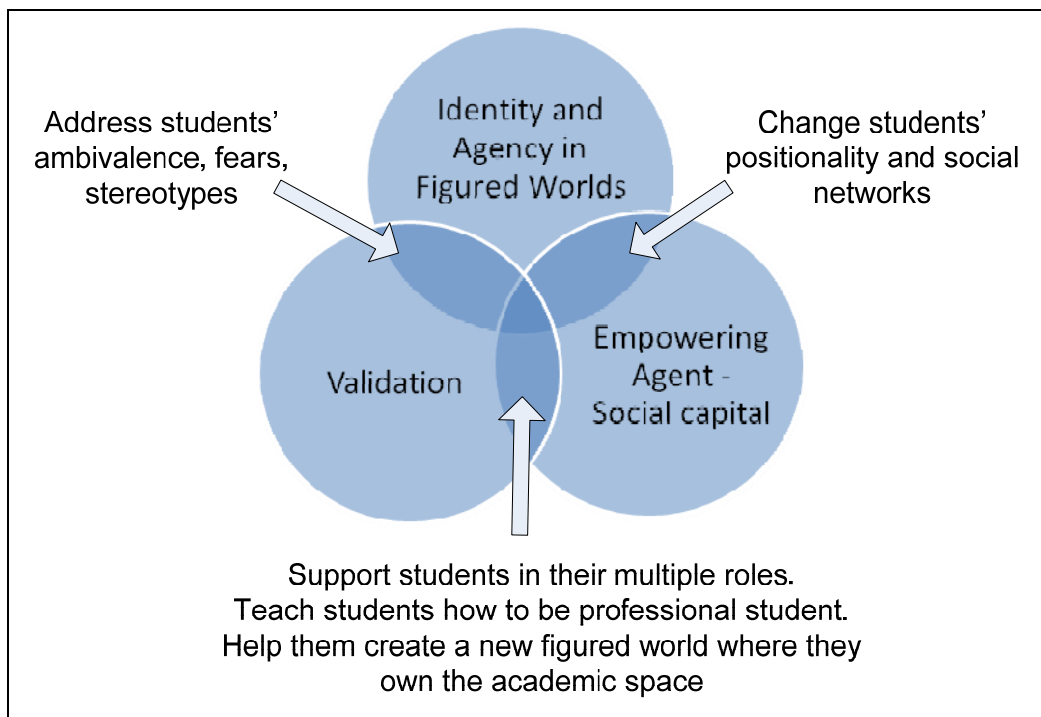
Figure 10. Combining validation and social capital in figured worlds to address student needs. Each overlap of area describes how an institutional agent can provide support to students.

socially constructed, the institutional agent can support the student in addressing issues in their figured world. When taking figured worlds into consideration with social capital theory, institutional agents can facilitate the creation of a new and healthy academic positional identity through providing connections to resources that are typically outside of the student's network. And finally, providing both validation and social capital to students helps support them with their multiple roles in life, with their fulfillment of becoming a "professional student," and with the creation of new figured worlds where the students become active agents in academic figured worlds.

Strategies for empowering student include the following: (a) providing validation through encouragement and support of students as scholars through encouraging words,

(b) providing social capital to students with less capital by connecting them to resources, and (c) recognizing the student as an individual and not as a member of a group.

Recommendation 6: Hire Institutional Agents

Another strategy to increase student–faculty interaction on campus is to hire faculty with strong interpersonal skills and who value interaction with students outside of class. Einarson and Clarkberg (2004) found faculty's interpersonal knowledge and abilities in making connections with students had the strongest correlation with frequency of interaction outside of class. Therefore, when examining where future and current faculty fall on the axis of interpersonal skills and axis of valuing interaction, if a candidate falls into the lower left hand quadrant with a low valuing of interaction and low interpersonal abilities, then the hiring committee needs to think carefully about how that individual may help further the goal of equity and student success in the community college. Figure 11 illustrates the two axes and the corresponding action in the four quadrants. Golde and Pribbenow (2000) found faculty who had a proclivity toward interaction with students outside of class were more committed to teaching. Hiring committees need to be more conscious of candidates' interaction styles as well as equity-minded qualities in the faculty they hire.

In summary, before faculty can improve upon student–faculty interaction practices, faculty need to understand the impact it has on students. From there, faculty can begin to improve upon interaction levels and interaction strategies. A tool faculty can use to improve student–faculty interaction is included in Appendix G.
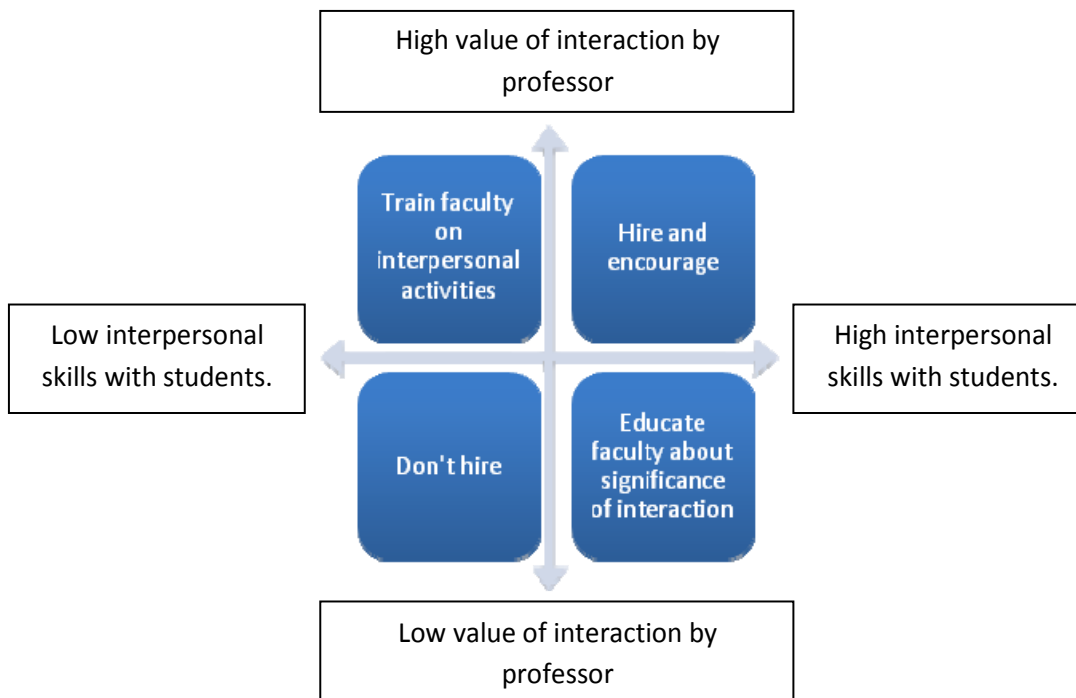
Figure 11. Hiring and training recommendations. Each quadrant displays recommendations for hiring and/or training of faculty.

Recommendations for Further Research

For further research, more student focus groups are recommended. This study featured one focus group and nine individual interviews with students. The student focus group seemed to allow students to support each other in expressing their satisfaction and dissatisfaction with interactions with their professors. Individually, the students were more timid about expressing how they genuinely felt. They eventually expressed their thoughts and feelings in the latter half of the interviews, but not without probing from the researcher. Focus groups seem to provide the dynamics that facilitate deeper exploration and greater reflection due to the presence of peers.

Studying students over a period of time would yield interesting results. With a longitudinal design, the researcher could observe whether or not students' attitudes,

experiences, and perceptions changed over time as students became more familiar with navigating college. Also, with this design the researcher would be able to observe how the students identify themselves and grow as individuals over time. Moreover, if the researcher develops rapport with the students over an extended period of time rather than in one or two conversations, then the study might elicit more truthful and uninhibited responses from the students.

A quantitative analysis at a community college, or even across community colleges in a state, further examining the findings in this study would be helpful in generalizing student attitudes, experiences, and perceptions to a larger population. Surveys could be conducted about student ambivalence or on perception of responsibility for the initiation of student–faculty interaction. Data could be collected through observation and by shadowing specific faculty members to determine the frequency and method of student–faculty interaction outside of class rather than relying on reported values. A quantitative analysis of faculty members' attitudes and perceptions of interaction would also be helpful, not only for research, but also in bringing attention to the faculty member about the significance of student–faculty interaction outside of class and how they implement, or avoid, interaction in their own practices.

Studying specific populations, both quantitatively and qualitatively, would allow for greater generalization of the results by population and hopefully bring to light the marginalization experience of the various groups of nontraditional students within community colleges. Specific populations might include students from underrepresented ethnicities, low-income students, underrepresented male students, single mothers on public assistance, former foster children, returning adults, and part-time students. As for

the study of faculty members, results by discipline may reveal patterns in amounts of interaction outside of class due to either subject matter or patterns in personalities of faculty members in various fields. Number of years at a community college or even age of the faculty member would also be interesting covariates to take into consideration. Studying faculty by ethnicity would reveal how interactions may differ culturally.

Lastly, focusing on faculty attitudes toward initiation of interaction with students outside of class, as well as their attitudes toward initiation of interaction with students who seem uninterested, may assist in exploring the keys to changing faculty members' attitudes toward becoming validating and empowering agents for the students. A qualitative study on faculty best practices in communication and interaction outside of class may assist in developing best practices in initiating productive interactions with students. Because of the anxiety produced from interactions outside of a structured setting, a set of circumscribed tools for communication and interaction could help faculty. By creating a cooperative, collaborative, and supportive environment for students, as well as for faculty through professional development, educators can continue to create innovative ways of learning for both current and future students in this rapidly changing figured world of higher education.

Concluding Remarks

Although student–faculty interactions outside of class are cited by many nontraditional students as contributors to their success in college, such interactions currently occur at low frequencies at the community college. This study aimed to examine student–faculty interaction outside of class from the perspectives of both students and faculty. The results clearly showed such interactions are extremely

beneficial to students but also that there are a number of barriers to interaction. These are

obstacles that both students and faculty erect. There are, however, specific strategies that

can reduce these barriers to better serve students, especially those who are considered

nontraditional students. This study aimed to especially examine the experience of

student–faculty interaction through the validation of students as well as through

empowering institutional agents who challenge the current social structure in order to

promote equitable outcomes in education. Described in this study, reasons for low levels

of interaction outside of class included the following: (a) underestimation of the benefits

of student–faculty interaction by both students and faculty; (b) lack of intentional

initiation of interaction by faculty; (c) lack of faculty knowledge of strategies for

interaction outside of class; (d) students' intimidation of faculty sometimes interpreted by

faculty as an absence of interest; and (e) an absence of an equity-minded perspective that

provides validation and empowers students through interaction outside of class. These

circumstances, all of which hinder the initiation of interaction outside of class, are

certainly manageable. It is clear from this study that in order to change these

circumstances, faculty and institutions must first understand the impact that institutional

agents and interactions outside of class have on students, especially students who have

doubt in their success as college students. Secondly, faculty can take a series of simple

steps, such personally inviting students to office hours or checking in with their students

individually on their standing in the class, which might dramatically improve likelihood

of success.

Each faculty participant in this study wanted to do what was best for their students

in terms of pedagogical practices. Often, faculty were not sure how to create more

opportunities for interaction outside of class. Simply asking faculty to provide more opportunities for interaction outside of class is not enough. Faculty also need support and validation to change their practices from traditional interaction patterns toward equity-minded efforts such as interaction outside of class. Therefore, support for student–faculty interactions outside of class needs to be expanded so that the frequency of those interactions can increase. And through the frequency of those interactions, the likelihood for the meaningful interactions that support and give confidence to students in navigating through community college will increase.

This study has implications that go beyond interactions between students and faculty members in community colleges. Missed opportunities for communication occur all the time. Every day, people underestimate how they can positively affect a person's mood through a simple smile, act of kindness, or uplifting words. In this study, the researcher discovered that both students and faculty underestimate the impact student–faculty interaction has on positive student outcomes, something all students can benefit from. Instead of working together with faculty towards the common goal of positive student outcomes, students work alone with the idea in mind that student success is individually accomplished. Students and faculty tend to forget about the support and satisfaction people receive from relationships, and they forget about the roles those relationships play in their own accomplishments. In the words of George Washington Carver, "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in life you will have been all of these."

REFERENCES

Anderson, L. E., & Carta-Falsa, J. (2002). Factors that make faculty and student relationships effective. *College Teaching, 50*(4), 134-138.

Astin, A. W. (1984). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Personnel, 25*, 297-308.

Atkinson, D. R., & Hackett, G. (1998). *Counseling diverse populations* (2nd ed.). Boston, MA: McGraw-Hill.

Bandura, A. (1999). *Self-efficacy: The exercise of control*. New York, NY: Freeman.

Barnett, E. A. (2011). Validation experiences and persistence among community college students. *The Review of Higher Education, 34*(2), 193-230.

Barr, R. B., & Tagg, J. (1995). From teaching to learning—A new paradigm for undergraduate education. (Cover story). *Change, 27*(6), 12-25.

Bensimon, E. M. (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 441-469.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. (2009). *National survey finds work, family responsibilities fueling low college completion rates [Press Release]*. Retrieved from http://www.gatesfoundation.org/press-releases/Pages/study-shows-school-work-family-balance-is-greatest-challenge-091209.aspx

Boroch, D., Fillpot, J., Hope, L., Johnstone, R., Mery, P., Serban, A., . . . Gariner, R. S. (2007). *Basic skills as a foundation for student success in California community colleges*. Sacramento, CA: The Center for Student Success.

Bryant, A. N. (2001). Community college students recent findings and trends. *Community College Review, 29*(3), 77-93.

Cejda, B. D., & Rhodes, J. H. (2004). Through the pipeline: The role of faculty in promoting associate degree completion among Hispanic students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 28*, 249-262.

Center for Community College Student Engagement. (2009). *Making Connections: Dimensions of Student Engagement (2009 CCSSE Findings).* Austin, TX: The University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program.

Chang, J. C. (2005). Faculty–student interaction at the community college: A focus on students of color. *Research in Higher Education, 46*(7), 769-802.

Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis.* London, England: Sage.

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1987). Seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *AAHE Bulletin, 39*(7), 3-7.

Chickering, A. W., & Gamson, Z. F. (1999). Development and adaptations of the seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 1999*(80), 75-81.

Cohen, A. M., & Brawer, F. B. (2008). *The American community college.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Cohen, G. L., Steele, C. M., & Ross, L. D. (1999). The mentor's dilemma: Providing critical feedback across the racial divide. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25*(10), 1302-1318.

Cole, D. (2008). Constructive criticism: The role of student–faculty interactions of African American and Hispanic students' educational gains. *Journal of College Student Development, 49*(6), 587-605.

Coleman, J. S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *The American Journal of Sociology, 94*, S95-S120.

Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). (n.d.) *Key findings*. Retrieved from http://www.ccsse.org/survey/survey.cfm.

Cotten, S. R., & Wilson, B. (2006). Student–faculty interactions: Dynamics and determinants. *Higher Education, 51*(4), 487-519.

Cox, B. E., McIntosh, K. L., Terenzini, P. T., Reason, R. D., & Quaye, B. R. (2010). Pedagogical signals of faculty approachability: Factors shaping faculty–student interaction outside the classroom. *Research in Higher Education, 51*, 767-788.

Cox, B. E., & Orehovec, E. (2007). Faculty–student interaction outside the classroom: A typology from a residential college. *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 343-362.

Cox, R. D. (2009a). *The college fear factor: How students and professors misunderstand one another.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cox, R. D. (2009b). Promoting success by addressing students' fear of failure. *Community College Review, 37*(1), 52-80.

Cress, C. M. (2008). Creating inclusive learning communities: The role of student–faculty relationships in mitigating negative campus climate. *Learning Inquiry, 2*(2), 95-111.

Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches.* Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Einarson, M. K., & Clarkberg, M. E. (2004, November). *Understanding faculty out-of-class interaction with undergraduate students at a research university*. Paper presented at the annual meetng of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Kansas City, MO.

Garcia, M. (2010). When Hispanic students attempt to succeed in college, but do not. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(10), 839-847.

Giancola, J. K., Grawitch, M. J., & Borchert, D. (2009). Dealing with the stress of college: A model for adult students. *Adult Education Quarterly, 59*, 246-264.

Gibson, A. M., & Slate, J. R. (2010). Student engagement at two-year insistutions: Age and generational status differences. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34*(5), 371-385.

Golde, C. M., & Pribbenow, D. A. (2000). Understanding faculty involvement in residential learning communities. *Journal of College Student Development, 41*(1), 27-40.

Gonzalez, K. P., Stoner, C., & Jovel, J. E. (2003). Examining the role of social capital in access to college for Latinas: Toward a college opportunity framework. *Journal of Hispanic Higher Education, 2*(1), 146-170.

Hagedorn, L. S., Maxwell, W., Rodriguez, P., Hocevar, D., & Filpot, J. (2000). Peer and student-faculty relations in community colleges. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 24*, 587-598.

Halawah, I. (2006). The impact of student–faculty informal interpersonal relationships on intellectual and personal development. *College Student Journal, 40*(3), 670-678.

Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond culture.* Garden City, NY: Anchor Press.

Harper, S. R. (2012). *Black male student success in higher education*: *A report from the National Black Male College Achievement Study.* Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania, Center for the Study of Race and Equity in Education.

Harper, S. R., & Quaye, S. J. (Eds.). (2009). *Student engagement in higher education: Theoretical perspectives and practical approaches for diverse populations.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Helterbran, V. R. (2008). The ideal professor: Student perceptions of effective instructor practices, attitudes, and skills. *Education, 129*(1), 125-138.

Holland, D., Lachiocotte, W., Skinner, D., & Cain, C. (1998). *Identity and agency in cultural worlds.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hubbard, S. M. (2009). Attitudes, perceptions, and preferences of faculty at Hispanic serving and predominantly Black institutions. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*(3), 270-289.

Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*(4), 324-345.

Jaasma, M. A., & Koper, R. J. (1999). The relationship of student–faculty out-of-class communication to instructor immediacy and trust and to student motivation. *Communication Education*, *48*(1), 41-47.

Jones, J. M. (1972). *Prejudice and racism.* Reading, MA: Addison Wesley.

Jones, J. M. (1997). *Prejudice and racism* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Karp, M. M., O'Gara, L., & Hughes, K. L. (2008). *Do support services at community college encourage success or reproduce disadvantage? An exploratory study of students in two community colleges.* (CCRC Working Paper No. 10). New York, NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Keller, G. (2001). The new demographics of higher education. *The Review of Higher Education, 24*(3), 219-235.

Kim, K. A., Sax, L. J., Lee, J. J., & Hagedorn, L. S. (2010) Redefining nontraditional students: Exploring the self-perceptions of community college students, *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *34*, 402-422.

Kim, Y. K., & Sax, L. J. (2007). Student-faculty interaction in research universities: Differences by student gender, race, social class, and first-generation status. *Research in Higher Education, 50*, 437-459.

Kuh, G. D. (2001). Assessing what really matters to student learning: Inside the National Survey of Student Engagement. *Change, 33*(3), 10-17, 66.

Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6), 683-706.

Kuh, G. D., & Hu, S. (2001). The effects of student-faculty interaction in the 1990s. *The Review of Higher Education, 24*(3), 309-332.

Kuh, G. D., Kinzie, J., Schuh, J. H., Whitt, E. J., & Associates. (2005). *Student success in college: Creating conditions that matter.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Laird, J., & Green, R. (1996). *Lesbians and gays in couples and families*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Laird, T. F., & Cruce, T. M. (2010). Individual and environmental effects of part-time enrollment status on student–faculty interaction and self-reported gains. *The Journal of Higher Education, 80*(3), 290-314.

Li, L., & Pitts, J. P. (2009). Does it really matter? Using virtual office hours to enhance student–faculty interaction. *Journal of Information Systems Education, 20*(2), 175-185.

Lundberg, C. A., & Schreiner, L. A. (2004). Quality and frequency of faculty-student interaction as predictors of learning: An analysis of student race/ethnicity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(5), 549-565.

Mack, N., Woodson, C., MacQueen, K. M., Guest, G., & Namey, E. (2005). *Qualitative research methods: A data collector's field guide*. Research Triangle Park, NC: USAID.

Nadler, M. K., & Nadler, L. B. (2001). The roles of sex, empathy, and credibility in out-of-class communication between faculty and students. *Women's Studies in Communication, 24*(2), 241-261.

Nasir, N. S., & Hand, V. M. (2006). Exploring sociocultural perspectives on race, culture, and learning. *Review of Educational Research, 76*(4), 449-475.

Pascarella, E. T. (2006). How college affects students: Ten directions for future research. *Journal of College Student Development, 47*(5), 508-520.

Pascarella, E. T., Seifert, T. A., & Blaich, C. (2010). How effective are the NSSE benchmarks in predicting important educational outcomes? *Change*, 16-22.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (2005). *How college affects students.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Patton, L. D., McEwen, M., Rendon, L., & Howard-Hamilton, M. F. (2007). Critical race perspectives on theory in student affairs. *New Directions for Student Services, 2007*(120), 39-53.

Pena, E. V., Bensimon, E. M., & Colyar, J. (2006). Contextual problem defining: Learning to think and act. *Liberal Education*, 48-55.

Pike, G. R., Kuh, G. D., & McCormick, A. C. (2008, November). *Learning community participation and educational outcomes: Direct, indirect, and contingent relationships*. Paper presented at annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education, Jacksonville, FL.

Rendon, L. I. (1994). Validating culturally diverse students: Toward a new model of learning and student development. *Innovative Higher Education, 19*(1), 33-51.

Rendon, L. I. (1998). Helping non-traditional students be successful in college. *About Campus, 3*(1), 2-3.

Rendon, L. I., Jalomo, R. E., & Nora, A. (2000). Theoretical consideration in the study of minority student retention in higher education. In J. M. Braxton (Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 127-156). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Rendon, L. I., & Valadez, J. R. (1993). Qualitative indicators of Hispanic student transfer. *Community College Review, 20*(4), 27-37.

Rubin, B. C. (2007). Learner identity amid figured worlds: Constructing (in)competence at an urban high school. *The Urban Review, 39*(2), 217-249.

Rugutt, J., & Chemosit, C. C. (2009). What motivates students to learn? Contribution of student-to-student relations, student–faculty interaction and critical thinking skills. *Educational Research Quarterly, 32*(3), 16-28.

Saenz, V. B., Ngai, H. N., & Hurtado, S. (2007). Factors influencing positive interactions across race for African American, Asian American, Latino, and White college students. *Research in Higher Education, 48*(1), 1-39.

Santamaria, L. J. (2009). Culturally responsive differentiated instruction: Narrowing gaps between best pedagogical practices benefiting all learners. *Teachers College Record, 111*(1), 214-247.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (1997). A social capital framework for understanding the socialization of racial minority children and youths. *Harvard Educational Review, 67*(1), 1-40.

Stanton-Salazar, R. D. (2010). *A social capital framework for the study of institutional agents and their role in the empowerment of low-status students and youth.* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Steele, C. M. (1997). A threat in the air: How stereotypes shape intellectual identity and performance. *American Psychologist*, *52*(6), 613-629.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory (2nd ed.).* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sue, D. W., & Sue, D. (1999). *Counseling the culturally different.* New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Terenzini, P. T., Rendon, L. I., Upcraft, M. L., Millar, S. B., Allison, K. W., & Patricia L.
Gregg, R. J. (1994). The transition to college: Diverse students, diverse stories.
Research in Higher Education, 35(1), 57-73.

Thompson, M. D. (2001). Informal student–faculty interaction: Its relationship to
educational gains in science and mathematics among community college students.
Community College Review, 29(1), 35-57.

Tierney, W. G. (1992). An anthropological analysis of student participation in college.
The Journal of Higher Education, 63(6), 603-618.

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical systhesis of recent
research. *Review of educational research, 45*(1), 89-125.

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition
(2nd ed.).* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Umbach, P. D., & Wawrzynski, M. R. (2005). Faculty do matter: The role of college
faculty in student learning and engagement. *Research in Higher Education, 46*(2),
153-184.

Urrieta, L. (2007). Figured worlds and education: An introduction to the special issue.
The Urban Review, 39(2), 107-116.

U. S. Census Bureau. (2011). *2010 Census shows America's diversity.* Retrieved from
http://2010.census.gov/news/releases/operations/cb11-cn125.html

Walker, T., Pearson, F., & Murrell, P. (2010). Quality of effort and career preparation
differences between African American and White community college students.
Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 34(9), 738-754.

Wells, R. (2008). The effects of social and cultural capital on student persistence: Are

    community colleges more meritocratic? *Community College Review, 36*(1), 25-

    46.

Wilson, R. C., Woods, L., & Gaff, J. G. (1974). Social-psychological accessibility and

    faculty–student interaction beyond the classroom. *Sociology of Education, 47*(1),

    74-92.

Zepke, N., & Leach, L. (2010). Improving student engagement: Ten proposals for action.

    Active Learning in Higher Education, 11(3), 167-177.

Appendix A

Recruitment Handout for Class Visits

Participation in a Study

<u>Title of Study</u>: Perceptions and expectations of the initiation of student-faculty interaction outside of class at a community college

<u>Investigator</u>:   Glyn Bongolan, M.A.
             Counseling Department
             (760) 744-1150 x3636
             gbongolan@palomar.edu

<u>Purpose of the Study</u>: The purpose of this study is to understand and describe the context of the various levels of initiation of interaction for community college students and faculty. Students and faculty members will be interviewed. Students are required to be currently enrolled in a minimum of six units.

<u>Description of the Study</u>: You are being asked to participate in a research study. First, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire describing your educational status and demographic information. Next, you will be asked to participate in a focus group or an individual interview for approximately one hour. Questions will include whether or not you initiate contact with faculty, and how you decide to engage, or not engage, in interaction outside of class. You will be asked to share your perception of interaction outside of class. Finally, you may, or may not, be contacted again for a second individual interview for additional data collection or for clarification. Participation is completely voluntary. All interviews will be audio recorded.

<u>Questions about the Study</u>: If you have any questions about the research, please ask. You can contact me at the information listed above.

- -- -- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -- - - -

If you are open to being contacted for an individual or group interview for the study, please check the box below and provide your name and email address.

☐   No, I am not interested in participating.

☐   Yes, I am interested in participating.

     Name:

     Email:

Appendix B

Participant Consent Form

San Diego State University
Consent to Act as a Research Subject
Perceptions and expectations of the initiation of student-faculty interaction outside of
class at a community college

You are being asked to participate in a research study. Before you give your consent to
volunteer, it is important that you read the following information and ask as many
questions as necessary to be sure you understand what you will be asked to do.

Investigator: Glyn Bongolan, M.A.
                 Counseling Department
                 Palomar College

The investigator is a doctoral candidate in the College of Education at SDSU.
Supervising her research is Marj Olney, Ph.D., a professor in the College of Education at
SDSU.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to understand and describe the process
of the initiation of contact between students and faculty outside of the classroom.
Approximately 10 to 15 students and 6 to 9 faculty members will be interviewed.
Students are required to be currently enrolled in a minimum of six units in order to
participate.

Description of the Study: The study will be conducted in a conference room or private
office at Palomar College. First, you will be asked to complete a questionnaire
describing your educational background and personal information. Next, you will be
asked to participate in a focus group or an individual interview for approximately one
hour. Questions will include whether or not you initiate student-faculty interaction, and
how you decide to initiate, or not initiate, student-faculty interaction. You will be asked
to share your perception of the initiation of student-faculty interaction. The initial
questions will be followed up with questions about the context of the initiation of
interaction. Finally, you may, or may not, be contacted again for a second individual
interview for additional data collection. If you are contacted for a second interview, you
will answer more in-depth questions about how you related to faculty members outside of
class time. The interview will take approximately one hour. Both the focus groups and
interviews will be audio-recorded.

<u>What is Experimental in this Study</u>: None of the procedures used in this study are experimental in nature. The only experimental aspect of this study is the gathering of information for the purpose of analysis.

<u>Risks or Discomforts</u>: A potential risk to participation in the study is that you may feel concerned that the comments you provide will be read by your future/present instructors or by your students even though your name or other identifiable characteristics will not be part of the final report. Another potential risk for you may be embarrassment from answering questions about your involvement levels in student-faculty interaction. Should you begin to feel uncomfortable at any time during the interview, you may discontinue participation, either temporarily or permanently.

<u>Benefits of the Study</u>: I cannot guarantee that you will receive any benefits from participating in this study. The benefit to you may be the satisfaction of being a contributor to the body of knowledge about the initiation of student-faculty interaction. Another benefit may be having the opportunity to contribute to the improvement of student-faculty interaction on campus. Lastly, a potential benefit may be having the opportunity to express how you feel about student-faculty interaction.

<u>Confidentiality</u>: Confidentiality will be maintained to the extent allowed by law. Hard copies of the research files, as well as audio recordings, will be stored in a locked, private office. Electronic data will be stored on a USB drive which will remain with the researcher at all times. That data will be backed up on a hard drive in the locked, private office. Both electronic copies will be password protected. Audio recordings will be used to record interviews and will be transcribed by the researcher. The transcribed interviews will then be coded into themes grounded in theory. Only the researcher will have access to the data. Data will be destroyed within 90 days of publication of the research.

<u>Incentives to Participate</u>: Incentives for participation in a focus group or individual interview may include extra credit if you are enrolled in a learning community. If you are not enrolled in a learning community, incentives may include a meal or cash compensation equivalent to the cost of a meal. Monetary incentives will be provided at the end of the interview and focus group which will last approximately one hour. Food incentives will be provided before the focus group and interview.

<u>Costs and/or Compensation for Participation</u>: There are no monetary costs to participate in the study. The only cost to you is your time.

<u>Voluntary Nature of Participation</u>: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your choice of whether or not to participate will not influence your future relations with San Diego State University or Palomar College. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your

consent and to stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are allowed.

Questions about the Study: If you have any questions about the research now, please ask. If you have questions later about the research, you may contact me, Glyn Bongolan, at (760) 744-1150 extension 3636.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the Division of Research Administration San Diego State University (telephone: 619-594-6622; email: irb@mail.sdsu.edu).

Consent to Participate: The San Diego State University Institutional Review Board has approved this consent form, as signified by the Board's stamp. The consent form must be reviewed annually and expires on the date indicated on the stamp.

Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this document and have had a chance to ask any questions you have about the study. Your signature also indicates that you agree to be in the study and have been told that you can change your mind and withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You have been given a copy of this consent form.

_____

Name of Participant (please print)

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date

Appendix C

Student Intake Form

Name: _____

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

1. Gender
    ❑ Male
    ❑ Female

2. Age: _____

3.   Ethnicity (Check the ones that apply)

    ❑African-American

    ❑Asian

    ❑Caucasian

    ❑Hispanic, Latino

    ❑Native American

    ❑Pacific Islander

    ❑Other _____

4. Are you married? Circle one: Yes No

5. English is my first or primary language. (Check one)
    ❑ Yes
    ❑ No   If No, what is your first or primary language?_____

6. Number of semesters enrolled in college (including current semester): _____

7. Units completed to date (include all units): _____

8. Number of units currently enrolled in: _____

9. Current GPA @ this college: _____

10. When do you most frequently take classes at this college?
Circle one: Day Evening Weekend

11. Do you have children who live with you? Circle one: Yes No

12. My parents/guardians have earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. Circle one:
Yes No

13. Number of hours of work (employment) per week: _____

14. Email Address:

Please give your intake form to the researcher. Thank you.

Appendix D

Faculty Intake Form

Name: _____

Directions: Please answer the following questions.

1. Gender
   ❑ Male
   ❑ Female

2. Age: _____

3. Ethnicity (Check the ones that apply)

   ❑African-American

   ❑Asian

   ❑Caucasian

   ❑Hispanic, Latino

   ❑Native American

   ❑Pacific Islander

   ❑Other _____

4. <u>Part-time faculty</u> or <u>full-time faculty</u> or <u>retired faculty</u>? Circle one.

5. English is my first or primary language. (Check one)
   ❑ Yes
   ❑ No   If No, what is your first or primary language?_____

6. Number of semesters teaching in community college (including current semester):_____

7. Number of semesters at Palomar College: _____

8. Number of units currently teaching (overall): _____

9. Number of units currently teaching (Palomar only): _____

10. Subject you are teaching:

_____

11. When do you teach? Circle one or more: Day Evening Weekend

12. Have you taught in a learning community? Circle one: Yes No

Please give your intake form to the researcher. Thank you.

Appendix E

Initial Interview Questions for Students

Verbal Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please review

the consent form and sign it if you agree. This interview will last approximately one

hour. Your participation is completely voluntary. If there are any questions you are not

comfortable answering, please let me know, and we will move on to the next question.

You can opt out of the interview at any time. Do you have any questions?

Possible Student Interview Questions:

Interaction/Contact

1. What are your perceptions (thoughts and feelings) about initiating interaction, or
   contact, with faculty?

2. How do you initiate interaction with faculty outside of the classroom? What led
   up to that initiation of interaction?

3. How do you think of the interaction in terms of value?

4. Do you have expectations in regards to the initiation of interaction outside of
   class?

5. What encourages or discourages you to initiate interaction with faculty?

6. Describe your level of comfort with initiating interaction with faculty.

Validation, Sense of Belonging

1. Do you feel supported (academically, emotionally, etc.) on campus?

2. In what ways can faculty be more supportive of you?

Figured Worlds, Social Capital

1. How do you view the social status of professors on campus?

2. How does the social status of professors affect how you initiate contact with a professor?

3. What are your thoughts and feelings about college in general?

4. How do you feel about the campus culture and how you fit the culture?

Closing

1. Is there anything else you think I should know about the initiation of interaction?

2. Are there any questions that I can answer for you?

Appendix F

Initial Interview Questions for Faculty

Verbal Introduction: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Please review the consent form and sign it if you agree. This interview will last approximately one hour. Your participation is completely voluntary. If there are any questions you are not comfortable answering, please let me know, and we will move on to the next question. You can opt out of the interview at any time. Do you have any questions?

Interaction

1. What are your perceptions (thoughts and feelings) about initiating interaction with students or students initiating interaction with you?

2. How do you initiate interaction with students outside of the classroom? What circumstances lead up to that initiation of interaction?

3. Do you expect students to initiate the interaction or do you initiate the interaction?

4. For what reasons do you initiate interaction with students?

5. For what reasons do students initiate interaction with you?

6. How important is interacting with students outside of class?

7. Describe your comfort level with initiating interaction with students 1 (bad) - 7 (good).

8. Do you notice a change in performance after meeting with a student outside of class?

9. What encourages or discourages you to initiate interaction with students?

10. Do students email you?

11. Do students talk about career plans with you?

12. Have you worked with students on activities other than coursework outside of class?

Validation, Sense of Belonging

1. How do you provide support for students outside of class?

2. What are your views of interactions outside of class in terms of support for students?

Figured Worlds, Social Capital

1. Do you think your social status as a professor affects how students interact with you? (how students address you, if they talk to you like a peer, are they nervous are you, etc)

2. What kind of image do you want your students to have of you?

3. What do you do to communicate/portray that image?

4. How do you see your role in student success in terms of interaction?

Closing

1. Is there anything else you think I should know in order to understand the initiation of interaction?

2. Are there any questions that I can answer for you?

Appendix G

Student–Faculty Interaction Tool

1. **Intentionally Initiate Interaction**
   - Send emails to check-in with students which will allow them to personally respond back about their situation
   - Personally invite students into interaction
   - Conduct one-on-one meetings with each student

2. **Be Available to Students**
   - Increase deliberate incidental contact
   - Conduct office hours or preparatory time in student centers
   - Participate in student events and activities

3. **Validate Students**
   - Personally let students know when they are doing well
   - Use encouraging words
   - Balance negative feedback with positive feedback

4. **Empower Students**
   - Teach students how to navigate through campus bureaucracy
   - Reinforce the idea that the students are scholars
   - Connect students to resources on campus

5. **Focus on Social Development of Students**
   - Encourage students to share stories about themselves
   - Teach students the importance of networking and how to network with people
   - Assign journals and provide opportunities to discuss journals outside of class in groups

6. **Demystify Yourself to Students**
   - Tell students about yourself
   - Share personal experiences of being a student

7. **Learn Various Methods of Engaging Students Outside of Class**
   - Participate in professional development
   - Share techniques in Faculty Inquiry Groups (FIGs) on student–faculty interaction

8. **Assess Personal Strategies**
   - Observe your personal interaction patterns
   - Notice who you interact with most
   - Interact with all students