All Theses And Dissertations   Theses and Dissertations

12-20-2016

Teaching The First: A Phenomenological Study Of Southeastern Community College Instructors Communicating With First-Generation College Students

Tanyanika Mattos
University of New England

Follow this and additional works at: https://dune.une.edu/theses

Part of the Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Higher Education Commons, and the Higher Education and Teaching Commons

TEACHING THE FIRST: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS
COMMUNICATING WITH FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

By

Tanyanika Mattos

BS (Audrey Cohen College) 2000
MBA (Long Island University) 2001

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Affiliated Faculty of

The College of Graduate and Professional Studies at the University of New England

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of Requirements

For the degree of Doctor of Education

Portland & Biddeford, Maine

November 2016

Tanyanika Mattos
November 2016
Educational Leadership

TEACHING THE FIRST: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF
SOUTHEASTERN COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS
COMMUNICATING WITH FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS

Abstract

This phenomenological research study explored eight Southeastern community college instructors communicating with first-generation college students, specifically the lived experiences of community college instructors as they taught developmental education. The participated included a lawyer, health care executive, and engineer, psychologist, bookkeeper, health sciences professional, and education specialist and computer information systems professional. Pre-interviews, interviews and an electronic survey were utilized to obtain the data on the phenomenon. This phenomenological data analysis process offered a structured analysis process that is reflective and grounded in vibrant descriptions. During the interview, all forms were used to document responses of interviewees. The interviews were interpreted in real context, transcribed, and emergent themes were identified. Next, categories were created using these emergent themes, and subcategories were also created. Once emergent themes were identified, textual descriptions were outlined, using instructor experiences of communicating with students. The themes that came from the text of the interviews revealed the instructors' experiences communicating with developmental education students. The observation protocol was retained as part of the study for future and comparative research use. Two critical themes emerged from the transcribed interviews. (1) College instructors' lived experiences

communicating with first-generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges can be found in the context of instructions, as predicated by their various perceptions on subjects such as workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom and mental health/student support services. (2) Community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation students as an intricate part in communication success and challenges with first generation college students. Instructors shared their experiences using strategies to support student success and to overcome challenges in communicating with first-generation college students, regarding expectations of instructor availability, ongoing communication of student expectations, access to technology, literacy and academic dishonesty can be found by observing their vastly different instructor strategies. Their approaches to helping students negotiate higher education reflect the tenets of transformative leadership. Transformative leadership theory presents the idea that we can lead in current roles, in pursuit of the greater good- going beyond our personal needs for social benefit.

University of New England

Doctor of Education
Educational Leadership

This dissertation was presented
by

Tanyanika Mattos

It was presented on
November 29th, 2016
and approved by:

Michelle Collay, Ph.D., Lead Advisor
University of New England

Ella Benson, Ed.D., Secondary Advisor,
University of New England

Allen Farina, Ed.D., Affiliate Committee Member
Ottawa University

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost I would like to thank God, through him all things are possible. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my committee, Michelle Collay, Ph.D., Ella Benson, Ed.D, and Allen Farina, Ed. D., for guiding me through the dim lights and bringing my research and my passion together. Thank you.

To my many friends and family and fur kids, thank you for your unwavering support. I would specifically like to thank my sweet daughter Rickayla Plaskett, my loving husband Eli D. Mattos, my parents Charles and Jacquelyn Babies and my grandmothers Linne Babies and Malissa Johnson. To my sister from another mom, Nicole Lynn Fanning and my many special friends: Kay Francis Copeland, Arona Testamark and many, many more, thank you. A special thank you to my beloved Rottweiler, Dutch MySon- forever my champion on the late nights for many years. Finally, thank you Professor Warren Kunz for being my academic champion since 1998. This could only have been done with all my family and friends' love and support. Thank you.

A special note to my nephews Connor and Carter- you can do anything!

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will even forget what you did,

but people will never forget how you made them feel. – Maya Angelou

This phenomenological research study is an in-depth exploration of lived experiences of adjunct and full-time community college instructors as they teach developmental education courses at a community college in a Southeastern state. Higher education instructors have a story to tell about communication with their students. Some higher education instructors may assume roles as change agents, in that they are positioned to engineer active learning situations for adult learners. Higher education instructors crusade both for programs geared towards adult learners and supportive services at their colleges (Blair, 2010).

Adult learners seeking formal education face many challenges; among those so challenged are first-generation colleges students, of whom the majority hold full-time jobs while raising a family. First-generation college student experiences, as described by researchers who study American community colleges, included feelings of inability to navigate the college environment physically, emotionally, and academically to accomplish education goals (Rosenbaum, Pearson, & Deil-Amen, 2006). Communications from instructors play a fundamental role in (a) assisting first-generation college students to avoid isolation and (b) encouraging first-generation college students to become engaged in class (Rosenbaum, Pearson, & Deil-Amen, 2006). Developmental education courses are selected as criteria for selecting participants because developmental education courses afford a higher chance to identify first-

generation college students; 55 % of first-generation college students took some developmental education course during their college years (Chen, 2005). First generation college students (FGCS) are usually students whose parents haven't graduated from a four-year college or university. Nearly 30 percent of all college students are FGCS (University of New Hampshire, Counseling Center, 2016). Qualitative research methods were used to uncover instructor perspectives and attitudes to understand better how instructors perceive they communicate with first-generation college students.

Problem Statement

The problem addressed in this study is community college instructors' perceptions of how they are interacting with first-generation college students (Garriott et al., 2015; Petty, 2014; Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). Instructors may perceive they are communicating effectively with students, but research on the experiences of first generation students suggests they do not communicate effectively. Instructors often report difficulty understanding how their role as a communicator can play a vital part of the FGCS experience (Garriott et al., 2015; Petty, 2014; Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014). A likely explanation of the importance of student-instructor communication can be found in earlier studies, which showed that the increased frequency of student-instructor interaction is related to student's satisfaction with the academic and non-academic aspects of college (Pascarella & Terenzine, 1978). For example, instructors may perceive they are often communicating with students, but research on the experiences of first generation students suggests they are not communicating as often as they think (Pascarella & Terenzine, 1978).

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this phenomenological study is to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of community college instructors who teach first-generation college students through gathering descriptions of instructor experiences of communicating with developmental education students, and (b) learn how they make sense out of those communication experiences by co-constructing meaning about those communication experiences through dialogue with development course instructors.

The study will include representation of instructors' experience in communicating with students, perceived challenges, and overall instructors' perceptions about the requirements of their roles and student communication. In this study, the phenomenon is described as the instructors' perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students. Research from Bensimon (2007), Cox (2009), Deil-Amen (2010), Stage and Hubbard (2008) and Tinto (2000) explores and examines the relationship of first-generation student academic performance and instructor-student communication. However, only a small number of studies examine beliefs about instructors' roles in retaining first generation students, their responsibility for developing cross-cultural communication skills or cultural competence despite their being a reason to believe that instructors play a central role in first generation student educational experiences.

Research Questions

The research questions central to my study include:

- Research Question 1: What are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges?

- Research Question 2: How do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation college students?

Conceptual Framework

The theoretical frame for this research includes transformative leadership theory, systems theory, and communication theory. Creswell (2007) highlighted the significance of my own experiences within the qualitative research study. Although not employed at an institution of higher education at the time of the study, experiences from 9 years of college teaching were drawn upon. Having been involved in workshops and roundtable discussions regarding instructor-student communication has brought some knowledge to the research study.

The social constructivist approach will be used in this study. Gergen (2009) asserted that the social phenomenon of consciousness developed in social contexts. In turn, this helped me narrow the query on communication, while factoring in the educational system and the instructor-FGCS relationship. By studying the phenomenon of instructors' perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students, transformative leadership could be used as a strategy to benefit the student.

Transformative Leadership Theory

The transformative leadership theory presents the idea that one can lead in current roles, in pursuit of the greater good. Shields' (2010) definition of transformative leadership begins with questions of social justice and looks critically at discriminatory practices that include both the individual's and the greater benefit. Furthermore, the transformative leadership theory focuses on reciprocity and discretion at the most intimate points of contact: direct communication. Effective communication between instructors and students, instructors and

instructors, and instructors and administration may be employed as a self-leadership strategy in transformative leadership. Leadership at all levels will develop, resulting in higher student retention, higher instructor retention, and higher performing higher education institutes (Nica, 2013, p. 190).

For the purpose of this study, the analytical lens of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010) is used. Shields (2010) listed the characteristics of a transformative leader as being able to balance critique and promise, effect profound and equitable change, create new knowledge frameworks, acknowledge power and privilege, focus on liberation, democracy, equity and justice and finally, demonstrate moral courage and activism. As an educator, a transformative leader embraces each opportunity to lead from the classroom and campaign for that student who will, in turn, reinforce their family and ultimately the community.

Systems Theory

There is no way to look at or measure unique solutions without addressing the uniqueness of the problems with institutions of higher education (Flumerfelt & Banachowski, 2011). Understanding the higher education system by using systems theory helps to explain the connection between instructors, first-generation or nontraditional college students, and the nature of that communication. According to Tinto (1975), deviating from the traditional organization of institutes of higher education, systems theory states that all the components relate (Adams, Hester, & Bradley, 2013; Schein, 1980). By choosing this perspective, one can analyze the inputs of the institute (the educator, instructors successfully teaching college courses), the output (educated first-generation or nontraditional college students), and the goals (successful completion of course exams and graduation). Using systems theory, one can state that the

instructor remains associated on all levels with the core product (the graduating student). Systems theory provides a basis to understand the education system, and during this study, this was applied "as a lens" (Adams et al, 2013, p. 4107) for viewing the problems this study addresses.

Some aspects of higher education systems aren't set up to retain first-generation students. Furthermore, some educators have lobbied Congress to encourage the full time quota as 15 credits per semester instead of 12 (Complete College America, 2013). Most FGCS students attend school part time because they are working to support themselves and their dependents. Unfortunately for non-traditional learners, administrative and financial aid offices are not available outside of business hours. Finally, language tests, bell curves systems and placement tests are designed to categorize and assign resources accordingly, which is the exact opposite of social justice.

Communication Theory

Gumperz and Hymes (1986) and Toon and Wright (2013) defined communication as a concept that is not dictated by particular social norms. Communication represents a multi-step process in which the speaker first takes in stimuli from the outside environment, evaluating and selecting among them in light of their cultural background, personal history, and what they know about their interlocutors. They then select from the available norms that apply to the situation at hand. These patterns determine the speaker's selection from among the communicative options available for encoding his or her intent (Street & De Haes, 2013).

Communication happens whether one understands or chooses the method of communication (Griffin, 2012). Institutes of higher learning face unique challenges with

communication due to rapidly changing student bodies, expectations of instructors, and requirements from the administration. According to earlier research by O'Keefe (1988, 1990), communication theory represents a field of information theory that posits that people have different thoughts about the act of communication, and these thoughts are called message configurations. These logics aid the process of thinking from objections or intentions to actual words (Forrest, 2008, p. 23). From the literature, researchers have described the process of creations and interpretation of messages (Shannon, 1948). According to Stamp, Vangelists, and Knapp (1994), verbal communication represents a type of social interaction in which conversationalists create their distinct interpretations about their social world (p. 23). The following framework illustrates three areas of theory that converged in exploring instructors' perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students in this study.
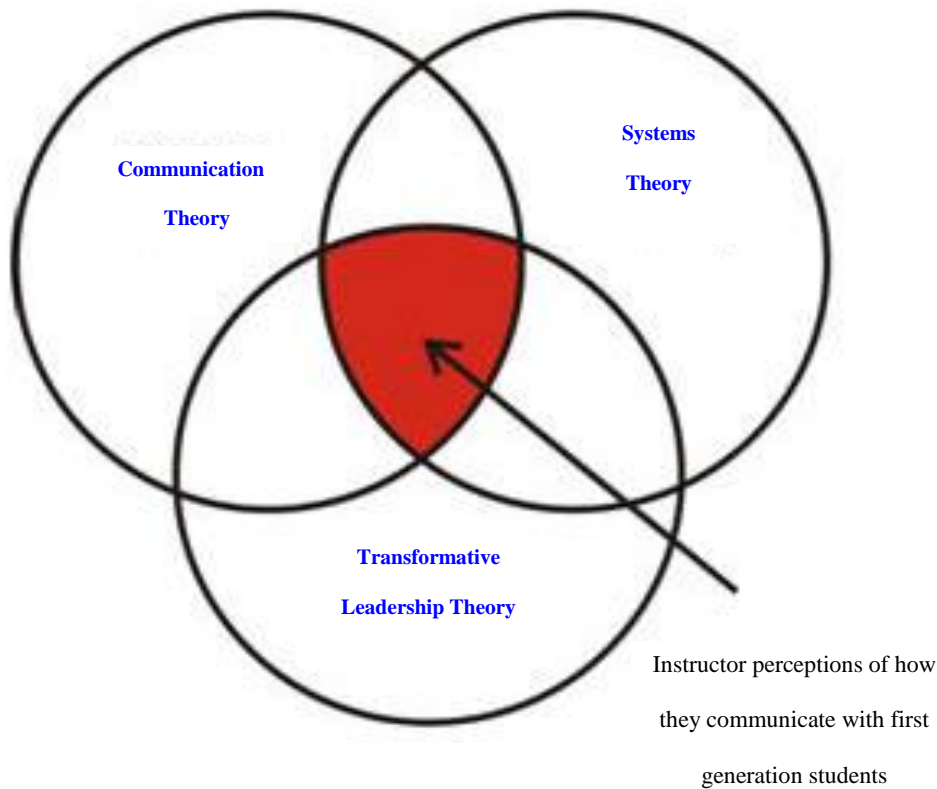
Figure 1. The framework illustrates three areas of theory that converged in exploring instructors'
perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students in this study.

For the past two decades, through the formal educational institution system, instructors

have been advised on how to communicate with traditional students. Instructors can better

communicate by showing concern for the students (McCroskey & Wheeless, 1976) and being

highly immediate with their students (Mehrabian, 1971). Researchers Blackwell & Pinder

(2014), Irlbeck et al. (2014) and Petty (2014) found that transformative leadership addresses the

importance of instructors as institutional agents through instructor-student communication. As

research has progressed, instructor-student communication has been shown to affect student

motivation levels undeniably, decrease student absences (Rocca, 2004), and ultimately influence

that student's commitment to reach their educational goals (Turner and Patrick, 2004).

Instructors' perceptions, attitudes, beliefs, values, and practices help shape the student

outcomes and experiences (Bensimon, 2007; Cox, 2009; Stage & Hubbard, 2008). The purpose

of this phenomenological study is to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences

of community college instructors who teach first-generation college students through gathering

descriptions of instructor experiences of communicating with developmental education students,

and (b) learn how they make sense out of those communication experiences by co-constructing

meaning about those communication experiences through dialogue with development course

instructors.

Definition of Terms

Attrition. Defined as students who discontinue their present classroom course. Other terms

used to describe this phenomenon are wastage, non-retention, non-completion, non-graduation,

dropping out, disenrollment and withdrawal (Kyger, 2008).

Brick and Mortar. The physical structure of an institution of higher education.

Critical Pedagogy. Pedagogy is the science of teaching that seeks to understand and analyze

the historical and sociopolitical context of schooling and to develop practices that aim to change

not only the nature of schooling but also the wider society (Mahmoodarabi & Khodabakhsh,

2015).

Development education. Encompasses courses in reading, writing, or mathematics for

college students who lack basic literacy and arithmetic skills necessary to perform college-level

work (Fadel & Shuqair, 2013; McCleary, 1997).

First-generation College Student. A college or university student from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a baccalaureate degree (Atherton, 2014; Pike & Kuh, 2005).

Higher Education. University, community college or post-secondary college.

Nontraditional College Student. Student meeting one of seven characteristics: (a) delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; (b) attends college part-time; (c) works full time; (d) is financially independent for financial aid purposes; (e) has dependents other than a spouse; (f) is a single parent; or (g) does not have a high school diploma (Pelletier, 2010).

Perceptions of how instructors communicate with first generation students. This refers to cognition or apprehension obtained through the senses and intellect, as well as to ideas or notions arising from such knowledge (Marrin, 2006, p. 9).

Rigor. Teaching and testing of skills that matter the most to reach educational goals (Wagner, 2008).

Retention. Defined as students who have completed their studies (Kyger, 2008).

Student Outcomes. Defined as overall academic performance or grade of a student across all subjects in one semester (Driessen, 2015).

Assumptions, Limitations, Scope

Limitations include the amount of readily available research on instructors' perceptions regarding instructor-FGCS. Note, only instructors will be invited to participate in the study, which is half of the instructor- FGCS relationship. There will be a review of the syllabi, provided in conjunction with the interview. The syllabi, as an artifact, will inform me of the communication options instructors are providing to their students. Methods of communication

are provided to students if they need to communicate regarding class, attendance, grading policies and completing assignments on time.

A delimitation of the study lies in the methods instructors use to communicate with FGCS. Individuals are different in the way they view, present and select communication methods. Finally, only one community-college setting is used; this can be a limitation in applying study results to other non-community college institutions.

Significance of the Study

The findings will inform stakeholders, students, instructors and community colleges of their current communication methods and explore communication as a transformative leadership strategy to reduce the isolation of the FGCS in the classroom. Additionally, understanding community college instructors' experiences, and the meaning they make from those experiences can shed light on the relative merits of different types of communications, and in what context, to help inform future focus in community college communication and leadership development programming.

Past research has concentrated on the pedagogical benefits of instructor-student communication and on variables that hinder or encourage instructors to communication with FGCS, but researchers have not taken into account the experiences of the instructors that may affect communication. Student-faculty contact both in and out of the classroom is important for student engagement. Faculty interest in student performance assists with student commitment. Additionally, faculty interest encourages students to assess their values and plans (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996, p. 2). A phenomenological approach allows me to gain a better understanding of how instructors communicate with their FGCS and the nature of that communication. The

findings from this research study may contribute to the research about instructor perceptions of the influence of their communication practices with first-generation students, both in and out of the classroom. Additionally, being better informed on community college communication may contribute to methods whereby FGCS know a few instructors more intimately, which according to research presented here, may enhance the students own commitment to their college plans (Chickering & Ehrmann, 1996, p. 2).

The study adds to the existing body of research and literature as it extends the research on instructor perceptions of their student communication within developmental education; it extends the research of transformative leadership and communication, and it continues the research on FGCS and instructor relationships. This study may contribute to the improvement of communication practices as it documents awareness of instructor-FGCS communication, demonstrates ways for instructors to engage in communication exercises, and the findings may allow first-generation students and instructors to work together to increase degree program completion. Three ways this study may contribute to communication policy in colleges and universities is that recommendations can establish mandatory communication workshops for instructors, instructors can receive mandates to open specific lines of communication, and ultimately encourage learning organizations to address transformative leadership as a strategy in reducing FGCS isolation within the classroom.

Summary

This qualitative phenomenological study explores instructors' lived experiences of community college instructors who teach FGCS through gathering descriptions of instructor experiences of communicating with developmental education students. Additionally, this study

seeks to learn how they make sense out of those communication experiences by co-constructing meaning about those communication experiences through dialogue with development course instructors. The review of the literature in Chapter 2 describes and discusses related concerns of the problem; community college instructors' perceptions of how they are communicating with first-generation college students. The review of the literature builds from communication theory, systems theory, and transformative leadership theory.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

For this study on instructor-FGCS communication, the initial section will introduce the research on communication with first-generation college students. Next, communication theories were reviewed for connections to the current system of higher education. The literature also explores the uses of instructor transformative leadership as a contributor to the instructor- first-generation student communication processes. More specifically, this review of the background literature focuses on several questions. What are the experiences of instructors and how they communicate or have communicated with first-generation students? What are the perceptions of instructors regarding their role in the academic socialization of first-generation students?

Before exploring the influences and challenges that first-generation students face, it would be useful to understand the background and origins of this unique student body. The emergence of FGCS or students in the 20th century is a result of social and economic factors. First, there will be a brief description of the development of the first-generation student, followed by literature on instructor-FGCS communication and finally transformative leadership as displayed by instructors. This study uses transformative leadership (Shields, 2002), a theoretical framework to understand nontraditional student and instructor communication as it relates to transformative leadership, sense of belonging and instructor immediacy. The literature review will address the concepts that support the choice of methodology, participants, and analysis.

The First-Generation College Student

Research about the nontraditional college student from the last thirty years has evolved as that student body has diversified. Allen (1993) described nontraditional students as age 25 or

older, who are enrolled part-time, and who commute to school. Nontraditional students have

entered higher education at record enrollment numbers, according to Cox, Friesner, and Khayum

(2003); registrations from 1970 to 2000 rose from 8.5 million to a record-breaking 15.1 million

students. Challenges and needs of nontraditional students differ from that of traditional students.

Long (2007) indicates that, little attention has been paid to adult learners and their educational

outcomes. There are vast differences between non-traditional students and traditional students;

the major differences include family structure, economic status and part-time enrollment. Other

differing factors include less access to financial aid and even lower educational goals.

Many students seek education within traditional higher education institutions that are not

prepared or equipped to address the challenges of the nontraditional student (Pusser et al., 2007).

J. Chen (2014) refers to Knowles (1980, p. 40) in highlighting the point that nontraditional

learners have needs that may not align with traditional university academic structure, which is

typically structured on transmission-based pedagogy, or 'the art of teaching children". Current

researchers have added to the body of research, as J. Chen (2014) warns educational institutions

to address the sudden influx of nontraditional students while recognizing these students' unique

experiences and differences or continue to be outpaced by nontraditional student growth.

The term "nontraditional" college student has developed to include a broader scope of

individuals within the last five years. For the framework of this study, the focus was narrowed to

"first-generation" college students; the definition of a first-generation college or university

student is a student from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a baccalaureate degree

(Atherton, 2014; Pike & Kuh, 2005). Pelletier (2010) has added to existing research on non-

traditional students and listed seven characteristics of the nontraditional student. However, this

is not as useful in today's college environment, because the majority of students can be classified in two or more of these categories, making the term "nontraditional" not useful. Within the last two years, the literature about nontraditional students has evolved to more accurate classifications, such as first-generation. First generation college students (FGCS) are usually students who have parents that didn't graduate from college (University of New Hampshire, Counseling Center, 2016). Most FGCS are women who come from a low socioeconomic background, belong to one or more minority ethnic groups, and are beyond the age of 22 (University of New Hampshire, Counseling Center, 2016).

According to Pelletier (2010), the nontraditional college student meets one of seven characteristics: delayed enrollment into postsecondary education; attends college part-time; works full time; is financially independent for financial aid purposes; has dependents other than a spouse; is a single parent or does not have a high school diploma. According to Pelletier, a first generation college student fits one of the seven characteristics that describe a nontraditional college student. Because the term nontraditional student encompasses a broad spectrum of students today, there is a focus on the one particular characteristic of first generation student for the purpose of this study. Researchers Atherton (2014) and Pike & Kuh (2005) describe first generation students as those students from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a baccalaureate degree.

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES; 2012), a federal committee that collects data, analyzes it, and reports the findings and statistics about U.S. education to Congress, posted a report from a study about first-generation college students. The NCES (2012) indicated that approximately 32 % of undergraduates in the U.S. represented first-generation college

students. Also, the NCES (2012) reported that from 2000 through 2009, 44 % of first-generation students, enrolled in postsecondary institutions, left college without obtaining a degree, and 15 % of first-generation students remain enrolled and had not completed their degrees in 6 years. Studies by Warburton, Bugarin, and Nunez (2001) and Gibbons and Woodside (2014) found that first-generation college students remained more likely to take less rigorous courses, more remedial courses, and ultimately drop out, in comparison to students whose parents had a college education.

In earlier research, the NCES (2012) reported that from 2000 through 2009, 44 % of first-generation students, enrolled in postsecondary institutions, left college without obtaining a degree, and 15% of first-generation students remain enrolled and had not completed their degrees in 6 years. According to more recent research, first-generation students face numerous challenges in pursuit of earning college degrees, including (a) little or no knowledge of the expectations, environment, and resources associated with college education; (b) financial burdens; (c) psychological and physical stress because of the need to juggle school and work; and (d) lack of educational resources and access to technology (Gibbons & Woodside, 2014; Kabaci & Cude, 2015; Lightweis, 2014). Motivating students to pay attention to their studies to reach their academic goals presents a challenge to instructors, and studies revealed students do not focus on their outstanding required classes for college completion (Everett, 2015; Irlbeck, Adams, Akers, Burris, & Jones, 2014; Petty, 2014).

First-generation students have been the focus of some studies that indicate this group of students face particular challenges that may affect their academic performance. Gibbons & Woodside (2014), Kabaci & Cude (2015), and Lightweis (2014) discovered factors that may

contribute to poor academic performance by first-generation students. These factors include having little or no knowledge about expectations academic performance in the college environment, financial burdens, psychological and physical stress brought by the fact that students need to work to finance their studies, a lack of educational resources, and little access to technology. Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak, and Terenzini (2004) earlier verified that first-generation students experience differences compared to their fellow college students, such as lower class completion and higher work hours.

Instructor Effectiveness with First Generation Students

Engstrom & Tinto (2001) posit that there is a higher rate of student completion when the higher education institute creates an environment where students not only interact with their peers but also engage with instructors. Instructor involvement is just as crucial to first generation students as peer interactions in promoting retention in the student. Instructor effectiveness with first generation students is a direct result of instructors having access to available resources. In turn, the instructor creates an academic environment beneficial for retaining students (Fleming, Howard, Perkins & Pesta, 2005). Instructors, who engage actively with students beyond classroom discussions, create a climate that encourages student engagement. Instructor and student engagement and communication are only one of several parts that play a critical role in student retention, and it play a significant role in the overall function of the college (Engstrom & Tinto, 2001; Fleming et al., 2005).

Earlier research suggested that, despite measures to reduce student attrition, many students still drop out before achieving their objectives (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's (1975) Student Integration Model is one of the most referenced theories of student attrition, even today. Tinto's

model posited that lacking a precise definition of attrition, and compiling all the reasons students leave college caused colleges more harm than ever. Within his research, Tinto compared college to society; just as people have a hard time adjusting to society, some students (particularly those in a social disadvantage) find it difficult adjusting to college (Tinto, 1975). Instructor engagement and communication can assist first generation students to temporarily detach from their community life and focus on their academics, resulting in possible success (Tinto, 1993). Current research about socialization to the college setting for FGCS confirms Tinto's findings that these students have little time for socialization with other students before or after class, or becoming involved in study groups and learning communities (Lightweis, 2014, p. 7).

Sonia Sotomayor, U. S. Supreme Court Justice, the third women and first Latina to ever hold the position, graduated first in her class from Cardinal Spellman High School in the Bronx, NY. Justice Sotomayor grew up in a loving home as a child of Puerto Rican immigrant, albeit in a poor housing environment. A neighborhood friend who attended Princeton a year prior warned her not to come to college with illusions and warned her that being socially isolated was to be a big part of her experience; this friend encouraged her to have the strength to preserve and get through intact (Stolberg, 2009). As a first-generation college student, Sotomayer made it through the barriers of race and gender at Princeton in 1971, at that time Latinos numbered in the double digits and the school's first female students were first admitted only three years prior in 1969 (Stolberg, 2009). One example of a prominent American who overcome many obstacles is Justice Sotomayor, a first-generation college student in an exclusive group that includes noteworthy figures such as Ruth Simmons, the 18th president of Brown University, Starbucks CEO Howard Schultz, and First Lady Michelle Obama. Researcher Atherton (2014) described

nontraditional students as those whose parents did not have a bachelor's degree; this group of individuals represents an emergent and significant group of learners within today's higher education classrooms. In 2012, roughly a third or 32% of undergraduates in the United States (U.S.) are nontraditional students (NCES, 2015). The two categories of nontraditional and first-generation students have their similarities; first generation students are a sub-category of the much broader term *nontraditional student*.

Developmental Education

Development education had its roots in literacy and began almost two centuries ago. Piper (1998) highlighted that in the 1950's, developmental education was considered more philosophy and a method of improving student learning. Over 50 years ago, the educational community approached learning with a holistic approach, an approach that encompasses the entire educational process of a student, versus education dissected, or in parts. Developmental education is a perspective of teaching, which draws upon human development theories; and bridges both student support and academic support as a hybrid effort to assist students to make decisions about their educational development.

As a result of students being ill-prepared in high school for college classes, they enter college unprepared and at a severe disadvantage (McCabe & Day, 1998, p. 85). Some leaders in the educational community recognized this lack of preparedness for college and turned their attention to structured development education programs with the intent to meet that need and bridge that gap. The literature has identified these at-risk students as being behind traditional students in technology, finances, and education (The National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999). Two decades ago, The National Center for Educational Statistics (1999) reported that 40

% of first-generation students are underprepared for college, and the statistics are reported as high as 70 % for subjects such as math, science and reading classes (Roueche & Roueche, 1999).

The literature makes a distinct difference between developmental education and remedial education. Casazza (1999) provides four identifying characteristics of developmental education which sets it apart from remedial education; developmental education is a process that treats the student holistically; focuses on the social and emotional growth as much as the academic development of the student; recognized that their students may become successful despite all their challenges, therefore encourages them to find their talents, which can be fostered; and finally developmental education is available to all learners at all academic stages of learning. For the purpose of this study, both terms will be used to reflect their use in the literature.

Developmental education students come from many socioeconomic backgrounds such as ethnic minorities, first generation college students, English as a second language and low-income households. Corrigan (2003) reported that low-income students are most likely to be unprepared academically and financially for higher education enrollment. In a study of 592 students who participated in development education within community colleges, McCabe (2000) found that poverty is directly related being underprepared when entering college. Literature suggests that minority students make up a significant portion of developmental students. Studies that specifically identify students who are in need of developmental education courses include VanHaitsma (2010); VanHaitsma reported that one school system had two-thirds African American and Latino admitted students who were placed into an English developmental education course.

Adult learners who have been out of a learning environment for over 20 years, and students coming straight from high school comprise a large population of students that take development course (Levin & Calcagno, 2008). Finally, the last group adult learners are identified as English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners. Earlier in the review, we were careful to point out the differentiation between "developmental" and "remediation" terms at times being used interchangeably during research, true with ESL students being separated as a population from those students taking English developmental education courses (McKay, 1981).

The effectiveness of developmental education courses has been one of the most controversial issues in higher education during the past decade (Adelman, 1996; Grubb, 2001; Levin & Calcagno, 2008; McCabe, 2000). Bettinger and Long (2005) reported that the increase in the number of requirements for students in developmental education, increases the time and cost to earn a degree; these increases for these students may negatively impact student outcomes. Grubb (2001) wrote regarding remedial education that no one really knows how it supposed to work and whether it is effective. Additionally, Grubb (2001) pointed out there is little research to support the outcomes of remedial education.

Bettinger and Long (2005) found that remedial education had a positive impact on college outcomes for first-generation students. After conducting a study for 28,000 full-time, 18-20-year-old freshmen at Ohio public colleges for a five-year span, to investigate the impact of remediation on college performance, the researchers found that underprepared students without remediation courses had little retention rates. Bailey, Jaggers & Scott-Clayton (2013), responded to recent criticism from Goudas and Boylan (2012), as referenced by Bailey, Jaggers & Scott-Clayton, (2013); by asserting that their research found that the current system of developmental

education doesn't work well for many students. However, Bailey, Jaggers & Scott-Clayton report that although developmental education is important, there are negative aspects of the traditional developmental education when addressing the developmental population as a whole (2013, p. 2).

Communication and Communication Theory

Researchers have described the process of creation and interpretation of messages (Shannon, 1948). According to Stamp, Vangelists & Knapp (1994) verbal communication is a type of social interaction in which conversationalists constantly change their perceptions of their world (Forrest, 2008, p. 23). Many studies corroborate the importance of communication within organizations, such as Wrench (2013), who asserts that communication is just as important as breathing; in organizations there are many stakeholders with needs for various communication strategies. Current researchers have extended this earlier work; for example, Rajesh & Seganthis (2013) state that communication is a key factor in reducing uncertainty and promotion of discussion among individuals.

The definition of communication, as provided by Gumperz and Hymes (1986) is as follows:

Communication is not governed by fixed social rules; it is a multi-step process in which the speaker first takes in stimuli from the outside environment, evaluating and selecting from among them in the light of his cultural background, personal history, and what he knows about his interlocutors. He then decides on the norms that apply to the situation at hand. These patterns determine the speaker's selection from among the communicative options available for encoding his intent. (p. 90)

The original forms of communication were through sight and sound (Carr, 2010). Anthropologists estimate that, around 5000 B.C.E., communication evolved into written language and made possible transference of knowledge to the next generation of humans (Trealor, 1996). Communication is necessary for life, stemming from relationship formations, public behavior and even promotion of self-confidence (Reina & Reina, 1999). The natural progression of communication includes: drumbeats, smoke signals, word of mouth, pigeon service, posted letters, printing technology and newspapers, telegraph and telephone, radio, cinema, television and finally the internet. However, there has been much debate among evolutionary linguists and biologists regarding the development of speech (Hauser, Chomsky, & Fitch, 2002). Recent generations have made leaps and bounds in forms of communication over the last 6 million years. A brief evolution of communication includes the following noteworthy milestones, c. 3100 BC, writing is developed, at Sumer as cuneiform script on clay tablets; 1456, a copy of Europe's first book printed from movable type, the Gutenberg Bible, is completed in Mainz; 1876, Alexander Graham Bell makes the first practical use of his telephone, summoning his assistant from another room with the words 'Mr. Watson, come here. I want to see you.' 1896, 22- year old Guglielmo Marconi takes out a patent in Britain for the invention of radio; 1926, John Logie Baird gives the world's first demonstration of television to a group assembled in his attic rooms in London; 1976, Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs design and market a personal computer, calling it the Apple; 1989, At CERN, in Geneva, Tim Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau build ENQUIRE, a first step towards the future World Wide Web; 1997, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, both Ph.D. students at Stanford University, register the domain name Google.com; 2001, Wikipedia, the 'Free Encyclopedia', is put online by Jimmy Wales as an empty shell which

members of the public are invited to fill with content; 2006, Google pays $1.65 billion for

website YouTube, launched less than two years previously; 2007, Apples' iPhone goes on sale in

the USA and 270,000 are sold in the first thirty hours and finally 2010, Wikileaks publishes

another batch of US government documents, this time, diplomatic cables of which about 100,000

are marked 'secret' or 'confidential' (Gascoigne, 2001).

The most profound communication developments over the past two decades include

Internet, on-line course management systems, email, and social media instant messages. Each

method advances the options for instructor-student communication methods (Carr, 2010). It is

standard for each educational institution to provide email to all student, instructors, and

administrative members.

According to Conrad & Poole (1998), the scholarly definition of communication is the

processes in which people create, make meaning and interact with one another. Other scholars

have contributed to communication theory by asserting that communication: is the process which

increases commonality; is the sharing of experiences on the basis of commonness; is the

exchange of facts, ideas opinions by more than one person; and finally, it is the sharing of

information and transmission of meaning (Katz & Khan, 1978). According to O'Keefe (1998,

1990), communication theory represents a field of information theory that posits that

"individuals have different premises about the act of communication, and these thoughts, called

message design logics, guide the process of reasoning from goals or intentions to actual words"

(cited in Forrest, 2008, p. 23). The common view of communication is vastly different from the

view of communication from a communications scholar. Communication happens despite

understanding or choice of the method of communication. Institutes of higher learning face

unique challenges with communication due to rapidly changing student bodies, expectations of instructors and requirements from the administration.

Several theorists have discussed and described the communication process, and each has made significant contributions. In 300 B.C. Aristotle stated that, of the three elements in speechmaking (speaker, subject and person addressed), it is the last one, the hearer that determines the speech's end and objective (Haung, 2007). Aristotle's model of communication includes the speaker, message and ends with the listener. In 1948, researcher and political scientist Harold Lasswell, asserted that a convenient way to describe an act of communication is to answer the following questions a) who b) says what c) in which channel d) to whom and finally e) with what effect (Lasswell, 1977). The point of Laswell's comment was that there must be an effect if communication takes place. Additionally, Laswell's assertion has been described as the verbal version of Shannon and Weaver's transmission model (cited in de Lange, 2000). Laswell's view of communication focused entirely on verbal messages, such as Aristotle's two thousand years previously (Lasswell, 1977). In the following year, 1949, Shannon and Weaver (cited in de Lange, 2000) created a model as a result of a study done at the Bell Telephone Company. This model focused on information theory, and in particular, the transmission and reception of messages.

Previous communication models overlooked elements such as a transmitter, a receiver and sources of noise. The Shannon and Weaver model relied on the fact that in telecommunications, hardware was required by sender and receiver during communication. It is to be noted that Shannon and Weaver sought to reduce the communication process to a set of mathematical formulas, and disregarded all sociological or psychological aspects of

communication. The Shannon-Weaver model is a linear, one-way communication model (de Lange, 2000). In 1954, Schramm (cited in de Lange, 2000) introduced several models; of significance was the second (field of experience), which incorporated the sociological aspects involved in communication. Schramm asserts that the absence of a common background and culture leaves little chance for successful communication (de Lange, 2000).

The presence of communication between instructors and FGCS can increase the likelihood they will feel guided and stay focused on completing their respective degrees (Garriott, Hudyma, Keene, & Santiago, 2015; Gibbons & Woodside, 2014; Petty, 2014). Increased communication may be an option in supporting institutional efforts to motivate FGCS. There are evidenced-based high-impact teaching practices that include communication as an essential component (Francis & Miller, 2008).

The motivation students have to stay enrolled may be influenced by support systems that must be in place to help them transition to university life and strive for degree completion (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Irlbeck et al., 2014). Support systems may include family members, friends, and the mentors or instructors of these nontraditional college students. Researchers noted that instructors' roles in the academic success of first-generation college students remain critical, as they represent the ones who can give realistic and appropriate guidance on the students' academic journeys (Moschetti & Hudley, 2015; Petty, 2014; Trevino & DeFreitas, 2014).

Communication and First-Generation College Students

Instructors may perceive they are communicating effectively with students, but research on the experiences of first generation students suggests they are not communicating as well as

they think. Academically, first-generation students perform at a poor rate in comparison to traditional students. While in college, FGCSs report lower GPAs than continuing-generation students (Warburteon et al., 2001). In the classroom, FGCS often struggle, and their experience may negative impact overall learning (Rendon, 1995). FGCSs often shy away from class discussions, because of the uncertainty of the rules of the classroom environment or the awkwardness experienced from engaging in academic conversations (Rendon, 1995).

Francis and Miller (2008), Bui (2002) and Lundberg et al. (2007), have pointed out that it is a norm for FGCSs to feel emotionally and socially isolated. Because FGSC tend to live off campus (Davis, 2010, p. 193), work more hours outside of school than their continuing-generation colleagues (Saenz et al., 2007), and have under-age children (Terenzini et al., 1996) college can be a painfully lonely moment for FGCSs. Feelings of anxiety intensify the isolation of FGCSs within the classroom; in addition to refraining from speaking out in class, FGCS also have fewer positive interactions with instructors (Kim & Sax, 2009). Thus, FGCS have fewer incidents of engagement with instructors in or outside of the class in comparison to their continuing-generation traditional colleagues, even when controlling for other social factors like race and gender (Kim & Sax, 2009).   Close communication between student and professors boost student performance academically and socially (Kim & Sax, 2009, p. 437).

Instructors who interact with college students can play a fundamental role in mitigating the challenges faced by this population. Researchers Garriott, Irlbeck, Petty and Wang have found that instructor-student communication reflects a crucial element in a first-generation or nontraditional college student's top class and program completion (Garriott et al., 2015; Irlbeck et al., 2014; Petty, 2014; Wang, 2014). Therefore, it remains imperative for higher education

instructors to use effective communication skills to engage students to become more focused on completing their degrees (Lanning, Brickhouse, Gunsolley, Ranson, & Willett, 2011; Lundquist, Shogbon, Momary, & Rogers, 2013).

Systems Theory and Organizational Communication Theory

The most widely known communication theories as they relate to organizations, specifically, the institutions of higher education, originate from the industrial revolution. The idea that organizations are similar to machines contributed to the classical view of each employee being a part of a massive machine—the organization itself. If there is a failure with one part, the entire device fails. Fredrick Taylor's Scientific Management Theory (1913, cited in Wren, 2011), focuses on time and motion as an indicator of production efficiency; Taylor believed if each task was designed scientifically, and workers were sufficiently trained, then the time the labor required would be reduced, and production would increase (Wren, 2011). Wren (2011) built on Taylor's theory and concluded that Taylorism did not encourage employee input, just performance.

The study of communication in organizations also influenced Bureaucratic Theory. Max Weber, and Henri Fayol were two theorists known for their perspectives on organizational communication (Fantuzzo, 2015). Weber defined bureaucracy as the goals that organizations should aim for, and he felt that bureaucracy was the best way to select authority. Weber's theory is based on criteria standard for the task versus nepotism or popularity (Fantuzzo, 2015). Henri Fayol believed that there are principles of management and that communication in the classical perspective has two functions: control and command. When given clear instructions, employees know what is expected of them; successful managers (commanders) have integrity, communicate

clearly and are consistent; controlling is to discover the accuracy of the organization's efforts and its plans, verification if everything is going according to the plan--which requires clear communication. Fayol believed that organizations must have a formal chain of communication, so that employees will know how and with whom they will have to communicate (Wren, Bedeian & Breeze, 2002).

Higher education institutions are highly complex systems that are expected to function despite constant constraints, such as tuitions, state support, research funding and clinical streams (Sussman & Kim, 2015). Constraint and disruptions include doing more with less due to severe budget cuts, implementation of technology, and an increasingly diverse student body including adult learners. Traditionally, the American education afforded students with distinguished academic records the opportunity to succeed (Brint & Karabel, 1989, p. 221). The history of higher education demonstrates three distinct models of the institution: elite, mass and universal (Trow, 2007). Trow (2007) describes the-elite model as the traditional ivory tower with the purpose of preparing a select few for elite roles. The second type, mass, skyrocketed with the purpose of training the masses for a larger span of management roles. Finally, there is a model of universal education, which has the purpose of adapting the entire population to increased social and technological change. Furthermore, all three types of higher education institutions are now more diverse, have endless wide spans of student ages, professional qualifications, multiple ethnicities and varied cultures (Trow, 2007).

Searching for solutions to complex challenges within higher education can be difficult without addressing the complexity of institutions of higher education institution themselves (Flumerfelt & Banachowski, 2011). Universal education, for example, community colleges, have

deviated from the traditional organization of institutes of higher education. Systems theory states that all the components are related, dependent and whole (Schein, 1980). According to Schein (1980), compartmentalization of an organization involves assigning specific tasks to specific divisions. Frederick Taylor's Scientific Management Theory defines the division of labor as the process of dividing tasks into small jobs (Wren, 2011). Compartmentalization is commonly used interchangeably with the term *division of labor*. In higher education, payroll would fall under accounting, whereas student financial aid would fall under administrative offices. By choosing this perspective, one can analyze the inputs of the Institute (the education, including the educators), the output (educated individuals) and the goals (gainful employment).

It can be said that the instructor is associated with all levels of the core product (the graduating student), and this association cannot be separated from the administration or other instructors. Therefore, the communication or lack thereof employed by instructors directly impacts students, administration and themselves. Higher education systems aren't set up to retain first-generation students; for example, some educators have lobbied Congress to encourage the full-time quota as 15 credits per semester instead of 12 (Complete College America, 2013). Most FGCSs attend school part time because they are working to support themselves and their dependents. Administrative offices are not available outside of business hours, and financial aid is available mostly to full-time students. Finally, language tests, bell curves systems and placement tests are designed to categorize and assign resources accordingly, which is the exact opposite of social justice.

The earliest use of the term 'general system theory' originated from Bertalanffy's general system theory (Bertalanffy, 1974). Von Bertalanffy believed that the general theory of systems

was essential and required in science. Von Bertalanffy's ultimate purpose in developing the general systems theory was to unite all the things he'd seen as a biologist. For example, Bertalanffy unified and extended the scope from single organism to biological organizations in general- from cell to biocenosis. Specifically, he challenged the summative view of the cell. Bertalanffy understood the cell is a basic structural element, but he challenged others by insisting the organization of the entire organism can be found in a single cell. Therefore, this biologist asserted that the single cell plays another role, as it is a part of a unit of higher order. Finally, life isn't the sum of single cells, but these cells are unified on another level by means of nerves and hormones. (Bertalanffy, 1974). However, the meaning may have been lost in translation, as evident through more modern thoughts on general theory of systems, such as organizational psychologist Schein (1980). More progressive research by Schein (1980) first brought to light complexity in organizational management and suggested that compartmentalization actually destroys the effectiveness of the system instead of cultivating cohesiveness (Schein, 1980). Systems theory today speaks to the challenge of everything being compartmentalized into groups as ineffective, through systems theory, all components are associated and unified, therefore will always have a relationship between the groups.

Anderson and Carter (1990) asserted that components of a system may include the following: input, output, environment, goal, and feedback. The higher education institute is a system, and viewing this system through this lens helps us to understand the relationship between all groups involved and how important communication truly is. New ways of viewing higher education institutes as a system include educating adults to join an educated workforce and an enlightened citizenry. As a part of a system, education is classified as the input, in which

individuals are converted into knowledgeable beings. At the end of the process, there is passing of an exam which demonstrates the attainment of class goals and the individual's knowledge is confirmed and converted into a grade or passing mark. The output is the educated, enlightened and aware student (Anderson & Carter, 1990).

<div align="center">**Student-instructor Communication**</div>

Instructor have used a variety of methods to communicate with their students; one example is the use of the syllabus as a communication tool. According to Lowther (1989), the original purpose of the syllabus was to communicate course content and provided a contract between instructors and students. More recent research attributes the syllabus as being a well-designed course map, device for communicating seriousness and expectations, and as an agreement between instructors and student. The success of the course depends on the strength of the syllabi (Matejka & Kurke, 1994).

Studies have shown student-instructor communication as a contributor to the positive quality of student college experiences (Fusani; 1994; Jaasma & Koper, 1999; Richmond, 1990). Recent research has highlighted the importance of interactions and messages between student and instructors (Cox, 2009; Deil-Amen, 2010; Tinto, 1998, 2000). Tinto (1993) goes further in asserting that it is the classroom itself that becomes an entranceway for student involvement in the large academic and social communities of the college. Communication attributed as being a large factor that directly influences learning (1993, pp. 132-133). Student-instructor communication includes both in-class communication and Out-of-class communication (OCC). OCC references student-instructor communication that occurs in all places outside of the physical classroom, such as before class begins, on campus, or the instructor's office. Pascarella

and Terenzi (1978) highlighted the importance of OCC when it became apparent during a study on student retention.

Researchers have built upon Pascarella and Terenzi (1978), and have pointed out that a contributing factor to a lack of student-instructor communication may lie in the way in which instructors are taught to learn during their educational journey (Barrera, 2014). While receiving training as an instructor, differing learning styles are often overlooked. Therefore, when instructors enter institutions of learning they function under the assumption that teaching happens among students that are similar in backgrounds, culture, and experiences (Barrera, 2014, p. 220).

Within a short twenty-year time span, the way students reach out to instructors has dramatically changed. Student communication with instructors was limited to visiting the instructor during a pre-arranged office visit or through a pre-arranged telephone call. With the introduction of electronic media, the door has widened for students to communicate directly with instructors. D'Souza (1992) studied electronic methods of instructor-student interaction and suggested that electronic communication provided a seamless link between instructor and student, which encourages students to communicate more (p. 259). Cross-cultural communication requires perspectives of FGCSs to be incorporated into the curriculum, and instructors must use cross-cultural communication skills with this student body. Researchers agree that effective communication is necessary for the higher education institution (Gratz and Salem, 1981, p. 7), and poor instructor-student communication is detrimental to the quality of education (Jenkins, 1983).

With the rise of FGCS, many developments have influenced the way the FGCS perceives accessibility and communication processes. Given the tools of social media and instant messaging, D'Souza's study dealt with a group of students who are comfortable with digital communication, instant communication, and increased levels of communication (1992). These are similar to those described by Marc Prensky (2010), who defines this generation as a student body that is not traditional (p. 1).   Bonk and King found that, from a socio-cultural perspective, interpersonal communication is starkly different depending on the environment in which the communication occurs, such as office visits, telephone calls and in class lectures (1998, p. 27). Based on their observations, Bonk and King claim that the blend of technologic and pedagogical advancements has created a need to study new forms of instructor-student communication (1998).

Student outcomes

Although student outcomes are not the focus of this study, one cannot overlook a major purpose of institutions of higher education; to provide an education. While some studies of instructors in higher education ignore the student (e.g., Volkwien & Parmley, 2000), it is also true that research on higher education students usually ignores the influence of instructors on student outcomes (Blair, 2010). New theories are required to help us to understand the different ways instructor-student communication affect students (Everett, 2015; Irlbeck et al., 2014; Petty, 2014). Student outcomes include student satisfaction, and increased diversity in the student population

Astin (1991) provided a guide for understanding and classifying student outcomes. This typology classifies student outcomes as they relate to the type of issue (affective or cognitive)

and the type of data (behavioral or psychological). Specifically, cognitive-psychological outcomes can be described as having subject matter knowledge and academic achievement. Effective psychological issues include values, interests, and satisfaction with college. Additionally, the cognitive-behavioral output includes degree attainment, and awards or special recognition. Effective behavioral outcomes include leadership and interpersonal relations (Berger & Milem, 1998).

One obvious student outcome that indicates success is retention and student GPA. Student GPA has both intrinsic and extrinsic value to students, not only as a sign of academic achievement but also as a predictor of success in the economic market (Hu, 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). In addition to GPA, student persistence in college is another outcome that can be measured. Tinto (1998) pointed out that there are serious concerns in society about high attrition rates, which cost the students, the institution, the government, and finally the community.

According to the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (2004), student-learning outcomes have received attention and requirements for higher education accountability have escalated. The use of student surveys to garner self-assessments of learning is the dominant instrument used among researchers. Examples of surveys of college students are the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ), which requires students to self-report their gains from the college experience (Gonyea & Miller 2011; Hu et al. In press).

Implications for a conceptual framework include instructor use of transformative leadership theory as a strategy to be used to understand how their roles as a communicator play such a vital part of the FGCS experience (Garriott et al., 2015; Petty, 2014; Trevino & DeFreitas,

2014). Although systems theory sheds light on a present culture that encourages higher education instructors not to engage in leadership development (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2002), the roles of higher education instructors as leaders are moving towards versus away from leadership (Flumerfelt & Banachowski, 2011; Whitechurch, 2006). Systems theory also reveals how historically, instructors' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities as communicators are influenced by the higher education system. Systems theory may also offer an explanation for the relationship between first-generation college students and the community college. Another implication for a conceptual framework includes the use of communication theory in assessing effective communication as it may hold the key to successful instructor-student interactions. As Gratz and Salem (1981, p. 76) posit, communication between the two should become a greater research focus, just as the human system responding to organizational climate demands our attention.

Summary

Self-evaluation of current communication perceptions and practices may inform instructors of sufficiency or deficiency in their communication with first generation college students. After self-evaluation, instructors may consider the use of transformative leadership as a communication strategy in brick and mortar settings, as it may prove to be beneficial for the higher education system, instructors and ultimately the first-generation student. Additionally, transformative leadership by instructors results in greater student retention, higher instructor retention and increased quality research being produced from higher education institutes (Nica, 2013, p. 190).

Education needs leadership at all levels, and Bisbee (2007) recommends a new view of academic leadership if higher education institutes wish to excel. Bisbee credits the shape of the present culture that encourages higher education instructors not to participate in leadership development to Wolverton and Gmelch (2002). By not motivating higher education instructors to engage in leadership development, education institutions of higher learning add to the ambiguity that surrounds leadership responsibilities and expectations (Bisbee, 2007). As Bisbee reported, leadership development "is a process, not a single event" (Bisbee, 2007, p. 86). Despite higher education leadership development being highly studied in the past ten years, there are still challenges for higher education instructors (Flumerfelt & Banachowski, 2011). According to Flumerfelt & Banachowski (2011), the roles of higher education instructors as leaders are moving towards versus away from leadership; in turn creating more chaos in an already complex system. Effective communication using a leadership strategy, such as transformative leadership, may hold the key to frequent instructor-student communication. According to Gratz and Salem (1981), there is a need to study communication between higher education instructor and students (1981, p. 76). None of these studies specifically describe the overall leadership and communication experiences of instructors from the instructor's perspective.

This phenomenological study describes the experiences of community college instructors currently teaching FGCSs who are taking developmental education courses to discover their experiences of being communicators. This study also will explore instructors describe their communication processes with these students.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study sought to describe the communication experiences of community colleges instructors with first-generation college students. A qualitative research methodology was used to collect data to answer this question of instructors' experiences, or the "essence of human experience" (Creswell, 2007), in their communication process.

Research questions

The research questions central to my study include:

- Research Question 1: what are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges?

- Research Question 2: how do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation college students?

Role of the researcher

This study was guided by the constructivist paradigm due to reliance on the participant's views of their communication with FGCSs (Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002). Acknowledgment of my background was accomplished by using the constructivist paradigm; this model allowed researchers' experience and interpretation in the study. The focus of this study was on the participants' views, voices, and multiple realities, so a social constructivist worldview is a fit. As the investigation progressed, development of my knowledge and self-awareness, along with more fully grasping the phenomenon continued (Moustakas, 1994).

My nine years of experience as an adjunct in three New York colleges drove my interest in the experiences of study participants. As the investigator, I possessed knowledge regarding communicating with first-generation college students; this phenomenological inquiry offered a

comprehensive process to acknowledge prejudgments and biases. The study focused on instructor's perceptions about instructor-student communication as it relates to their experiences with students in developmental education courses, many of whom are first-generation college students.

While any researcher brings bias to their research, there are ways to address how personal bias influences study explicitly. The process of "bracketing" as defined by Edmond Husserl (cited in Creswell, 2007), allowed me to explore the phenomenon from the participants' view while recognizing the risk of pre-conceived views.

Phenomenological Research Design

Creswell (2007) provided five common qualitative traditions: narrative, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology. A phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study because it required me to be immersed in the research study and develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2007). Both Moustakas (1994) and Creswell (2007) outline specifically structured methods of analysis in phenomenology. Table 1 describes the procedural steps in phenomenology and how these will map to the steps in my study. The phenomenon in question is instructor perceptions of instructor-student communication and therefore, the essence of the instructor-student experience is the phenomenon to be studied. Moustakas described capturing the universal essence, which in this study includes capturing what community college instructors experience and how they experienced it, through the important statements, themes of the meanings, all to develop an exhaustive description of the phenomenon of instructor perception of instructor-student communication (1994).

Phenomenology was used to capture the individual experiences and articulate those experiences as phenomena to achieve the stated objective of this study, as explained further in the following table. In this study, community college instructors described their perceptions about their communication with FGCS, and the researcher interpreted those descriptions and strives to articulate the universal essence of the phenomenon (van Manen, 1990).

Table 1

Procedures in Phenomenology. Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2007). Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

1. Determining Approach	Phenomenology is the approach used for describing community college instructors perception of their communication with FGCS
2. Determining phenomenon	Common experiences of communication with FGCS by community college instructors
3. Recognizing philosophical assumptions	Social constructivist is the selected worldview because the study will focus on the participants' views, voices and their realities. My own experiences will be attempted to be bracket, and simultaneously remain reflected, unbiased, fully present and engaged (Moustakas, 1994)
4. Determine individuals who have experienced the phenomenon	10-12 community college instructors will be attempted to be identified to participate
5. Collect the data	Moustakas' recommendation of two broad questions to describe experiences and to describe the context of those experiences will be followed (1994)
6. Analyze the data	Data will be analyzed the from the interviews (Creswell, 2007)
7. Write description of participants' experiences	There will be a description of the themes or 'meanings' that emerge
8. Write composite or 'essence' of the phenomenon	There will be a synthesis of the above descriptions

Research Participants

This study used criterion sampling. Creswell (2007) asserted that criterion sampling is the best sampling strategy for researchers who engage in phenomenological inquiry. The following six criteria were used.

1. Instructors confirmed they are instructors (adjunct or full-time);

2. Instructors taught in a *brick and mortar* community college or technical college in the last 6 months;

3. Instructors have taught or currently teach developmental or adult education classes;

4. Instructors have at least two years of higher education teaching experience;

5. Instructors have taught Developmental Education courses at this specific community college (Pelletier, 2010) and;

6. Instructors confirmed their willingness to participate in this study by responding to the email solicitation (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2009; Richards & Morse, 2007).

The target group for this study consisted of approximately 8-10 instructors (adjunct and fulltime), who have been selected by their institution to teach developmental education classes and who can confirm teaching first generation students (according to Pelletier, 2010). Specifically, because of the high number of development education courses offered by community colleges, a single community college or technical college site located within the Southeastern United States will be selected, and instructors will be specifically targeted.

Gaining Access to the Research Site

To gain access to one Southeastern community college site where the study will be conducted, the following procedures were followed.

1. A copy of the research description, along with an introduction letter, was emailed to the community college director. In the introduction letter, there was a request for a meeting to discuss the study.

2. Upon approval by the faculty director a letter granting permission was obtained before proceeding with data collection.

The Research Site

This Southeastern community college was founded initially as a bookkeeping and secretarial school in 1967. As of December 2002, this community college offers Associate Degrees and Diploma programs in the medical, legal, business and computer fields. What makes this site so appropriate is that the majority of the student body is identified as non-traditional college students, and retention is a critical topic at the forefront of all community colleges' agenda. The research site is a comprehensive institution offering associate's degrees and certificates for students while serving as a cornerstone for workforce training and development. As a community college rooted in tradition, this community college continues to serve as a major educational vehicle for educational and training opportunities in the region. The college prides itself on remaining committed to its mission and core values. The mission of the community college centers on providing affordable, accessible, and good-quality programs with the goal of preparing lifelong non-traditional and first-generation learners.

With the minority student population of 75 % at the research site, according to IPEDS (2014), and 56 % of the students are part-time, the demographic make-up of the college is an important indicator of non-traditional (including first-time generation) college students. Forty-two percent of average community college students are going to college full-time, while 58 % are enrolled part-time (AACC, 2012). Almost half (42 %) of the students hold first-generation status, with their primary goal the completion of a certificate program (AACC, 2012). McClenney (2009) estimated that between 60 % and 90 % of community college students need at least one developmental education course to prepare them for success in college level courses. A study of more than 250,000 students at 57 community colleges in the Achieving the Dream initiative found that 59 % of entering students were referred to developmental math and 33 % were referred to developmental reading (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010). Based on community college demographics, research indicates that at least half of students in developmental education courses are FGCSs.

According to Atherton (2014) and Pike and Kuh (2005), the definition of a first-generation college or university student is a student from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a baccalaureate degree. This community college is critically examining how to enhance their support efforts of their students, who are majority non-traditional and a segment of first-generation college students.

The college is actively involved in two programs, which encourage support and the success of their students, (a) articulation agreements, and (b) transfer alliance. With the articulation agreements, this community college transfers student Associate degree credits seamlessly to get the Bachelor's degree. This community college listened to the needs of their

students and began actively pursuing universities with which to partner. The college has set up

articulation/transfer credit agreements with several colleges and universities in the Atlanta area.

Articulation agreements allow graduates to transfer the credit they receive from their associate

degree directly into a bachelor's degree program, without the usual hassle of trying to transfer

credits. Now, instead of having to negotiate with the Office of the Registrar, these community

college graduates can enroll and begin their second two years of study towards their bachelor's

degree, as a junior (taken directly from college's website, May 2016).

Data Collection

After obtaining approval from The University of New England's Institutional Review

Board and site level permission to conduct this study, instructors were contacted via email in the

solicitation of their participation. A copy of the demographic form and informed consent form

has been put in the Appendix. A copy of the email invitation has been placed in the appendix.

The site was selected by narrowing community colleges that have high numbers of first-

generation college students.

Permission to conduct research at the community college site was granted, and a copy of

the site study permission has been placed in the Appendix. The research site has a total of 14

instructors who teach developmental education classes as of January 1, 2016. The campus

director of the community college, the designated contact point, was able to forward a pre-

written email to each instructor via email, and once she received a favorable response, she then

forwarded the participants' information directly to me.

Each interested instructor was contacted by a follow-up phone call so that an introduction

could be made, and to explain the study in more detail. This explanation included such topics as

the time commitment and the benefits and risks associated with being a participant in the study. Appointments were scheduled for each instructor participant. Follow-up emails were sent to each participant to confirm the appointment.

For this study, I administered a pre-interview survey to the participants who agreed to participate in the study collected data. Second, in-depth interviews were conducted (Creswell, 2007). The interview of 8 instructors provided information about their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding instructor-student communication.

For a phenomenological study, Burnard (1991) recommended that data collection should encompass in-depth interviews to capture the participants' voices, and their life experiences (Wilding & Whiteford, 2005). To capture the phenomenological in-depth interview process, open-ended questions were used (Creswell, 2007), and notes were taken and an audio recorder was used to record participants' responses; all participants were asked the same questions, although follow-up questions may have changed slightly as each participant shared their experience to create an interactive interview (Moustakas, 1994). Due to the length of time required to conduct the in-depth interviews (Polkinghorne, 1989), the purposefully selected sample population included only 8 interviews. The Informed Consent to Participate in Research form, demographic form and pre-survey forms were emailed to the instructors before the interviews; thus, many of them completed and signed the consent forms and took the pre-survey before the in-depth interview. A review of the consent forms with the participants and confirmation of their signatures was performed before the interviews start and a reminder given to them that the interview would be recorded.

Pre-interview Surveys

Each participant completed a pre-interview survey that is included in the appendix. The pre-interview survey, which asked open-ended questions, was distributed via Survey Monkey. This pre-interview survey provided preliminary demographic information about the participant, such as time in their position, years in their field and courses they've taught to developmental education students, to ensure the sample is described accurately (Creswell, 2007). The pre-survey and consent forms were emailed to each participant for their review before the interview; interview location took place on campus unless participant indicated somewhere else more comfortable and convenient. Additionally, participants were requested to have a copy of a course syllabus on hand for their reference during the interview: the syllabus would be the one used in a developmental education course. The demographic data from the institution allowed me to characterize the likelihood that the majority of developmental education students are first-generation.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight instructors to engage the instructor perceptions of instructor-student communication. The interview included documenting work experience relevant to the study; an explanation of the role of the syllabus in their communication practices; and open-ended questions about instructor perceptions of their experiences with and roles in communicating with students.

The interview provided data about communication methods used by instructors while teaching developmental education courses. Instructor perspectives were explored via their description of the syllabi, tests, or email templates to students. Instructors verbally described

syllabi, tests, or email template contents and their purpose in being used to communicate with the student. The syllabus was not available publicly. Therefore, information about the syllabus was provided only during the interview. This method provided rich data regarding instructor perspectives on communicating with their students and will allowed me to discover which communication methods were utilized by different participants. The focus of the interviews was to explore instructor beliefs and instructor perceptions about the instructor-student communication. The participants shared their experiences of communication with first-generation college students, which they identified from their past teaching experiences, according to first-generation college students as defined by Atherton (2014), and Pike and Kuh, (2005).

After the interview concluded, a reminder was given to the participants of the member-checking process, in which the transcription would be shared with them to ensure each interview was captured correctly. If there were any revisions, those changes were emailed directly to me and were noted on the master transcription documents.

Creswell (2007) wrote that lived experiences are the direct experiences and perspectives the participants have with the central phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) asserted there are two primary questions that should guide a phenomenological research study, about (a) experiences and (b) context for the experiences. The overarching research questions were used to guide this study is: (a) what are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges (b) how do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation college students?

Answering these specific questions, and more generally, examining the lived experiences of instructors informs the development of new communication practices and learning experiences.

Instruments

Interview protocol. Interviews were conducted in person or over the phone. Interview Protocol forms comprised of questions that were asked during the interview, details of time, location, and instructor perceptions of the interviewee and an area to record notes (Appendix B).

Data analysis

During the interview, all forms including the interview, demographic forms, and protocol forms were used to document responses of interviewees, note observations of non-verbal behavioral cues. The interviews were interpreted in real context, transcribed, and emergent themes will be identified. Next, categories were created using these emergent themes, and subcategories were also created. Once emergent themes were identified, textual descriptions were outlined, using instructor experiences of communicating with students. The themes that came from the text of the interviews revealed the instructors' experiences communicating with developmental education students. The observation protocol was retained as part of the study for future and comparative research use (Creswell, 2007).

Artifact Review Protocol

The artifact review protocol form was created to organized the process of identifying the emergent themes categorized systematically through a coding process. The artifact, once identified, was stored in the codebook for each instructor participant; and was used for comparative purposes during the Artifact Review Protocol.

According to Moustakas (1994), a number of steps are involved in the data analysis for the phenomenological approach. Before reviewing the transcribed interviews, I engaged in *epoche*, setting "aside prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85). This process consisted of clearing the mind and inviting the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). It was important for me to set aside my experiences (Moustakas, 1994) of interactions with first-generation college students during my teaching and focus on reading and listening to the participants' "lived experiences" (Creswell, 1998, p. 54). From the *epoche*, we are challenged to create new ideas, new feelings, new awareness, and new understanding (Moustakas, 1994, p. 86).

The second step involved "horizontalization of the data or phenomenological reduction" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). This step included my *finding statement* that captures how the respondents experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). *Significant comments* that were captured during the interview were used as data (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). These statements were coded and treated equally (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). In using this method, the transcripts were read and re-read to capture the true essence of the participants' experience. Creswell describes this step as the researcher reading each transcript line-by-line using open coding (2003). Each time the transcriptions were read, several significant statements were identified, in which different colored highlighters were used. Codes were written on the page margins to document the emerging findings.

The third step involved "the synthesis of meanings or meaning unit of a cluster of meaning" (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). This utilized grouping (clustering) the statements into "meaning units" (Creswell, 1998). At this stage, themes and common categories were recorded

(Moustakas, 1994) and "textural descriptions" were written on the experience (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). Textural description involves my clustering themes through the use of verbatim examples from the participants (Creswell, 1998). I constructed a Word® document, where important statements that were found in the second state were documented. Using these important statements, the process began to cluster the themes and standard categories using examples from the participants to validate the emerging findings.

The fourth step involved engagement in imaginative variation (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). During this process, reflection on the emergent themes happened, also use of imaginative variations to search for meaning about the phenomenon took place (Creswell, 1998). In other words,

To engage in imaginative variation is to search for possible meanings (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). During this process, reflection on the emerging themes took place and appropriate revisions based on the creative variation process were made. Afterward, emergent themes through the eyes of the community college instructor were aggregated to form structural descriptions, which were then viewed (Creswell, 1998).

The fifth and final step required the construction of the overall description of the meaning (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). At this stage, textural and structural descriptions have married to arrive at the participants' experience (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The themes that emerged as a result of the final step were recorded in this section.

This phenomenological data analysis process offered a fresh and innovative approach to exploring and understanding a phenomenon holistically. It offered a structured analysis process

that is reflective and grounded in extremely detailed descriptions (Creswell, 1998, p. 203).

Underscoring this statement, Moustakas (1994) asserted:

> Through phenomenology is a significant methodology is developed for investigating
> human experience and for deriving knowledge from a state of pure consciousness. One
> learns to see naively and freshly again, to value conscious experience, to respect the
> evidence of one's sense, and to move toward an inter-subjective knowing of things,
> people, and everyday experiences. (p. 101)

Participants' Rights

Before gaining access to the research site and student participants, the Institutional
Review Board guidelines were followed, and the proposal was submitted for review and
approval.

1. An Informed Consent to Participate in Research form was reviewed with each
   potential participant (Appendix). The consent form included a confidentiality
   statement, description of potential risks for participants, study purpose, time
   commitment, and the right not to participate in the study at any time during the
   process.

2. An overview of the data collection and analysis process, which will include
   audiotaping, transcriptions, was discussed with the participants.

Issues of Credibility and Verification

Creswell (2013) suggests a minimum of two validation procedures when conducting
qualitative research, and these include triangulation of interviews, pre-survey, observations,
member checking and thick and rich descriptions. In phenomenological research, the

researcher's reflections were a part of the process (Polkinghorne, 1989). Documentation of reflections on the process of the interviews and the participants added to my experience as a researcher.

Member checks were carried out post-interview and analysis for verification and to establish credibility. Neuman's (2006) guide for verification was followed to establish credibility through follow-up questions asked for clarification purposes to confirm the intent of information provided by research study participants in the transcripts. Finally, thick, rich descriptions were used, according to Denzin (1989) and Creswell (2007). This included using participants' words as much as possible in my study findings and included details, contexts and as much emotion as possible to allow the reader to grasp the experience of the participants with the phenomenon fully.

Limitations and Ethical Considerations

Researchers, especially when engaging with human participants cannot avoid ethical issues. Ethical concerns in research include risk to and confidentiality of participants (Iphofen, 2011). Instructors may be hesitant to reveal anything information that may resemble criticism of the institution. Even after the data collection process has been completed, the privacy of the participants must be upheld. Kendall & Halliday (2014) strongly recommend that research participants be provided with an informed consent form prior to participation in the study, and this has been done in this phenomenological research study. The consent form outlined a description of the research and the requirements of all participants (Roberts, 2015). Participants had the right to withdraw from participation; even once the data collection process has been completed (Kendall & Halliday, 2014).

Participants who agreed to participate signed the consent form, in addition to providing verbal consent. In addition to privacy concerns, participants may be concerned about time constraints and inconveniences and expenditure of costs (Roberts, 2015). However, to minimize these additional risks, assurances continued to be provided regarding the protection of the data under the highest standard possible.

The electronic data collected for this study will be kept in a password-protected computer, located in my primary residence in the State of Georgia for five years. Participants' names were de-identified by coding each participant with a pseudo-code (Grossoehme, 2014).

Summary

The setting, problem, participants and research site all helped shape a research design that is dependable (Creswell, 1998). The central questions (a) what are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges, and (b) how do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation college students? (Creswell, 1998, p. 193), can be answered with confidence because of the methods established and used for this study.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

This phenomenological study explored (a) the college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges, and (b) how community college instructors perceived their role in communicating with first-generation college students. Meaning was made and documented through researcher's dialogue with development course instructors. Within the confines of the study, the phenomenon is described as the instructors' perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students. Instructors' perceptions help shape first-generation college student outcomes and experiences (Bensimon, 2007; Cox, 2009; Stage & Hubbard, 2008)

To explore this study, qualitative data were obtained in semi-structured interviews of eight community college instructors currently teaching at a Community College in the Southeastern United States. Through these interviews, instructors provided detailed accounts of their perspectives regarding communication practices with first-generation college students, as well as their attitudes and beliefs regarding instructor roles and responsibilities in communication with first-generation college students. Interviews were structured and designed to incorporate the two research questions guiding the present study:

- Research Question 1: What are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges?

- Research Question 2: How do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation college students?

The interviewees, referred to by pseudonyms to protect confidentiality, represent diverse disciplines and different levels of training and experience (see Table 2).

Table 2.

Interview Participants.

Instructor	Experience in Field	Education Level	Years Teaching	# of Prerequisite/Developmental Ed. Courses Taught
Alpha	12 Years Experience	Non Graduate Degree Computer Information Systems	5-10	20+
Beta	2 Years Experience	Graduate Degree Health Science	1-5	10
Carta	30 Years Experience	Graduate Degree Juris-Doctorate	5-10	20+
Delpha	20 Years Experience	Non Graduate Degree Bookkeeping	11-15	30+
Enda	1 Year Experience	Non Graduate Degree Health Care	1-5	8
Folger	20 Years Experience	Graduate Degree Psychology	10-15	20+
Grader	12 Years Experience	Graduate Degree Education	1-5	20+
Helper	15 Years Experience	Graduate Degree Engineering	5-10	10+

The following data analysis of the interview transcripts reveals findings on instructor lived experiences within the context of instruction and instructor role perceptions on communication success and challenges with first generation college students. The findings on instructor lived experiences with context of instruction include their experiences regarding instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom and

mental health/student support services. The findings on instructor role perceptions with communication success and challenges with first generation college students include expectations of instructor availability, ongoing communication of student expectations, and access to technology, literacy and academic dishonesty.

Faculty descriptions about the faculty-student relationship dynamic were recorded systematically to allow for the development of emergent significant themes. The findings are grouped under the following major headings; context of instructions and communication success and challenges with first generation college students. After these findings are presented, the remainder of the chapter provides a composite description of the findings in the context of scholarly literature. These results, in turn, are placed in an interpretive framework.

Participant Backgrounds

Alpha. Alpha has 5-10 years of experience teaching in the community college institution. Alpha has spent the better part of 12 years in the Computer Information Systems field and works for a Fortune 500 company in the position of Computer Technician in a department of several hundred employees. Alpha deals with local businesses as well as businesses internationally. This participant is devoted to helping the new generation understand the importance of computer technology and how it can improve their economic status in the world. Alpha has experience teaching only on the collegiate level and finds teaching challenging yet satisfying. The courses Alpha teaches include developmental courses in the field of math and science and Alpha has taught at several institutions. The syllabus is given to Alpha, and there are no supplemental materials provided other than class assignments and handouts. Alpha received a Bachelor's of Science degree from a southern college. Alpha agrees that most student

misunderstandings can be cleared up through the use of the syllabus, but there are times the syllabus falls short in providing policy and procedure in detail for student understanding. Neither of Alpha's parents completed education beyond high school, and it was, in fact a high school science teacher that encouraged Alpha to pursue higher education. English is Alpha's first language. However Alpha is bilingual in English and Spanish. Alpha expressed willingness to discuss the syllabus used in courses taken by a first-generation college student. Alpha confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Alpha taught and teaches.

Beta. Beta has 1-5 years teaching experience in community college institutions. Beta expressed a desire not to teach K-12 because of the certifications and qualifications required to teach underage children. Beta has heard many stories from a sister who teaches K-12, and there have been instances where Beta has questioned her effectiveness given the constraints she feels teaching underprivileged children. Beta took this to heart, and decided that it was more effective for Beta to try to help students who have a desire to pursue higher education; community college was therefore a logical choice. Beta has 2 years of experience in personal training and holds certifications in massage therapy. Beta did reveal there are some developmental courses that are taught beyond Beta's science educational scope, however they are very basic and he/she considers courses taught as successful. Beta agrees that student misunderstandings can be cleared up through the syllabus, but only if the students take the time to thoroughly read the handouts. The syllabi are provided and Beta gives additional charts and diagrams to accompany the syllabi regarding human physiology. Beta has a Bachelor's degree in Health Science from a southern college, and is a first-generation student. Beta's mother did not graduate from High

School to his/her knowledge, and the father's educational background is unknown. English is the first and only language spoken by Beta. Beta expressed willingness to discuss the syllabus used in courses taken by first-generation college student. Beta confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Beta taught.

Carta. Carta has been a faculty member at universities in the northern United States as well as community colleges in the southern United States for 5-10 years. Although having no experience in K-12, Carta has over 30 years of experience dealing with children, as Carta held position with a city agency, as an investigator within their crisis intervention, truancy and child sexual abuse units. Some responsibilities within this position included investigating reports of child abuse and mistreatment and conducting visual assessments in determining safety of children. Having this experience with a city agency has enabled Carta to deal with many issues involving students enrolled in Carta's courses. The developmental education courses and pre-requisite courses are related to paralegal and legal studies. In addition to the syllabus that is provided by the community college, Carta provides extensive supplemental materials to accompany the syllabus. Carta notes the difference between the current institution and other university institutions' methods of providing syllabi, and the community college is less comprehensive than that of university syllabi. Carta views the syllabi as a contract, in addition to being an information-filled guide for the course. Carta received all degrees from a northeastern University, including a Bachelor's in Criminal Justice, Masters in Criminal Justice and a Juris Doctorate. Carta's mother graduated high school and completed some college, however she didn't pursue higher education due to her family obligations in raising Carta and her siblings, along with taking care of Carta's father. Carta's extended matriarchal family is very focused on

education with many family members being doctors. Carta's father finished high school as far as is known, however, Carta's father didn't pursue higher education, as it was a time in history where working was more important than education. Carta's first and only language is English. Carta expressed willingness to discuss the syllabus used in courses taken by first-generation college students. Carta confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Carta taught and teaches.

Delpha. Delpha has 11-15 years of experience as an educator in higher education only. Delpha has 20 years plus experience as a project coordinator/bookkeeper, and continues to work secularly while teaching full time. Working at a family-owned business, Delpha has experience will all aspects of AP, AR, PR, HR & Journal Entries, AIA billing, handling General Liability & Workman's Compensation insurance & Audits, filing IFTA fuel reports, expense reports, reconciliation of vendor accounts and maintaining regulatory compliance filings of state licenses. Delpha handles 3 separate companies and 3 separate sets of books. The work environment includes dogs and cats, so it is a very casual environment. Development courses that Delpha teaches included Math and pre-requisite classes for bookkeeping courses. Community college is the only institution where Delpha teaches, and Delpha has no experience in 4-year colleges or universities. Delpha uses the syllabi provided by the community college, and feels that although the syllabi is there for student benefit, many do not read it; therefore, many student misunderstandings are not cleared up simply by referencing the syllabi. Delpha received a Bachelor's of Business degree in Accounting from a southern college. Both Delpha's parents are college-educated, with Delta's mom being a schoolteacher for over 40 years and Delpha's father working at a local plant as a project manager until his retirement. Delpha's first language is

English and he/she speaks limited conversational Vietnamese. Delpha expressed willingness to discuss the syllabus used in courses taken by first-generation college student. Delpha confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Delpha taught and teaches.

Enda. Enda has been an educator for 1-5 years at both community college and university institutions. Enda has no experience teaching K-12, and prior to teaching has 1 year of experience in the Health Science field. As a massage therapist, Enda is a healthcare worker who uses soft tissue massage to treat many conditions such as pain relief, poor circulation, stress and overall sense of wellbeing. Enda works as a Physical Therapist/Licensed Massage Therapists at a private metro practice while teaching at the community college full time. Developmental courses taught are strictly Science classes; there are no pre-requisite courses that Enda teaches. Enda reveals that student misunderstandings can be cleared up with the syllabi, which the community college provides for each course, especially class times and dates. Enda's educational background includes an Associate's degree, a Bachelor's degree and certifications in both healthcare and massage therapy. Enda's mother worked in an office for over 20 years, however she does not hold a Bachelor's degree. Nonetheless, Enda's mother has several certifications, recognition awards for her work. Enda's father's education is unknown. Enda first language is English. Enda expressed willingness to discuss the syllabus used in courses taken by first-generation college student. Enda confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Enda taught and teaches.

Folger. Folger has been a faculty member for over 15 years, teaching at several educational institutions that are community colleges. Folger hasn't officially been a certified teacher in K-12, however Folger taught PowerPoint on a few occasions to high school seniors, as

a substitute teacher. Prior to teaching in higher education, Folger worked for 20 years as a Licensed Optician. Within his/her job experience, Folger's responsibilities addressed eyeglass and contact lens fitting, in addition to assisting clients with the frame selection process. Developmental courses taught by Folger include Math, Science, Computer Science and also pre-requisite courses. Folger believes that student misunderstanding can be cleared up through the syllabus, which is provided by the community college. As a supplement to the template, Folger modifies and amplifies it when software and textbooks change and to conform to accreditation standards. Folger's education background includes a Bachelors and Masters degree in Psychology from a southern University. Folger's mother graduated high school, and Folger's father has an advanced degree in medicine. Folger expressed willingness to discuss the syllabus used in courses taken by first-generation college student. Folger also expressed inability to accurately identify every first-generation college student that takes a course, however Folger can confirm that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses offered.

Grader. Grader has been an educator for 1-5 years, as a faculty member within the community college. Prior to coming to higher education, Grader is a certified teacher in public education, and is in the largest school system in the state. Grader has taught first, second and third grades. The public school system Grader teaches in is one of the most diverse districts in the nation and has over 136 schools in the community. Developmental courses that Grader teaches include Language, Writing and Reading. According to Grader, some student misunderstandings can be cleared up regarding technical issues, however, students require much more than the syllabus because their issues fall outside the range of what the syllabus covers. Grader's educational background includes Bachelors and Masters Degree in Early Childhood

Education and Elementary Education from a historical college and university. Grader's mother (who is currently 83 years young) is an elementary school teacher who taught in a southern Public School system for over 30 years, and brags to this day that her degree from a historical college and university cost her only $35! Grader's father did not complete high school, dropping out of school to support his family when he was very young and passed away when Grader was still a young child. Grader's first language is English. Grader is more than willing to discuss the syllabi used in the developmental courses taught. Additionally, Grader confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Grader has taught and currently teaches.

Helper. Helper has 5-10 years of experience as a community college faculty member, in addition to teaching classes at a southern institute of technology. With no experience in K-12, Helper truly enjoys giving back to students through teaching at the community college. Helper has over 15 years experience as a computer hardware engineer, and now is a successful entrepreneur who employs over 20 technicians. Helper's private company engages in research, design, development and testing of computer systems and components, which include: processors, routers, networks, memory devices and circuit boards. Helper feels empowered with his/her company's strides in creating new paths in computer hardware, and the company's projects are advancing the world of computer technology at the same time. Helper teaches computer-programming courses for the general student body, including developmental math and science. Helper believes that student misunderstanding cannot be cleared up simply by the syllabus; students need more explanations about their complex circumstances. The community college provides the syllabus template, where as the Institute of Technology allows faculty to use guided means of creating the syllabus – which also needs to be approved before distributing to

the students. Helper's education background includes both a Bachelor's degree and Master's degree in Computer Engineering from a southern institute of technology. Helper's parents both are graduates of a mid-eastern University, and that is where they met each other. Now married over 50 years, both parents are retired, heavily involved in their church youth programs and travel extensively. Helper's first language is English. Helper is more than willing to discuss the syllabi used in the developmental courses taught. Additionally, Helper confirmed that first-generation college students have enrolled in courses Grader has taught and currently teaches.

Emergent Themes

Instructor Perceptions of Communication with Students. Themes reflecting instructor lived experiences and instructor perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students, were identified. In this study, I used the "open coding" technique (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify instances of the participant's perceptions of communication with first generation college students contained within the transcript. Open coding is identification of concepts and categories by segmenting data (i.e., interview transcriptions) into smaller units and labeling and describing their conceptual properties; this was done line-by-line. Open coding allowed identification and differentiation of facets of meaning.

The first stage was to identify as many concept and category codes as possible to capture the nuances in narratives. I began the process of "horizontalization of the data or phenomenological reduction" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 97). This step included finding statements that captured how the respondents experienced the phenomenon (Creswell, 2003). "Significant comments" will be captured during the interview will be used as data (Creswell, 2003, p. 191). These statements were coded and treated equally (Creswell, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). The

transcripts were read and re-read to capture the true essence of the participants' experience. Creswell describes this step as the researcher reading each transcript line-by-line using open coding (2003). Each time the transcriptions are read, several significant statements were identified, in which different colored highlighters were used. Codes were written on the page margins to document the emerging findings and at the end of each transcript.

Approximately half way through the transcripts review, similarity in meanings began to emerge (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). This utilized grouping (clustering) the statements into "meaning units" (Creswell, 1998). At this stage, themes and common categories were recorded (Moustakas, 1994) and "textural descriptions" were written on the experience (Creswell, 1998, p. 55). Textural description involved my clustering themes through the use of verbatim examples from the participants (Creswell, 1998). In my computer document, important statements that were found were documented. Using these important statements, clustered themes and standard categories using examples from the participants to validate the emerging findings were found.

Finally, in the last stage, I was involved in engagement in "imaginative variation or structural description" (Creswell, 1998, p. 150). During this process, reflection on the emergent themes did happen; also use of imaginative variations to search for meaning about the phenomenon will take place (Creswell, 1998). The two critical emergent themes are: Context of instruction, and communication events with first-generation college students/ instructor-role perspectives.

Context of instruction. Important statements pertaining to context of instruction emerged as a critical theme. Participants revealed interesting facts about instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom, and mental health and

student support services. The perspectives that participants shared about instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivating in the classroom and mental health student support services all stem from the way the course is designed, and how students are recruited for the course and the vetting process of qualifying students for the course. The following section explores each subtopic in detail providing specific interview transcript excerpts. Additionally, the following table illustrates the first critical theme, context of instruction and the five sub-topics; five common instructors' lived experiences that emerged from the narratives and the instructors' corresponding perceptions.

Table 3.

The Table Illustrates the First Critical Theme, Context of Instruction and the Five Sub-Topics;
Five Common Instructor Lived Experiences That Emerged From the Narratives and the
Instructors' Corresponding Perceptions.

Critical Emergent Theme:	Instructor Lived Experiences	Instructor Perceptions
Context of Instructions	*Instructor workload* Attempted use of the provided syllabus to communicate expectations, and they find that more is needed.	1. Fostering motivation in the classroom may increase instructor workload 2. Instructor responsibilities are limited to course-work related concerns, however they are expected to provide student support services beyond the classroom.
	Class size Attendance is poor. Class size diminishes drastically within the first few weeks- after students have received tuition refund. Student email and call due to socio-economic events prohibiting them from attending class.	1. Students have life challenges that limit access and ability to engage within the classroom. Expectations cannot be properly communicated when students are not emotionally present in class.
	Student Engagement Resistance from FGCS to actively engage in classroom activity and academic requirements.	1. This unique group of learners isn't prepared for college socially or financially. 2. Many students aren't enrolled to learn, but have underlying motives for being enrolled.
	Fostering motivation in the classroom Students are enrolled in class because of mandated government program	1. Fostering motivation in the classroom may increase instructor workload 2. Many students aren't enrolled to learn, but have underlying motives for being enrolled.
	Mental health/student support services Students break down in the midst of an active class being taught. Students bringing their own lives into class. Instructor has to facilitate classwork when students decompensate emotionally while in active class sessions. (Classified as a distraction).	1. Students have mental health concerns, and require support beyond the scope of the syllabus. 2. Students have life challenges that limit access and ability to engage within the classroom. Expectations cannot be properly communicated when students are not emotionally present in class.

Instructor workload. Approximately 88 % (7 of 8) of participants expressed concern

about the instructor workload. Three instructors expressed concern that the exams may not be as

efficient as they'd hoped because many times they would have to slow the class down significantly for those students who were having difficulties. Enda commented:

>As much as I enjoy teaching my students, with their array of personalities, I feel as though I am doing a disservice to those students who are ready to learn the content immediately because of having to slow the pace of the class down. Perhaps the placement exams can be a bit more thorough in the questions they ask first-time students so that more time can be spent teaching the content and less time teaching lessons to catch up to college life. It puts a bit of strain on my responsibilities because it can be a much to balance teaching, catching up the stragglers and giving extra assignments to those who need to move ahead.

Folger's view on workload included the following:

>I've attempted to teach with the general pace of the student ability, and what that means for me is more work given to those students who have a hard time keeping pace with the class, which translates to more work for me to grade. What would be great is if I could refer them to tutoring on campus, but we're just not equipped for that, so I give Wiki's and opportunities for extra credit. I'm going to be honest, the amount of extra work I've assumed is pretty good-sized, and I really don't mind but sometimes I just don't have the time to give the attention that some students require in the class because I have to keep true to the class content.

Many instructors expressed that they don't mind the extra workload caused by student challenges. Instructor Helper stated,

If they are falling behind I try to contact them first via Engrade to see if I can help them catch up. I try to help as much as possible, but I have to limit my emotional involvement of the students' situations and myself

Instructor Helper added, "I offer these students "extra instruction" in the afternoons when I finish with classes or on Fridays (not a class day but I'm doing computer maintenance)."

Instructor expectations, and what they're willing to do beyond the scope of their job description was a recurring topic among the participants. The workload itself, was described as being heavy, however it was expected when dealing with a diverse student body with extraordinary student needs. As Instructor Carta noted,

I feel like I'm more than a teacher, at another institution, there is more resources–more advisors. At community colleges, I have to wear all of those hats; I'm the greatest resource. I just want to make sure the students have what they need, when they walk out- they need to be prepared.

In summary, instructors are conflicted on their perceptions of going beyond the job and increasing their already heavy workload. Despite participants expressing hesitation, due to fear of an increased workload, just as many participants expressed a willingness to go beyond the scope of the job description even if it means an increased workload. Experience and instructor background seems to have influenced instructor's perception regarding their workload.

Class Size. Participants repeatedly praised the class size at the community college, as being a contributing factor in communicating more with the student body. Many instructors shared the sentiment of "smaller being better for this unique student body." Instructor Beta gave an example of the benefits of a small class in the developmental course they teach,

The placement exam helps to put students into classes suited for their needs, but sometimes the exam falls short of what we'd wish for. When this happens, what I do is break up my already small class, into smaller groups so I can address their needs. Some groups have to have their hand held, whereas some groups just go forward with the syllabus outline. If these same students were at larger institutions, they would drop out or fail – almost every one of them.

On the other hand, there were some participants who expressed their feelings that smaller class sizes, once they are reduced by attrition, multiple absences and withdrawals, inhibited the instructors desire to communicate beyond the classroom. As Instructor Grader confided,

There are times the class gets so small, and the students aren't engaged any longer, that I just want to get through the course and be done. I know it sounds terrible, but when you show up class after class and there's supposed to be 12 students and only 3 show up, of the 3 only 1 is remotely interested, and finally the 1 student that's interested wants to argue about test scores, it's really disheartening.

Being at an institution where there are less than 400 students in the community college, class size plays a large part in instructor-student communication. There were undivided feelings regards to class size, and it's impact on the dynamic of the class and communication with the students. Instructor Enda stated,

Class size really shouldn't make a difference in the way we teach and for the majority of us, I'm sure it doesn't. I feel like I can do more with less–my students need a lot of prodding, encouragement and one-on-one, and I just don't know how I could do that with a class of say 30 students–it would be impossible for me to get down on the ground with

them and help them dig into the course work. Many times, I have to go back and re-teach some basics that should've been taught, I'm able to do that with 10-15 students, not with 30 students.

In summary, although class size shouldn't be a factor in instructor perception of communication, it plays role in how some instructors perceive communication with the remaining students. Some participants expressed discouragement at the empty classroom, due to excessive absences and attrition. Most participants looked to the placement exam to fulfill it's job in identifying students who are able and motivated to attend; participants felt the placement exam fell short of its goal in filling the classes with course appropriate learners.

Student Engagement. Participants were able to positively identify having first-generation students in their classroom, after they were provided the definition used to guide this study. As Instructor Grader related, "It's hard to get the students to be engaged in the classroom, even through classroom discussions and things as simple as raising their hand–they're so reluctant." Several participants spoke about creating an emotionally safe classroom, and according to the participants, students have to feel safe in the classroom before they can participate or be involved. If students don't feel safe, and feel as though they are being targeted or shamed by a teacher, even unintentionally, they will completely cut themselves off from the class. "When my students are participating in the class, I don't feel as though I have to work as hard balancing teaching curriculum and dragging them into discussions," instructor Folger remarked.

Having first-generation students presents a challenge because some may not know proper classroom etiquette, but this is where the instructors step in and find a way to steer the situation. Instructor Delpha provides some examples of what they've done in their own classroom,

What I do is start with a simple task, so that the majority of my students are able to complete it. I do not provide negative feedback at all, I won't say, "that answer is wrong", what I'll do is ask another student can give me more information. I do all that I can to make sure no student's pride or feelings are bruised, and I never ever ever ever laugh at a student. My students respond well to this, and we've discussed these types of issues in our faculty meetings.

Instructor Grader, gave an example of how they use writing to communicate with their students during the last 10 minutes of class.

What I read was about how the Japanese teachers took the last few minutes of their class to encourage their students to write. This stood out with me over the years, and I started to use this practice. I can get into writing and grammar, but the purpose is so I know what they took away, what they missed and generally if I was effective at teaching the course plan for the day. It certainly is an eye-opener, because there were times I thought I got the points across and everyone would go home understanding the lessons. What I actually received from my students was- "I was confused, teacher, or I really didn't understand why XYZ".

One instructor shared experiences of turning a negative situation into a positive one, and forcing the student to become engaged in whatever issue the student raises. Instructor Carta provides an astounding example of student engagement being fostered from a grade dispute,

One student, when they don't get an "A", they question me on the question. They try to match the words to the book. I give you critical thinking questions because it tells me if

you understand the question and can apply them to a particular example. I used to show them exactly where the answer is, but I stopped that because it wasn't working.

I tell them now, since you want to argue, when you want to challenge me on the questions – I want you to put it to me in writing. I want to know where the correct answer is within the book – and if it's a valid argument I'll give you credit. There's really no more arguing with me – because they want to be heard. It got to be too much. There still has to be a balance when encouraging student engagement, especially among students inundated with many social, emotional and educational challenges.

Instructor Carta provides an example of reaching for a balance when encouraging student engagement,

I can't give legal advice, I can only give direction. Child welfare cases, cases where they take the children away I try to educate them on the state system, but you still have rights. I explain that they need to ask certain questions, things of that nature. Sometimes, I have to tell them you need a lawyer, their children are being arrested for drugs and armed robbery – what I'm saying is that I get it as a norm.

I teach child abuse and victim-ology. They feel safe to express, they divulge a lot of personal information and you go wow, they're really suffering. I was teaching a domestic violence case and she divulged that her boyfriend broke all her ribs and put her in the hospital 3 months – and that it was her fault. We had to do an intervention to show her it wasn't her fault, and everyone in the class was crying.

In summary, encouraging student engagement was perceived by instructors as, performing a balancing act. Instructors revealed their experiences to include turning negative

situations into positive opportunities to encourage student engagement. Most instructors shared that student engagement can be encouraged or discouraged directly from instructor communication.

 __Fostering Motivation in the Classroom__. Instructor Helper shared views that several other instructors felt as well,

> I let me students know that I believe they can succeed in a college class. A lot of these students come to class because they are involved in social programs or they're being somewhat forced to attend classes, the motivation to attend is poor. First of all, there are some students who are only here to try and live off the financial aid – the students we only see when the "excess checks" are given out. Some students have low self-efficacy and don't believe they are capable of doing well in college.

> I identify these students early in the quarter and offer them insights that sometimes help (how others have overcome similar problems, different ways of studying (I've made flashcards for students) or how to make sub goals and break the work down into smaller, achievable steps). Mostly, I try to be positive and encouraging on a day-to-day basis, reminding them of how great they'll feel when they graduate and receive their diploma.

Other instructors expressed sentiments along the same lines; student motivation is something instructors feel students bring with them to the classroom. Another example of student motivation as perceived by instructors is allowing student's to use whatever resources available to help them learn. Instructor Helper provides an example of one student,

I've had students with language difficulties, one used an electronic translator until she

became more comfortable with instructors' explanations, and I would accommodate their

needs. I gave permission for a Columbian student to bring her son back to her computer

lab in the afternoons between day and night classes to translate book instructions for her

and she ended up doing very well.

Instructor Carta goes further in describing his/her perception of student motives,

Personally, honestly and truthfully I would have to say NO [in response to the placement

exam effectiveness]. I find that a lot of students coming into my paralegal classes, they

all have underlying motives, whether they want to come to appease their parents, or they

have a little game they can get away with certain things. They need to ask more critical

questions, especially paralegal field, they need to have a basis- not saying they can't learn

it. But I find that my program is the smallest because most of them drop out, not sure

they choose the right students.

So, instructor Carta responds to those students, that she perceives as having low motivation in

this manner,

I give them my background, I've been in the legal field for over 30 years, and I've

worked at the top, government, many different things – I tell them as they grow they'll

find areas that suit you. I've worked at bourgeois jobs and I've worked at hole in the

walls – I call it putting on my ghetto wear so I can dodge bullets and angry parents –

boots and jackets. I've had to run from people setting dogs on us, I've been in jobs where

you learn to adapt – this is where you make your mistakes right here with me. Some of

them get it – some of them don't.

Several instructors respond to their student's motivation levels, in the form of story telling, the process of sharing their personal experiences in order to help the students understand a point. One instructor, Instructor Enda, illustrates how they use story-telling to address student motivation

> I like to tell them the story of how I had to work full time, support my family as a single parent and still finish schoolwork. What I like to share is how I didn't think about IF I was going to get the assignments done, but WHAT I needed to do in order to get the assignments done. I also share with them, my constant comfort was that once I was done with my assignments, my degree would be conferred and I would've accomplished something that no one can ever take away from me – I completed my education.

Another instructor, Carta, provided his/her favorite example of using story telling to help students with their motivation,

> Yes! And it's hard and you know what story I give them for being prepared and being motivated to do your very best, my professor was teaching psychological analysis for paraplegic, and she was a paraplegic herself. My professor is a doctor who became a psychologist – became paraplegic. One assignment I just turned something in on the cuff-just wrote, wasn't prepared. This classy professor called me into her office and cursed me out with the most curse words I couldn't have even imagined. She used $50 words all the time! From that moment, I never did that again. I accompanied my professor to Washington to lobby for many issues and she became a mentor in my life and helped me to appreciate – BE PREPARED, stay motivated no matter what. Never did that again!"

Nonetheless, some participants felt that an effort to increase student motivation would result in an increase in their workload, and students still wouldn't be motivated despite the effort. "I can lead a horse to the water, but I can't make them drink. We're in college now, and they have to learn to swim or choose another body of water than the community college," Instructor Beta stated.

In summary, instructors believe that student motivation is intrinsic, and instructors cannot create motivation if it is absent. However, a few instructors have given relentless efforts to foster student motivation in the classroom. Instructors perceive the role in communicating with students can only result in a positive if the student initially is a somewhat motivated learner.

Mental health and student support services. The most common reason given by the participants for student contact is because the student will not be attending class. Instructors also shared that many students face social, financial, emotional and medical challenges, which the instructors do not feel it is their responsibility to address. Due to instructors' desire to genuinely help their students, many take on the roles of student support and even referrals outside of the community college to mental health support organizations. Once such example is Instructor Folger,

> The common reason is because they're not coming in. Dealing with home life, emergency comes up and they just can't make it in. They will text and call. Students have issues, family members have cancer – some have court dates, some have life issues like they suffer from abuse – and although there is supposed to be private. Because the nature of the school, it's a small school, I wear a lot of hats – it helps me strategize on teaching them if I know what their make-up is.

The majority of the participating instructors expressed different levels of frustration with lack of resources to share with students facing unique challenges, nonetheless, they attempt to communicate verbally with students to help them find resources to overcome their challenge. Instructor Carta gives us a glimpse into a day-to-day struggle with this issue,

A lot of teachers get very frustrated; a lot of these kids have serious mental health and social issues. It's like I'm used to dealing with this because of my background with crisis interventions – sexual abuse truancy – my background helps me. A lot of teachers are frustrated, as a teacher some of us have that passion, but we can't help them that much.

We get mixed messages from the school, we want to mentor help shape but not get too person. When you see a student decompensate in your class because they're not on their meds – it's an issue. Some schools give notification for students with special needs. Community colleges don't have that, but we do it ourselves to a point. Some students need that physical person – not referral phone numbers. A lot of the kids have a lot of problems, other institutions we can re-direct to student support services. At our community college, we can't refer them anywhere we have to help them right then and there. First generation students have astronomical needs.

Instructor Helper states plainly,

In order for students to be successful in college, they must have reliable transportation, childcare and the money for both. Additionally, as far as the students who want to earn a degree but are struggling, many of them are single parents and only breadwinner in the family, this is what I hear from them: children's illness or disability, day care, or Court

keeps them out; transportation issues, car problems, losing a ride, no gas money keep them out for days at a time; having to quit to earn money.

Suspicion of mental disabilities is something always tossed around the faculty discussion table. I've had students that I suspected had an intellectual disability I am not normally briefed about such things by administration and I have helped them one-on-one if needed. Discussions about the needs for such students will come up at Midterm faculty meetings and we share advice.

The use of the syllabus is helpful during times student have support challenges and are unable to complete work. I've had students that had family crises arise during finals and needed time off and I arranged for an Incomplete so they could finish the class at a later time. Many times pregnant students will not be able to finish before they are due and, I've arranged for them to finish their work at home if they couldn't return to school to finish. This is possible with the computer classes because they test online.

Support services for first-generation students should address the structure of classes and study opportunities. Instructor Helper suggests, "most day students have full morning schedules and leave right after their last class to pick up children from school. I'll suggest that they try to find someone to study with."

In summary, context of instruction encompasses issues such as instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom and mental health/ student support services; all of these subtopics were revealed as major concerns that are directly related to instructors perception of their communication with first generation students. Between juggling mental health issues which occur at times in the classroom, the inability to refer those students

with special needs to student support services, diminishing class size, absence of student engagement and failed efforts to motivate student, participants have revealed the strain of wearing more than just a teacher's hat; many student challenges go beyond the scope of the syllabus. The following table details the critical theme and subtopics that were revealed.

Communication successes and challenges with first-generation college students. Important statements pertaining to communication successes and challenges with first-generation college students emerged as a critical theme. Participants revealed perceptions about expectations of instructor availability, and ongoing communication of student literacy, and academic dishonesty as it relates to their perception of communication FGCS. Participants also described observations about students' access to technology, literacy, and academic dishonesty as it relates to their perception of communication with FGCS.

The following section explores each subtopic in detail providing specific interview transcript excerpts; the following the table provides a detail view of the emergent theme and subtopics.

Table 4.

The Table Illustrates The Second Critical Theme, Communication Success and Challenges With First-Generation College Students and the Five Sub-Topics; Five Common Instructors-Role Perceptions and Various Strategies That They've Implemented That Emerged From the Narratives

Critical Emergent Theme:	Instructor-Role Perceptions	Instructor Strategies
Communication success and challenges with first generation college students	*Expectations of instructor availability* Instructor responsibilities are limited to course-work related concerns, however they are expected to provide student support services beyond the classroom.	Provide students with resources they may not know exist, to assist with childcare, transportation and housing issues.
	Ongoing communication of student expectations Instructors should not attempt communicate expectations beyond the scope of the syllabus with students who simply are not physically and emotionally present	Identify students who show interest in the class early on, and dedicate time to those students who show interest in learning. Distance self emotionally as far as possible and refer to outside support. Share personal stories to encourage students.
	Access to technology Instructors need to utilize technology, although students may not have access to technology.	Provide printed coursework for online and supplemental materials.
	Literacy Instructors cannot teach academic writing; furthermore students do not understand academic writing.	Provide students with resources they may not know exist, to assist with reading and writing. Refer to outside agencies that specialize in reading programs.
	Academic dishonesty Instructors are expected to uphold standards despite student's not understanding academic rigor. Instructors should be concerned with teaching foremost, not enforcing standards of academic dishonesty within the classroom.	Teach the basics of citation of sources and plagiarism. Work with students individually on their academic rigor

Instructor availability. Some instructors don't feel as though they need to share what they consider personal contact information beyond the syllabus with students. "I don't give out my home phone number and all Engrade messages come to me through my cellphone which I carry at all times. A student could leave a message with the school and they can call me at home," said Instructor Helper. During the interviews, some instructors are available during school hours only whereas others expressed that they are available 24/7. For those who have attempted to be available beyond the scope of the teaching period, they've encountered problems. Instructor Helper shares with us their experience,

> I've tried to share my personal phone with students in the past and it was disastrous,
>
> they'd call me at inappropriate times in the evenings and call to argue about grades and
>
> attendance. That's something I no longer do I promise you!

Instructors view their availability as a direct reflection on their professional and personal time constraints. There are those instructors that teach at three institutions while balancing their own family obligations. However, some instructors make allowances to be available electronically around the clock, such as Instructor Carta. Instructor Carta views availability in this light,

> If a student emails me, we have 24 hours to respond– which includes weekends. I give
>
> them my personal cell phone number, and on the syllabus of the professor's personal
>
> contact information, and I tell them they can contact and text me. They can also call me
>
> on Thursdays because we don't have classes on Fridays. If it's an emergency, text!
>
> Emails I check regularly anyway. Some of my classes are over 30-35 students, I give
>
> them feedback on everything, 3 assignments = 3 X 35.

In summary, instructors are conflicted about availability responsibilities. According to a few instructors, the syllabus is very clear about instructor availability; however, they also express how the syllabus doesn't address special circumstances where the instructor needs to be reached outside of hours. Dealing with a unique set of learners, who have full time jobs and are commonly not available during instructor specified hours, presents challenges to the instructors as well.

Ongoing communication of expectations. They syllabus provides an excellent reference for what instructors expect from students, and a clear message to students as to what to expect from instructors regards to ongoing communication. Instructor Folger elaborates for us,

Small outline, topics covered from week to week, and quizzes vs. a metropolitan college that I teach at, the syllabus is sometimes 20-25 pages, a lot more comprehensive, school policies, my contact information, course description, prerequisites, learning objectives, course learning materials, assessment – percentage break down, grading scale, attendance policy--additional information about what make an absence, policies for withdrawing process, accommodation services- who do you contact, 3 campuses, code of conduct, academic integrity, student evaluations.

The community college does evaluations through paper forms- whether they like the course. At the metropolitan college I also teach at, we have electronic evaluation, anonymously. Faculty specific requirements is what I put in criteria for research papers, format etc. There is a lot of interaction for online. The amount of time set aside is beyond the norm. I feel that for some classes, we do so much more, and we should get paid more.

Being transparent works best for many instructors as expressed by Instructor Beta,

> Just telling my students what I expect from them, and what they can expect from me isn't
>
> enough. I write individual expectations on sticky notes and put that on our ongoing
>
> communication folder. It's a lot of effort, almost like having to teach the first grade at
>
> times, but it pays off. I toyed around with the idea of having the students sign a contract,
>
> after reading they syllabus but there were some legal issues with that idea. More about
>
> the ongoing communication folder, this is an exceptional log of what students say they're
>
> going to do and what actually gets done. I hold them accountable and it really makes a
>
> difference at the end of the term.

In summary, the instructors perceive the syllabus as an information source and point of

reference for expectations. However, several participants expressed the limitation of the syllabus

for communication of expectations, as the students tend to treat the syllabus as a snapshot of the

class schedule only. Instructors also shared their thoughts on communicating with students that

they are accountable and the syllabus is actually a contract between the school and themselves.

As a subtopic, participants also revealed interesting facts about access to technology,

literacy, and academic dishonesty as it relates to their perception of communication with FGCS.

The following section explores each subtopic in detail providing detailed interview transcript

excerpts.

Access to technology. All instructors have access to technology, have the use of smart

phones and are actively involved in the academic forum of computer-based communication via

email or EnGrade. However, student access to technology is limited and it has adverse effects on

the communication between themselves and the instructor. Instructors find themselves as a cross

roads on decision to using technology based teaching methods and communication methods. "Having a working computer and Internet connection at home to do homework is a big factor that influences student preparedness for my course," Instructor Helper explains. Furthermore, access to technology is a direct influence of student performance and student-teacher communication. Instructor Helper explains the relationship, "Some students come to class but don't do well because of test anxiety or inability to do homework because of no computer or Internet service or just can't schedule time to study."

In today's college environment, participants stated that having a smart phone or tablet/notebook is becoming more crucial than having a laptop. Instructor Alpha explains the importance of having a smart phone,

> Smart phones provide Internet access to my students who don't even have the resources to keep Internet on at their homes. I believe that smart phones bridge a divide, only because of my experiences teaching at large colleges and universities, it evens the playing field and helps make the Internet accessible for students rich or poor. Using our software EnGrade within our community college is a great tool! However, when students leave the campus, unless they have Internet access they can't get the Wiki's that I load, the extra learning tips I post or even communicate via email. I know it's unbelievable, but some students even complain that even though they have an "Obama phone" or low-income provided cellular phone, they don't have enough minutes to access the Internet. It's a shame to me.

Instructor Alpha shared their feelings of uncertainty of student challenges with technology,

If a student can't text or call or email us, we don't know what's going on period. When a student doesn't communicate with me initially, I used to view it as a sign of them not being responsible. Until once I had a student who would always use a pay phone, until the city tore the payphone down- we have students who just don't have much as far as means. I actually had to ask for the intersection for the pay phone and see for myself that it indeed was torn down. The McDonald's that's near the student started giving out their Wi-Fi passwords with their meals--the student had to either wait to get a receipt or buy something just to have access. There are many problems for students who are low-income having access to technology beyond the college campus. At times it hard to decipher who is having a technology issue, and who is just using lack of technology access as an excuse- it's a real struggle for me as a teacher.

Another recurring subject was the posting of online materials. Instructor Beta describes what happens when he/she posts the majority of their materials online and not everyone has access,

> I used to post everything online, because at the first University I taught online access was a major means of instruction. Here at the community college, if I post everything online, some students come to class not having a clue of assignments, articles to discuss, and anything else. Ever had a classroom and you asked a question and not one hand goes up- even worse, they say they didn't know because they couldn't check online before class? The silence is deafening, and I feel guilty. So, I print materials out and post online- just to cover my base. It doesn't take a lot to discourage my community college students, so I have to stay diligent at all times and be on my game!

In summary, instructors believe that technology is only helpful if there is access to that technology. Instructors, who taught in more than one institution, appreciated the integration some colleges have with technology; however, there is a gap in community colleges whose student body may not have access to smart phones, Internet and laptops. Instructors held the belief that technology being used in a demographic group identified as not having access, can actually widen an economic gap versus narrowing the economic gap.

Literacy. Many first-generation students have difficulty with reading and writing. Placement exams attempt to identify those students who need extra support to get up to the appropriate reading and writing standards for the course. Instructor Helper reflected, "Occasionally a student has trouble with the instructions or terminology in a class. I do find that many students don't qualify for the developmental education courses, but where else can they place them?" Instructor Delpha provided an example of why they discontinued certain practices within the classroom, "I used to call on students to read but soon quit this practice because many had such poor reading skills they were embarrassed to read out loud. This goes for writing skills also."

> Instructor Carter struggles with student literacy, and it's a constant reason for concern,
> I have to force them to read, force them to read – complain all they time. Do you all
> understand what being a paralegal is – 90 % is reading and writing? Writing has to be a
> certain quality – but you have to understand what this job requires, it's not secretarial, its
> more analytical, write briefs, read cases, ask questions. Some of them are just not there-
> not sure if it's because of the underlying agendas, they may not just care. I do have a few

students I can see off the cuff, and I encourage them to go to law school. Some of them I

push, and I have colleagues who own their own firms, I lobby for them to get an intern.

Another Instructor, Instructor Delpha expressed similar concerns regarding student

literacy,

Reading comprehension and writing level is low, and I've noticed some students who've

taken my classes and put the effort, their writing has improved – I have to be able to

elevate you to the next level- or you'll never grown. I incorporate many different

components into the curricular so they have more of a foundation to build on.

Finally, Instructor Delpha shared with me his or her experiences with communicating

with illiterate students in the community college.

I have encountered too many illiterate students in my classroom, who can't even read on

the third grade level! Some buy the textbooks, for the most part I try to have them print

articles and access online, but most of them cannot comprehend the text. When I very

carefully, and individually question them about their literacy they brag that they hate

reading.

So here we have literacy being a problem, but it goes further because they feel

just because they show up they should get a passing grade. There's no desire to learn

information, but an expectation to pass. My job as a teacher and professor has become

extremely hard; my student's feel like reading is a punishment for something. It makes

written communication with students nearly impossible- at least for me.

In summary, instructors struggled with students who cannot read or write on the

collegiate level. Instructors provided examples of how literacy is required in order to take

advantage of technology-driven communication. Instructors perceive communication with illiterate students as noble, but not ultimately fair to the class in its entirety.

Academic dishonesty. Instructor Helper opens the discussion up by stating that all students in the community college engage in dishonesty whether it's intentional or not. One example provided by Instructor Helper is as follows,

> Most students could not begin to analyze a topic critically and, instead, relied on copying and pasting online analysis that they liked. When I realized this, I was careful to take writing samples and I redesigned the project to have them turn in an introduction first so that I could correct any future problems with plagiarism before they actually turned in their paper. Most glaring were papers turned in from ESL students. They could not compose well in English so the plagiarism really stood out.

Cheating happens at this community college. Does that mean that instructors at the community college perceive cheating and dishonesty as a norm, and how do they address it? Instructor Alpha answers that question, by sharing the following example,

> I tell my students they have so much at their fingertips with the computer, so much more than we have, and we had to go to the library. Less copying and pasting, which is why I think we're better writers than they are. Less plagiarism please. What do I get? Copy and paste all day long! I told them not to insult my intelligence. Students have reached out to argue with me, regarding grading marks.
>
> Students are dishonest about turning in work online, especially when it comes to online assignments – they fail to see that I can see when they log on. Students also love to blame technology, and we use Engrade not Blackboard; it's private, but it works for

the purpose. Do I take them before administration? No, I am expected to deal with this in-classroom, cheating is so rampant. I am tough, if they don't improve, they will not get credit for the assignment. I don't fail students over plagiarism, I teach them, and allow them the opportunity to learn how to NOT cheat.

Instructor Carta too believes that they share a responsibility to encourage academic honesty,

I believe that's it's my job to inspire a student's passion for learning, so I try to link academic honesty with the student's graduation goals. For example, in my para class, I explain to them when they get out into the real world, lawyers are going to expect original work and for you to know how to read cases. If you cheat your way through college, they will hire you expecting you to know basic things. Once you start your job, and show that you know nothing – they may terminate you immediately and that's a humiliating thing to have to experience. I tell my students we are building relationships with each other, and I want them to feel so good about the relationship that they wont do anything to break it by being dishonest.

Table 5.

The Table Illustrates the Third Critical Theme, Communication Success and Challenges With First-Generation College Students and the Five Sub-Topics; Five Common Instructors-Role Perceptions That Emerged From the Narratives.

Critical Emergent Theme:	Instructor-Role Perceptions
Communication success and challenges with first generation college students	*Expectations of instructor availability* Instructor responsibilities are limited to course-work related concerns, however they are expected to provide student support services beyond the classroom.
	Ongoing communication of student expectations Instructors should not attempt communicate expectations beyond the scope of the syllabus with students who simply are not physically and emotionally present
	Access to technology Instructors need to utilize technology, although students may not have access to technology.
	Literacy Instructors cannot teach academic writing; furthermore students do not understand academic writing.
	Academic dishonesty Ethical challenges (patterns of student writing/lack of writing skill, cheating). Syllabus is informally retracted: Instructors are expected to uphold standards despite students not understanding academic rigor. Instructors should be concerned with teaching foremost, not enforcing standards of academic dishonesty within the classroom.

Summary

This study provided (a) an in-depth exploration of the lived experiences of community college instructors who teach first- generation college students through gathering descriptions of instructor experiences of communicating with developmental education students, and (b) an in-depth exploration of how they make sense out of those communication experiences by co-constructing meaning about those communication experiences through dialogue with

developmental education course instructors. The concerns expressed by the instructors were used to frame strategies the instructors felt had decisive impacts on first-generation college students taking developmental education courses. Qualitative data were collected through semi-structured interviews to provide answers based on instructor participants' perceptions.

Data analysis of interview transcripts revealed two major themes and corresponding sub-topics. The first critical theme is context of instruction. Participants revealed experiences with and perceptions of about instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom, and mental health and student support services. The perspectives that participants shared about instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivating in the classroom and mental health student support services all stem from the way the course is designed, and how students are recruited for the course and the vetting process of qualifying students for the course.

The second critical theme is communication successes and challenges with first-generation college students. Participants revealed perceptions about expectations of instructor availability. They described ongoing communication of student expectations. Participants also described observations about students' access to technology, literacy, and academic dishonesty as it relates to their perception of communication with FGCSs.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The aim of the study presented in this dissertation was to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of community college instructors who teach first-generation college students through gathering descriptions of instructor experiences of communicating with developmental education students, and (b) learn how they make sense out of those communication experiences by co-constructing meaning about those communication experiences through dialogue with development course instructors. A phenomenological approach was used for this study because it required me to be immersed in the research study and develop an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, instructor perceptions of how they communicate with first generation students (Creswell, 2007).

Research Questions

The study drew upon three areas of theory: communication, systems theory and transformative leadership theory to answer the following research questions:

- Research Question 1: What are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges?

- Research Question 2: How do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation college students?

The study was conducted at a community college in the southeast United States, with a demographic student size of 325 students. The study was conducted to understand instructor perceptions of communication practices and expectations in light of the ever-increasing number of first-generation college student enrollment at community colleges. The rapid enrollment rate

of first-generation college students has generated the need to study instructor-student communication.

This study was comprised of eight semi-structured interviews of instructors teaching various developmental education courses at a southeastern community college. These eight instructors have confirmed they teach first generation college students (Pelletier, 2010). The interviews provided differing narratives on their past experiences, both negative and positive, with first generation students. The interviews revealed divergent views on instructor responsibility and an aversion for increased workloads, as a result of pursuing advocacy beyond the syllabus. Most participants agreed that students were at a disadvantage due to limited access to technology; however some participants felt that it was the instructors' obligation to go beyond the syllabus and provide written material in addition to online materials. Whereas some participants saw forms of plagiarism as academic dishonesty in the community college students, others described opportunities to teach academic rigor in addition to their required course work. Finally, the interviewees held differing thoughts on navigating student support and emotional challenges while actively teaching a class. Some wanted outside referrals, whereas others took a more active role in providing student support.

Qualitative data was collected by through semi-structured interviews, which were coded, into themes, which allowed the researcher to arrive at conclusions regards to the phenomenon. The interviews were geared towards instructor daily experiences with, beliefs about and perceptions toward the teachers-student communication.

Data analysis of interview transcripts revealed two major themes and corresponding sub-topics. The first critical theme is context of instruction. Participants revealed their perceptions

about instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom, and mental health and student support services. The perspectives that participants shared about instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivating in the classroom and mental health student support services reflect to a large degree how coursees are designed.

The second critical theme is communication successes and challenges with first-generation college students. Participants revealed perceptions about expectations of instructor availability and ongoing communication of student expectations. Participants also described observations about student access to technology, literacy, and academic dishonesty as it relates to their perception of communication with FGCSs.

Interpretation and Alignment of Findings with Literature

Two research questions guided this study's collection of rich, phenomenological data uncovering instructor perceptions on communication and instructional practices. These findings of instructor perceptions – context of instruction, communication success, and challenges with first-generation college students – can be mapped back to findings presented in the earlier literature review. The first finding, context of instruction, represents a variety of individual factors related to the adult learner bound within an instructional environment that promotes sense-making and provides meaning for the received messages. Individual factors influence and define what, when, where, how, why and with whom individuals learn from instructions. These factors include context of instruction: instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivating in the classroom, and finally mental health/student support services. The second finding, communication success and challenges with first-generation college students encompasses the preferred methods of communicating. Communication successes and challenges

with FGCSs represents a variety of individual factors related to the adult learner who is bound within an ever-changing technological and academically vigorous environment. Individual factors influence and define communication success and challenges with FGCS; these include expectations of instructor availability, ongoing communication of student expectations, and access to technology, literacy and academic dishonesty. The third finding, instructor support as transformative leadership, emerged in response to instructors lived experiences and role perceptions.

Research Question 1: What are college instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges?

Data analysis of interview transcripts revealed eight instructor's lived experiences communicating with first-generation college students at the community college research site. The interviews revealed varied experiences and attitudes among instructors regarding a number of subtopics of the emergent theme, context of instruction: instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivating in the classroom, and finally mental health/student support services. The following section addresses each subtopic in detail.

Instructor lived experiences.

Instructor workload. While receiving training as an instructor, different learning styles are often overlooked. Therefore, when instructors enter institutions of learning they function under the assumption that teaching happens among students that are similar in backgrounds, culture, and experiences (Barrera, 2014, p. 220). Participants revealed that there are challenges that extend beyond the scope of the syllabi, and to assist FGCS, instructors must voluntarily increase their workload for additional teaching.

Class size. Attendance usually decreases after the first two weeks of class, according to the participants. Communication about attendance is something that is expected every class, the reasons many students are unable to attend class were the same as those identified by Long (2007). Instructors described students' concerns with childcare, financial aid did not fully cover the cost and the student was unable to make up the financial difference in tuition, and finally, work schedules. Many students have to work to support their low-income households.

Some instructors made great efforts to reach out to disadvantaged adult learners and assist when the opportunity presented itself, whereas some instructors took a more neutral stance on OCC (out-of-classroom communication). Long (2007) described some of the challenges faced by this unique group of adult learners, as having a family structure in which they are the breadwinner, lower economic status and part-time enrollment (p.1).

Student engagement. Instructors understand that students enrolled in developmental education courses come from various socioeconomic backgrounds and most likely will be underprepared academically and financially for higher education (Corrigan, 2003). Therefore, they mentally equip themselves to assist these FGCSs, and reach out to communicate with them outside of the curriculum and offer support and referrals resources to help them meet their challenges.

Fostering motivation in the classroom. According to the literature, motivating students to pay attention in college is a challenge for instructors, and studies reveal that students don't focus on their academic requirements for graduation (Everett, 2015; Irlbeck et al., 2014; Petty, 2014). Instructor perceptions on their communication about motivating students varied. Some instructors believed that some FGCSs attended college with hidden agendas, including collecting

the tuition refund check, qualifying for housing programs and even completing parole requirements. These instructors limited their communication with these FGCSs to in-classroom communication and limited email correspondence. Instructors' rationale was that they held the belief certain FGCS have no interest in educational goals beyond meeting other agendas. In contrast, some instructor participants found that it was their duty to reach out to FGCS and do all they could to motivate students to accomplish their academic goals.

Mental health/student support services. Instructors shared many experiences specifically dealing with female students and their challenges with childcare. According to University of New Hampshire, Counseling Center (2016), most first-generation college students are women who come from a low socioeconomic background. Instructors communicated with these female students by referring them to state agencies that offer childcare, talking with them about family options when there are no financial resources.

Instructors revealed that they communicated with their students about concerns involving student mental health. Students' struggles with life issues sometime played out in the classroom. For example, instructors reported that students have divulged being victims of domestic violence and shared that they are in guided programs. However, these same students may break down in the classroom, have medication withdrawal behavior and are unable to attend or perform in the developmental education courses in which they were enrolled. This finding aligns with those of Gibbons and Woodside (2014), Kabaci and Cude (2015) and Lightweis (2014), who reported that FGCSs face numerous challenges including psychological and physical stress because of the need to juggle school and work.

When speaking about the higher education system, instructors shared that their institution was not equipped to handle these unique group of adult learners, and there were limited resources offered to the students, therefore the bulk of handling student support landed on instructors. Sussman & Kim (2015) found that higher education institutions experienced constraints due to budget cuts and specifically a diverse student body. Instructors shared their efforts to limit student intervention, at risk of causing classroom disruption. More than one instructor shared the common belief that if colleges would have more resources available for students, they would not take on unnecessary responsibilities, resulting in an increased workload. Fleming, Howard, Perkins & Pesta (2005) shared the same sentiment; their research found that instructor effectiveness with first general students was a direct result of instructors having access to available resources.

In summary, the findings predicated instructor perceptions regarding their own lived experiences with instructor workload, class size, student engagement, fostering motivation in the classroom and mental health/student support services. Research supported these findings; instructors who engage actively with students beyond classroom discussions create a climate that encourages student engagement. Instructor and student engagement and communication are only one of several parts that play a critical role in student retention, and it play a significant role in the overall function of the college (Fleming, Howard, Perkins, & Pesta, 2005; Engstrom & Tinto, 2001).

Research Question 2: how do community college instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation students?

Data analysis of interview transcripts revealed eight instructor's perceptions of their roles in communicating with first-generation college students at the community college research site. The interviews revealed varied experiences and attitudes among instructors regarding a number of subtopics of the emergent theme, communication success and challenges with first-generation college students: expectations of instructor availability, ongoing communication of student expectations, access to technology, literacy and academic dishonesty. The following section addresses each subtopic in detail.

Instructor role perceptions.

Expectations of instructor availability. According to the data, instructors perceived their role in communicating with first-generation students as limited to the syllabus, and had heavy institutional restraints. However, some perceived that their role went beyond the syllabus into advocacy for the student's benefit. Historically, according to systems theory, instructors' perceptions about their roles and responsibilities as communicators are influenced by the higher education system. Tinto (1975) posited that systems theory states all components relate; this deviated from the historical organization of higher education, which created compartmentalization, and separation of departments and groups (Adams, Hester & Bradley, 2013; Schein, 1980).

The instructor participants said that communication with FGCSs beyond the immediate academic realm was not fully supported, unintentionally perhaps, by the community college leadership. Instructor participants revealed struggles where to draw the line between teaching

and advocacy by revealing that they always question their job. Participants thought it was silly

to question the job description, because it is expected that instructors are hired to teach subjects,

be in compliance with the school standards and have signed contracts. However, instructors

revealed in their interviews that instructors replicated their own experience of teacher roles,

despite their earnest efforts to engage in advocacy and ultimately cause understanding and to

help students make meaning of the curriculum. Instructor perception of the systems' stance on

communication beyond the syllabus guided their involvement in students beyond the classroom.

According to O'Keefe (1998, 1990), communication theory represents a field of information

theory that posits that people have various beliefs about the actual act of communication

(Forrest, 2008, p. 23). The literature describes the syllabus as being a well-designed course map,

used for communicating seriousness and expectations, and it is used as an agreement between

instructors and student. The strength of the syllabus was also found to be the key to success of

the course (Matejka & Kurke, 1994). The data collected from the instructor participants proved

otherwise, the syllabus was only as strong as the supplements that go with it, and student

motivation to read and acknowledge it.

   Ongoing communication of student expectations. Some instructors shared experiences

of going beyond the syllabus and engaging actively with students, the result was enriched

classroom discussions and improved student performance. Studies found that instructor-student

engagement and communication was only one factor that played a critical part in student

retention (Engstrom & Tinto, 2001; Fleming et al., 2005). The literature also stated that

communication was a key factor in reducing uncertainty and promotion of discussion among

individuals (Rajesh & Seganthi, 2013); this was certainly the case with some instructors

experiences, as the discussions with students sometimes went beyond the classroom, resulting in student engagement in class discussions.

Access to technology. Despite the literature's descriptions of an evolved communication development including the Internet, smart phones and social media, which should enable instructor-student communication, this did not always prove to be the case. The majority of instructors shared personal experiences that conveyed moments of frustration with the students not having access to the Internet or smart phones to access communication materials that could have enhanced their learning experience. Technology-mediated communication was not always successful when instructors were dealing with a body of students with socioeconomic challenges; most FGCSs are women from low socioeconomic backgrounds (University of New Hampshire, Counseling Center, 2016). The instructors struggled not to widen the gap between advantage and disadvantage, choosing not to post the majority of communication pieces as technologically accessible only. Whereas other colleges were using Blackboard, webmail and access from mobile or computers, this community college's on-campus communication system was limited. This community college uses EnGrade in lieu of Blackboard, which offers the same web-based platform with limited features and a college website. There was no formal on-campus communication system, which would traditionally include media distribution via news releases, official college online sites via twitter, Facebook, blogs or campus bulletin.

Literacy. Stepping in to teach students how to read and write was much more difficult than instructors anticipated. Research indicated that creating solutions to complex challenges can be difficult within higher education, especially without addressing the complexity of institutions of higher education themselves (Flumerfelt & Banachowski, 2011). Many students were not

prepared for higher education because of their educational background, and struggled to perform at the most basic level of reading and writing. Besides referring students to public social programs and providing reading/writing exercises, many instructors were at a loss as to how to handle the lack of literacy. As the literature highlighted, many students who seek education within traditional higher education institutions are not prepared or equipped to address the challenges of the nontraditional student (Pusser et al., 2007). Knowles (1980, cited in Chen 2014) highlighted the point that nontraditional learners have needs that may not align with traditional university academic structure, which is typically structured on transmission-based pedagogy, or the science of teaching children.

Academic dishonesty. The educational background of most FGCSs is not usually rooted in academic rigor. Many are unfamiliar with academic honesty and tend to engage in plagiarism and other acts of academic dishonesty. Instructors are challenged to move beyond the syllabus and take an advocacy stance with their students. Many instructors found themselves teaching proper citation and academic standards of writing. As the literature points out, adult learners face challenges that the educational system may not be prepared to handle. Challenges and needs of nontraditional students differ from that of traditional students (Long, 2007).

In summary, the findings describe instructor role perceptions regarding communication success and challenges with FGCSs, including expectations of instructor availability, ongoing communication of student expectations, access to technology, literacy and academic dishonesty. Research supported these findings; as a result of students being ill prepared in high school for college classes, they enter college unprepared for college rigor (McCabe & Day, 1998, p. 85)

Instructor Support as Transformative Leadership

Instructors shared their experiences using strategies to support student success and to overcome challenges in communicating with first-generation college students. Their approaches to helping students negotiate higher education reflect the tenets of transformative leadership. Transformative leadership theory presents the idea that we can lead in current roles, in pursuit of the greater good; going beyond our personal needs for social benefit. Shields (2010) defined transformative leadership as that which begins with questions of social justice and looks critically at inequitable practices that include both individual and the greater good benefit. Furthermore, transformative leadership theory focuses on reciprocity and discretion at the most intimate points of contact, direct communication.

Historically, college leadership was limited to and focused on those in perceived positions of authority such as Deans, Presidents, Provosts and Chairs. However, as diverse students from vast geographical and socioeconomic backgrounds have converged on institutions of higher learning, there has been a greater demand for leadership by higher education faculty. Transformative leadership theory presents the idea that everyone can lead in current roles, in pursuit of the greater good, going beyond our personal needs for social benefit.

"Academic leadership is a central component in striving towards excellence" (Nica, 2013, p. 190). Although the term "transformative leadership" has been used in extensively in literature for many years, it was used interchangeably with transformational leadership. Shields (2010), along with other scholars sought to define and describe transformative leadership as different; with the main characteristics being its commitment to social justice and equality in society (Shields, 2010). Transformative leadership recognizes the imbalance in society where

some have greater power than others do and over others, and in this, the leader recognizes the need to:

> Begin with critical reflections and analysis and to move through enlightened understanding to action – action to redress wrongs and to ensure that all members of the organization are provided with as level a playing field as possible – not only with respect to access but also with regard to academic, social and civic outcomes. (Shields, 2010, p. 572)

The transformative leader 'both inspires and transforms individual followers' so they can also share in that vision and take their personal achievements and apply them in their community and the world as a whole (Foster, 1989, p. 41). Sergiovanni and Starratt (1988, p. 198) assert that transformative leadership goes beyond inspiration, in that it 'involves an exchange among people seeking common aims, uniting them to go beyond their separate interests in pursuit of higher goals." Thus, the transformative leader requires the collective to turn events into a meaningful event; it cannot rest on one individual student or teacher.

There is a need in colleges for personnel to work together in meeting the needs of their students, through problem solving (Boscardin, 2005). Distributive leadership is what Boscardin described as everyone having the students' best interest at heart in the quest to become academically successful. It is this approach, which has allowed school leaders (leaders include faculty members) to balance injustices pertaining to discrimination, inequality and cross-cultural issues. This has helped "…create better educational outcomes for students and improved instructional practices for teachers" (p. 28).

Aligning with the theory of transformative leadership, instructor participants sought to increase the frequency and supportive nature of student-faculty communication in order to strengthen feelings of belonging and perception of faculty immediacy. Studies have indicated that out-of-class communication is present in positive relationships with faculty (Terenzini et al., 1996). Studies also indicate that out-of-class communication is key in student retention, resulting in increased student academic performance (Terenzini et al., 1996). Additionally, researchers also show that faculty benefit from OCC, as there is a strong correlation to faculty evaluations (Jaasma & Koper, 2002).

Recommendations for Further Study

Recommendations include using some of the transformative leadership strategies instructors employed with their students. These strategies include (a) providing students with resources they may not know exist to assist with childcare, transportation and housing issues; (b) identifying students who show interest in the class early on, and dedicating time to those students who show interest in learning; (c) distancing oneself emotionally as far as possible and referring students to outside support; (d) sharing personal stories to encourage students; (e) providing printed coursework for online assignments and supplemental materials; (f) providing students with resources they may not know exist to assist with reading and writing; (g) referring students to outside agencies that specialize in reading programs; (h) teaching the basics of citation of sources and plagiarism; and (i) working with students individually on their academic rigor.

The findings provide valuable insight for stakeholders, students, instructors and community colleges to assist them with exploring communication as a transformative leadership strategy to increase the success of FGCSs in the classroom. Additionally, there was a need to

understand community college instructors' experiences, and the meaning they make from those experiences so they may shed light on the relative merits of different types of communications, and in what context. Understanding instructors' experiences will help inform future focus in community college communication and leadership development programming.

A key finding was recognizing that instructors have a range of beliefs about their roles, such as retention and going beyond the syllabus; there were also serious social issues beyond simple lack of familiarity with the community college. Therefore, this recommendation includes attention to social services and program support outside of the classroom. Furthermore, administration might also include providing faculty development that addresses the severity of students' life/school balance concerns and suggest approaches faculty can use to respond to those concerns and events.

This study could be repeated in another academic setting such as a technical college, mentoring program and programs with an emphasis on non-traditional adult learners. Additionally, this study could be repeated with another group of non-traditional adult learners, specifically English as a second language.

Conclusion

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to (a) gain an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of community college instructors who teach first- generation college students through gathering descriptions of instructor experiences of communicating with developmental education students, and (b) learn how they make sense out of those communication experiences by co-constructing meaning about those communication experiences through dialogue with development course instructors. Conducted at a southeastern community

college, this study provided insight into instructor assumptions, perspectives and attitudes, and an understanding of instructor-lived experiences teaching first generation college students enrolled in developmental education courses. Findings from this study might aid institutions of higher education in adopting leadership programs for instructors, to maximize student engagement and success.

An analysis of the interview data of the eight community college instructors led to the following conclusions to the study's two research questions:

1. College instructors' lived experiences communicating with first generation college students at brick and mortar community colleges include daily struggles to engage a unique group of learners, with complex challenges. As a result of these daily experiences with FGCSs, some instructors make a great effort to reach out to these challenged students and assist when possible, where as some instructors have taken a more neutral stance on OCC (out-of-classroom communication).

2. According to the data collected, some instructors perceive their role in communicating with first-generation students as being multi-faceted, whereas others need to limit engagement of students beyond the physical classroom. However, some perceive their role going beyond the syllabus into advocacy for the student's benefit.

3. Communication is shaped heavily by the socio-emotional circumstances of many students.

As the literature predicted, although systems theory helps us understand the present culture that encourages higher education not to engage in leadership development (Wolverton & Gmelch, 2001), the roles of higher education instructors as leaders are moving towards

leadership (Flumerfelt & Banachowski, 2011; Whitechurch, 2006). However, there is a struggle with instructor communication with first-generation college students; FGCSs have complex challenges with which community colleges are not yet equipped to deal. Reliance on administration for policy and guidance does not seem to allow instructors to go beyond the scope of the written job description. Instructor perceptions about communication with FGCSs factor into their historical relationship with the higher education system and their daily experiences with FGCSs. These individuals have different beliefs about the act of communication (Forrest, 2008, p. 23).

Despite the varied experiencing, there was a unanimous belief that bolstering instructor-student communication contributed directly to student engagement and success. Course design requires that instructors and administration work together to identify technology-based techniques and interactive tools that are best suited for this unique group of adult learners and their many challenges. Community colleges must commit to exploring interactive forms of communication, and strive to support their students in keeping up with collaborative technology resources and tools.

Beyond these recommendations, instructor interviews indicated a need for institutions to explore and promote transformative leadership programs for instructors. Not only are first-generation students demographically and economically different from those in traditional courses, but also they have made a personal commitment to pursue their educational goals despite other responsibilities such as raising children, caretaking, financial obligations, and secular jobs. These distractions can lead this unique group of adult learners away from the traditional classroom. Again, strategic course design can encompass both flexibility and

engaging instruction practices. Developmental courses are predicated on computer access and student literacy, these community college must invest in student support services to ensure these first generation college students have access that facilitates communication and interaction with instructors and fellow students.

Overall, the findings from this study point towards the importance of improvements in instructor perceptions of communication with students, whether in course design, or student advocacy beyond the syllabus. Educational institutions, specifically community colleges, should explore transformative leadership programs. Transformative leadership programs designed for instructors will assist them in fostering their perception of their roles in communication with first generation college students enrolled in developmental courses, and in turn encourage student engagement, which will ultimately lead to student success.

References

Adams, K. M., Hester, P.T., & Bradley, J. M. (2013). A historical perspective of systems theory. *IIE Annual Conference Proceedings*, *17*(1), 102-109.

Adelman, C. (1996). The truth about remedial work (point of view). *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A56.

American Association of Community Colleges. (2012). Total community college Pell grants recipients and disbursed funds, by state: 2009-2010. Retrieved from AACC_PellbyState_2009-10.pdf

Anderson, R., & Carter, I. (1990). *Human behavior in the social environment: A social systems approach* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Aldine de Gruyter.

Astin, A. W. (1991). *Assessment for excellence: The philosophy and practice of assessment and evaluation in higher education*. New York, NY: Macmillan.

Atherton, M. C. (2014). Academic preparedness of first-generation college students: Different perspectives. *Journal of College Student Development*, *55*(8), 824-829.

Bailey, T., Jeong, D. W. & Cho, S. (2010). Referral, enrollment, and completion in developmental education sequences in communication colleges. *Economics of Education Review, 29,* 1-6.

Baily, T., Jaggers, S. &Scott-Clayton, J. (2013). *Characterizing the effectiveness of developmental education: A response to recent criticism.* (CCRC Working Paper). New York NY: Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center.

Barrera, M. L. (2014). School smarts: A reflection of pedagogical and Personal Insights. *Journal of Latinos and Education*, *13*(3), 212−221.

Bensimon, E. M., (2007). The underestimated significance of practitioner knowledge in the scholarship on student success. (Presidential Address). *The Review of Higher Education, 30*(4), 441-469.

Berger, J. B., & Milem, J. F. (1998). Organizational behavior in higher education and student outcomes. *Handbook on Research in Higher Education*, 40(6), 268-338.

Bettinger, E. P., & Long, B. T. (2005). Remediation at the community college: Student participation and outcomes. *New Directions for Community Colleges, 129*(1), 17-26.

Bisbee, D. C. (2007). Looking for leaders: current practices in leadership identification in higher education. *Planning and Changing, 38*(1), 77-88.

Blackwell, E., & Pinder, P. J. (2014). What are the motivational factors of first-generation minority college students who overcome their family histories to pursue higher education? *College Student Journal*, *48*(1), 45-56. Retrieved from http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/prin/csj

Blair, A. (2010). In from the margins: The essential role of faculty in transforming a professional studies unit into an academic department. *Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, *58*(1), 31-39.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Education.

Bonk, C. J., & King, K. S. (Eds.). (1998). *Electronic collaborators: Learner-centered technologies for literacy, apprenticeship, and discourse*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Boscardin, M. L. (2005). The administrative role in transforming secondary schools to support inclusive evidence-based practices. *American Secondary Education, 33*(3), 21-32

Brint, S., & Karabel, J. (1989). T*he diverted dream: Community colleges and the promise of educational opportunity in America*, 1900-1985. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Bui, K. V. T. (2002). First-generation college students at a four-year university: Background characteristics, reasons for pursuing higher education, and first-year experience. *College Student Journal, 36,* 3-11.

Burnard, P. (1991). A method of analyzing interview transcripts in qualitative research. *Nurse Education Today, 11,* 461-466.

Carr, N. (2010). *The shallows: What the Internet is doing to our brains.* New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Casazza, M. (1999). Who are we and where did we come from? *Journal of Developmental Education, 23*(1), 2-7.

Chen, J. C. (2014). Teaching nontraditional adult students: Adult-learning theories in practice. *Teaching in Higher Education, 19*(4), 406-418.

Chen, X. (2005). First generation students in postsecondary education: A look at their college transcripts. National Center for Education Statistics, Publication #2005171.

Chickering, A. & Ehrmann, S. C. (1996, October). Implementing the seven principles: Technology as a lever. *AAHE Bulletin*, 49(2), pp. 2-6.

Conrad, C., & Poole, M. (1998). *Strategic organizational communication: Into the twenty-first century.* New York, NY: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

Corrigan, M. (2003). Beyond access: Persistence challenges and the diversity of low-income students. *New Directions for Higher Education, 121,* 25-34.

Cox, R. D. (2009). "It was just that I was afraid": Promoting success while addressing students' fear of failure. *Community College Review, 37*(1), 52-80.

Cox, S. R., Friesner, D. L., & Khayum, M. (2003). Do reading skills courses help underprepared readers achieve academic success in college? *Journal of College Reading and Learning, 33*(2), 170-196.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Davis, J. (2010). *The first-generation student experience: Implications for campus practice, and strategies for improving persistence and success.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

De Lange, R. (2000). Culture: A filtration process during communication in education. *Tend*

    2000: Proceedings of the technological education and national development conference,

    "crossroads of the new millennium." April 8-10, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

D'Souza, P. V. (1992). Email's role in the learning process: A case study. *Journal of Research*

    on Computing in Education, 25(2), 254-56.

Deil-Amen, R. (2010). Socio-academic integrative moments: Rethinking academic and social

    integration among two-year college students in career-related programs. *Journal of*

    Higher Education, 82(1), 54-91.

Denzin, N. (1989). *Interpretive Biography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Driessen, G. (2015). Teacher ethnicity, student ethnicity, and student outcomes. *Intercultural*

    Education, *26*(3), 179-191.

Engstrom, C & Tinto, V. (2001*).* Building collaborative partnerships with student affairs to

    enhance student learning. In M. Barr (Ed.), *Handbook for student affairs administrators.*

    San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Basss Inc.

Everett, J. B. (2015). Public community colleges: Creating access and opportunities for first-

    generation college students. *Delta Kappa Gamma Bulletin*, *81*(3), 52-58. Retrieved from

    http://www.dkg.org/

Othman, F. & Shuqair, K. M. (2013). Effectiveness of the remedial courses on improving

    EFL/ESL students' performance at university level in the Arab world. *International*

    Journal of Higher Education, 2(3), 132-138.

Fantuzzo, J. (2015). A course between bureaucracy and charisma: A pedagogical reading of Max

    Weber's social theory. *Journal of Philosophy of Education, 49*(1), 45-64.

Fleming, W. J., Howard, K., Perkins, E., & Pesta, M. (2005). The college environment: Factors influencing student transition and their impact on academic advising. *The Mentor, 7, 1-9.*

Flumerfelt, S., & Banachowski, M. (2011). Understanding leadership paradigms for improvement in higher education. *Quality Assurance in Education, 19*(3), 224-247.

Forrest, D. (2008). Communication theory offers insight into mathematic teacher's talk. *The Mathematics Educator, 18*(2), 23-32. Retrieved from http://tme.journals.libs.uga.edu/index.php/tme/index.

Foster, W. (1989). Towards a critical perspective of leadership. In J. Smyth (Ed.), *Critical perspectives on educational leadership*. London: The Falmer Press

Francis, T. A. & Miller, M. T. (2008). Communication apprehension: Levels of first-generation college students at 2-year institutions. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 32*(1), 38-55.

Fusani, D. S. (1994). "Extra-class" communication: Frequency, immediacy, self-disclosure, and satisfaction in student-faculty interaction outside the classroom. *Journal of Applied Communication Research, 22,* 232-255.

Garriott, P. O., Hudyma, A., Keene, C., & Santiago, D. (2015). Social cognitive predictors of first- and non-first-generation college students' academic and life satisfaction. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *62*(2), 253-263.

Gascoigne, B. From 2001, ongoing. HistoryWorld. http://www.historyworld.net

Gergen, K. J. (2009). *An invitation to social construction*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Gibbons, M. M., & Woodside, M. (2014). Addressing the needs of first-generation college
    students: Lessons learned from adults from Low-Education families. *Journal of College
    Counseling*, *17*(1), 21-36.

Goudas, A. M., & Boylan, H. R. (2012). Addressing flawed research in developmental
    education. *Journal of Developmental Education, 36*(1), 2-13.

Gratz, R. D., & Salem, P. J. (1981). Organizational communication and higher education. *AAHE-
    ERIC/Higher Education Report No. 10.*

Gravetter, F. J., & Wallnau, L. B. (2009). *Statistics for behavioral sciences*. Belmont, CA:
    Wadsworth.

Griffin, E. (2012). *A first look at communication theory* (8th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Grossoehme, D. H. (2014). Overview of qualitative research. *Journal of Health Care
    Chaplaincy*, *20*(3), 109-122.

Grubb, N. (2001). From black box to Pandora's box: Evaluating remedial/developmental
    education. *Community College Research Center Brief, 11,* 1-4.

Gumperz, J. J., & Hymes, D. (1986). *Directions in sociolinguistics. The ethnography of
    communication*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hatch, Amos. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings.* Albany, NY: State
    University of New York Press.

Haung, L. (2007). Practicing speaking for academic purposes using Aristotle's "Topics".
    Communication Teacher, 21(2), 62-67.

Hauser, M. D., Chomsky, N., & Fitch, T. (2002). The faculty of language. *Science, 298,* 1569-
    1579.

Hu, S. (2005). *Beyond grade inflation: Grading problems in higher education*. San Francisco, NY: Jossey-Bass.

Hu, S., & McCormick, A.C., & Gonyea, R.M. (In press). Examining the relationship between student learning and persistence. *Innovative Higher Education.*

Iphofen, R. (2011). Ethical decision making in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research*, *11*(4), 443-446.

IPEDS Data Center (2014). https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter. As reported by Community College Review. Retrieved from www.communitycollegereview.com/ gwinnett-college-lilburn-profile.

Irlbeck, E., Adams, S., Akers, C., Burris, S., & Jones, S. (2014). First generation college students: Motivations and support systems. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, *55*(2), 154.

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,* 41-47.

Jenkins, M. M., Gappa, J. M., Pearce, J. (1983). *Removing Bias: Guidelines for student-faculty communication.* Women's Educational Equity Act Program (U. S.). Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association

Kabaci, M. J., & Cude, B. J. (2015). A Delphi study to identify personal finance core concepts and competencies of first-generation college students. *Family and Consumer Sciences Research Journal*, *43*(3), 244-258.

Kendall, S., & Halliday, L. E. (2014). Undertaking ethical qualitative research in public health: Are current ethical processes sufficient? *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health*, *38*(4), 306-310.

Khatz, D. & Khan, R. L. (1978). The social psychology of organizations (2nd ed.). New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons

Kim, Y. K., & Sax, L. J. (2009). Student-faculty interaction in research in research universities: differences by student gender, race, social class, and first-generation status. *Research in Higher Education, 50,* 437-459.

Knowles, M. S. (1980). *The modern practice of adult education: From pedagogy to andragogy (revised and updated)*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Cambridge Adult Education.

Kyger, J. W. (2008). *A study of synchronous and asynchronous learning environments in an online course and their effect on retention rates* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from Dissertations & Theses: Full Text database. (Publication No. ATT 33363962).

Lanning, S. K., Brickhouse, T. H., Gunsolley, J. C., Ranson, S. L., & Willett, R. M. (2011). Communication skills instruction: An analysis of self, peer-group, student instructors and faculty assessment. *Patient Education and Counseling*, *83*(2), 145-151.

Lasswell, H., (1977). Communication in a divided world: Opportunities and constraints. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Levin, H. M., & Calcagno, J. C. (2008). Remediation in the community college. *Community College Review, 35*(3), 181-207.

Lightweis, S. (2014). The challenges, persistence, and success of white, working-class, first-generation college students. *College Student Journal*, *48*(3), 461-467. Retrieved from http://www.projectinnovation.com/college-student-journal.html

Long, D. A. (2007). *Environmental factors affecting nontraditional-age undergraduates' postsecondary persistence and graduation rates: A structural equation modeling analysis* (Doctoral dissertation). ProQuest Digital Dissertations database. (Publication No. AAT 3256874).

Lowther, M. A. , Stark, J. S., & Martens, G.G. (1989). *Preparing course syllabi for improved communication.* Boston: Northeastern University, Office of Instructional Development and Evaluation.

Lundberg, C., Schreiner, L., Hovaguimian, K., & Slavin Millers, S. (2007). First-generation status and student race/ethnicity as distinct predictors of student involvement and learning. *NASPA Journal, 44*(1), 57-83.

Lundquist, L. M., Shogbon, A. O., Momary, K. M., & Rogers, H. K. (2013). A comparison of students' self-assessments with faculty evaluations of their communication skills. *American Journal of Pharmaceutical Education*, *77*(4), 72.

Mahmoodarabi, M., & Khodabakhsh, M. R. (2015). Critical pedagogy: EFL teachers' views, experience and academic degrees. *English Language Teaching*, *8*(6), 100-110.

Marrin, W (2006). *Altered perceptions: Addressing the real water crisis.* Bloomington, IN: Unlimited Publishing.

Matejka, K., and L. Kurke (1994). *Designing a great syllabus. College Teaching, 4*(3) 115-117.

McCabe, R., and Day, P., Jr. (Eds). (1998). *Development education: A twenty-first century imperative.* Mission Viejo, CA; League for Innovation in the Community College. (ERIC Document Reproductive Service No. ED421176).

McCleary, B. (1997). Survey of remedial education in higher education more relevant to politics than to teaching and curriculum. *Composition Chronicle: Newsletter For Writing Teacher*, *10*(4), 1-3.

McClenney, K. (2009). Helping community-college students succeed: A moral imperative. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *55*(33), A60.

McCroskey, J. C. & Wheeless, L. R. (1976). *Introduction to human communication*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

McKay, S. (1981). ESL/Remedial English: Are they different? *English Language Teaching Journal, 35*(3), 310-315.

Mehrabian, A. (1971). *Silent messages.* Belmon, CA: Wadsworth.

Moschetti, R. V., & Hudley, C. (2015). Social capital and academic motivation among first-generation community college students. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, *39*(3), 235-251.

Moustakas, C. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

National Center for Education Statistics (1999). The condition of education. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs99/condition99/pdf/section3.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics (2002). Descriptive summary of 1995-1996 beginning postsecondary students: Six years later. Institute of Educational Science Report 2003-

151. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education.

National Center for Education Statistics (2015). Demographic and enrollment characteristics of

nontraditional undergraduates: 2011-2012. Retrieved from

http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2015025.

Neuman, W. L. (2006). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (6th

ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Nica, E. (2013). The importance of leadership development within higher education.

Contemporary Readings in Law and Social Justice, 5(2), 189-194. Retrieved from

http://heinonline.org/

O'Keefe, B. J. (1988). The logic of message design: Individual differences in reasoning about

communication. *Communications Monographs*, *55*(1), 80-103.

O'Keefe, R. A. (1990). *The craft of prolog* (Vol. 283). Cambridge, MA: MIT press.

Pascarella, E. T., Pierson, C., Wolniak, G. & Terenzini, P. (2004). First-generation college

students: Additional evidence on college experiences and outcomes. *The Journal of*

Higher Education, 75(3)*,* 249-284. Retrieved from http://www.ashe.ws/?page=186.

Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1978). Student-faculty informal relationships and freshman

year educational outcomes. *The Journal of Education Research*, *71*, 183-189.

Pelletier, S. G. (2010). Success for adult students: looking at the demographics of today's student

body, nontraditional is the new traditional. How can public universities best serve today's

older student population? *Public Purpose.* Fall*,* 2-6. Retrieved from

http://www.aascu.org/uploadedFiles/AASCU/Content/Root/MediaAndPublications/Publi

cPurposeMagazines/Issue/10fall_adultstudents.pdf

Petty, T. (2014). Motivating first-generation or nontraditional students to academic success and

    college completion. *College Student Journal*, *48*(2), 257-264. Retrieved from

    http://www.projectinnovation.com/college-student-journal.html

Pike, G. R., & Kuh, G. D. (2005). A typology of student engagement for American colleges and

    universities. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *76*(3), 276-300.

Piper, J. (1998). An interview with Martha Maxwell. *The Learning Assistance Review, 3*(1), 32-

    39.

Polkinghorne, D. E. (1989). *Phenomenological research methods*. In R. S. Valle & S. Halling

    (Eds.), *Existential-phenomenological perspectives in psychology* (pp. 41-60). New York,

    NY: Plenum.

Postsecondary Analytics (2013). How full-time are "full-time" students? Prepared for Complete

    College America. Retrieved from: completecollege.org/pdfs/2013-10-14-how-full-

    time.pdf.

Prensky, M. (2010). *Teaching digital natives: Partnering for real learning.* Thousand Oaks, CA:

    Corwin.

Breneman, D. W., Gansneder, B. M., Kohl, K. J., Levin, J. S., Milam, J. H., Pusser, B., (2007).

    Returning to learning adults" success is key to America's future. Indianapolis: IN:

    Lumina Foundation for Education.

Rajesh, J. I., & Suganthi, L. (2013). The satisfaction of teachers with their supervisors'

    interpersonal communication skills in relation to job burn-out and growth

satisfaction in Southern India. *Management in Education, 27*(4), 128-137.

Rendon, L. I (1995). *Facilitating retention and transfer for first-generation students in community colleges.* Paper presented at the New Mexico Institute: Rural Community College Initiative, Espanola, NM (ED 383 369).

Reina, D., & Reina, M. (1999). *Trust and betrayal in the workplace: Building effective relationships in your organization*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster.

Richards, L., & Morse, J. M. (2007). *Read me first for a user's guide to qualitative methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Richmond, V. P. (1990). Communication in the classroom: Power and motivation. *Communication Education, 39*(3), 181-185.

Roberts, L. D. (2015). Ethical issues in conducting qualitative research in online communities. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *12*(3), 314.

Rocca, K. A. (2004). College student attendance: Impact of instructor immediacy and verbal aggression. *Communication Education, 53*(2), 185-195.

Rosenbaum, J. E., Person, A. E., & Deil-Amen, R. (2006). *After admission: From college access to college success.* New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation.

Roueche, J., & Roueche, S. D. (1993). *Between a rock and a hard place: The at-risk student in the open-door college.* Washington, D. C.: The American Association of Community Colleges.

Saenz, V. B., Hurtado, S., Barrera, D. Wolf, D., & Fanny Yeung (2007). *First in my family: A profile of first-generation college students at four-year institutions since 1971*. Los Angeles, CA: Higher Education Research Institute, UCLA

Schein, E. H. (1980). *Organizational psychology*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Sergiovanni, T. J. & Starratt, R. J. (1988). *Supervision: Human perspectives* (4th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Shannon, C. E. (1948). A mathematical theory of communication. *The Bell System Technical Journal*, *27*, 379-423, 623-656.

Shields, C. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equality in diverse contexts. *Education Administration Quarterly*, *46*(4), 558-589.

Shields, N. (2002). Anticipatory socialization, adjustment to university life, and perceived stress: Generational and sibling effects. *Social Psychology of Education, 5*(4), 365-392.

Stage, F. K. & Hubbard. (2008). Teaching Latina, African–American and Native American undergraduates: Faculty attitudes, conditions, and practices. In M. Gasmen, B. Baez, & C. S. V. Turner (Eds.), *Understanding minority-serving institutions*. Albany, NY: State University of New York.

Stamp, G. H., Vangelists, A. L. & Knapp, M. L. (1994). Criteria for developing and assessing theories of interpersonal communication. In F. L. Casmir (Ed.) *Building communication theories: A social/cultural approach* (pp. 167-208). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Stolberg, S. G. (2009,). Sotomayor, a trailblazer and a dreamer. *The New York Times,* May 26, A1.

Street, R. L. & De Haes, H. C. J. M. (2013). Designing a curriculum for communication skills training from a theory and evidence-based perspective. *Patient Education and Counseling*, *93*(1), 27-33.

Strauss, A. & Corbin, J. (1998). Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory. (2nd ed.) Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications

Sussman, J. & Kim, C. (2015, April). 6 signs of disruptions: what higher education can learn from healthcare. University Business,

Terenzini, P. T., Pascarella, E. T., & Blimling, G. S. (1996). Students' out-of-class experiences and their influences on learning and cognitive development: A literature review. *Journal of College Student Development, 37*, 149-162

Tinto, V. (1975). Dropout from higher education: A theoretical synthesis of recent research. *Review of Educational Research, 45*(1), 89-125

Tinto, V. (1993). *Leaving college: Rethinking the causes and cures of student attrition.* Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Tinto, V. (1998). Colleges as communities: Taking research on student persistence seriously. *Review of Higher Education, 21,* 167-177.

Tinto, V. (2000). Linking learning and leaving: Exploring the role of college classroom in student departure. In J. M. Braxton (Series Ed.), *Reworking the student departure puzzle* (pp. 81-94). Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University.

Toon, K. L., & Wright, C. N. (2013). A listener's perspective: Using communication theory and practice to reframe persuasion in the communication classroom. *Communication Teacher, 27*(2), 76.

Trealor, A. E. (1996). Electronic scholarly publishing and the World Wide Web. *Journal of Scholarly Publishing, 27*(3), 135-150.

Trevino, N. N., & DeFreitas, S. C. (2014). The relationship between intrinsic motivation and academic achievement for first generation Latino college students. *Social Psychology of Education*, *17*(2), 293-306.

Trow, M. (2007). Reflections on the transition from elite to mass to universal access:

Forms and phases of higher education in modern societies since WWII. In J.J. F Forest & P. G. Althack (Eds.), *International Handbook of Higher Education* (p. 243-280). Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Turner, J., & Patrick, H. (2004). Motivational influences on student participation in classroom learning activities. *Teachers College Record, 106,* 1759-1785.

University of New Hampshire, Counseling Center. (2016) First generation students. Retrieved from: https://www.unh.edu/couseling-center/first-generation-students

VanHaitsma, P. (2010). More talk about "basic writers": A category of rhetorical value for teachers. *Journal of Basic Writing, 29*(1), 99-124.

Van Manen, M. (1990). *Researching lived experience: Human science for an action sensitive pedagogy.* London, Canada: The University of Western Ontario.

Volkwien, J. F. & Parmley, K. (2000). Comparing administrative satisfaction in public and private universities. *Research in Higher Education, 41,* 95-116.

Von Bertalanffy, Ludwig, (1974). *Perspectives on General System Theory Edited by Edgar Taschdjian*. George Braziller, New York.

Wagner, T. (2008). Rigor redefined. *Educational Leadership, 66*(2), 20-25.

Wang, T. R. (2014). Formational turning points in the transition to college: Understanding how communication events shape first-generation students' pedagogical and interpersonal

relationships with their college teachers. *Communication Education*, *63*(1), 63-82.

Warburton, E. C., Bugarin, R., & Nunez, A. (2001). *Bridging the gap: Academic preparation and postsecondary success of first-generational students.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.

Whitechurch. C. (2006). Who do they think they are? The changing identities of professional administrators and managers in UK higher education. *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 26*(2), 133-145.

Wilding, C. & Whiteford, G. (2005). Phenomenological research: An exploration of conceptual, theoretical, and practical issues. *Occupation, Participation and Health, 25*(3), 98-104.

Wolverton, M., & Gmelch, W. H. (2002). *College deans: Leading from within*. Westport, CT: American Council on Education Oryx Press.

Wren, D. A. (2011). The centennial of Frederick W. Taylor's *The Principles of Scientific Management*: A retrospective commentary. *Journal of Business and Management*, *17*(1), 11-22.

Wren, D. A., Bedeian, A. G., & Breeze, J. D. (2002). The foundations of Henri Fayol's administrative theory. *Management Decision, 40*(9), 906-918.

Wrench, J. S. (2013). *Workplace communication for the 21st century: Tools and strategies that impact the bottom line*. Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger/ABC-CLIO.

Appendix A. RESEARCH METHODS

Qualitative Research Traditions

Narrative	Biography, autobiography, life history, oral history	Traditional, a single individual	Humanities and social sciences, including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology	To explore the life of the individual
Phenomenology	Hermeneutical, transcendental. Describing what all participants have in common as they experience a phenomenon	Several individuals	Psychology and philosophy	To understand the essence of the experience
Grounded Theory	Systematic, constructivist. To generate or discover a theory	Entire cultural group	Anthropology and sociology	To describe and interpret a culture-sharing group
Case Study	Single instrumental case study, collective case study, intrinsic case study	One issue, through one or more cases in a bounded system	Human and social sciences, and applied areas, i.e.: evaluation research	To develop an in depth description of a case or cases

Adapted from Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

Appendix B. INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Interview Protocol:

Faculty Participants

Date:
Time:
Location:
Interviewer: Tanyanika B. Mattos
Interviewee:
School of Discipline:

Consent form on file: YES/NO

SURVEY MONKEY Participant Pre-Questionnaire:

These help portray the landscape of the instructor participant.

1. How long have you been an educator? Faculty member in the community college?
    a. Revised: You have been a Faculty member:
        i. Less than 3 years
        ii. 4-8 years
        iii. 10-15 years
        iv. 15+ year
2. Have you taught in K-12, if so what classes? (Fill in text box)

3. What field did you come from prior to higher education and what was your position:

    a. (Fill in text box)

4. (Circle All That Apply) The courses that you teach include:
    a. Math/Science
    b. Language/Arts
    c. Prerequisite
    d. Skilled Trade
    e. Graduation Equivalent Degree
        i. Have you taught at other institutions
        ii. Do you prepare your own syllabus

5. Student misunderstandings can be cleared up through the syllabus. Do you design your syllabi or use a template?
    a. (Fill in text box)

6. (Circle All That Apply) Your educational background is:
   a. High School Diploma
   b. Certificate/Associates degree
   c. Bachelor's degree/Master's degree
   d. Doctorate

7. (Circle All That Apply) Your mother's educational background is:
   a. Unknown
   b. High School Diploma
   c. Certificate/Associates degree
   d. Bachelor's degree/Master's degree
   e. Doctorate

8. (Circle All That Apply) Your father's educational background is:
   a. Unknown
   b. High School Diploma
   c. Certificate/Associates degree
   d. Bachelor's degree/Master's degree
   e. Doctorate

9. Your first language is:
   a. English
   b. Spanish
   c. Chinese
   d. Other (Fill in text box)

10. Are you willing or able to discuss the content of a syllabus used in a course with at least one enrolled first-generation college student?
    a. Yes
    b. No

11. Are you able to identify a first-generation college student enrolled in any courses you've taught; according to the definition of first-generation college student from Atherton, 2014; Pike & Kuh, 2005: first-generation student is a college or university student from a family where no parent or guardian has earned a baccalaureate degree.
    a. Yes
    b. No

Appendix C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Questions:

1. Do you design your own syllabus or do you use the schools template?

2. How do you use the syllabus to communicate with your students?

3. Is a placement exam effective in placing a student in your course?

4. What factors influence student preparedness for your course?

5. How often do students contact you and what are the most frequent/common topics for discussion?

6. Based on research, first-generation college students experience daily exceptional challenges, I'm going to provide some examples taking from the researcher (a) part-timers cant access traditional offices like financial aid, (b) registrar and even their instructors during traditional college operation times, (c) financial aide usually are not available for part-time status students and it causes some not to be able to afford your course books and finally, (d) some have issues striking a work/life balance working as full time financial providers for their families and may have a hard time completing your course assignments on deadline. Tell me about your day-to-day experiences with communicating with student in your course?

7. Describe any opportunities you've had to assist students experiencing exceptional challenges?

8. In case of a student needed to withdraw from your course, how would they communicate with you?

9. In case of a student personal emergency, how would they communicate with you? Describe how you inform your students of these communication options, i.e., syllabi

Appendix D: INFORMED CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE

(Date)

Dear (Name),

I am contacting you today in my role as a doctoral student at University of New England. In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree, I am conducting a study focused on teacher-student communication dynamic as seen through the eyes of faculty. I am writing to request your participation in my study titled "Teaching the first: A phenomenological study of a Southeastern community college instructors communicating with first-generation college students."

Proposed Study Synopsis:

The purpose of this phenomenological research is to study the dynamic of instructor-student communication from the perspective of the instructors who teach development education courses at a Southeastern community college. For the purpose of this study, the perception of the instructor-student communication from the instructor's view is defined as the phenomenon. The study will explore the perceptions, challenges, and experiences of individual instructors. The study may lead to identifying successful methods to increase instructor-student communication. This study is focused specifically on instructors teaching first-generation students enrolled in developmental education classes.

Considerations:
Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary. Should you consent to participate, you will be asked to take a pre-interview questionnaire via Survey Monkey. Also, you will be asked to engage in a semi-structure interview. The duration of the interview will last 45 minutes up to an hour and will take place either at the community college or a mutually agreeable location. The open-ended questions that will be asked during the interview session are those questions that will allow me as the researcher to better understand your thinking, your individual experiences and your assumptions as well as perceptions towards teaching first-generation college students taking developmental education courses.

Confidentiality:
Should you agree to participate in the study, all reasonable steps will be taken to maintain confidentiality and to safeguard your identity as a study participant. Information gleaned from the interviews will be maintained securely during the study period, and audio recordings of the interviews destroyed following completion of the study. Furthermore, no personally identifiable information arising from your participation in the study will be shared with colleagues or

administrators at the community college in the Southeast. Additionally, findings from the study will be reported anonymously as to protect the identity of the participants. Your volunteering for this interview will be your consent to participate in the study. You may opt out of this study at any time. If you have any concerns or questions about this study, please feel free to ask at any time.

       I thank you in advance for considering participation in this research. Should you be willing to participate in this research project, please contact me at your earliest convenience.

       Sincerely,

       Tanyanika Mattos
Doctoral Candidate
University of New England
College of Graduate and Professional Studies
tbabies@une.edu
Phone: (470) 231-9331

Appendix E: IRB EXEMPTION

UNE | **UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND**

Institutional Review Board
Olgun Guvench, Chair

Biddeford Campus
11 Hills Beach Road
Biddeford, ME 04005
(207)602-2244 T
(207)602-5905 F

Portland Campus
716 Stevens Avenue
Portland, ME 04103

To: Tanyanika Mattos

Cc: Michelle Collay

From: Olgun Guvench

Date: September 8, 2016

Project # & Title: 082416-007, Transformative Leadership & The Community College: A
                      Descriptive Qualitative Study of Faculty-Student Communication (Initial)

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects has reviewed the
above captioned project, and has determined that the proposed work is exempt from IRB review
and oversight as defined by 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2).

Additional IRB review and approval is not required for this protocol as submitted. If you wish to
change your protocol at any time, you must first submit the changes for review.

Please contact Olgun Guvench at (207) 221-4171 or oguvench@une.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

Olgun Guvench, M.D., Ph.D.
IRB Chair

IRB#: 082416-007
Submission Date: 8/23/16
Status: Exempt, 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2)
Status Date: 9/8/16