

DISSERTATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS' EXPERIENCES WITH POST-
BACCALAUREATE REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGY

Submitted by

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In partial fulfillment of the requirements

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Colorado State University

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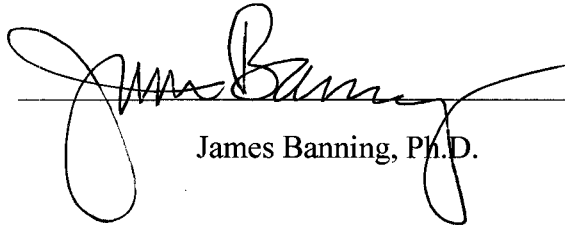
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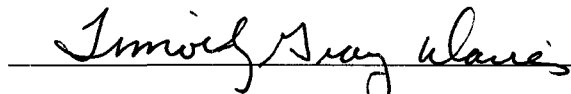
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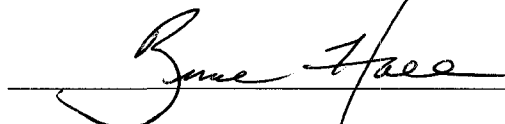
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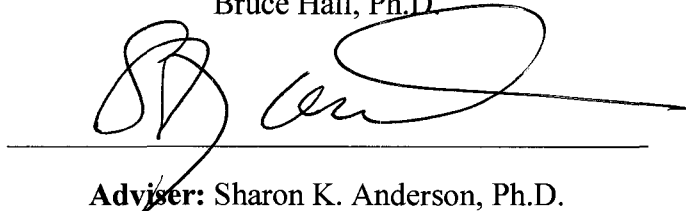
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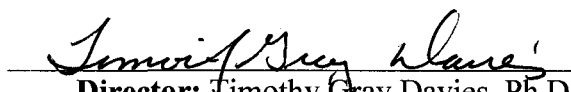
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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

COMMUNITY COLLEGE INSTRUCTORS' EXPERIENCES WITH POST-BACCALAUREATE REVERSE TRANSFER STUDENTS: A PHENOMENOLOGY

This qualitative study examined the lived experiences of eight community college faculty. The goal of the research was to understand what it is like to teach community college classes with post-baccalaureate reverse transfer (PBRT) students in them. Using a phenomenological approach, the data was interpreted to develop an understanding of the essence derived from the participant's experience.

Through the interpretation of the data, six master themes emerged: *Participants' Description of PBRTs*, *Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms*, *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms*, *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and non-PBRTs*, *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs*, and *Refining Teaching Styles to Fit PBRTs*. These master themes provided the structure and meaning to the essence of the phenomenon, *Professionals Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of Education*.

Participants' Description of PBRTs gave a portrayal of the PBRT student as the participants view them. The theme, *Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms*, allowed the participants to explain how they determined who PBRTs are and whether it mattered if they knew or not. The *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms* theme describes how the participants appreciate the academic capital PBRTs bring with them, as well as the seriousness, focus, and professional

behaviors they display in class. The *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs* theme describes the world of classes with both PBRTs and non-PBRTs. In this environment the evolution of relationships between the two groups of students and participants transpires. In the *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs* theme, participants shared their feelings about how it is a natural fit to teach PBRTs because of the connectedness of being professionals. The final theme, *Refining Teaching Styles to Fit PBRTs*, illustrates how the participants modified their teaching style so it was both equitable and fair to PBRTs and non-PBRTs.

These six master themes were reduced to the essence of the participants' experiences of teaching PBRT students, *Professionals Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of Education*. It illustrates the professional relationships between the participant and PBRTs and the cyclical transference of knowledge, resulting in collaborative learning.

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DEDICATION

To Bob, you left us too soon, your spirit will always be with me. You were a friend and a mentor; you helped me more than you know. To Remington, your time passed before we could complete another degree together. I will miss you both dearly.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

An Instructor's Experience

Have you ever thought about what it might be like to teach community college students who have already earned a bachelor's degree? What would this experience be like? Well, I would like to share my experience of teaching such a group.

I work at a private university and I teach a group of these students. Remington University (RU), a pseudonym, offers two-year and four-year degrees in a variety of fields including an Associate in Applied Science (AAS) in culinary arts. One unique program within the culinary arts degree is called Enhance Your Degree (EYD), a pseudonym for the program. This program allows students with a four-year degree in another field or discipline to complete a two-year culinary arts degree in an accelerated format.

My First Experience

When I think back on my first encounters with the EYD students, I recall having mixed emotions and experiences. As an instructor new to RU and to the teaching profession (I had just stepped out of industry a year earlier), I was introduced to the EYD students in my second year at the university. The only warning I received about this unique group was given to me by my department chair. He said, "You will be teaching an EYD section of Cost Control this year." When I inquired about what an EYD section was, I was told that they are a group of students who have already received a bachelor's

degree and have enrolled at RU to earn an AAS degree in culinary arts: That was about it. At this point, a feeling of anxiety began to build up, and I immediately began to wonder how I was going to teach students in this group. Up until this point, I had been teaching traditional freshman students, who were young and just out of high school.

I had developed the confidence as a new teacher to teach traditional freshman students, but now I would be teaching a group who already had earned a bachelor's degree. How should I plan for this? I was a bit scared because I knew that some would have attained the same level of education as I had; some may have had more postsecondary education than I did (at that point I was working on my Master's of Business Administration degree and only held a Bachelor of Science degree in Management). So the first thing I did was reevaluate my lesson plans. I thought I needed to make the lessons more intriguing and the assignments tougher: I needed to "step it up." So, I did and I thought I was ready for them. "Bring 'em on!" I thought as we began the first term.

On the first day of class I was ready. When I received my roster, what did I see? My class was not just EYD students; there were traditional students as well. My head began to swim a little, but I thought to myself, "This is a manageable situation." While the first day went well, I felt challenged and afraid: challenged to teach to the EYD students and to a mixed class, and afraid that I was not prepared for this. I thought, "How am I going to pull this off? They'll eat me alive."

Teaching to the EYD Students

As I think back to that first class of EYD students, there are several events which still come to the forefront of my mind. One such experience was when I found out that

one group of EYD students was not happy with the academic education they were receiving at RU. One person mentioned that the academic courses were “worthless and taught at such an elementary level.” This made me feel that I needed to make sure that I offered the best course I could. However, that did not make the dissatisfaction go away. I knew I also had to establish my credibility. Second, I had to adjust my teaching style to teach to this level of student.

It was challenging to balance the elements of a mixed class, the required materials, and course objectives. Even though I had adjusted the course delivery, some of the required material was basic; this perpetuated the quality issue that the EYD students were concerned about. However, if I were teaching a “pure” class of EYD students, I could have completely redesigned the class to a higher level of learning, but this was not the case.

Along with these challenges came some joys. I welcomed the change of teaching to a more mature audience better able to contribute to the class at a higher level. For the most part, the level of questions and the quality of work submitted was of a higher caliber than most of the traditional freshmen. However, the class had both EYD students and traditional students and the overall quality of work submitted varied greatly.

Teaching to the Mixed Class

In most any class, an instructor teaches to a variety of students with different learning styles and interests. However, the mixed class of EYD and traditional students presented a unique set of challenges and questions. How do I reach out to the whole spectrum of students in my class? How do I make the class exciting for the EYD student

and not lose the traditional student, or vice-versa? These were just a few of the issues I confronted.

The classroom dynamics were another part of the experience that was challenging and interesting. In my mixed class, the ranges in age and maturity were broad. Some students had just completed high school and some had just left long careers (for example, there was a middle aged lawyer who entered the program because she wanted to learn how to cook before opening a bed and breakfast). These dynamics presented situations that made managing the classroom tricky at times. For example, an EYD student might ask a question beyond the scope of the class, and while I delivered a response, the traditional students would lose interest and start talking which was distracting. Often the EYD students would get annoyed with the traditional students because of their lack of professionalism and maturity in the classroom. When it came to group work, the EYD students would often choose to work together and the traditional students would work together, perpetuating the separation and segregation of the groups in the class. These behaviors made it difficult to teach and to deliver the course material. I could not help but think that I really needed to teach two separate classes! Knowing that was not an option, I worked constantly to come up with new teaching strategies that would encourage the two groups to work together. This was very frustrating, especially to a new teacher.

However, there were also several examples of positive classroom behavior that I still reflect on today. As the term progressed, it was interesting to see the constructive interactions between the EYD students and the traditional students. For instance, I recall an older EYD student having trouble with using a computer and a younger traditional student helped this person out; I could see a relationship beginning to develop. I also

noticed that some of the older EYD students became mentors to the younger traditional students, not only from an academic standpoint, but from a life experience standpoint.

Vignette Summary

The experiences of my first contacts with RU's EYD population opened my eyes and sparked my curiosity as to what it must be like for other instructors who teach students returning to the university setting after already earning a higher degree. I have continued to reevaluate my teaching style when it comes to teaching EYD students and teaching mixed classes. However, I remain curious about the experiences of other instructors and I want to understand what can be gleaned from that discovery.

Post-Baccalaureate Reverse Transfer Students in the Community College

Today, it is not uncommon to have a group of students attending classes in two-year degree programs who already have obtained a baccalaureate degree. In some cases these students also have obtained masters' degrees, doctoral degrees, and professional degrees. At the community college, this group of students is known as post-baccalaureate reverse transfers (PBRTs). They are not segregated into their own PBRT classes and are mixed among the many other types of students.

There are many issues that may arise from this scenario, such as culture clash between the varied groups, the role the PBRT student might play in the classroom, or the range of academic preparedness. In this chapter I discuss my problem statement, the background of the problem, the theoretical context for my study, my methodology and method, my perspective as a researcher, my research interest, my research question, and the significance of this study.

Problem Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand the experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in the community college classroom. Participants were faculty at a community college in the Metro area of Denver, Colorado. For this study, PBRT students were defined as students who have obtained a baccalaureate degree or higher and were enrolled in credit or non-credit community college classes.

Theoretical Context

The community college has served society in many ways over the past 100 years. It has evolved from being a gateway from high school to the four-year institution in the early 1900s to the comprehensive community college of today (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). According to Cohen and Brawer, the broad mission consists of five curricular functions which include academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, developmental education, and community service. Also central to the community college mission has been the function of transfer. As Cohen and Brawer (2003) state, the primary purpose of the community college transfer mission is to accept students from high school and “provide them with a general education” (p. 343) and send them on their way to a baccalaureate degree. This mission of transfer has been the foundation of community colleges in America since their inception over 100 years ago (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). When this part of the mission is considered in conjunction with the open door admissions policy, it is evident that community colleges have made transfer and attainment of a bachelor’s degree a reality for many students.

Over time the patterns of transfer from the community college to four-year institutions have changed. In the early days of the community college, there was the

assumption that a transfer in an upward direction from the community college to the four-year institution was the typical progression. Townsend (2001) identified six patterns of transfer alone that described how students circulate between the community college and the four-year institution, with the end result being the attainment of a baccalaureate degree.

Although these patterns focus on the movement between the community college and the four-year institution, Townsend (2001) did not include the enrollment of students in the community college who had already obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, or in other words, the PBRT student. It is this group of students who has interested some scholars for almost 50 years. Studies of students in this group have evolved from the exploration of the reverse transfer phenomenon (Clark, 1960) to more recent studies on the phenomenon of PBRT. Kajstura and Keim (1992) and others (Delaney, 1995; Klepper, 1991) mention a group of students who had earned a baccalaureate degree or higher as "completers" during their studies on reverse transfer. However, in a study by Lambert (1994) this group was finally named "post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students" (p. 1).

Since the 1990s, many studies have been focused on PBRT students. Studies examining topics such as enrollment trends and numbers (Quinley & Quinley, 2000; Barnes & Robinson, 1999), redefining the term *second chance* (Quinley & Quinley, 1998), creating awareness to policy makers and the public (Townsend, 1999), and recruitment of PBRT students (Catanzaro, 1999) have all contributed to the body of knowledge on the PBRT phenomenon. However, there has been very little reported

research on the experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in the community college. My study addresses this absence in the literature.

My interest in PBRTs is not solely a consequence of my review of the literature. My interest in this study also has arisen from my professional experience in the college classroom. With PBRT students representing nearly 20% of the community college student population (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005; Phillippe & Valiga, 2000), they are bound to have an impact on how faculty teach. I have identified several studies that have explored the experiences of PBRT students in the community college, why they are enrolled there, and reasons for recruiting them, but very few have focused specifically on the faculty who teach them and what they experience while doing so. Thus, there was a need for further study in this area.

Methodology and Method

In order to learn more about the experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in the community college, I needed determine which methodology would work best. Since I wanted to learn about the experiences of those instructors on a more personal level, a quantitative method would not work well for my study, as it could not provide me with the essence of the experience I desired. Therefore, I chose to do a qualitative study to accomplish this.

To develop this understanding of the lived experience, I chose to use the phenomenological approach. Moustakas (1994) states the aim of this approach is to “determine what an experience means for the persons who have had the experience and are able to provide a comprehensive description of it” (p. 13). Creswell (1998) describes phenomenology as “the meaning of the lived experiences for several individuals about a

concept or the phenomenon” (p. 51). In addition, Sokolowski (2000) defines phenomenology as “the study of human experience and of the ways things present themselves to us in and through such experience” (p. 2). It is this exploration of the lived experience that I wanted to investigate. I was hoping to find if common themes emerge from the participants’ experiences and if what others have experienced has been similar to what I have gone through in the classroom. I believe that this information may be helpful to me and others who teach PBRT students.

Research Questions

The central question for my study was: “From the perspective of community college faculty, what meaning is derived from their having PBRT students in their classrooms?” The following subordinate research questions guided my study:

1. What is it like to teach PBRT students?
2. Have the instructors’ teaching experiences changed over time?
3. What are the classroom dynamics in a mixed class of PBRT and traditional students?
 - a. What interactions do faculty observe between the two groups?
4. How do faculty teach to a mixed class of PBRT students and traditional students?
5. In terms of academic achievement, do faculty expect more from a PBRT student?

Significance of the Study

With the PBRT population representing approximately 20% of the community college student body (Phillippe & Valiga, 2000; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005), it becomes important to better understand the experiences of faculty who teach them. Despite this large group of students in the community college, there have been few studies reported

on what it is like to teach them. The results of my study can be useful in developing a better understanding of this experience. In addition, the results of this study can possibly be useful to the training and professional development of faculty who teach PBRT populations.

My Perspective as a Researcher

I bring to this study my personal experiences of teaching to a group of students similar to PBRT students. I have been teaching this group for six years, mainly in a culinary based Menu Planning and Cost Control class, but on occasion I have also taught a Food Safety and Sanitation Management class. During this time I have reflected on the experiences I have had teaching to a mixed class of PBRT and traditional students. It is my own personal experience, along with a curiosity to see how instructors experience this phenomenon, which has lead me to this study.

Like any researcher, however, I have biases and will need to be aware of these as I progress with my study. With six years of teaching experience at the university level, I bring to this study my own understanding of the experience of teaching students with a bachelor's degree or higher. These experiences would include reconfiguring my lesson plans to meet the intellectual needs of the PBRT student. I also have made the assignments more challenging, both intellectually and academically. In addition, I establish my creditability and credentials on the first day of the term through open discussion with the class. Through this discussion, I am able develop rich rapport and mutual respect with the PBRT students. Along with teaching experience, I bring my own personal thoughts and feelings about the PBRT students. I have found it to be both gratifying and frustrating. It is gratifying when, as a class, we are able to bring the

discussion and class work to a higher level. It is frustrating when the PBRT students think they “know it all” and resist what is being taught. Also, I have confided with colleagues about how to teach to this group of students and have sought their opinions of them, which has exposed me to their biases and frustrations. These frustrations include: being constantly challenged by the PBRT students in the grading of assignments, being challenged on the instructors’ authority, and having the perception that the PBRT students are receiving assignments that are too elaborate. However, there are a few instructors who enjoy the classroom dynamics created by PBRT students and feel that the rich discussions and deeper level of questions create a refreshing environment. Finally, I bring my own unique perspective from my own experience as a student at the university level. Although I am not a PBRT student, I started my academic journey later in life and consequently always have been an older student amongst younger students in some of the classes I have taken.

As a researcher and college instructor, my interest in this topic was on several levels. As a college instructor, it is usually the responsibility of the faculty member to “figure out” the best way to teach to students. Devising teaching strategies is usually compounded by several factors such as course content, academic preparedness, maturity development, age range, and social interaction amongst the students in the class. When an instructor’s class includes students who have already earned a degree, this adds one more factor with which the instructor must contend. Understanding the experience of adjusting to this group will prove to be helpful to myself and other instructors.

As a researcher, I also wanted to discover what other instructors' experiences with PBRT students. This discovery may help in the development of teaching practices or may

uncover more questions and topics to research. However, as mentioned above, with my experience of teaching such students, I must be able to be aware of my prejudgments and predispositions in order to be able to discover the true essence or meaning of the experience.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have provided an introduction to my study. I began by discussing my experiences with a group of students similar to the PBRT student and from this defined the focus of my study. I have discussed the theoretical context and questions that guided my study. I concluded this chapter with the significance of my study and my perspective as a researcher. In Chapter Two, the literature review will provide an overview of the PBRT student in the community college.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

In Chapter Two of my dissertation, I review literature relevant to my study. In the first section, I provide an overview of the student populations attending community colleges. Then, I review the literature of PBRT students at the community college. This literature is divided into chronological sections to note the progression of literature on this subject. I begin this chronological review by examining the community college transfer mission and then a review of early literature (1960-1970) on reverse transfer students in the community college. Next, I explore and review the literature on reverse transfer from the time period of 1971 through 1999, which covers the inclusion of PBRT student as a new topic of study in addition to the reverse transfer student. Finally, I review the literature on the phenomenon of PBRT written from 2000 to the present in which the PBRT student is recognized as a significant member of the community college population.

The Community College

The community college has played a major role in the history of public postsecondary education in the United States. During this time the definition or the name of the two-year institution has changed. In addition, part of what has distinguished this institution is the students that it has admitted. In the following section, I briefly discuss the definition of the community college name, the makeup of this population, and the community college open door admissions policy.

Two-Year College Name Definition

Over the last century, there have been two names primarily associated with the two-year college, the *junior college* and *community college*. From the early 1900s to the 1940s, the junior college was described as a two-year institution or university branch offering “lower division work” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 3). This meant that the junior college had to offer general education courses equivalent to those of the four-year institution (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

According to Cohen and Brawer (2003), in the 1950s and 1960s the junior college was associated with “lower-division branches” of private institutions and two-year institutions supported by independent or church organizations. Consequently, the term community college was first used and associated with “publicly supported institutions” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p. 4). Today, the term community college is most commonly used for both public and private two-year institutions. Cohen and Brawer define the community college as “any institution regionally accredited to award the associate in arts or the associate in science as its highest degree” (p. 5). They add that the definition includes both the “comprehensive college as well as many technical institutes” (p. 5).

Community College Student Population in General

The community college has educated students for over 100 years. During this time, the community college has evolved and has made changes “seeking new programs and new clients” (Cohen & Brawer, 2003, p.36). Along with this evolution, the demographic make-up of the student has changed as well. Cohen and Brawer (2003) sum up this change in student population in two words: “number and variety” (p. 37).

According to a survey by the American Association of Community Colleges, the 2001 nationwide enrollment in community colleges was at 2,330,860 full-time and 3,886,612 part-time students (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Today the student population at the community college is comprised of a diverse student body that consists of students who have just graduated high school and are attending the community college with the intent of transferring to four-year institutions. There are students who are older and enrolled in the community college to learn basic job skills for immediate access into employment. There are people with established careers enrolled to diversify, upgrade, or enhance their job skills through credit or non-credit courses. Finally there is a group of students that only seek enrichment through courses that are recreational or cultural in nature (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005).

Open Door Admissions Policy

In order for the community college to accommodate the wide variety of students, it historically has maintained an open door admission policy. Cohen and Brawer (2003) state that the community college maintains “open channels for individuals, enhancing the social mobility that has characterized America, and they accept the idea that society can be better, just as individuals can better their lot within it” (p. 36). These open channels include accepting students from all levels of socioeconomic and demographic diversity. Cohen and Brawer (2003) have credited the community college with “accommodating the different types of students without turning anyone away. They have always tended to let everyone in but have guided students to programs that fit their aspirations and in which they have some chance to succeed” (p. 260) even when the students were not taking courses which lead to degrees.

Synthesis

In the preceding section, I briefly described how the name of the two-year college has evolved from the original term of junior college to the current format of community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Next, I illustrated that the community college population consists of students with a wide variety of interests in attending the community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Of particular interest to me in this study are the groups returning to the community college for career diversification and enhancement courses. As the review of literature will show in the following sections of this chapter, it is this group that traditionally is composed of PBRT students. In addition, I discussed the open door admission policy which makes it possible for all of the above groups to attend community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2003) and thus be included in the community college population.

The Community College Mission and Reverse Transfer Literature from 1960 to 1970

In this theme, I review publications that address the community college transfer mission and the early documentation of reverse transfer. The first sub-theme describes the mission of the community college, including the transfer mission. In the second sub-theme, I review publications that illustrate how these explain the first indications of reverse transfer.

Transfer Mission

The community college has served society in many ways over the past 100 years. It has evolved from an extension of the high school in the early 1900s to the comprehensive community college of today (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Although the mission of the

community college may have changed to accommodate the changing community, the underlying or primary function of the community college has virtually remained the same (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). According to Cohen and Brawer, the comprehensive mission consists of five curricular functions which include academic transfer preparation, vocational-technical education, continuing education, developmental education, and community service. However, central to the community college mission has been the function of transfer (2003).

The transfer mission was the historical foundation of the junior college. Students interested in transfer attended the junior college for the first two years and then transferred to a four-year college or university to complete the baccalaureate degree (Townsend, 2001). Cohen and Brawer (2003) affirmed this: “One of the community college’s primary purposes has been to accept students from secondary schools, provide them with general education and introductory collegiate studies, and send them on to senior institutions for the baccalaureate” (p. 343).

Documenting Reverse Transfer

Although the traditional transfer function has existed for many years, other types of transfer had not been documented. One of the first researchers to notice reverse transfer was Clark (1960) who noted that the junior college was used as a “transfer station” (p. 575) to allow students the opportunity to follow the traditional path to a four-year degree. However, he stated that the junior college was often used as a facility to perform a “cooling-out” (p. 572) function for students who otherwise would be dismissed from the four-year college or university for poor academic performance. For Clark, this cooling-out function was a process in which the at-risk student was “reoriented” (p. 572) or

moved from a transfer major to a terminal vocational program. In other words, the cooling-out process was a systematic method for gently diminishing the hopes of the failing student to realize that the student should pursue vocational training instead of a goal to transfer to a four year institution. Clark's study is relevant to my research because it is one of the first studies to recognize the phenomenon of reverse transfer, which ultimately leads to the study of PBRT in the community college.

One of the first studies focusing explicitly on reverse transfer was conducted by Heinze and Daniels (1970) who set out to discover (a) the reverse transfer population in selected community colleges in the United States, (b) problems the reverse transfer student encountered in the transition from the four-year institution to the community college, and (c) the implications of their findings for the community college. Heinze and Daniels began their study with a definition of the reverse transfer student, as "any student (full or part-time), presently attending a community college, who had his [or her] last record of academic work before attending the community college at a baccalaureate granting college" (p. 4). It is this definition that has become the foundation for other researchers to use in their studies on reverse transfer, which eventually leads to the definition of PBRT.

In the study, data were collected by using a survey sent to 60 community colleges. The survey was mailed to the Dean of Student Personnel Services, or the equivalent position. The researchers reported a 77% return rate for a total of 46 completed questionnaires. Heinze and Daniels' interpretation of data from the completed questionnaires yielded the following findings. First, reverse transfer students represented 9.44% of the total student population. Second, a majority of the community colleges

surveyed admitted individuals who were on academic probation or had been dismissed from the previous institution. Next, 59% of the colleges indicated that records of reverse transfer students were not “readily available” to indicate who these students were and how many attended the community college. Finally, only 22% of the colleges offered “orientation or guidance services” (p. 5) to reverse transfer students.

The significance of this research was that there was a large presence of reverse transfer students on the community college campus in 1970. This study suggests there was a need to provide some form of student services assistance geared to the reverse transfer student.

Synthesis

In this section I provided an overview of the community college transfer mission and the early research on the reverse transfer within the community college. The themes that I have discovered are as follows: The community college is an institution that is to serve the community in many facets and allows access to all of its members (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). It is this open access and the promise of a better life and opportunity through education that inspire members of our society to attend a higher educational institution (Clark, 1960). However, as Clark (1960) noted, not all students at the four-year institution may succeed. Some might need to transfer back to the community college for remedial education or for cooling-out.

This literature is important to my study on several levels. First, the community college is an institution that allows members of the community to enroll for classes even if they may have already earned a degree higher than issued by the community college.

Second, it sets the stage for future studies on reverse transfer, which in turn leads to the identification of the PBRT student.

It is this notion of going back to the community college identified by Clark (1960) that inspired Heinze and Daniels (1970) to study the phenomenon of reverse transfer. Their findings documented the presence of reverse transfer students in the community college and more importantly, the need to identify these individuals and to provide support services to meet their needs. For my study, it is important to note that there are other populations than the traditional student present in the community college classroom. However, at this point in time the literature only recognizes the reverse transfer student and has not recognized PBRT as a separate phenomenon.

Reverse Transfer to the Recruitment of Post-Baccalaureate Reverse Transfer Literature:

From 1971 to 1999

In this section, I review selected publications to explain how the population of reverse transfer students within the community colleges has continued to grow. Next, I review the literature that distinguishes the reverse transfer student group into two subgroups. These are (a) individuals who have attended a four-year institution, but did not earn a degree prior to enrolling at the community college, and (b) individuals who have earned a four-year degree before enrolling into the community college. These studies have helped to coin the term of *post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students*. Following this, I review the literature on what PBRT students are looking for in the community college, as well as other reasons PBRT students attend the community college. I follow this with an examination of the literature as to the need for policy

makers to be more aware of PBRT students. Finally, I review several publications concerning the recruitment of PBRT students and the benefits and problems of enrolling PBRT students.

Growth of the Reverse Transfer Student Population

Building on the study by Heinze and Daniels (1970), Hudak's (1983) study had three objectives: determining (a) how many reverse transfer students (RTS) were enrolled in the public community/junior colleges nationwide, (b) how the RTS were classified, and (c) what impact the RTS student might have on his or her institution. Hudak surveyed administrators at 305 community and junior colleges nationwide, using a questionnaire that collected data regarding the three objectives mentioned above. Hudak discovered that 16.38% of students enrolled at surveyed institutions were RTS. This number represented a 6.94% increase over what Heinze and Daniels (1970) reported approximately thirteen years earlier.

In addition to the increase of RTS, Hudak concluded (a) administrators of community colleges have acknowledged RTS as a "generally acceptable classification" (p. 164), (b) the definition of RTS was clearly defined, (c) the increase of RTS has impacted all aspects of the community college from administrative functions to "economic viability" of the community college, and (d) RTS have a "wide and diverse range of education, experience, interests, and expectations" (p. 165) which should broaden the range of course offerings. In addition, these characteristics would create more awareness for assisting RTS with student services functions, and (e) RTS bring maturity, professional and academic experience, and a higher level of pride and accomplishment to the classroom (p. 165).

The significance of Hudak's (1983) findings to my literature review are that he identified a pattern of increasing enrollment of reverse transfer students within the community college. In addition, he identified characteristics of the RTS that are similar to PBRT students and expressed the need for the community college, as a whole, to change its way of thinking and to embrace this segment of the community college population. Although Hudak (1983) and the others (Clark, 1960; Heinze & Daniels, 1970) were able to study the reverse transfer student, they did not identify within this group the students who may have previously earned a bachelor's degree or higher.

Redefining Who Reverse Transfer Students Are

To gain a better understanding of the reverse transfer phenomenon, Kajstura and Keim (1992) performed a study in the spring of 1989 on reverse transfer students attending community colleges in Illinois. After identifying the reverse transfer students within the community college system, they used a survey questionnaire to collect data from these students. Kajstura and Keim reported a 62% response rate which, in turn, yielded a sample size of 296 students. After their analysis of the data, Kajstura and Keim discovered that of all of the respondents, 29% held a bachelor's, master's, or doctoral degree. In addition, the data disclosed new information concerning this population including the enrollment status (part-time or full-time), reasons why the student left the four-year institution, and reasons why the student chose the two-year college. Furthermore, Kajstura and Keim were able to determine the primary educational goals of the reverse transfer student. On these points, Kajstura and Keim found 29% of the reverse transfer student population held a bachelor's degree. In addition, reverse transfer students with degrees held full-time jobs and were enrolled part-time.

One significant point of Kajstura and Keim's (1992) article is the identification of two subsets of students within the reverse transfer population. The first subset, or "noncompleters" (p. 39), was students who had previously attended a four-year institution, but had not earned a degree. The second group of students was "graduates" (p. 39) who had earned a minimum of an undergraduate degree prior to returning to the community college. The term "graduates" appears to be the precursor to the PBRT identifier used in today's research. The second significant point of Kajstura and Keim's article is the idea that reverse transfer students are becoming a fixture in community college population. It is because of this presence, they state, that the community college as a whole needs to be able to identify who the reverse transfer students are and why these institutions need to be able to accommodate them.

In subsequent studies, there have been others (Townsend & Dever, 1999; Catanzaro, 1999) who have divided reverse transfer students into similar subsets. However, it is the graduate subset of reverse transfer students that are of interest in my research and will be further examined.

The Introduction of the Post-Baccalaureate Reverse Transfer Student

Kajstura and Keim (1992) identified reverse transfer students who already held a four-year degree or higher prior to enrolling into the community college as "graduate" reverse transfer students (p. 39). Klepper (1991) and Delaney (1995) described this group of students as "completer" reverse transfer students. However, it was Lambert (1994) who referred to this group as *post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students*. Lambert (1994) defined PBRT students as those who have "already earned a baccalaureate or higher degree and who have returned to the community college for additional education"

(p. 1). Now this group of students is recognized by their new name, but is their purpose for attending the community college the same as the traditional reverse transfer student?

Redefined Second Chance

As noted by Clark (1960), the community college can be a place for “cooling out,” or a place to provide a second chance to the academically under-prepared students and to reorient their academic aspirations from a transfer major to a trade program. However, the term second chance has developed new meanings. In a study intended to examine the second chance phenomenon, Quinley and Quinley (1998) set out to gain a better understanding of PBRT students as long-term students in the community college. The results of the study, conducted at Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) in Charlotte, North Carolina, were reported in the August 1998 Community College Research Center Occasional Paper.

The data for the study were collected using two approaches: an examination of CPCC student records and a telephone survey of enrolled PBRT students who had completed 15 credit hours at CPCC. The records of first-time PBRT students who completed 15 credit hours or more and were enrolled at CPCC during summer 1993 through spring 1997 were examined. From these data, a telephone survey was conducted in fall 1996. Quinley and Quinley (1998) selected a random sample of 100 students from a population of 1,104 qualified students and completed 40 interviews. The interviews included seven open-ended questions. The respondents’ answers were transcribed, coded, classified into categories, and then analyzed for common themes.

The examination of student records generated information concerning enrollment percentages, demographic characteristics, enrollment patterns and academic majors, and

academic achievement. More specifically, Quinley and Quinley (1998) found that the percentage of PBRT students enrolled at CPCC increased annually from 1993-1996. The enrollment records provided Quinley and Quinley the demographic characteristics of PBRT students enrolled at CPCC in the fall of 1996. The records revealed that over half of the PBRT students were White males over the age of 40. In addition, Quinley and Quinley discovered that 61% of the PBRT students enrolled in academic programs related to technical or vocational programs. Specific majors, with larger enrollments of PBRT students, included computer, paralegal, and business/accounting/international courses. Finally, Quinley and Quinley (1998) determined that 81% of the enrolled PBRT students were attending as part-time students, 66% were taking one course, and 21% had earned a “straight A average” (p. 10).

The findings of the telephone interviews led to the development of three major themes: “life circumstances and goals, profiles of students, and experiences as community college students” (p.11). These themes revealed that, of the 40 interviewed respondents those who held degrees in career-specific majors outnumbered those who held degrees in liberal arts. Also, a greater part of the respondents “had considerable work experience before coming to the community college” (p. 12) and had worked in their career field more than five years. In regards to the goals of PBRT students attending CPCC, Quinley and Quinley (1998) discovered five major reasons: “career exploration, current job skills update, supplemental income, new career, and personal interest” (p. 13). During the interviews, Quinley and Quinley (1998) were able to develop a deeper or richer profile of each of the respondents. These profiles were as unique as the reasons each gave for attending the community college. Finally, Quinley and Quinley (1998)

asked the respondents to describe their experiences at CPCC. The categories of responses, to name a few, included comments on the quality of instruction, cost of the courses, the positive overall rating of the experience, and the favorable comparison of the community college experience to the four-year school.

The major conclusion by Quinley and Quinley (1998) was that PBRT students represent a different type of second chance student. Their findings showed that the PBRT population represents a significant portion of the community college population. Also, a majority of PBRT students already held career degrees, as opposed to liberal arts degrees as once thought. Along with the career degree, most of the PBRT students had considerable work experience and attended the community college for career purposes. Finally, Quinley and Quinley (1998) concluded the PBRT students were successful and met their educational goals while attending CPCC.

Other Reasons PBRT Students Attend Community Colleges

Going beyond the second chance described by Clark (1960) and Quinley and Quinley (1998), PBRT students have had other reasons for going back to the community college. As Catanzaro (1999), Quinley and Quinley (1998), and Townsend and Dever (1999) have reported, some want to utilize the community college to advance their careers through new training or retraining. They may be looking at becoming more marketable or they may be interested in professional development. Whatever the reason, LeBard (1999) found that PBRT students utilized the community college to their advantage by completing courses for career enhancement, personal growth, and earning degrees or certificates.

Number of PBRT Students in Missouri Community Colleges

Barnes and Robinson (1999) wanted to determine the percentage of Missouri community college population comprised by PBRT students. In addition, Barnes and Robinson also wanted to find out how the chief academic officers (CAOs) perceived PBRT student enrollment: They then compared these perceptions with actual enrollment data.

In the first part of their study, Barnes and Robinson (1999) developed a profile of bachelor degree graduates using the enrollment records from the Missouri public two-year and four-year institutions. The cohort they studied was tracked for five years to follow the enrollment into the community college system. From this information, they were able to look at trends and patterns of PBRT students. As the first portion of their study concluded in 1998, the second part of the study of the CAO perceptions was conducted. Eight CAOs from Missouri public community colleges were interviewed via e-mail using the Missouri Student Achievement Survey consisting of five open-ended questions.

The data from the survey provided the information needed to develop a profile of PBRT students in the Missouri community college system. The most important finding of the survey showed PBRT student enrollment averaged a 26% growth each year from 1993-1996. Through the interviews with the participating CAOs, Barnes and Robinson (1999) discovered that the CAOs believed there were larger numbers of PBRT students enrolled than the actual database indicated. Although the CAOs thought that there was a larger population of PBRT students, Barnes and Robinson discovered that most of the CAOs felt the PBRT student was “not a significant market niche” (p. 61).

From these findings, Barnes and Robinson (1999) concluded that there is a growing population of PBRT students in the Missouri community college system and that the PBRT student population has made a choice to continue with specialized training instead of graduate work. However, the major implications of this study call attention to redefining the transfer mission to include PBRT and develop a better profile of the PBRT student. In addition, Barnes and Robinson (1999) note that many community colleges are not prepared to track the enrollment of PBRTs and, as a result of incorrect data, strategic planning and marketing strategies may be inadvertently misguided.

Awareness of the PBRT Function to Policy Makers

In a paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Community Colleges, Townsend (1999) expressed a similar desire as Barnes and Robinson (1999) to inform policy makers and the general public about the multiple methods of transfer. Townsend expressed that the transfer function is a “fact of life” (p. 3) in the community college and in particular, focused on how the community college serves the PBRT group, be it a small or large percentage of the college’s enrollment. Townsend’s study showed that (a) the transfer function is a complicated one, (b) the community college as part of its transfer function serves a sub-group of transfer students known as PBRT, (c) the community college is a choice for many students to transfer to, not just away from, and (d) PBRT students attending the community college had a “highly satisfactory experience” (p. 5). Townsend (1999) also noted that some PBRTs did attend the community college for personal growth but more were attending for career enhancement purposes. Townsend (1999) confirmed that there is more than one method

of transfer and more importantly, the community college serves students who have a bachelor's degree or higher credential.

Enrollment and Recruitment of PBRT Students

Capitalizing on this awareness of the increasing presence of PBRT students in the community college, Catanzaro's (1999) qualitative study was intended to evaluate and study reverse transfers (to include PBRT students) at Chattanooga State Technical Community College (CSTCC) in order to develop strategies to recruit reverse transfer students. Catanzaro realized that reverse transfer students are an important part of the student demographic make-up and that this group should be studied to determine the variables that might influence their size and enrollment within the community college.

Catanzaro's (1999) data collection was performed at CSTCC during the 1997-1998 academic year. The author used focus groups and one-on-one interviews with reverse transfer students. Catanzaro selected a student from each sub-group of reverse transfer students at CSTCC, which consisted of special purpose undergraduate reverse transfers, technical degree undergraduate reverse transfers, enrichment post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students, specific skills post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students, and transient students, and interviewed each participant as to the reasons of his or her decision for reverse transfer. Through his findings, Catanzaro was able to understand why the interviewed students chose to reverse transfer.

Two important findings by Catanzaro (1999) were reported. First, variables were identified that affected and influenced reverse transfer enrollment. These were the proximity of the community college to the four-year school, comparative costs, satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the area four-year school, and the offering of specific

programs and courses. Second, combining these variables with the subgroups of reverse transfer, the researcher was able to create a profile of these students and thus develop effective ways to recruit them. Catanzaro's study is significant because he identified ways for community colleges to recruit reverse transfer students, which consist of PBRTs. Examples of recruiting methods include an all-out media campaign, creating new dynamic courses which target PBRT students who enroll for personal enrichment courses, and targeting corporate partners with customized curriculums to further the PBRTs technical skills.

Experiences, Institutional Problems, and Benefits of Enrolling PBRT Students

Once a community college chooses to actively recruit PBRT students, the assessment of potential problems and benefits from this practice become important. For example, a study by Townsend and Lambert (1999) examined the experiences of PBRT students at the two-year college, as well as the institutional problems and benefits of having PBRT students enrolled at the two-year college. Their study focused on three two-year colleges in Maryland and Tennessee during the 1991-1992 academic year. The data were collected by conducting interviews with ten randomly selected non-degree-seeking and ten randomly selected degree-seeking PBRT students from two of the colleges in Maryland. In addition, eight faculty and administrative members, who worked with PBRT students, were selected from each of the two Maryland colleges and interviewed. The data for the second study were collected at a technical institute in Tennessee where 89 PBRT students responded to a survey, from which seven were selected and interviewed.

The data provided by all of the participants were analyzed and used to develop a general description of four major themes. The first theme was why the PBRT students chose the two-year college and how they felt about it. The second dealt with what institutional changes the PBRT students would like to see at the two-year college. The third explored what institutional problems might be created by the presence of PBRT students, and fourth, how the presence of the PBRT students might benefit the two-year college.

In regard to the first theme, Townsend and Lambert (1999) reported that a majority of the PBRT students was attending the two-year college for career enhancement reasons and that the PBRT students were usually pleased with their experiences at the two-year college. The findings for the second theme revealed that PBRT students indicated they would like to see institutional changes that would facilitate their enrollment and study processes. The third theme revealed that the potential problems in enrolling PBRT students stem from two issues, the first being a challenge for some faculty in teaching PBRTs and second, the question of whether enrolling this group conflicted with the mission of the two-year college. Although there may be some challenges in enrolling PBRT students, Townsend and Lambert (1999) discovered that there were several benefits to the enrollment of this group. Mainly, the benefits were in the form of the ways in which the PBRT students brought positive dynamics to the classroom, how they acted as role models or mentors for the non-PBRT students, how they stimulated faculty academically, and how they served as “good public relations for the college” (p. 73).

The implications of this study suggest that although the main reason for PBRT students to return to the two-year college is for career enhancement or job change, the

two-year college should be mindful of the benefits such students bring, especially in view of the institution's second chance mission and its role in the community.

Synthesis

In this section I have reviewed the literature as it pertains to the increase of the reverse transfer population to the development of the term *post-baccalaureate reverse transfer* student to the recruitment of the PBRT student and the implications this might have on the community college. During this review, a number of themes have been developed. First, this population of students is growing and special attention to their needs is required (Delaney, 1995; Kajstura & Keim, 1992; Klepper, 1991). This is important to my study in regards to recognizing the PBRT student as a permanent subset to the community college population. Second, since this group of students has been recognized, their reasons for attending the community college cannot be lumped into the same categories as before. The community college, as a whole, needs to make adjustments to accommodate and welcome these students in order for them to be successful (Quinley & Quinley, 1998). As my study is based on having PBRT students in the classroom, it is important to understand the various reasons they are enrolled and for the community college to provide the student services PBRTs need. Third and most importantly, administrators need to recognize that there is a segment of the population wanting to come back to the community college after obtaining a four-year degree or higher. Community colleges can market to this population, but in turn, they must accommodate the unique needs of this group (Barnes & Robinson, 1999; Catanzaro, 1999; Townsend, 1999; Townsend & Lambert, 1999). By doing so, the community college will become more desirable to PBRT students as a destination for educational

attainment. Knowing that PBRTs have been sought after and have been provided accommodations, possibly exclusively, should provide a better insight as to what faculty members may be dealing with in their classrooms.

PBRT Literature: 2000 to the Present

In this final section, I review the academic literature on PBRT and how this phenomenon has influenced the community college transfer mission to meet the needs of an ever-changing environment. Following this, I explore the literature for evidence that the PBRT population has continued to grow and has a strong presence in the community college. I then review several articles on how the community college can justify the enrollment of PBRT students and the courses PBRT students may take. Next, I look at the issue of the community college meeting the needs of the PBRT students and how the transfer process can be improved for students and administration, and finally, the motivation for PBRT students going back to the community college.

The Transfer Mission Revisited

As I mentioned at the beginning of this literature review, the central historical mission of the community college was one of transfer. However, Cohen and Brawer (2003) reminded us that although the mission of transfer is still the focal point of the community college, it is not the only mission. The comprehensive nature of community college includes additional missions in the areas of vocational/technical education, continuing education, and community service. Pope, Turner, and Barker (2001) stated that because the community college is always adapting to the needs of the community, the missions of the community college, including transfer, must remain flexible to adapt to meet the changing needs of the various communities they serve. Townsend (2001)

supported this notion by stating that the community college transfer mission needs to reflect the many methods of transfer, including PBRT.

Changing Community College Mission

In order to better understand the community college transfer mission, Levin (2000) completed a study on the changing mission during the 1990s. More specifically, Levin reported on a qualitative, multiple-case study of seven community colleges located in the Pacific-Western Region of the United States and Canada. Data were collected from site visits, interviews with community college constituents, analysis of government documents, and observations of “institutional environments and interactions” (p. 6).

Levin (2000) found that the mission of the community college had not changed, but that organizational behaviors had changed or been altered to meet the needs of a rising global economy, mainly in the areas of “fiscal resources, organizational identity, and organizational culture” (p. 10-11). Levin described a new focus on productivity, enhancing the organizational image, and giving more attention to multiculturalism and diversity in both recruiting of students and hiring practices of faculty and staff. For example, at one of the community colleges, several interview respondents said that the emphasis on “productivity, curriculum driven by private sector interests, and loss [of] collegiality reflected an altered institutional ethos” (Levin, 2000, p. 11). However, several respondents at a different study site stated that by focusing on productivity and efficiency behaviors at their community college campus, they were able to improve “cost effectiveness of college operations” (p. 11).

Thus, there is some evidence that the community college mission has shifted from serving the “local communities to serving the economy” (p. 19). This altered mission

includes a more vocational-based approach with an emphasis on serving the needs of the middle class and the “engines of the economy” (p. 20). Although the mission may seem to have evolved, a portion of it still remains the same. That is, to be a responsive institution, or in other words, to adapt to the changing needs of its environment.

The significance of this study for my review of literature is that although the transfer mission has not changed, the globalization of the community college has affected the institution. As it turns out, there are a significant number of PBRT students attending the community college for career enhancing courses (Townsend, 2003). It is this need for career enhancement, training, or re-training that is part of the global economy of which Levin spoke.

The Numbers

There has been a gradual change in the population of the PBRT student within the overall community college student population. As reported earlier, Heinze and Daniels (1970) found that reverse transfer students represented 9.44% of the student population in their study. Then, Hudak (1983) reported a reverse transfer population of 16.38% in his study. However, neither of these figures represented the population of PBRT students within the community college. This was not reported until a study by Barnes and Robinson (1999), which reported a 26% growth of PBRT students attending community colleges in Missouri.

A study by Windham and Perkins (2000) determined that during the 1992-1993 academic year the percentage of students with a bachelor’s degree or higher enrolled in Florida’s community college system reached an all time high of 19.8%. In a study performed in 1999, Phillippe and Valiga (2000) found that 28% of “noncredit

respondents” (p. 5) had already earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, the American Association of Community Colleges estimated that 10-20% of the current community college students enrolled nationwide had earned a bachelor’s degree or higher (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005). Needless to say, this shows there is a strong presence of PBRT students in the community college population and now the community college may need to rationalize the enrollment of such a large group.

Justifying the Enrollment of Reverse Transfers

With the large population of PBRT students enrolled at the community college, Townsend (2000) reported findings from a study conducted in 2000 to develop a better understanding behind the reasoning and justification of community colleges enrollment of reverse transfers. Reverse transfers in this study included both undergraduate reverse transfers and PBRTs. Townsend expressed concerns that the admission of reverse transfer students result in these students taking enrollment spaces in selective or capped courses, thereby preventing prospective students who have either no previous college experience or who are weak in academics from taking these courses.

Townsend (2000) chose to do a meta-study based on document analysis to discover how the view of reverse transfers enrollment has been evolved over time to fit the mission of the community college. The data studied included a variety of writings including “journal articles, book chapters, ERIC documents, and dissertations” (p. 304). In addition, Townsend included newspaper articles and a commissioned report in her research. The documents examined were then organized into three categories of students, consisting of undergraduate reverse transfers, post-baccalaureate reverse transfers, and both. The documents were then analyzed for any rationale as to the recruitment and/or

admission of the aforementioned groups to the two-year college and were also then reviewed for common themes.

Townsend (2000) concluded that community colleges are facilitating transfer in two respects. First, they are providing remedial help before students transfer to a four-year institution (for the under-graduate reverse transfer student). Second, they are enrolling those who are transferring back to the community college for lifelong learning (for the PBRT student). However, the most prevalent finding was Townsend's discovery of a new rationale for justifying the enrollment of reverse transfers. This new rationale provides that community colleges should enroll reverse transfers to increase the economic strength of the institution. Regardless of the reason, Townsend expressed concern that the reverse transfer phenomenon has the potential to limit access for those whom the community college was initially designed to serve.

Courses Taken by PBRT Students

Based on the assumption that the enrollment of PBRT students is not intentionally to displace first-time students, Windham and Perkins (2000) wanted to ascertain what courses PBRT students were taking. Windham and Perkins (2000) investigated the assumption that a vast majority of PBRT students were returning to the community college to obtain new skills in the information technology fields. The purpose of their study was to analyze what courses PBRT students in Florida's community colleges enrolled in and to verify if the assumption mentioned above was true.

The data for the study were collected using the state's community college and university system databases. The Social Security numbers of all students enrolled at Florida's Community Colleges (FCC) between May 1995 and April 1998 were matched

against degree files at Florida State University System (FSUS). The subset of matches were returned to FCC and linked to course enrollments during May 1992 and April 1998.

The conclusions, offered by Windham and Perkins (2000), determined that the most common courses taken by PBRT students in the Florida community college system were in criminal justice, natural sciences, and health services. In addition, the data showed that most PBRT students did not go back to the community college for a degree, but instead to expand their knowledge for current careers or for career changes.

The significance of this study was that community college planners need to be aware of the skills or needs that the business community is demanding of its employees, as well as the career aspirations of PBRT students. In addition, the content or design of curriculum also needs to reflect the changing demographics of the community college classroom beyond the traditional freshman and sophomore student and include PBRT students.

Study on Meeting the Needs of PBRT Students

Pope, Turner, and Barker, (2001) attempted to learn more about what the community college could do to meet the specific needs of PBRT students, in regards to the academic and student services. The results from their study were presented at a conference on the topic of *Transfer: The Forgotten Function of Community Colleges in Overland, Kansas*.

The data were collected at Oklahoma City Community College (OCCC) using the student records database to determine the number of PBRT students enrolled at OCCC during the fall of 1991. Of the 184 PBRT students records examined, they found that 90% held a bachelor's degree and that the remaining 10% held a master's degree. As for

the courses being taken, Pope et al. (2001) discovered that computer science courses were the most popular followed by nursing.

The significance of these findings suggests that the PBRT students “are serious students who are seeking education for job enhancement and job transition” (p. 7). In addition, the high academic performance of PBRT students should stress to the community college the importance of student support services for the PBRT students. Furthermore, as more and more community colleges target the PBRT student population for recruitment, understanding the needs of this population will help the community college prepare to not only recruit them, but to retain them.

Assessing the Transfer Function

In order to better understand the transfer phenomenon, Welsh (2002) studied the current role of state higher educational agencies’ use of transfer student information systems. The data were collected in the winter and spring of 2000 using a telephone interview of individuals who were responsible for transfer issues in higher education offices in all 50 states and Puerto Rico. These officials included chief academic officers and chief research officers.

Welsh (2002) developed a list of interview questions based on several analytical dimensions from the literature on student information systems. The responses were then coded and organized into a matrix and summarized. By combining the dimensions developed from the research literature and the responses to the interviews, Welsh (2002) developed a set of “best practices” (p. 260) of the state higher education agencies. Therefore, the agencies were able to benchmark themselves against other institutions and to improve services to transfer students and to state policy makers.

The significance of this study is that community colleges and state governments are in a position to collect and use data on transfer students in a positive way. This means they would be able to provide a smoother transfer process and provide better “outcomes” (p. 267) to the transfer student, including the PBRT student. In addition, the benchmarked information would aid those involved in the improvement of accessibility, retention, and recruitment of transfer students.

Choice of Going Back

Townsend (2003) performed a study of baccalaureate degree holders (BDH) who continued their education at a two-year college. In this qualitative study, Townsend wanted to develop a better understanding of the factors involved in the choice process and the educational satisfaction at the two-year college. The objectives of the study were to “(1) construct a demographic profile of these students, (2) ascertain their reasons for choosing the two-year school, and (3) determine factors contributing to their satisfaction at the two-year college, including comparison to their four-year college experience” (p. 275).

Townsend’s (2003) data were collected at an urban, mid-southern two-year technical institute during the fall of 1996. Data collection was performed in two stages; In the first, the BDH student population was surveyed; and in the second, a sampling of the survey respondents was interviewed. The findings of the study showed that BDHs who returned to the two-year college, often based their decision on geographic proximity and family responsibilities. Also the main motivator for going back was to prepare for a career change. In addition, Townsend found that BDHs experienced a high degree of satisfaction with their experiences at the two-year college. The significance of this study

is that by understanding BDH students better, faculty and administrators can develop curriculum and services to meet their needs.

Conclusion

The community college has always embraced the transfer mission (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). Over the last several decades, the community college has seen the methods of transfer expand beyond the traditional flow-through method of high-school to community college to the four-year institution. The literature review has uncovered additional forms of transfer including the phenomenon of PBRT (Catanzaro, 1999; Delaney, 1995; Kajstura & Keim, 1992; Klepper, 1991; Lambert, 1994; Townsend, 1999; Townsend & Dever, 1999). In addition to identifying this population, the literature points out the increase of the PBRT enrollment over the past 30 years (Barnes & Robinson, 1999; Heinze & Daniels, 1970; Hudak, 1983; Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005; Phillippe & Valiga, 2000; Windham & Perkins, 2000).

In the first section of the review of literature, the main theme that I discovered is the wide variety of reasons that students enroll at the community college. In order to accommodate these different reasons for attending the community college, the institution has upheld its open door admissions policy to ensure the enrollment of varied student populations (Cohen & Brawer, 2003).

In the next section of the review of literature, I have uncovered several themes. First, PBRTs are here to stay and they represent a significant portion of the community college population (Phillippe & Sullivan, 2005; Phillippe & Valiga, 2000; Townsend, 2001). Interestingly, one emerging theme suggested more of a business mind set in the community college (Levin, 2000). Although Levin's (2000) study is based on a small

number of colleges, it is interesting to see a business theme transcend to the very basis of the community college, the transfer mission.

The primary premise of the transfer mission remains the same. However, the community college is revising its operational procedures to remain financially competitive in an ever changing global environment (Levin, 2000). Recognizing that the PBRT student is a significant market to recruit and enroll, the community college must be careful not to exclude the other populations it was originally meant to serve, such as first-time college students or students using the community college as a stepping stone to a four-year institution (Townsend, 2000). However, when trying to attract the PBRT students, the community college needs to be in tune with what the business community wants and, in turn, what types of courses should be offered (Catanzaro, 1999). In addition, the literature comes back to the theme of making sure that the community college is meeting the needs of the PBRT student in more than just academic preparedness, but in such ways as a smoother transfer process and general student services (Townsend & Lambert, 1999).

Although many studies and reports have been written in regards to the PBRT phenomenon, very little has been written about the lived experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students. So far, the literature only has looked at the PBRT phenomenon from the student's perspective. Filling this void is what has drawn me to this study. Primarily, I am interested in the lived experiences of community college instructors who have PBRT students in their classrooms. I am interested in finding out what it is like for the community college faculty in particular who teach students who already have earned a higher level degree than the community college can offer.

In addition to finding limited literature on the faculty perspective, little was mentioned about the use of the phenomenological methodology. Therefore it only seemed fitting to use a phenomenological approach to discover faculty experiences. In Chapter Three of my dissertation, I explain my approach to this study.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

In Chapter Three I describe the research approach and rationale of the phenomenological method for my study on the experiences of community college instructors who have PBRT students in their classrooms. I then describe the four phases of the study: invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation. Following this, I describe the research setting which will include the location, participant selection process, and criterion. The chapter concludes with a summary of the research question, steps in my data analysis, and the approaches to trustworthiness that I used.

Research Approach and Rationale

My study was to learn about the lived experiences of those who teach PBRT students. In order to do so, the methodology selected will need to permit me to get close to the participants in a way that will allow them to tell me what it is like to teach this group of students. Creswell (2003) describes the qualitative approach as “one in which the inquirer often makes knowledge claims based primarily on constructivist perspectives (i.e., the multiple meanings of individual experiences...), or advocacy/participatory perspectives... or both” (p. 18). He also adds that qualitative research is a process where the researcher can examine a “social or human problem” (p.15) resulting in a depiction using words and the perceptions of the informants. Adding to this definition, Shank (2006) states that qualitative research can be as varied as the person defining it or the emphasis of the project the researcher is studying.

As mentioned above, my study seeks to explore the phenomenon of what it is like to teach community college courses with PBRT students enrolled in them. The qualitative research study, through the analysis of interviews and the emergent data, attempts to construct a deeper and more holistic meaning of the experiences of instructors teaching PBRTs at one of Colorado's community colleges.

The Phenomenological Research Method

As Creswell (2003) states, the qualitative approach uses many "strategies of inquiry" (p. 18) or methods to glean the information needed for the study. These include such traditions as biography, grounded theory, ethnography, case study, and phenomenology to name a few. Each of these traditions has its own strengths and merits when being considered for my study, but after careful consideration, I chose the phenomenology method.

Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) has been described as "the founder of phenomenology" (Sokolowski, 2000, p. 2). Husserl (1931) stated that phenomenologists go about the task of trying to explain a human phenomenon as opposed to understanding it in terms of causal antecedents or to connect it to other phenomena. In addition to explaining the phenomenon, Sokolowski (2000) states, "not only can we think the things given to us in experience; we can also understand ourselves as thinking them. Phenomenology is precisely this sort of understanding: phenomenology is reason's self-discovery in the presence of intelligible objects" (p. 4).

Moustakas (1994) summarizes Husserl's work and defines phenomenology as the "first method of knowledge" (p. 41), meaning the knowledge emerges from the essence of the experience. Moustakas states:

[That phenomenology] attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment, setting aside presuppositions, and reaching a transcendental state of freshness and openness, a readiness to see in an unfettered way, not threatened by customs, beliefs, and prejudices of normal science, by the habits of the natural world or by knowledge based on unreflected everyday experience (p. 41).

It is this openness of the mind or transcendental state that allows phenomenology to let the experiences emerge or come to life for those who lived the phenomenon and the interpretation of those experiences by the researcher.

With this in mind, the true phenomenologist may “prefer a more loosely structured, emergent, inductively ‘grounded’ approach to gathering data” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 17). From this looseness, the conceptual framework of a study will emerge, the true research questions will come to light, and participants will be identified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). However, as Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, for an individual new to qualitative research, such as me, tighter constraints are recommended. This can be accomplished through the building of a conceptual framework to help guide the researcher. In my study, this “map” will be a graphical, descriptive framework as illustrated in Figure 1. This general framework guided the initial stages of my study, not dictating its path.

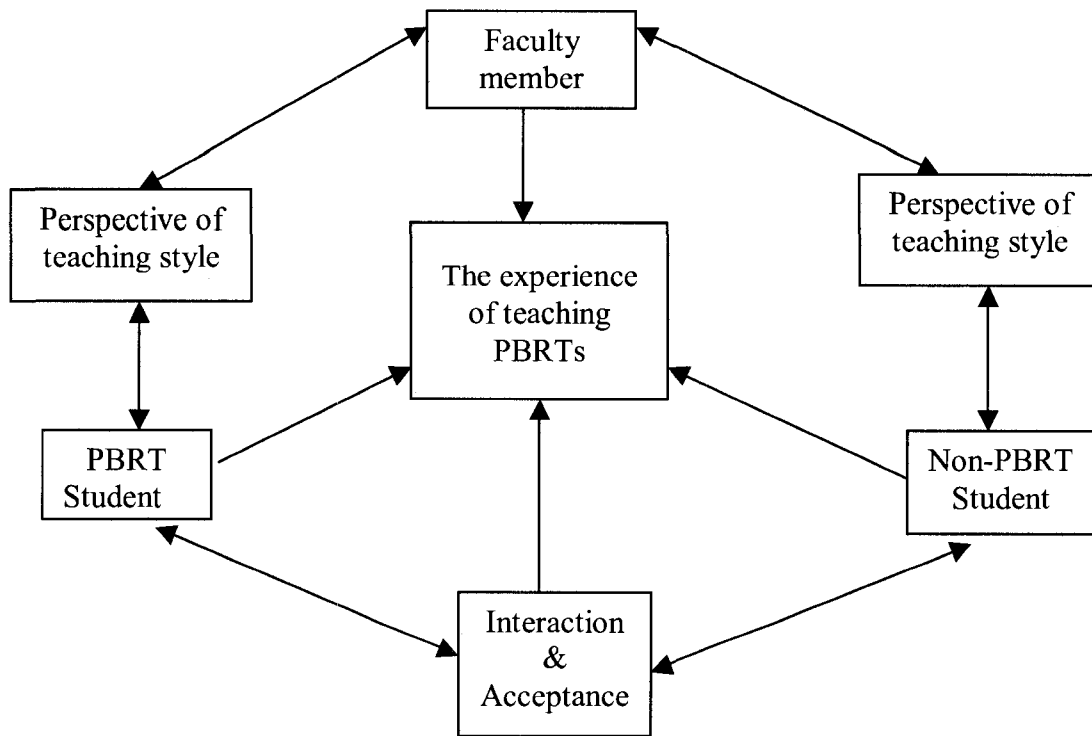


Figure 1. Conceptual framework or map of the proposed study.

As I mentioned earlier, there has been very little, if any, literature published about the lived experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in the community college classroom. By using the phenomenological research method in my study I hoped to capture, as Patton (1990) puts it, “how people describe things and experience them through their senses” (p. 60). Even more so, Patton states that:

Interpretation is essential to an understanding of experience and the experience includes interpretation. Thus phenomenologists focus on how we put together the phenomena we experience in such a way as to make sense of the world and, in so doing, develop a world view (p. 69).

Through extracting the emergent themes from each participant’s story and refining those themes down into an essence of the experience, I was able to provide a “world view” of the lived experience of teaching PBRT students. The steps that were used in this process will be described in the Data Analysis Process section.

Phases of the Study

The qualitative research process of my study was broken down into four phases. Kirk and Miller (1986) describe these as invention, discovery, interpretation, and explanation. Collectively they are known as “the four phases of qualitative research” (p.59). The first phase, invention, was the planning stage in which the research design was developed or in other words, “a plan of action” (p. 60). In my study, this was accomplished by the dissertation proposal. The second phase, discovery, was the stage that produces information. Taped interviews, which were transcribed, were the source of data for my study. The third phase, interpretation, was the evaluation and analysis of the data and produced an understanding of it. In my study, this was accomplished by using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as described by Willig (2001). The IPA will be described in more detail in the Data Analysis Processes section. The fourth and final phase, explanation, was the communication of the message or results and the package that delivers them. For my study I did this by way of the completed dissertation.

Research Setting

In order to gain a better understanding of the participants who have experienced the phenomenon of teaching PBRT students, it was important that the community college I selected offered vocational/career based courses. The community college chosen was located in the Denver, Colorado, metropolitan area and is one of thirteen community colleges of the Colorado Community College System. Throughout this proposal, I used the pseudonym of Flat Lands Community College (FLCC) for the site that I have selected. Flat Lands Community College is located in several cities along the Colorado Rocky Mountain Front Range. During the 2003-2004 academic year, FLCC served more

than 20,000 students, offered over 100 degree and certificate programs, and employed more than 150 full-time faculty members (Colorado Community College System, 2006).

I chose FLCC for several reasons. First, FLCC offers career based courses that would attract PBRT students. Second, FLCC has one of the largest enrollments in the Colorado community college system and therefore has a greater opportunity for PBRT populated courses. Third, FLCC is where I received my Associate of Arts degree in 1996. Finally, I have been fortunate enough to be able to utilize a conference room at FLCC as my “classroom” for the video conference portion of my doctorate classes. Consequently, I feel a personal connection to the college and this gave me an opportunity to give something back to FLCC.

Participant Selection and Sample Size

Selection of participants for my study was purposeful. The logic and reasoning behind purposeful sampling is based on the selection of “information-rich cases” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). The intended outcome of selecting information-rich cases was to “work with small samples of people, nested in their context and studied in-depth” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27). Creswell (2003) states that the researcher should purposefully select participants that would best help develop an understanding of the phenomenon. In the case of my study, multiple participants who have experienced the phenomenon were selected.

Patton (1990) and Creswell (1998) state that “criterion sampling” (Patton, 1990, p.176) is one of the preferred methods to use in a phenomenological study. Criterion sampling is where the participants must meet some sort of predetermined criteria before being selected (Patton, 1990). To meet this requirement, a sound definition of the

phenomenon was necessary. For my study, the goal was to understand the experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in their community college classrooms.

The criterion for selecting participants was as follows. The potential participant needed to be a current community college faculty member, full or part-time, who had taught a minimum of five PBRT students in career-based courses within the last two years. In discussing my study with the vice president of FLCC, he was able to provide me with a list of programs that contained instructors who that met the criteria. In addition, I was able to utilize the relationship I had developed with a faculty member at FLCC to contact potential participants who taught specific courses identified by the vice president. My contact at FLCC had been briefed on the purpose of my study and stated she did know fellow faculty members who taught PBRTs and qualify for my study. These faculty members in turn provided me with names and contact information for individuals that they thought might have been willing to participate in my study.

The initial target sample size was to be 10 individual interviews as recommended by Creswell (1998), although the sample size was ideally to be determined by my reaching a point of saturation. However, Patton (1990) states when planning a study, a minimal sample size should be specified and rationalized, but it should also be “flexible and emergent” (p. 186).

The research participants were chosen from list of technical faculty who represented several departments and programs which focused on career based courses at FLCC. This list was provided by my gatekeeper and originally contained eight names from several departments (Allied Health, Computer Sciences, Paralegal, and Horticulture). These individuals were contacted via e-mail, using the script approved by

the University's Human Research Committee, and resulted in six qualified participants. Within the next six months, I was given three more names from the Nursing and Allied Health departments, as well as contacts to the Career Technology Education departments which resulted in two more qualified participants, totaling eight participants for the study.

All eight participants taught courses in the Career Technical Education programs. These included: Computer Information Systems, Pharmacy Technician, Horticulture and Landscaping Technologies, Dietetic Technology, Nursing, Hospitality, Paralegal, Nurse Aide, and Emergency Medical Services. In addition, the participants had worked in various industries prior to teaching at FLCC.

Although I was able to procure a total of eight participants, I did experience difficulty in achieving the desired total of ten participants. The difficulties were as follows: I had one person come forward, but then declined to meet at the time arranged for the interview. There were faculty who did not respond to several requests and their participation seemed unlikely. I had one potential participant who declined participation and gave no specific reason for refusal. Finally, additional requests from my gatekeeper to various department heads yielded no additional responses. It was determined by the methodologist and committee chair that I could proceed to the data analysis portion of the study with eight participants for two reasons. First, reasonable and persistent efforts to interview additional faculty were made, but were unsuccessful. Second, saturation was reported.

Human Subjects Protection

In order to ensure that I conduct my study in an ethical manner, I submitted an application to the University's Human Research Committee before I began the process of

participant selection. In this process I informed them of who will be interviewed and the questions that will be asked and any other information required. It was my intent to maintain a set of standards “to protect individual rights, privacy, and minimize the intrusion into the lives of the participants” (Felix, 2002, p. 40). In addition, I used the informed consent and confidentiality agreement forms which were provided in advance and at the beginning of the interview. As a researcher, I agree with Patton’s statement that it is “our commitment to treat all people with respect” (2002, p. 271) and to be “ever vigilant in fully informing and protecting the people who honor us by agreeing to participate in our research” (Patton, 2002, p. 271).

Data Collection Strategies

As mentioned in Chapter One, the purpose of the study was to understand the experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in the community college classroom. More specifically, the study was to uncover the essence of the experience for those who teach PBRT students. In order to accomplish this goal, an overarching research question was developed. Creswell (2003) states that in a qualitative study, researchers “state research questions, not objectives” (p. 105). He further states that the questions usually “assume two forms: a central question and associated subquestions” (Creswell, 2003, p. 105) or in other words, a central overarching question along with several subquestions.

The overarching research question is usually presented to the participant in a general or broad format. In my study this was accomplished through the use of open-ended questions. Patton (2002) describes the responses to open-ended questions as a way for the researcher to “understand the world as seen by the respondents” (p. 21). Patton (2002) further explains that “the purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions

is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories” (p. 21).

In developing the open-ended question, it was my objective to word a question “without fixed response choices” (Patton, 2002, p.353). Instead, the open-ended question allowed the participant to answer from his or her own experiences and permits them to “take whatever direction and use whatever words they want to express what they have to say” (Patton, 2002, p. 354). In my phenomenological study, the question was broadly stated without reference to existing literature (Creswell, 2003). The overarching research question that I used in my study was: From the perspective of community college faculty, what meaning is derived from their having PBRT students in their classrooms?

Creswell (2003) recommends using subquestions to follow the central question. This will help “narrow the focus of the study but leave open the questioning” (Creswell, 2003, p. 106). Patton (2002) also refers to these types of questions as “probes” (p. 372). The use of the probes is to enhance and gain deeper meaning of the participant’s response. Patton (2002) recommends that the probes “should be conversational, offered in a natural style and voice, and used to follow up initial responses” (p. 372). Examples of subquestions or probes that were used in my study are as follows:

1. What is it like teaching PBRT students?
2. Have these teaching experiences changed over time?
3. What are the classroom dynamics when there is mixed class of PBRT and traditional students?
4. What types of interactions do you see between the two groups?

5. How do you teach to a mixed class of PBRT students and traditional students?
6. In terms of academic achievement, what are your expectations of the PBRT student?

Interviewing Technique

For my study, the data collection process began with using open-ended questions. In order to collect data through open-ended questions, I conducted one-on-one interviews with each of the participants. According to Patton (2002) the purpose of interviewing participants is to find out the things we “cannot directly observe” (p. 340). By interviewing, the researcher is allowed to enter the participant’s perspective of the experience through the process of questioning. By doing so the researcher is able “find out what is in and on someone else’s mind, to gather their stories” (Patton, 2002, p. 341).

The approach for collecting data from the participants in my study was the general interview guide approach (Patton, 2002). This involves developing a guide or checklist of issues or questions to be investigated prior to the interviewing of the respondents. By doing so, the researcher can make sure all applicable issues or questions are covered. As a result, it allowed for the same overarching research question to be asked of each participant. However, the researcher does have the freedom to “build a conversation within a particular subject area” (Patton, 2002, p.343). This in turn, allowed the researcher to be somewhat spontaneous in the generation of questions and probes during the interview.

Data Analysis Process

The data analysis process I used for my phenomenological study was developed by Willig (2001). The process is called Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA)

and as Willig (2001) states, “is a version of the phenomenological method which accepts the impossibility of gaining direct access to research participants’ life worlds” (p. 53). The resulting analysis will then become an interpretation of the participant’s experience. The IPA process is broken down into a systematic set of steps that include reviewing of the transcribed text, identifying the themes, clustering of themes, producing a summary table, and integrating the cases. Once this was been completed, the study was written up discussing my interpretation of the experiences told by the participants.

Interviews for the study were set up using email which consisted of an introduction and a brief description of the study’s purpose. In addition, a copy of the consent form was attached for the participant’s initial review. Seven of the interviews were arranged to take place at FLCC campus and one at the participant’s house, which was done to accommodate the participant’s busy schedule. Prior to the start of the interview, the study was explained in more depth, the consent form was reviewed in detail and then signed by the participant. The interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and then transcribed using word processing software, thus allowing for data analysis.

As mentioned earlier, the data set for this study consisted of transcribed interviews of eight faculty instructors and their experiences of teaching PBRTs at FLCC. The verbatim transcripts were used as the raw data for the study and became the foundation for the analytical process. The following stages, as outlined by Osborn and Smith (1998) and Willig (2001), were used in the interpretation of the data. In the first stage, the interview transcripts were read and reread to get a sense of the participant’s accounts. During this process, notes were written in the left-hand margins of the

transcripts. These include un-constructed thoughts about what was being said, questions I might have had about a comment or situation, the possibility of a theme, or additional non-specific thoughts about the experience.

The second stage consisted of rereading the transcripts line-by-line and notations of emergent themes were made in the right-hand margins. The third and forth stage involved the clustering or organization of the emergent themes and the production of a summary table. Clustering the themes allowed for the introduction of structure into the analysis. This was accomplished by examining all of the themes developed in stage two and grouping them together in categories of meaning. In addition, themes that did not pertain to the experience of teaching PBRTs were eliminated. The categories were then labeled and organized into a summary table for further analysis. Once this was completed for all eight participants, the individual tables were integrated into one table consisting of master themes and their constituent themes. It is from this list of master themes where the analysis was made and my interpretation of the experiences, as they have been told to me, began. In this process, relationships were recognized between the emergent themes and were refined to the essence of the experience. It is this essence which attempted to answer this study's research question, what it is like to teach community college classes with PBRTs in them.

Trustworthiness

To establish creditability within a study and of the data, one must first define the concepts of trustworthiness. Shank (2006) defines trustworthiness as "simply the degree to which we can depend on and trust given research findings" (p. 115). Lincoln and Guda

(1985) list the four terms of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (p. 300) as tools to help ensure quality and validity.

Credibility

There are several techniques that were used to establish credibility in a study. The four that were used in study were: peer review, clarifying researcher bias, reflexivity, and member checking. Peer review provided an opportunity for discussion of my study with colleagues. This allowed for an external review and the questioning of data and results. Clarifying researcher bias is where I stated my biases that may have impacted my study. This process had already begun in Chapter One of this dissertation. Reflexivity was the process of maintaining a field journal of personal reflections during the study. This journal helped by providing insights on my thoughts, and feelings and of the methodological decisions made. Lastly, member checking was used to determine the credibility of the interviews, findings, and interpretations by the participants. Participants had the opportunity to validate and revise the data as deemed necessary (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability

Transferability allows the results of the study to be transferred to a different setting or to a different population (Shank, 2006). Transferability of my study occurred through rich, thick descriptions. Through the detailed description of the participant's experiences and settings I provided data or transfer information to "potential appliers" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This description should allow interested individuals to make a decision about the possibility of transferability (Creswell, 1998, 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

Dependability addresses where the data “comes from, how it was collected, and how it was used” (Shank, 2006, p. 114). For my study, dependability was comprised of using peer review and an audit trail. The peer review was completed by my methodologist, dissertation committee, committee chair, and selected members of my Community College Leadership cohort. The audit trail is in the form of a journal that consists of the raw data, field notes, coding processes, coded data, memos, final report, and methodology notes which would allow another researcher to duplicate the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Confirmability

Confirmability encompasses the “details of the methodologies used” (Shank, 2006, p.115). For my study I utilized the reflective journal and the audit trail to provide the details of my data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I described the research approach and rationale to my study; and more specifically, the phenomenological research method. I have described the phases of the study along with the data analysis process. In addition, the research setting and participant selection process were explained. Following this, I reviewed the data collection strategies and discussed the trustworthiness as it pertains to my study. The findings of this study are presented in Chapter Four and my interpretations of these findings are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Overview

The goal of this phenomenological study was to learn about the lived experiences of those who teach PBRT students in the community college classroom. The overarching research question used in this study was: From the perspective of community college faculty, what meaning is derived from their having PBRT students in their classrooms?

This chapter is divided into several sections. The first section is an account of the methodological rationale and process associated with the IPA process. Here I describe the data collection process used and the aim of the study. Since the study explores the lived experiences of eight community college faculty who teach PBRTs, it would be helpful to know a little of their background. I introduce them by giving a brief description of who they are and what they do at FLCC.

The next section will present the six master themes that emerged from the analysis of the data. They are: (a) participants' descriptions of PBRTs, (b) participants' knowledge of PBRTs in their classrooms, (c) academic capital displayed by PBRTs in participants' classrooms, (d) dynamics and interactions between PBRTs and non-PBRTs, (e) participants' feelings of teaching PBRTs, and (f) refining teaching styles to fit PBRTs.

In the third section I discuss the relationships between the master themes and the connectedness or commonalities that provide the meaning and essence of the phenomenon which is *Professionals Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of*

Education. In the final section, I tie the experiences of the eight participants back to the vignette used in Chapter One, linking the essence of the participants' experiences back to my own experiences teaching a similar group of students.

Methodological Rationale

The research approach used for this study was the IPA method. This method allowed me to develop an insight of the participants' perspectives, but with the understanding that results are only through my analyses and interpretation of what was said to me during the interviews. It should "therefore be considered as a co-construction between participant and analyst in that it emerges from the analyst's engagement with the data in the form of the participant's account" (Osborn & Smith, 1998, p. 67).

The goal for this study was to gain a better understanding of the experiences of faculty who have PBRTs in the classroom. The underlying question, "What is it like teaching PBRTs?" along with the several sub-questions provided a guide for the participant to tell his or her story. The aim of the interview was to facilitate the participant in the telling of this story, not to impose my own impressions, feelings or experiences of teaching PBRTs.

Research Participants

The foundation of my phenomenological study is the experience of the participant as it has been told to me at a specific point in time. These individuals bring with them the lived experiences of what it is like to teach PBRTs and have them in their classrooms. From these lived experiences come the emergent themes and the essence of this experience. Before describing the themes, I would like to introduce the participants by providing some background information about each of them. Hearing this information

allowed me to gain an understanding of each participant and set the stage for each interview. Asking each participant about his or her background provided the opportunity to build rapport and make the environment more relaxed and inviting for a conversation about what it is like to teach PBRTs.

I asked the following open ended questions: “Please tell me a little about your professional background.” What is your position at the college and what type of classes do you teach?” and “How long you have been at FLCC?” The participants responded with answers to the questions, some with more information than others, but each with enough detail to provide some insight as to who they are and what they do. In writing this chapter I have given each participant a pseudonym to protect his or her anonymity. Participant One, Participant Two, Participant Three, Participant Four, Participant Five, Participant Six, Participant Seven, and Participant Eight are the pseudonyms used to distinguish each participant. The participants are introduced in the order they were interviewed.

Participant One

Participant One is a male faculty member in the Business Systems Technology department who teaches in the Computer Information Systems program. At the beginning of the interview, Participant One informed me that he was not feeling well and was in the “middle of fighting a cold,” but wanted to proceed. He has taught at FLCC for nine years. The last three to four years he mainly has taught information technology courses to non-transfer students. He views the courses he teaches as career enhancement or continuing education courses. Examples of the courses he teaches include: Windows administration

classes, Microsoft Windows client operating system, Microsoft Server operating system, and some UNIX classes.

Participant Two

Participant Two is a female faculty member and program director in the Allied Health department. She teaches a variety of the pharmacy technician courses on the FLCC campus, as well as two clinical pharmacy rotations. She has been at FLCC for four years, but prior to that she worked the telecom industry.

When Participant Two was describing her background, it was interesting to note that she started off by saying “I was actually one of those PBRTs.” Before teaching, she was in the process of a career change from the telecom industry into the pharmaceutical industry. She wanted to take the Pharmacy Technician certificate program so she would understand “what pharmacy was and [be] familiar with the lingo.” When she completed the program, she did some work as a technician, but “loved the program” so much that she wanted to teach in it. She “started small...teaching computer skills and now [she is] the program director.”

Although the outcome was different from her career plan, Participant Two finds a connection between the “process of pharmacy and [her] background [as] a process engineer and quality system auditor.” As she states, “I didn’t end up exactly where I thought I was [going], but I find that I really love what I am doing.” She also states that she “loves” the “diversity in the classroom” which includes students such as the PBRTs.

Participant Three

Participant Three is a male who has been with FLCC for over nine years in the Science and Technology department and is the lead faculty member who teaches a

variety of classes in the Horticulture and Landscaping Technologies program. Prior to teaching at FLCC, he came from industry in which he did some employee training. Participant Three mentioned a couple of times that he did not have formal training as a college educator and when he “started here from industry, [he] was not a teacher. [He didn’t] have... lots of educational teaching degree kinds of background.” He mentions “Yeah, when I first started out, and again it was mostly because I didn’t have [any] formal training in teaching...my goal was to just transfer information.” Now he approaches it as the sharing of his knowledge and feels that “it’s fun to get into a class and teach students...to talk with them...it’s kind of fun.”

When describing the program, he states that “we’re a career tech program” which includes science and business classes in which the student can earn an “associate degree” and/or “five certificates.” He states that “folks can come in and get that specialty certificate and all of that credit folds into the associate degree.” He says that his program “trains people for the five broad areas called the ‘green industry’ which is landscape construction, landscape maintenance, greenhouse and nursery production, and garden center management.”

When asked what was his favorite course to teach, Participant Three answered, “Well I love the plant materials ID, that just [has] always been kind of my favorite subject and horticulture, so that’s kind of the ones that I really enjoy teaching...the diversity of plant life has always interested me.”

Participant Four

Participant Four is a female faculty member who is the Department Chair for the Allied Health department and Dietetics. She has been with FLCC for 19 years, 17 of

which have been as the department chair. Prior to coming to FLCC, Participant Four had embraced her entrepreneurial spirit by owning several businesses, as well as working in food sales. In addition, she holds the title of Registered Dietitian, although she states “my real interest probably has not ever been the clinical [application], it’s been the business part attached to it.”

In addition to her duties as the chair, she teaches courses for the Dietetic Technology, Nursing, and Hospitality programs. The courses she teaches are Human Nutrition, clinical classes or internship classes for the dietetic program, the nutrition class that is just for nursing, and Foodservice Menu Planning class

Of all the classes she teaches, Participant Four states that the “menu planning and purchasing class” is the one she likes the most because of the business nature of the course. However, she also states “the Human Nutrition class is just a really exciting one” in the sense that the class can affect the students lives by changing what they are eating. Participant Four is currently teaching about half of her classes online. When talking about the online classes, she mentions that she “definitely prefer[s] teaching in the classroom...because I miss...that individual smile...it’s not the same as the class, being there and just having fun.”

Participant Five

Participant Five is a male faculty member in the Business, Information Systems and Technology department and is the Paralegal Program Director. His path to FLCC is similar to the other participants in that he too has come from industry. Participant Five is a law school graduate and has worked as a “criminal defense lawyer” in private practice but has “always thought...that [he] always wanted to teach law.” Through some

networking opportunities he was able to be hired on to teach in the legal secretarial program. At the time when he started at FLCC, he thought he would be teaching one class. As it turned out, he would be teaching and coordinating the whole program. During this time period, Participant Five made the decision to leave his law practice and teach full-time. As a successful teacher while also running the legal secretarial program, Participant Five was asked to “develop a paralegal program” and after 12 years, the program has evolved from a certificate program to a degreed program.

In describing the program, Participant Five states that it is “vocational in nature” and many of his students “are already in the field [and] looking [for] just a little advancement, or were clear career changers.” Over the years, he has noticed fluctuations in enrollment and the reasons are just as varied, including advancement, retraining, or for transferring to a four-year institution. In addition to teaching paralegal courses, Participant Five “also teach[es] business law...which isn’t part of the legal program.” He finds that “some students...have decided to go to paralegal after [his] business law class” which he credits to the career mindedness of the students. In describing his background, the pride Participant Five has for his program accomplishments was evident.

Even after finishing his program, Participant Five enjoys continued contact and professional relationships with several students. Some of his past students are now in a position to ask him for interns and some just want share their experiences over a cup of coffee. His expressed feelings are those of a proud educator. He states, “it’s great...you know we don’t do it for the pay.”

Participant Six

Participant Six is a male instructor in the Business, Information Systems and

Technology department and teaches for the Computer Information Systems program.

Participant Six brings with him many years of experience. Before teaching he “was a software engineer, for 22 years, a manager of programs in the aerospace industry.”

During his career in industry, he managed people and “was managing programs... [and the] basic products were reconnaissance systems in overhead satellites.”

He decided “to make a career change” into teaching and has taught 11 years, eight years as a full-time instructor. So, all in all, he states that “I have been in software for 35 years, one way or another.” As for teaching, he has taught “all computer, mostly computer-based courses, [a] couple management courses, everything from the very beginning computer courses to our most advanced program courses, system analysis courses and the whole range of the program...very technical courses.” When asked what his favorite courses were, he stated “the Computer Science I and II course sequence the...various programming languages and...the beginning computing courses. The overview computing courses are good, just to get people started on the right path.” He mentions that he has “probably taught about 15 different courses” but is “dominated by online courses now.” In his estimation, Participant Six has probably “taught somewhere between 100 and 120 sections in 10 years...over 50 have been online.” He states, overall “we train people for IT work in our two-year program.”

Participant Six credits his teaching talents from being a manager and finds a connection between his former career and his current one. Having been in the industry for “20 years” he stated:

I know how to identify people, underutilized [personnel]...who might easily become a technical person...So I developed a lot of people, everything from secretaries to accountants, to anybody I could find and spot and figure out was an above average employee became a candidate to maybe get trained and moved on,

so it's very natural for me.

Participant Seven

Participant Seven is a female who is the "Nurse Aide Program Director" within the Nursing department. During the interview, Participant Seven disclosed that she had been on maternity leave for the current semester and had not been teaching that term.

Before her pregnancy she explained her time as the following:

A third of the time...running the program, a third of the time...teaching classes which consist of some didactic and skills in a lab here on campus and once that's completed, we take the students to a clinical site...and another third, I usually am teaching in the nursing program.

Even though the Nurse Aide program is listed as part of the Nursing department, Participant Seven states that "the Nurse Aide program is the CNA program, Certified Nursing Assistant, so... I work...in the Allied Health team." Her CNA classes are generally "very small... usually 16-20" students. The classes are "only 8-10 week class[es]" or "it's roughly a 90 contact hour program." She feels that this is a big draw for those students that want to make a career change but do not want to make the full commitment to two years of school or "want to see what it's about."

Participant Seven's professional background is in nursing. In addition to teaching, she is still working in the nursing industry. As part of her teaching style, she mentions that she likes to relate her experiences as a student and professional to her students' experiences, with the hope of building a comfort level in the classroom and to reduce the anxiety levels of the students.

Participant Eight

Participant Eight is a male who is the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program Director in the Allied Health department. Prior to teaching at FLCC, Participant

Eight worked as a paramedic for approximately seven years. What is interesting is that he started the interview stating that “I bring two perspectives too because when I went back and got my paramedic [license], I actually took the paramedic program after receiving my bachelor’s degree too.”

Participant Eight started at FLCC in 1999 as “a part-time instructor...focusing mostly on teaching skills to the EMT basic level students that have come through.” About four years ago, Participant Eight became full-time and assumed a coordinator position. A year later he took on the Program Director responsibilities for the department, and is still actively involved, most recently teaching EMT basics.” Participant Eight’s teaching load fluctuates from term to term. He explained it as:

The psycho-motor, the skills component, how to do X and Y skills that you need to have to be an EMT, I’ll do some of that this semester. Last semester and probably for the four or five previous semesters, I did the lectures for the majority of my teaching.

As for his current role, Participant Eight States “I really enjoy [teaching]...the administration part is something I’m growing into and learning, but the actual teaching is very, very rewarding.” He also states that “it’s really fun teaching the student population that you get at a community college...I think, the really enjoyable thing about here too is that you see all walks of life within the college.”

Summary

These brief descriptions of the participants were presented to give more of a human touch to the voice as they described their lived experiences of teaching PBRTs. Although they are individuals, each participant has a varied professional background and brings a unique experience to the study. They all bring some sort of industry experience into the classroom whether it is information technology, landscaping, law, software

engineering, or nursing. Two of the participants were PBRTs themselves during their career change. As result of this experience they chose teaching as their new career. As each one answered the research question of ‘what is it like to teach PBRTs and have them in their classroom?’ a richer study of the phenomenon can be explored by examining the master and constituent themes of the lived experience. These themes are described in the following section.

Analysis

This section represents the six master and constituent themes which emerged from the analysis of the transcripts. These master themes embody a richer understanding of the phenomenon: What is it like to teach and have PBRTs in the classroom? The first master theme describes how each of the participants portrayed PBRTs, whether by age, general characteristics, or even the life experiences PBRTs have brought into the classroom. The second master theme describes how participants identified the PBRT student or expressed an awareness of having PBRTs in their classes. The third master theme illustrates how participants experienced the academic capital and/or the prior educational experience PBRTs brought into the classroom. The fourth master theme highlights the dynamics and interactions between PBRTs and non-PBRTs. How the participants felt about teaching PBRTs, whether embracing the challenge or the personal satisfaction they received, emerged as the fifth master theme. The sixth and final master theme addresses the different teaching styles the participants used in working with PBRTs. A discussion of each of these themes follows.

Participants' Description of PBRTs

In sharing his or her experience with PBRTs, each participant took time to share a description of the PBRT students. These accounts created the first master theme, *Participants' Description of PBRTs*. The theme sets the stage for how the participants view and describe the PBRT student. The master theme is broken down into constituent themes: (a) the population of PBRTs in the classroom, (b) the reference to PBRTs, (c) the age of PBRTs, (d) the reasons for PBRTs coming back to higher education, (e) the characteristics of PBRTs, and (f) the life experience PBRTs bring with them. The following is a discussion of how the participants portrayed the PBRT student.

PBRT Population

Several of the interviews began with a conversation about the presence of PBRTs in the community college. According to participants, PBRTs represented 25-70 % in their individual program or classroom. For example, Participant Three estimated that two-thirds "are folks that have some sort of level of education in the post secondary realm. The bulk of them are going to have a bachelor's degree in something."

Supporting the belief PBRTs are a larger percentage in the classroom, Participant Five believed his "program is basically a majority plus, 50 plus, [even] 70% or more" are PBRTs. Participant Six believed his classes had a higher percentage and stated "I will bet you that a third have degrees." On a final note, Participant Eight saw a variance in enrollment percentages between semesters. He mentioned in the summer semester he got the "general sense...that they've had more college than most coming in the spring or fall."

Even though the participants themselves did not have firm statistics to back up

their estimates of PBRT numbers in the classroom, they did feel there was a substantial amount at the college and their classroom. The participants recognized the presence of PBRTs in their classroom and referred to them in several different ways. This leads us to the next constituent theme.

PBRT Reference

During our conversations, each participant had a different way of referring to the PBRT student. Although they were each speaking about the same group of students, the participants used a different description depending on how they viewed them. For example, Participant Two referred to the PBRT as “an experienced student,” where as Participant Three and Participant Four referred to them as “returning” students. Some of the participants used the term “older students” several times. For example, Participant One used this descriptive phrase six times, Participant Five used it nine times, and Participant Six used it five times. Participant Four and Participant Six added their own spin to the “older student” description by calling them “older returning students.” On the same note, Participant Five made reference to PBRTs as “transferring older students,” whereas Participant Six made several comparisons to them as “older degreed students.” Along the “older student” theme, Participant Six referred to them as “more mature students” and Participant Three addressed them as “adult students.” Finally, it was interesting to note that when Participant Six was describing PBRTs, he was the only one to use the phrase “this class of student.”

Just as the participants were able to describe the PBRT in their own terms, they were also able to describe the age of the PBRTs as they saw them in their classes. Age of PBRTs is the next section.

Age

As previously discussed, almost all of the participants referred to PBRTs as “older students.” However, what is defined as “older” may depend on the person comparing the PBRT to the more traditional college age student or to the participant’s own age. It is interesting to note that there was a range to the term “older student.” For example, Participant Three stated the age of “older” PBRTs to be in the “45-50” age range. Participant Eight estimated the age range to be “probably 32-33 years old and up,” whereas Participant Seven saw most of her PBRT students “under 35 years of age.” Participant Four stated “they tend to be the older returning students... [or] they could still be only in their twenties.”

On the other hand, some participants noticed a changing trend in recent years. For their perspective, PBRT students were becoming younger or there was no change in age for PBRTs. The following statement is representative of those participants who have seen a younger PBRT coming into the classroom. Participant Two shared:

When I first started teaching here we did have non-traditional students that had their degrees already, but they were older students...now it has changed to the classes...becoming younger and younger, so I’m going to say I maybe have two students that are over 35 in my class now. Where it wasn’t that way, you know, a year ago. So now it is a younger base of students, younger population and they do have degrees.

Participant Three also noticed a shift, he explained “in the nine years or so that I have been here, when I started out we had a lot of folks that were 45-50. Now it is more 25-35 age range.” He had also noticed “a lot of folks that are coming out of high tech sort of jobs. So I have got these kids that are, I call them kids, 25-30 year old students that are changing jobs...with their bachelor’s degree.” Participant Five stated that he too was “starting to see more and more younger PBRTs coming in.” In general, each participant

was able to describe the age of the PBRT as typically older than the traditional community college student. In addition to age, another commonality the participants touched on when describing the PBRT was the reason for PBRTs returning to the community college.

Reasons for Coming Back

Overwhelmingly, the participants stated their belief that PBRTs were coming back to the community college for some kind of career enhancement. Their descriptions included career changing, using a program or class as a stepping stone or gateway to another career goal, updating of skills, and enhancing their credentials. Of all the reasons listed above, the majority of the participants spoke to the notion that PBRTs were in their classes to facilitate a career change.

The career change theme has several facets to it, one being just making a change. Participant Five saw “mostly career changers” in his paralegal program, as did Participant Eight who saw some of the PBRTs changing careers in his Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) classes. Another facet of career change for PBRTs is simply that they want to get out of their current fields to do something else. Participant Three saw many of his horticulture PBRT students as career changers. He explained:

[They] have gone into the corporate world and one day they sat in their cubicle and looked out the window and decided ‘why am I here, when I would really enjoy being out and doing gardening’...that is usually what draws them in and then they start to look at what are the career options...a lot of them are just kind of fed up with the corporate world. I’ve had three or four folks that have been graphic artists that have worked in advertising and promotions... [in which] graphic design work... is a part of our landscape and construction area.

He had heard this sentiment numerous times. For example, he mentioned one PBRT who said “I got this degree in x-y-z and decided that I want to change careers and that is why I

am here” and another who was “fed up with the idea of the corporate world kind of not telling the truth.” This participant, Participant Three, added that his “program is primarily second career folks” that when a large business closed many of the employees “were looking at retiring from there, trying to do a second career of landscaping because they thought it would be a good way to stay healthy and that sort of thing.” His impression of the second career PBRTs was “we get a lot of folks that have kind of done those sorts of routes and they said ‘forget it, I think I would be happy running a landscaping business, doing landscape design.’”

Participant Four stated the PBRTs in her dietetic classes are “making a career path change.” She also mentioned that “they are back here to take it for...another career path or even if they are just taking it, I have had some take it for fun.” Likewise, Participant Seven speculated on what some of the PBRTs in her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) classes might be feeling. She imagined a stay-at-home mom getting back into the workforce saying something similar to the following, “I want to do something, I don’t know if I want to get into nursing, I don’t know if I want to get into becoming a paramedic, I just kind of want to see what it’s about.”

It is this idea of getting a different job or starting a second career that Participant Eight expanded on. His description was similar to Participant Three’s where he had PBRTs that had worked in various careers or jobs before enrolling in his program. He stated:

[They have worked] office type jobs, cubicle-jobs, realizing that is not what they’re looking for. They want to be more of the outdoors and just a different work environment and generally, I would also say [they] want the fire-service career, that of a community service aspect, as well as...the financial security that comes with the pay with the fire departments.

Another aspect to the career change group was the PBRTs who are using the class or program as a stepping stone or gateway to a loftier career ambition. Participant Four remembered a lady who said:

You know, I have always wanted to be a nurse' and she said 'I don't know why I didn't do it back then...now I am going to be one' So she has to take the nutrition class to fulfill her, those requirements to become a nurse.

Participant Eight stated that many of the PBRTs in the EMT program use his class as a stepping stone before joining the fire department. He comments:

They want to join a fire department, and this is the step to get into the fire department, so they're coming in here with that ultimate goal...transitioning, getting their EMT certification so they can come in. And, that's their ultimate motivation... to get through this to move onto a different career.

Likewise, Participant Seven believed that many of the PBRTs in her CNA program "want to get into the nursing program, and a lot of them want to get their CNA, which is kind of [a] step up."

Participants identified other issues related to career change. Some of the PBRTs may be back due to the loss of a job. Participant Six stated:

Older students... [are] coming back to the community college because... they have been doing something in technology and programming for many years. They have been working at the same job for many years and [became] pretty much stuck in the same technology for many years, and all of the sudden they do not have a job anymore. There are skills on paper, actually in reality, their skills have fallen behind the times...I am getting more than I expect lately of very old [PBRTs] trying to upgrade their skills.

He went on to say "that is probably why I see some of these very highly qualified people coming back, because they are just doing anything they can to look modern and up to date...looking to upgrade their life, upgrade their skills." Participant Two shared the same sentiment, she recalled:

When I first started teaching here we did have non-traditional students that had

degrees already, but they were older students that maybe were laid-off and now they are looking...to move on to another industry...to learn more about the industry but they also wanted...a job.

Participant One also noticed the “enrollment picks up with a lot of jobs in computers and that’s probably true of every field...we get people with bachelor’s degree[s] in history or something, some of them have computer science degrees.” He believed that there was an increase in his enrollment when computer industry jobs appeared to be more glamorous to those students seeking a career change.

Additionally, Participant One shared a different set of reasons for the PBRT to enter his computer classes. He saw them as “com[ing] back [for] some additional training...just updating their skills set and going on either applying at their current job or getting a different job.” In addition to updating their skills, a couple of the participants perceived PBRTs are coming back to enhance their credentials. Participant Four mentioned, “I’ve had teachers who have come back because they use it for [toward] their three professional development credits,” whereas Participant Three had a PBRT with a “master’s in landscape architecture...[who] was coming back to [get] an associate degree...so that he could put that on his resume.”

Participant Three had PBRTs who saw the career change they were making as a last chance. He stated:

They are old enough that they know that if they screw this one up it’s going to be ten years down the line and that is going to be five years from retirement and the don’t want to go back and try to retrain again.

In addition, Participant Three remarked that:

Most of the [PBRT students] are typically paying for this out of their savings and so they’re much more focused on, here is exactly what I need to do, [this] is exactly how I need to get through this path and I’ve got to succeed at every level because I don’t want to have to come back and deal with anything again.

Participant Four also shared comments about the PBRT student paying for the class and how they might think that “I am doing a career change. I am paying my bucks. I am back here. They want to learn everything that you can do.”

Regardless of what aspect of career enhancement PBRTs had for coming back to the college setting, nonetheless they were in the participants’ classrooms. Just as these reasons varied, so did the descriptions participants gave about the general characteristics of PBRTs.

Characteristics

In this section, I will share how the participants described the characteristics of the PBRT student. The common categories that these descriptions fall into are: focus, responsibility/maturity, career mindset, and work ethic.

When describing the focus level of PBRTs, Participant One stated that they “are there, they know what they want, they are not there to screw around and mess around. They pay attention. They actually want to get the material.” Participant Three echoed this by saying that he had “noticed a lot of the [PBRT students] are very focused...and think[s] that it comes from having been in a work environment where they have had a boss.” Participant Four felt that PBRTs “who want to go into the nursing programs are very focused.” She recalled one student who was “doing a career change into nursing... [and] she [knew] where she want[ed] to go, so she really focus[ed] on it.” She also found that PBRTs “just bring a whole lot to the class...their focus, in that I mean, it’s just so easy to teach people who are there to learn.” In contrast, Participant Two lamented over the younger PBRTs who “are bright and they really are higher achievers, but they don’t seem to know how to set goals.”

Along with describing PBRTs as focused, several participants touched on the level of responsibility and maturity PBRTs display. From a maturity perspective, this characteristic may simply come from work experience as well as life experience. For example, Participant Six characterized the maturity level based on the personal characteristics of his PBRTs. Since most of his PBRTs are from the information technology sector, he described them “to be relatively mellow, you know, more shy than outgoing, rarely argumentative and fairly helpful...they tend to be more quiet. They tend to be more attentive.” Participant Four felt, “they just seem more settled in their life and they understand what has to be done.”

Participant Eight viewed the PBRT student as demonstrating a higher “maturity level” in the classroom. He felt that maturity was mainly “a function of positions and industry [experience] prior to coming in [to the class].” Furthermore, he generalized that PBRTs in his classes had about “3-5 years of work experience,” Participant Five also described maturity and responsibility from a professional perspective. He stated, “I don’t see any behavioral problems [with PBRTs] I mean, even if [they are] not going to be in class, they will call me and ask me...what I am going over...it’s like a job...where they tell you way in advance.” Participant Six described responsibility as a manager would. He explained, they “have the ability to make priorities, the ability to really take on individualized responsibility.” He added that PBRTs are much more, they are able to recognize when they are having problems, “they usually have the maturity to realize, ‘ok, it is what it is’ they cannot complain per se.”

Participant Eight looked at the PBRT student as one who brought the career mindset back into the classroom. He explained, “on average, they’ve had some

experience with their bachelor's afterwards and are coming back...oftentimes, it's four, five, six years [later, and they] want to come back." He went on to say PBRTs "are generally full-time working, coming to class just to try to get stuff done. A lot of them...are generally an older population with leadership experience and other jobs."

Participant Seven described PBRTs as "the ones who are very career-driven...to get into nursing school, or to get [the] hours [they need] so [they] can get into the PA program."

Along with the career mindset, at least two participants explained the work ethic of PBRTs. Time management was the number one common theme. Participant Six described PBRTs as:

Well organized. They know how to work. They know what is required...and they are very good at identifying what they need to do and they are very good at really understanding what they can do...they typically don't have a problem in figuring out what needs to be done.

He characterized this as good "time management." Participant Eight shared this same sentiment, saying they know "how to manage their time."

Life Experience

In addition to time management, PBRTs bring work and life experiences into the classroom. The participants noticed that PBRTs share common life experiences and incorporate them into their daily interactions with the participants and fellow students. Participant Six referred to these experiences, as they "have been out, they have either had success or not had success, but ...they understand the relationship between work and reward." He then added "they do have a depth of experience [that they] bring with them: management skills, personnel skills, time maintenance skills, all sorts of things that are useful, and problem solving skills...for the most part, [they] can solve problems."

Participant Three added:

A lot of the folks that come back for a second career... have had some management experience and I think that having to deal with people and manage people kind of flavors their way of looking at life. They start to think ahead more because I think one of the things that working in business and management makes you do is 'ok here are my employees; well I have got to be two steps ahead of them.' I think they kind of bring that same idea to the classroom.

Further, PBRTs bring additional life experiences into the classroom. For example,

Participant Five described how:

Usually the life experience part that I get with these type of students that have already have some sort of a degree...usually it comes from some sort of domestic situation: divorce and their experience with that and the system...so they know [that things have] to be filed with the attorneys...some of them have done their own work.

He also included his thoughts about PBRTs bringing work experience into the classroom, "you will see what the [PBRT] students borrow [from] life experiences, as far as dealing with people, especially ones that have been in management."

Participant Four explained how the PBRTs "just bring a whole lot to [the] class...because they are older and they have more life experience...they have got a life experience behind them." In regards to classroom interactions, Participant Four wondered if the reasons for their level of class involvement stems from them "hav[ing] more life experience and again the subject matter that I am teaching is one that dwells a lot on life experience." She mentioned that she felt that the life experiences that PBRTs share adds to the class experience for the other PBRTs and non-PBRTs.

Summary of Participants' Description of PBRTs

Six constituent themes emerged from the participants' collective portrayal of the PBRT student: (a) the description of the PBRT students in the classroom, (b) the reference to PBRTs, (c) the perceived age range of PBRTs, (d) the identified reasons for

PBRTs coming back to college, (e) characteristics of PBRTs, and (f) the life experiences PBRTs bring with them.

The participants stated that PBRTs represented a good proportion of their classes. Although most of the participants were not aware of the formal name of PBRT, each had his or her own phrase or terminology to describe this group of students. Participants used phrases such as “experienced student,” “returning student,” “degreed student,” “class of student,” “mature student,” and “adult student.” However, “older student” was the most commonly used term. The “older student” moniker made sense for the participants to use. When describing the ages of PBRTs in their classes, they gave ranges from 25-50 years old.

Whatever the age was of the PBRT student, the participants cited career enhancement as the primary reason for PBRT students to come back to the community college. The participants also described certain characteristics of PBRTs. They described PBRTs as focused on what they wanted to accomplish, responsible and mature, career minded based on work experiences, and possessing a good work ethic in their approach to the classes. Finally, the participants described how PBRTs bring life experiences into the classroom. Several participants expressed how these experiences enhanced the learning environment.

Participants’ Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms

The participants in this study experienced an awareness of PBRTs in their classrooms. The participants typically know they will have “older” students on their class rosters and that some of those “older” students may have already earned a bachelor’s degree or higher. However, the task of identifying the PBRT is not as simple as one

would think. The master theme of *Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms* was derived from the constituent themes of an awareness of PBRTs in the classroom and how the participants confirmed who the PBRTs were.

Awareness

Emerging from the data was a theme which is present in almost all of the participants' experiences. This theme is having an awareness of PBRTs' presence in the classroom. Participant One knew from his experiences that there might have been PBRTs in his classes, but at the beginning of the semester he was not always sure which students were PBRTs. He stated, "You know, I can't look at this group and say, oh that guy he's got a bachelor's degree in the past and the person doesn't, because often times I don't know that." Participant Eight echoed this experience when he mentioned:

We don't always know who does and who doesn't [have a degree] initially coming in, but we know that we get a lot of people ...that have either completed or are in the process [of completing a degree]...we don't know a breakdown of who does and doesn't going in, although we've got a pretty good idea.

Participant One added, "You can usually get an idea of the people [who] were recent students, if they are older students, and they look like they are comfortable in asking questions and you can kind of get the impression that they have [had] some college or something." Both Participant Eight and Participant One mentioned they usually can tell by the end of the semester who was a PBRT and, as Participant Eight stated it, "For the most part, [I'm] pretty accurate by the end" in identifying PBRTs. Participant Five was also very confident in his ability to identify PBRTs. He stated, "I can tell and I am right every time. I haven't been wrong once."

Frequently, a particular course has a history of having a PBRT population. This was the experience for Participant Five, "The intro to law class is usually where I have

the [PBRT students].” Participant Three had a similar experience but in a different course, “You see it a lot in the technical education areas...because...in my program I’ve got a lot folks that have a bachelor’s degree or a master’s degree.”

In addition to the type of class being an indicator, certain academic behaviors led some participants to believe a student is a PBRT. Participant Five was aware of PBRTs:

They always have the book. A lot of the younger students don’t. They wait. I can always tell the students that are [PBRTs and prepared]...that is the one thing I look to see who has the book...so they are ready to go, and usually have read the first three or four chapters.

Participant Four found that the presence of PBRTs “becomes pretty apparent, usually in the quality of the work that most of them are turning in, particularly the written work...they can spell...they can punctuate.”

Confirmation of PBRTs

With all of the participants’ knowledge at some level there are PBRTs in their classes, how do they confirm this assumption? The practices expressed by the participants yielded two techniques of identifying PBRTs. The first technique was simply asking. For example, Participant Two recalled, “When I became the program director and started conducting interviews myself, that is when I really became aware of it.” This identification process happened before the students enrolled. She went on to say:

I interview every student that is interested [in taking the class] before I sign off that they can enroll. I do that because I think it is important that they understand what [the program is]. So I get to know each of the students that way. They are all required to provide me with...their college transcripts. So I identify them in that way...I want to understand, you know, what their purpose is for being in the program, what they are looking for.

Participant Four used a different method of identifying a PBRT student, “In my classes I make them fill out a little postcard or a three by five card and tell their name,

their...email address and a phone number...I also ask their educational background...so I seek it out.” Participant Eight said, “We’ll get a transcript from them that designates them as having received a bachelor’s degree, so we know sometimes that way.” Participant Six simply said, “I ask them.”

The second technique of confirming who is a PBRT student was to allow the student to self-identify. Several of the participants did not ask whether a student has earned a degree or not. Participant One explained:

Oftentimes I won’t know they have another degree maybe, sometimes I probably never find out. I am sure that some of them have degrees and I don’t know...I don’t ask up front whether they have a degree or not...it doesn’t matter to me what their background is, so I don’t ask.

However, this same participant mentioned that, “We will be having conversations later on about class or something and they’ll just bring it up...a lot of times I find out.”

Participant Seven said she did not ask directly, but explained that she has “never taken [a survey]; it’s just from talking with the class that I’ve learned this.” She stated however, that PBRT students purposely “tell me what their background is, with classroom experience....some of the students love to tell me they’ve got their bachelor’s in Finance or in whatever it may be, Biology, and I think they’re hoping it might change how I treat them in the classroom.” Other participants found that PBRTs self-identify during classroom introductions. Participant Eight said that PBRTs are “volunteering the information...the student will volunteer, ‘I have a bachelor’s from CU in this, so this is my interest’...we don’t know a breakdown of who does and doesn’t going in.”

Participant Six also became aware of who was a PBRT through introductions. “I get a sense from the very beginning. [At the] start of every class...I ask them, you know, tell us about yourself, why you are here, what you are after.” Participant Four experiences

were similar with PBRT students identifying themselves during introductions.

From another perspective, Participant Three oftentimes had PBRTs self-identify during advising sessions. “Usually the way that we end up doing it is that they end kind of up identifying themselves to me when they come in for initial counseling...[their academic background] usually comes up that ‘well, I’ve got a bachelor’s degree...how can I fold that credit in’ and so forth. That is the primary way [of knowing].” Participant Five found out many times when students sign up:

Just about every student contacts me first. If they...have a bachelor’s degree already, they will ask me what classes could they transfer. That will be the first question...the second thing is...because they are shopping around...they ask you [about] income and placement. They want to make sure that, is this right, should I be switching jobs, careers? If it is going to be the same thing that I am leaving....That transferring older students like to come in and meet me. As opposed to the younger ones, they just sign up. I always know when the older students are kind of like ‘can I meet you personally that is not an eighteen year old.

Summary of Participants’ Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms

In summary, the experience of *Participants’ Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms* included having an awareness of PBRTs in the classroom. Most of the participants were indifferent whether they found out or not if there were PBRT students in the class. A lot of times they would just wait for the PBRT student to self-identify. However, being able to confirm who the PBRT students were was important for some participants. Those that were concerned used various techniques to acquire the information the needed.

Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants’ Classrooms

Having PBRTs in the classrooms was not a surprise to the participants. They knew PBRTs enrolled in their classes and many times knew who the PBRTs were. When

talking about PBRTs, the participants spoke of positive memories. These positive memories suggested respect and appreciation for the higher level of educational exchange with these students. These memories make up the third master theme, *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms*. Three constituent themes emerged as the participants described their experiences: (a) what PBRTs bring, (b) what PBRTs do, and (c) how PBRTs do it. The following is an account of these three sub-themes.

What PBRTs Bring

Post Baccalaureate Reverse Transfer students enroll in the community college armed with the skills and tools to navigate the realms of academia. Having already proven themselves by earning bachelor's degrees and higher, they know how education works. However, having this prior knowledge does not necessarily give PBRTs an advantage when it came to learning the skills or "hands-on" portion of a course. It also did not help PBRTs feel less intimidated when returning to college many years later after earning their degrees.

From their collective experiences, the participants expressed that PBRTs bring a high "quality of work" and educational "know how" into the classroom. Participant Six said of the PBRTs' level of understanding course requirements, "They understand what it means to read it and understand it, the due dates and to commit to it." Further, Participant Five expressed:

They are serious in studying...they are here because they want to be here...they know the terminology, the paperwork, the time and deadlines and everything! I just smile, because, you know, oh great, so I know you are here for the knowledge, for more knowledge...they were serious students.

Participant Five attributed these behaviors not only to prior education, but also to their professional backgrounds. He explained this further by saying:

Because they already have a bachelor's degree...and depending on their jobs, I mean, what they have been doing, if they have been in the business area or management or something like that, they have had to do reports and things like that.

Participant Seven added, "They're computer-savvy" and they are proud of their PBRT "status." Participant Four commented, "They study... [and] separate the important things...what you have to know and what you don't have to know."

Participant Eight noticed the PBRTs' "academic preparedness seemed to be much better as far as they understand how to study, how to manage their time portion for the actual, for the book-part of the course." He also pointed out "the writing tends to be [better] overall." Participant Two echoed this sentiment by saying, "the papers are always better written." Participant Five reinforced the notion of the "better writing" qualities when he said, "I noticed that students that already have degrees, whether they are bachelor or even higher, I have had some Ph.D.'s in my class. I already know that they catch on quickly to the writing stuff because they know how to do it." In reference to the assignments, he added, "there is more intense interest...they really get into that."

Participant Four commented on the PBRTs academic preparedness. She explained:

I would say for the most part, the ones that already have a bachelor's degree, because I give them a grading rubric right up front, they go down and write everything that is on the rubric. If I said, 'give three ways you are going to increase vegetable intake in your diet,' they will have number one, number two, number three...the better [papers]...oftentimes goes...[with students] that already have some kind of advanced degree.

Participant Two was aware PBRTs understand the educational process. She stated:

They know when they received an assignment and they're reading it and it says...three to five pages, double spaced, size 12 font, they know what that means, it needs to include the topics and if it's a case study or if it's a research paper or if I'm sending them out to evaluate internet sites for drug information... they understand what the process means... [they] have that level of understanding of what the assignment is.

She also recognized PBRTs are experienced in writing papers and they will ask questions like, “Do [you] want it MLA, APA, or is there [FLCC] formatting?...How many words does it have to be? Does it have to be third person, first person?... So they have those types of questions.” She also noticed PBRTs have some advantages from the classes they have previously taken prior to coming into her program. Some of them have had more exposure to particular writing styles or assignments which enables them to be a step ahead of their traditional student peers. For example, she explained:

If you have your bachelor’s and you have already had college algebra, where some students have not had any type of algebra. So the math is very difficult for [non-PBRTs]. So that is where you really see [a] knowledge gap.

However, having prior course work does not necessarily give the PBRT student an advantage. Participant One mentioned:

A lot of our stuff, though, is hands-on, so even if you had experience going to school in say, history or English or something like that, it would really be entirely different than what we do here because a lot of our training is hands-on.

Participant Six noticed another disadvantage PBRTs have when coming back into the classroom. He said:

Some of them are intimidated coming back to school after so many years, because they have not been in school for a long time. They have not been evaluated in grades per se, in a long time, even though they have been evaluated in reviews and raises and all sorts of promotions... Some of the students coming back feel the sense of concern in the first course when they come back. That usually goes pretty quickly. They realize, okay, yeah, I remember what this is like. But coming back to school for the first time in fifteen years can be intimidating for some of them.

Even though there may be the need for some adjustment, the general consensus from participants is that PBRTs know what needs to be done in the course and how to do it. PBRTs bring those skill sets with them into the classroom.

What PBRTs Do

Knowing that PBRTs have a proven academic track record and seeing that they have dusted off and polished their scholastic tools, the participants had witnessed what PBRTs can do in their classrooms. They saw this in a variety of ways including class preparedness, asking questions, being more scholarly, and a desire to get better grades. For example, Participant Six commented on how PBRTs were prepared for class. They are “the ones that show up on time; the ones that always hand their homework in on time. They ask good questions. They help the class out in that sense. They are typically good class members.” Participant Seven added, “If I say we’re going to have a class discussion due, they’re the first ones to be responding to it...they can follow directions.”

Many of the participants commented on how well PBRTs ask questions. Participant Three stated, “They are usually very good at sitting there and taking that topic and then asking questions.” Participant Five added, “That is one of the experiences already, more questions are asked of me in the first class [by these students]”. Participant Eight agreed with other participants in that the PBRTs typically asked better questions than the other students.

In addition to asking good questions, PBRTs tend to be more studious. Participant Eight observed PBRTs as better at “managing the time [and know] how to study.”

Participant Three suggested:

[PBRTs] identify their problems quicker, they are not afraid to say, ... I am having a real hard time memorizing all these plant names and putting them together, how do I do that?’ I can sit down and talk to them about well here is what I have seen other students in the past do. That is usually just a big relief to them.

Participant Four attributed their success in her classes to them knowing how to follow the

syllabus and grading rubrics. They understand “the assignments ...better. They just seem more settled in their life and they understand what has to be done.”

Understanding the assignments better and knowing what to do in class is a result, in part, of the PBRTs’ desire to earn good grades. Participant Four saw this in those PBRTs who want to go into the nursing program.

Those who want to go into the nursing programs are very focused. They know that there is a long waiting list. They know that they go to get a good grade. I have had several of them say to me that they are getting much better grades now than they did in their undergraduate work.

Participant Three had experienced this also. He said:

[I] see a lot of fear from them in terms of, ‘oh man, it’s going to take longer to absorb the information from class than it will some of these other students, these eighteen year olds. I’m not going to be able to do as well on the grade.’ They are more focused on getting a good grade and getting an understanding of absolutely everything in the class.

On the other hand, one participant noticed a less stressed student in the PBRTs. Participant One said, “[they] tend to... probably [be] less stressed over tests and things like that because they have this background, four previous years of college where they have done a hundred exams or something. So those things don’t bother them as much.”

How PBRTs Do It

This drive to be a high achiever does not come without strategies. The participants saw PBRTs use several approaches to satisfy the need for good grades and being successful in the classroom. Participant Four said it starts with the basics:

They read what the assignment says and then they...answer it according to the assignment...[and they] know what is acceptable to turn in on a paper...the older students tend to be a little bit more formal about that, a little bit more professional.

Participant Five hinted that it goes back to asking questions. He stated:

[They come with] more questions of preparedness and when it comes to assignments, more questions about the assignments...I have always noticed that with the students, that a lot of times they put in questions or ask extra things... outside of class and then [they] ask me in class.

And when it comes to the assignments he said:

They have a tendency to explain everything, which you don't ask for, but I don't discourage it because I always encourage students that 'it's better to write more than not enough'...so that way if you do too much, it's better to start editing then not having a feel for not doing enough.

He also noticed that PBRTs will embrace and explore in more depth, the resources he gives them such as web sites. He recognized PBRTs make the connections between assignments and "real-life experience" and they "will tell you when they don't understand something." Lastly, Participant Five saw the PBRT student to be the one to follow-up and ask questions regarding written comments, "usually [the PBRT student] comes in to see me; comments on things and ask[s] me about things that I point out in lecture."

Participant Three also had experienced some of the same things Participant Five had. He found that PBRTs want more in-depth answers and want more of a connection with the material. He stated:

[They] are almost always the ones that I see sitting there trying to take 'A' and 'B' and fit together to get 'C'. Any time that you give them feedback [they want] for you to help them make that connection because they are afraid that they have missed something.

He also found PBRTs are much more focused on the "why's and what's" when getting a test question wrong. He suggested:

[PBRTs are] oftentimes the first people that will ask for tutoring...when they don't really even truly need tutoring because they have already got it, but they just feel they need somebody to give them some feedback...They're also usually the first folks that will ask about how do I study, how can I do better at studying?

Participant Six's experience with PBRTs' focus and desire began with them "asking for help" if needed. This participant explained:

[Many times they appear] to be overly eager... to show the teacher that they know stuff...they will go out of their way and the first homework assignment from some of these students, which is really a fifteen line simple little program, will end up being four pages, a big novel.

He also noticed that the PBRTs will act as though they were at a job and practice professional behaviors. "It is sort of like the first day on a job...they dress up more than you might just to make a good impression. [They] might go out of the way to let people know that [they] know stuff."

Summary of Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms

The participants experienced three elements of the third master theme, *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms*. The three sub-themes which emerged from these experiences of PBRTs' academic prowess were: (a) what PBRTs bring, (b) what PBRTs do, and (c) how PBRTs do it.

The participants acknowledged PBRTs "know how education works" and welcomed these students into their classrooms. In describing what PBRTs did in the classroom, the participants saw PBRTs as a model student and a professional. The participants experienced the PBRTs making the connection between assignments and their experiences in real-world settings. Over-all, the participants experienced professionalism in the classroom from the PBRTs which enabled an exchange of information.

Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs

The first three master themes, *Participants' Descriptions of PBRTs*, *Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms*, and *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in*

Participants' Classrooms have given a glimpse of how the participants experience PBRTs. The fourth master theme, *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs* brings a flavor of what it is like to have mixed classes with PBRT and non-PBRT students. This theme emerged from the answers to the question, 'What is it like to teach and have PBRTs in your classroom?' From the master theme, four constituent themes emerged: (a) mixed class, (b) familiarity, (c) helpfulness, and (d) leveling the playing field. The following is a description of these experiences.

Mixed Class

From an enrollment standpoint, it did not really matter to the participants what type of student enrolled in their classes or programs. As long as the prerequisites of the course were met, it made no difference if the student had a bachelor's degree or high school diploma. The participants knew the chances were good that there would be PBRTs in their classes, but they also knew they would not have a class comprised solely of PBRTs. The non-PBRTs made up a significant portion of the class population and provided the basis for a mixed class of PBRTs and non-PBRTs. Each of the participants described some common observations about mixed classes as described below.

Even though the identification process had been discussed earlier, the participants would reference this process when describing the diversity and dynamics of their mixed classes of PBRTs and non-PBRTs. For example, Participant One got a good idea of who the PBRTs were and who was not just by observing the groups. He stated, "You can usually get an idea of the people that were recent students." Finally, when recounting her experiences Participant Two added, "the dynamics in that class are interesting" when describing what she saw in her mixed classes. Participant Eight commented:

[We have mixed classes] mostly because we have a diverse student population, from 18 [-year-olds] to... the PBRTs...come back and they're generally, on average, they've had some experience with their bachelor's afterwards and... are generally an older population anyway, they're not just right out of their four-year degree, often times, it's four, five, six years, [and they] want to come back.

Although the PBRTs and non-PBRTs are considered one group of students in the eyes of the community college, they are indeed two different groups within the classroom. As the participants pointed out, they experienced the uncomfortable reactions between PBRTs and non-PBRTs in their classrooms. The number one main reaction observed by the participants was a feeling of intimidation between the two groups, being able to "compete" against each other in the class seemed to be a concern. Participant Three mentioned:

[When PBRTs first came back] they're usually plagued first off with some real fears of how are they going to compete or be able to perform against these 18-year-olds as they perceive it. They are always concerned about, well, the kids are going to look at me as older and that's going to cause them to treat me differently. I have not ever really seen that happen, in reality.

He went on to say, "I think part of it goes back to just to the insecurity of coming back to school and not feeling like they can compete with younger kids."

Sometimes the intimidation can be reversed and non-PBRTs can be the ones who feel vulnerable. Participant One stated that he initially avoids publicly identifying PBRTs because "I don't want other students to think, this guy has got a degree, you know, from some university and I can't compete with that. So I don't ask and often times they don't tell me." Participant Seven referred to the non-PBRTs' insecurities of working side-by-side with PBRTs. She mentioned that the non-PBRT students are the ones that come to her for support and guidance and appear to be intimidated by the PBRT students.

Participant Two described a reaction she saw between the two groups which was

not intimidating, but was more of an “annoyance.” She saw the PBRT student “that wants to be perceived as the most knowledgeable” in the class, thus asking more questions. She witnessed where the non-PBRTs got annoyed at the amount of questioning by PBRTs. The non-PBRTs do not vocally express their annoyance, but Participant Two could see it on their faces or in their body language.

Participant One claimed that PBRTs in his class “are comfortable asking questions....They tend to be more outgoing, a little more comfortable in the settings.” This comfort level contributed to the questioning and “imparting of PBRT knowledge” to the class. Participant Five stated that PBRTs had this deeper quest for knowledge and “are not only just concerned about the regurgitation part, they want to know how to do something....they want to know what is going on.” Participant Four recalled an example from one of her classes. She stated:

When we started talking about a little bit of the foods and drugs and things like, the wealth of knowledge that that person could impart to the class... [was] a lot of information. What I don’t know from a teaching standpoint, do I have to be concerned that she might be intimidating to the 19-year-olds?

She felt the PBRTs wanted more information and the younger non-PBRTs were taking the class and just wanted to get through it.

On the other hand, this “quest for knowledge” and questioning could be frustrating at times for all involved. Participant Five had experienced the PBRTs getting frustrated with the non-PBRTs asking questions. He stated:

Some [PBRTs] get frustrated because [non-PBRTs] are asking questions on the material [PBRTs] already know and understand. They want to move on, but I can’t do that if I [have] ten people asking me this and one who knows it. I can’t just keep moving on because it’s no use for the ten for me to keep going if they don’t understand concept ‘A’.

Participant Two noticed that some of the non-PBRTs would initially be attracted

to the PBRTs because of their degrees. There is an attraction to the older student because of the material and progression of the course material. She stated:

Some of the students that have never been in college then all of the sudden [say], 'ah, this is the person I want to know because they must be really smart because they have a degree.' But then because the material is the same for everybody and requires a different set of skills, memorization and you know, you have to have the interest in order to do well. That sometimes changes. So I oftentimes will have people do better in pharmacology and they are better at memorizing, which is important. They may later become the leaders or the people that are looked too. So I don't see, other than calculations, I really don't see that 'oh, I am going to stick with that person throughout the program,' that doesn't continue, it changes.

Participant One acknowledged that group work was one way for PBRTs and non-PBRTs to get to know each other. He stated, "When they work in groups, they get to know each other and then everything opens up a bit." Participant Six noticed that in group work, it was easier for PBRTs to interact with non-PBRTs. He attributed this to the prior work experience of PBRTs. He stated:

So when we do break into projects and groups..., probably the [PBRTs] find it easier to interact because they have done that before. But, they often have a good sense of what not to do, like, not just give it away. They will be doing something that they... have seen before or... figure it out right away. Then they have something to latch onto, but they do not always just walk over to some kid and say, 'Hey, this is how it works.' You know, most of them have the maturity to know that people have to figure it out for themselves.

Participant Seven echoed Participant Six's perspective in regards to the cross-learning relationships between the two groups. She stated:

Everybody can take from everybody else in the classroom. And after a couple of weeks of that mixing, they'll realize that. You know, the students who have degrees realize, wow, Suzie who is just out of high school is great with people, and she's really got great communication skills, and I can kind of pull from that. This one has great life experience, this one has college experience.

Participant Eight saw the PBRTs primarily coming to class "just to try to get stuff done," but when interacting with the non-PBRTs he saw more than this. As he had

described before, Participant Eight saw PBRTs as “a little bit older, more maturity level.” He felt these characteristics set the stage for how PBRTs interact with non-PBRTs. He stated:

The students that I have seen that have a bachelor’s degrees tend to take on more of a leadership role in the class as we work in small groups....And generally speaking, those with the bachelor’s degrees will end up being more of a leader rather than just sitting back and watching.

He also added that he saw some mentoring relationships begin to blossom. He suggested:

[PBRTs] show leadership roles and some of the skills... as well as, and for a lack of a better term, taking the [non-PBRT] students under their wing, and trying to get the better prepared for the rigors of the class.

Familiarity

As the semester progresses, PBRTs and non-PBRTs form relationships and become more of a holistic class. The participants experienced a class climate of growth as they saw more familiarity develop between the two groups. From these experiences of familiarity emerged three sub-themes: (a) enhancement, (b) evolution, and (c) community. All three of these sub-themes together have created a culture in the classroom in which the participants described through their lived experiences.

Enhancement. After time passed PBRTs and non-PBRTs become more at ease with each other, as happens with any group of people working together. This passage of time can become an equalizer for the two groups of students. Participant One mentioned that in the beginning of the course many students do not know each other, let alone know whether anyone has already earned a degree. Oftentimes he did not even know “until way later on... and then by that time they all know each other pretty well and the interactions are all pretty smooth.” Time allowed the students to become more comfortable in collaborating.

Participant Six mentioned that PBRTs “jump in; they help the other students out. They tend to be helpful. It certainly works well.” Participant Four encountered the relationships on a different level; she saw more substance and learning being added to the class. She felt the “class probably goes into greater depth than a lot of fields and I want to say that more of them may learn more because we got more just interaction.” She added that non-PBRTs get more out of the class by what the PBRTs bring, “I think that they get more out of in the sense that the conversation just going around has more interest.” She sensed that the information shared by PBRTs helps personalize the topic material for the younger non-PBRT students. She gave an example of a PBRT who described her own medical condition and how nutrition affected her life, something the younger non-PBRTs may not have experienced yet.

In contrast, Participant Six had the opposite experience. Instead of the PBRT assisting the younger non-PBRT, it was the other way around:

Sometimes, the younger students will be much more aware of options in ‘My Space’ or websites, or you know, a whole generation of them, internet-based features that [PBRTs] do not, they never even heard of... So sometimes, they can offer insights into these.

In these statements, participants recalled experiences of how bonding over the exchange of experiences and knowledge enhanced the evolution of the relationships of the PBRTs and non-PBRTs.

Evolution. Participant One saw passage of time as an equalizer. It may be that the two groups are distant at first, “but you know, by week four or five, everybody is pretty much the same,” meaning they are comfortable as a class and with each other. He thought that “after they get to know all of the other peers in the room and everybody is working together it all equals out.” There is something about the time the two groups spent

together in which the participants noticed a change of the classroom dynamics.

Participant Two noticed this dynamic shift as well. She said “it changes throughout the fifteen weeks because these students are together five days per week for fifteen weeks.”

Time was also the ingredient for student growth in Participant Seven’s class. Her experiences of a class dynamic shift are partially due to the fact that students just get to know each other better. She had seen where “fear” occurs at the beginning of the semester for non-PBRTs when PBRTs describe their prior educational background. But as time went on she saw this interaction change. She remarked:

I kind of like the dynamics and I like seeing what they’ve learned by the end. We talk that last night after clinicals [are] done, after everything is done, and they’re getting ready to take their state test, and what they’ve learned, and those are the things, you know, ‘I can’t believe, little Suzie, who’s on every break text-messaging and doing this and that, she taught me so much about how to do PowerPoint so I could do my education program, etc. and teach the class, this and that, I got this one’s e-mail and this one, and I stay in touch with this,’ I just love those bonds that form... because I couldn’t pick it night one. But [I] hear at the end, what’s helped them.

One aspect of the relationship building was why the two groups were drawn together. Participant Five noticed non-PBRTs were drawn to PBRTs, though he was not sure if they did this for the right reasons or not. Possibly the non-PBRTs thought if they “hung out” with PBRTs they would get good grades. However, he thought it might be more than that, he noticed relationships develop over common interests. For example, if a PBRT had owned a business and talked about it in class and a non-PBRT was interested in starting a business, they begin to bond. “They will share it. There are going to be some people who like to share their experiences with people. It doesn’t cost a dime. They love to talk about it.”

Another avenue for relationship building between the two groups was through

study groups. Participant Three recalled one experience with PBRTs and non-PBRTs developing study groups:

A lot of the students will create study groups on their own, where they will get together a half an hour or an hour before class and talk. We have got a lot of students that are really just friends.

Participant Eight had seen where PBRTs would start a study group:

They had started essentially their own tutoring group with the students and they met in the conference room that we're meeting in today on a very regular basis and would review material and open it up to all the other students to come in and practice and sharpen their skills and hone their study skills and work on some of those other things that although we address in class, someone that's got more of an academic background can sort of really tailor a study program.

Although most of the lived experiences are positive ones, Participant Five had an experience where several PBRTs wanted to segregate their study group. They "always want[ed] to study together. They [did not] want to study with any younger [students]."

Community. Despite the one or two negative experiences, the participants did experience a sense of community between PBRTs and non-PBRTs towards the end of the semester. Many described an aura of professionalism. Participant Four experienced this transition "someplace between the fifth and the eighth week, [is when] they start to gel." She saw this happen over and over again, and explained, "that is more just the dynamics that go on in a class." Part of this process was where the students could just get to know each other through the course of the semester, where they "can laugh and share and talk...because we have built a little of thought of a community." Participant Six had experienced a slightly different aspect of community. In his classes he usually did not experience conflict between the two groups. He stated:

[PBRTs are] rarely argumentative and fairly helpful. The older degreed students, many of them have kids that age, or kids approaching that age. They take on the role of the kids' parent, I mean, so [for] the most part, they are helpful.

The professionalism aspect of community seems to stand out for some of the participants. Participant Three had experienced younger non-PBRTs seeing the success of PBRTs and this in turn piqued the curiosity of the younger non-PBRTs. He observed the non-PBRTs talking to PBRTs and asking questions about how they studied or how they might have accomplished a task. He saw this as a professional exchange or mentoring of learning strategies.

Participant Five emphasized professional behavior between the two groups in his classes by his philosophies and activities. He told them, “be respectful of one another. If a student asks a question that you may think is totally stupid...be professional about it. That student may not think it’s stupid... that is why they are asking [it].” In addition, he encouraged the two groups to collaborate together on work. Although it may be an individual assignment, he encouraged collaboration as he is trying to bring the “real world” to them. He stresses that “lawyers sit down and discuss strategies” together.

Helpfulness

An offshoot or by-product of PBRTs and non-PBRTs familiarity with each other is the willingness to help each other out. The participants saw PBRTs working with the non-PBRTs. Whether this was an expectation of the participant or just the natural tendency of PBRTs, it was an experience that emerged nonetheless.

Participant Six mentioned that his classes were computer based, and therefore not ones to promote much social interaction. However, he found PBRTs to be “helpful, they will be encouraging... [they bring] enthusiasm. Sometimes [it is] just good-natured kidding around.” In Participant One’s computer classes, he too found that PBRTs “tend to be more helpful.” He stated:

If they are working in groups, I expect them to help each other out and make sure that the person who knows the most, which historically would be the one that has the most educational background; they just don't do it all and leave the other person behind. I expect that person to make sure the person they are working with understands it just as well.

Participant Five took the approach that he wanted his students to help each other whether they are PBRTs or non-PBRTs. He would like to see them working in groups as they would see in the industry. He also enjoyed seeing mentoring happen between PBRTs and non-PBRTs. One experience he mentioned was when he had a PBRT "who was a legal secretary, pair up with a younger student and have that student come to work with [her]....She took that student with her and had that student do work for her." He saw PBRTs enjoying the mentoring process: "It's passing knowledge on to somebody else. People like doing that. You don't get a lot of credit for that....I like to see that when students do that."

Participant Three did not see a formal mentoring process between PBRTs and non-PBRTs. However, where he did see it happen was in the study groups. Whether the PBRTs did it voluntarily or by his suggestion, he was satisfied when the experience yielded bonds between the two groups. He could not emphasize enough the importance of studying together and forming partnerships. Participant Two found PBRTs were more than willing to be helpful in her classes. She shared:

[PBRTs] want to be the most helpful. So they want to make sure that everybody understands and they may ask a question if they think that everyone might not have understood a concept. They might be the ones that will speak out.

Participant Four had witnessed PBRTs becoming the leaders of mixed groups. She saw this automatically happening when the groups were formed in her class. She credited this to the PBRTs' experience and maybe "because they tend to be a little older."

As the term progressed, she also recognized the two groups began to look out for each other. For example, they would cover for each other if one was going to be absent by taking notes, etc.

Leveling the Playing Field

The participants were in agreement there was one thing that leveled the playing field for the PBRTs and the non-PBRTs in their classrooms, and that was the topic or skill set the students were there to learn. In the computer courses, Participant One stated, “we’re teaching in the computer fields, so most of the people that come here have some computer background.” He explained the “leveling effect” this way:

Again in my classes it’s not so much the prior formal education, it’s their aptitude or knowledge in this specific technical content. If they are good at it, then they can help those that aren’t and it doesn’t really matter I think whether or not they have the actual formal education background when it comes time to actually doing the work.

Participant Eight saw no difference in the skill sets between PBRTs and non-PBRTs. He said:

Most of the people that we get in have more of a science background, and while they might have done some time in the lab, they haven’t really practiced a particular skill, but they may have the book-smarts or the lecture that they get, but I haven’t seen much difference one way or the other.

From Participant Two’s experience, she found the student skill level tends to balance out any prior degrees which may have been earned by some of her students. She also found there was not much difference between the two groups when it came to technology; they were both “savvy” in that area. Most importantly, she found equality among the two groups when it came to the course material. Both PBRTs and non-PBRTs struggle with new material. Participant Four stated similar experiences. She said, “[It is] so much [about developing] skills, it doesn’t matter what experience you bring to the

table. We really all end up on the same level.” In her general nutrition class, nutrition becomes the equalizer. This was because “we start getting into life style nutrition” which offers commonalities to all of her students. The topics such as weight management, proteins, and fats apply to both PBRTs and non-PBRTs alike, regardless of prior degrees.

Summary of Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs

There were four constituent themes which emerged from the master theme of *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs*: (a) mixed class, (b) familiarity, (c) helpfulness, and (d) leveling the playing field. The participants expected mixed classes and the range of emotions that transpired between the two groups of students. The participants experienced enrichment to the learning environment of their classes through the exchange of knowledge and experiences by PBRTs and non-PBRTs. The participants felt the one equalizer which leveled the playing field for PBRTs and non-PBRTs was the topic skill set to be learned.

Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs

The participants in this study were practicing educators at FLCC and a component of their profession is to teach students enrolled in their classes. As with any occupation there are a variety of attributes that make the job what it is. One of those elements is how instructors feel about teaching specifically to a group of students such as PBRTs. In this study, the fifth master theme which emerged from the data was *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs*. In analyzing the experiences of participants, three constituent themes emerged: (a) general thoughts, (b) challenged by PBRTs, and (c) personal satisfaction. A narrative of these themes follows.

General Thoughts

When discussing their *Feelings of Teaching PBRTs* the participants shared some general thoughts about what it is actually like to teach PBRTs. These thoughts were grouped together into four sub categories: (a) teachability, (b) PBRT classroom personality, (c) academic demeanor, and (d) academic performance.

Teachability. If just one word could be used to describe teaching PBRTs, it would be the word “easy.” The participants made reference to this word in many phrases such as “easiest group to teach.” Participant One alone made reference to this phrase five times during the interview with four of those being in the first 10 minutes. The participants used other phrases such as: “easier to teach,” “easier by far to teach,” “easiest to deal with,” “easiest to work with,” “it’s just so easy to teach people who are there to learn,” and “they are an easy group to teach stuff too.”

In addition to the ease of teaching PBRTs, several participants expressed how they liked teaching PBRTs. For example, Participant Two expressed how she enjoyed working with the PBRTs. She herself was “actually one of those PBRTs.” As a result, she felt a connection with them and liked to get to know them better, which started in the interview process with students in the program. She wanted to identify each student’s purpose for being in the program. By doing so she hoped to eliminate any false expectations of her program.

Participant Four simply shared “they are more fun to teach.” Participant Five had feelings along the same lines which was evident when he said, “I don’t have to explain as much to them, because they catch on and I don’t have to worry about it.” Participant Six related back to his professional career before teaching when he said, “It is much more

natural for me to work with these students. This is like the people I worked with in industry for my first career.”

Participant Eight had a slightly different perspective to share. Even though academically he felt they were an “easy group to teach,” the skills component of the class is the classroom equalizer. “It is a little different than a pure academic course.” He added:

I think that’s where the big challenge comes for a lot of our students with bachelor’s degrees is really, it’s that higher-level, that application, critical thinking, with the actual skill application and everything else, when to do it, when not to do it. That’s where I think they’re challenged.”

Although the skills portion offered the most challenge to PBRTs, Participant Three expressed PBRTs could overcome the challenges and could become be successful nonetheless. He expressed his pride of these accomplishments when he explained, “just to see [how] those students in a couple of semesters really go from having zero skills in the area to really producing a professional product.”

PBRT classroom personality. Although participants see PBRTs as easier to teach and enjoy teaching them, the participants did allude to PBRTs having a “classroom personality.” For Participant Two, teaching PBRTs was intimidating at first. She explained:

Here I have someone who has [a degree], at the doctorate level, in chemistry and we are going to be talking pharmacology and how drugs work, so he’s going to be way up here and our instructors are not quite at that level because it’s a career type technical [education] program.

As she found out, it was not like that at all. What she discovered was that she “likes the diversity in the classroom” brought on by having both PBRTs and non-PBRTs. Another personality characteristic brought in by PBRTs was their ability to speak up in class.

Participant Five explained how PBRTs develop an interest in a subject because of

something he has said in class and they (PBRTs) apply the information covered in class to the “real-world.”

Participant Six enjoyed the work ethic PBRTs displayed in class. He felt PBRTs are in class to learn and not “goof around” and that their social life is not dominated by school.

Participant Three took pleasure in being challenged by the PBRTs. He mentioned:

They do challenge you in the classroom and you can almost always tell when they are going to because you will see the student listening along and then all of the sudden they just kind of freeze for a minute. You almost want to stop lecturing and say, ‘Ok, think the question through and then throw it at me,’ because you can see it happening.

He found it “really interesting to deal with them” and “rewarding” as well.

Participant Four found that PBRTs had a tendency to stay after class to ask questions about a particular topic. She said, “When they stick around then we can really get into the fun things.”

Academic demeanor. The PBRTs’ classroom personality is closely tied with their academic demeanor. Participant One found that PBRTs had a desire to understand the material and if they didn’t understand, they were not afraid to ask questions. He stated:

If they don’t understand something or if you say something that is not clear or you misspeak they are more likely, I think, to question that and then say, ‘can you explain that again or something.’ They are not going to let things slide by that, they are not afraid to ask the instructor questions or get clarification on ideas. So you know when you are done, you get a pretty good idea how they actually understand all of that and they got it because if they didn’t they would have spoke up.

Participant Four stressed that PBRTs wanted to learn as much as they can. She also found their demeanor to be one of focus and dedication, because they are “always in class” compared to most non-PBRTs. She found them to be “more vocal, more willing to

bring up things.... [They] just bring a whole lot to [the] class.... [They] are more willing to answer questions that I put out to the class.”

Academic performance. Participant Six found it easy to understand why PBRTs were in his class, whether it was “looking to upgrade their life [or to] upgrade their skills.” What had been a pleasant outcome of their academic behavior, was “getting more than I expect” in regards to academic performance. Even when PBRTs are challenged by the “psycho-motor skills component” of the course, they embraced and confronted this challenge head-on. Participant Eight also felt that PBRTs “excel” with and are:

Better prepared for the book-part of the course....but in our skills portion, we try to put them in challenging scenarios that are possible and common but not as straightforward as someone else so that they do feel challenged when they come out of the things and give them the higher level thinking that I think a lot of them are looking for.

As it had been previously mentioned, the participants appreciate the quality level of work PBRTs produce. Participant One mentioned the quality of work submitted is of higher quality than the non-PBRTs. “I would say that [PBRTs] tend to turn in a little higher quality work than [non-PBRTs].”

Challenged by PBRTs

Although teaching PBRTs had generally been described as a pleasant experience, the participants have all had situations where they may have felt challenged by PBRTs. These situations were viewed as a positive growth opportunity for the participant or as a disruption to the classroom learning environment. The two sub-themes which have emerged in this section are: (a) accountability and (b) actions.

Accountability. Any good instructor will hold students accountable for completing assignments and projects. However, in the case of PBRTs, two participants described

their experiences of the student holding them accountable for the policies and procedures of the class. Participant Seven explained:

What I've learned from being here at the college, if it says it in your policies and procedures, you must follow it. If it's not there, you can't always really enforce it. [Because] students will test that....They definitely keep me on my toes as far as what my outline states. They're the students that say, 'well, it says on the outline this, and we didn't do this.' Or, 'it doesn't say this in the outline,' they hold me more to the paperwork or the organization or the outline.

Participant Two shared a similar experience about PBRTs in her classes. She found they were the first ones to inquire about a grading rubric, where the non-PBRTs did not. She credits this to their prior experience with college. They will a lot of times ask, "What about your rubrics, I need my rubrics!"

Actions. From the perspective of the participants, holding the instructor accountable was not such a bad thing, they felt it "keeps them on their toes." Other factors that kept some of the participants on their toes were the actions or behaviors of PBRTs in their classes. These behaviors manifested themselves in a several different forms. For example, it could be as simple as a PBRT student trying to "help the instructor out." On the other hand, behaviors of the PBRT student in the classroom could sometimes be disruptive and unsettling. Although the participants felt, for the most part, PBRTs were not intentionally being disruptive.

Participant Two recalled an action which could be perceived as "good-hearted" when a PBRT student became the "self-proclaimed go-to person" for assistance during finals week. Other students in the class would contact this PBRT student for help with their study guide. However, when the PBRT student came to Participant Two with concerns, Participant Two had to clarify the PBRT student's role in the class.

On the disruptive side, Participant Two recalled an experience with a group of

PBRTs in one of her classes. One PBRT was very quiet, one wanted “to be perceived as the most knowledgeable, so she is very vocal in class,” and one who wanted “to be perceived as the most helpful.” She explained further, “the dynamics between these two are really interesting because you have one that is the vocal one, but may not be the best one to go to for information.” As it turned out in one specific example, the “vocal one” attended a “re-math class” for those struggling with math although “she was not struggling.” During this class she would make comments like “aaaahhh, this is so easy, I don’t know why anyone is struggling and I will help you guys if you are not getting it.” Then the “helpful one” would attend the “re-math class” to help fend off the “vocal one” from making the other students in the math class from feeling bad.

Participant Three described a similar somewhat negative experience with a PBRT student. She said:

I’ve had one person [whose] degree was in teaching. They were not afraid to tell me every time that they thought I was not up to snuff on [my] teaching. They were not afraid to tell me when they thought that I should have adapted something specifically to their need, very vocal, even to the point that where it has really shocked some of the other students.

Although this was extremely frustrating for Participant Three, he felt fortunate this was “the ugliest that it has ever been.”

Participant Six recalled an experience where two PBRTs with master’s degrees were looking for work and wanted to use him as a reference and he agreed. The PBRTs were unable to procure employment and Participant Six felt he could not “do much for them... [and felt] a little frustrated.” So, even though this was not an academic issue, the PBRTs actions did have an effect on Participant Six.

Participant Three has had different encounters with the actions of PBRTs during

lectures. He stated:

If I have forgotten to talk about [a subject, they will] pull me on into that sort of direction. So it is actually, I think, not so much a challenge on [the subject matter] as it is just to try and make sure that I am ready for any odd questions that I normally wouldn't think I'd need to talk about.

Participant Four also had PBRTs who wanted to drive the direction of his lectures. In his experience, it became more of a one on one conversation with PBRTs. He pointed out:

My biggest concern I have with them usually is domineering, they just have more to say. They start to take over and it's hard not to, you don't want to stymie them, but on the other hand, they can't dominate in a class. [It becomes] just a class between me and them. I want the quiet person who probably has something good to say to be part of it too... Most of them don't really mean to dominate, they just have a lot to ask and share.

The participants have found this thirst for more knowledge and asking of questions by PBRTS to bring the level of learning beyond the scope of the class.

Participant Four found that PBRTs will "come up and ask me more questions afterwards or ask questions maybe more in the classroom. Sometimes I have to put them off because they can sometimes start to dominate." It was no fault of their own, it was just that "they want to learn everything that [they] can. Then they come up with questions that sometimes I can't answer... They want to go into much [more] detail." In another example, she recalled where a PBRT student would dominate the class discussion, which in turn, would cause the other classmates to become upset. She stated:

I can see people in the back going 'uh, he's talking again.' You know, they have that rolling of the eyes, like 'uh, why doesn't he just shut-up so she can go on.' Although what he was asking, usually, is very relevant and is interesting.

Participant Three echoed the theme of "they want detail." He found PBRTs wanted to go beyond theory and to be able to apply the processes to real life applications. He said:

They want not only detail so they can feel like they can do their job, but they also want to see big picture sorts of things. Which at times is challenging.... They also

want you to make sure that in that lecture or in that experience you also in some way relate that to practical day to day activities that they are going to get place in or they take part in.

Participant Two also felt PBRTs wanted to go beyond the scope of the course material and into the subject matter more deeply. “At times they want to know more about a more specific topic.” Participant Seven mentioned PBRTs expected more from her when she teaches, “they don’t want me just standing up lecturing.”

Participant Six found PBRTs’ expectations for the course also go beyond the course objectives. The expectations of career changing PBRTs and the course outcomes for the introductory class they were taking did not match. “I mean, we are still a community college, this is still the first two years of college. This is not deep serious programming, this is on the way to that.” Other PBRTs may find the course too simple or not challenging enough. Participant Eight recalled a PBRT student who found the tests in the introductory classes too easy and not intellectually challenging. As a result, he found PBRTs would compensate by asking deeper questions which “forces [him] to go back and have to do research whereas, at other times, the level of difficulty of the questions is something [he is] very comfortable answering in front of the class.”

Participant Five also found his PBRT students wanting to move beyond the content of the course. However, he had to refrain from going too deep in these specific areas in order to keep on track. He too was challenged by more complex questions, to which he responded similarly to Participant Eight. Participant Six had experienced some of his PBRT students forming an “attitude” when they had to take a course for a certificate that they may have taken before. He said “once in awhile [they] will bristle [when]...they will actually retake some course that they must have taken the first time

around in their degree...They have a more serious agenda and less time to invest.”

Participant Eight had PBRTs who present “an intellectual superiority feeling” when they question the teaching and feel “it’s not as challenging, maybe, as they would prefer.”

Personal Satisfaction

All in all, with all of the highlights and the lowlights of teaching PBRTs the participants felt a sense of personal satisfaction when they work with PBRTs. The following information highlights the sentiment of each participant. Participant Eight felt that the way the PBRTs challenge him academically make it worth his while to be teaching. “I enjoy the challenge [of teaching] more with someone who has had more education, because it forces me to also go back and satisfy my own extra curiosity by looking up answers to questions.” Participant One enjoyed the quality of work the PBRTs produce and felt that this good quality adds to the professionalism of the student. Participant Seven enjoyed the challenge presented by PBRTs and because of her background, she can relate to many PBRTs in the teaching of her classes. Participant Two felt good about helping PBRTs become successful in industry, since she too had followed the same path as many of the PBRT students. Participant Six enjoyed passing on what he had learned and seeing PBRTs secure jobs that they want after taking his courses. Participant Three felt the same way, and felt good about being a part of the PBRT student’s success and seeing them “putting it all together.” He also enjoyed the quality and dedication of work put forth by the PBRT students and their appreciation of the faculty who teach them. Participant Five received satisfaction in seeing the relationships develop between PBRTs and non-PBRTs, “it just puts a smile” on his face. It also makes him feel good to see their success. Finally, Participant Four summarized her feeling of

PBRTs as a group of students who are fun to see in class, because they bring so much to it. They “bring so many good things....so many have been such bright and such fun people...they are just great people.”

Summary of Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs

There were three constituent themes which emerged from the fifth master theme *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs*: (a) general thoughts, (b) challenged by PBRTs, and (c) personal satisfaction. Each of the participants expressed feelings about the lived experiences of working with and teaching PBRTs. One general thought from the participants was the teachability of PBRTs, the participants like teaching PBRTs and look forward to doing so. The participants overwhelmingly expressed a personal satisfaction from working with PBRTs and viewed this process as not just “filling a vessel,” but being able to impart their knowledge and teach the application of skills to quench the thirst of PBRTs.

Refining Teaching Styles to fit PBRTs

In order to meet the academic needs of PBRTs, the participants need to be able to teach to them. In the sixth master theme, *Refining Teaching Styles to fit PBRTs*, the participants described their experiences on how they approach this undertaking. Through their lived experiences, four constituent themes emerged from the data: (a) teaching design, (b) adapting, (c) bias, and (d) outside role. An account of these experiences follows.

Teaching Design

In discussing their experiences teaching PBRTs, some of the participants complained that the material was too elementary for these students. Many PBRTs have

already completed freshman and sophomore level classes in previous degree programs similar to what is being taught. As a result, some PBRTs may view the material as elementary; as a repeat of something they have already taken; or as material not applicable to their career goals. Taking this into consideration, the participants acknowledged the prior learning of PBRTs.

Participant Six explained to PBRTs that they had to be patient and he acknowledged their concerns because of the nature of the course. He stated:

It is what it is, so I still have to teach it as best I can toward what is targeted, and if there [are] people in either extreme, under prepared or over prepared, they just have to be patient or work harder, depending on what it is....I cannot get into the more advanced topics that really set it apart, the difficult topics that a professional [would use].

Another tactic used at the beginning of the term by the participants was to describe what the course was all about and acknowledging that it may be “elementary” to some.

Participant One stated, “You have got to establish the ground rules first.” However, this may not work with all PBRTs. In one instance, Participant Two has had to implement conflict management in her dealings with a disruptive PBRT student. However, the disruption was mainly due to the PBRT student being vocal and “just trying to help,” which in reality was bothering other students. She felt that her intentions were good, but the way the PBRT student presented herself came across the wrong way. In order to find balance and deliver the course material to a mixed class, the participants needed to incorporate sound pedagogy to meet the needs of all of their students. The basis for this design is found in two sub-themes: equality and acknowledgement.

In thinking about a methodology for teaching a mixed class of PBRTs and non-PBRTs, the participants expressed that equality was the foundation of the design.

Sentiments such as “everybody’s treated the same” and “teach the same way for everybody” represent the feelings of the participants. With a majority of the courses being skill based, the participants held PBRTs and non-PBRTs to the same expectations. Participant One confirmed, “I don’t hold anybody to any different expectations than anybody else.” Participant Seven commented, “I don’t speed up my class for [PBRTs] specifically.” Rather, she taught to the class as a whole. Participant One added “I tend to present the material in a way that everybody gets it....It’s more [about] aptitude toward the content than it is if you have a degree in the past.”

Within the component of teaching design is assessment. The participants wanted to facilitate equality in the area of grading. They generally did not want to have double standards when it came to grading the two groups. Participant Four stated, “I don’t think that from a grading standpoint, I require any more out of them.”

Adapting

In continuing to develop better teaching practices, some of the participants found that they had to adapt their teaching style to meet the needs of PBRTs. The participants shared their experiences of strategies they had used or developed and whether their overall teaching style had changed because of having PBRTs in the classroom.

The participants used various strategies to make the learning experience a better one for PBRTs. Some of these strategies were simple, some were extensions of their normal teaching practices, and some were specifically tailored to PBRTs. The following are some examples of what the participants experienced. Participant One just “presents the material in a way that everybody gets it.” When describing his experiences of teaching PBRTs, he did not feel his teaching style had changed over the years to meet the

needs of PBRTs specifically. Where he thought he had changed or adapted his teaching style was in the material itself. As computer technology has changed, so has his topic material he needed to teach.

Participant Two used a strategy by establishing expectations for the course with the PBRT student during the interview process. By doing so she hoped to clarify that the course would be taught at a certain level, not at a bachelor's or master's level. To help the PBRT student who wanted to go beyond the scope of the class, she explained to them how they could utilize their "research skills [to] enrich the class...by delving deeper." If they did not have strong research skills she was happy to provide them with "better resource materials." If PBRTs were asking "deeper questions," she would say, "that is a great question and I really want to talk to you about it, so come see me at break."

Over the years, Participant Three had changed his teaching style from "just transfer[ing] information" to being able to communicate what is really "important." When teaching, he wanted to communicate the information to PBRTs which was best suited for "their livelihood in the future" and how they could best use this information. He had experienced an evolution, of sorts, in the delivery method of his material. He stated:

The lessons and the day-to-day activities... and what I am trying to accomplish and how we are getting there and that sort of thing... have changed a lot over the ten years. It's an evolution because every time I teach a class the different students that come through have different experiences, have different thoughts and oftentimes you don't realize until that question comes up that you have missed a whole large area that you wanted to talk about. So it's an evolution.

Participant Three had also experienced his best success by "taking time and laying out [what is expected] in [the] assignment, [stating] exactly what I am looking for." By laying out exactly what they need, he felt he was trying to tap into the professional

backgrounds many of the PBRTs brought with them. He also had experienced giving feedback as positive tool to use. He said:

Part of it is just giving them feedback after the assignment of 'ok here's the assignment, here's what you got on it, it's a fine grade don't worry about it, it's passing.' Even if it's what they consider terrible... it is usually an 85 or a 90, which is an 'A' or a 'B.' Then just taking time answering their questions about what I was thinking when I graded this or this is what wasn't there, and usually they are not going to be upset about the end result, they take it as 'well that's what I got' and 'that's what I did,' but they want to know why it wasn't right. It's just a matter of telling them.

Participant Four addressed the issue of PBRTs wanting to go "beyond the scope of the class" by meeting with them after class to discuss questions and topics more in-depth. She found when PBRTs wanted to go into more detail about a topic or if they wanted to share something they know, "that's where they often end up staying after class." She also allowed PBRTs to interact and share their life stories and experiences with the class. This way she could incorporate the PBRT student's life and work experience into the class topic and she finds it helps to validate what she was teaching. In one example, Participant Four discussed when a PBRT student, who had a child born with a defective heart, shared information in the class discussions. "You know, suddenly this is just not a professor talking garbage. Here is somebody who is doing it everyday." Participant Four included other examples from the nutrition program such as when a PBRT student was willing to show her insulin pump to a class; and when a PBRT student, who was in the military, brought in a sample of food he would eat in the battlefield. The class was able to discuss the nutritional needs of a soldier. "The class, when this young man talked, was absolutely quiet. They were just amazed." In a sense, she was allowing PBRTs to become a teacher with her by using their stories and examples, and tying their life experiences with the class topic to add richness to the class.

When it came to assignments in his paralegal class, Participant Five told PBRTs it was “ok to do more” than what was required. He did this to help prepare them for the type of detailed work they might need when working for attorneys. As for dealing with mixed classes, Participant Five had tried integrating PBRTs and non-PBRTs into assigned study groups. He mentioned:

I would intentionally put [PBRTs] with younger students....because I wanted them to trade ideas [and] attitudes....I would intentionally put the student with this group here where the students were doing better and if the student wasn't, I would intentionally put [that] student.... I [would] send them to the [PBRT students].

He primarily wanted non-PBRTs to learn to work together with PBRTs and to facilitate student success. But as he found out, he could not force “student success” on his students. He stated:

That was successful for a while, but then again, the bottom line is it is up to the individual how much success they want. If they aren't going to do it, they won't, but that was my intention of doing that.

He also used the pairing of PBRTs and non-PBRTs to quell the frustrations of some of the PBRT students who expressed annoyance with the questions non-PBRTs were asking. He looked at it as a smoothing-over of knowledge disparity. He said to the frustrated PBRT students:

You have to be patient with them. Even better yet, why don't you study with them? I put that on the table too. I say, 'Hey, you know, why don't you offer to meet with them and study with them? I mean, that will help you pull them along too. You can share some things, I mean, you have told some good stories in class, you worked for lawyers already, why don't you tell them some of that stuff.' Tell them in a classroom setting.

Participant Five would also try to pair up PBRTs with non-PBRTs in mentoring relationships. He related back to his college experience and how successful he felt it was, so he would try it with his students and found some success. Participant Five also had

strategies when dealing with PBRT students who had questions that were beyond the scope of the class. He would answer parts of the question which were relevant to the topic at hand, and then discuss the remainder of the question later in the course when it was appropriate. He said to the student:

Well I can answer that part of the question, but the other part is [a] tangent..., but if you remind me, or I will remember the question and I will write it down and then I will put a note when we get to that chapter....and flag it for when we get to it.

Participant Six's computer courses afford him the opportunity to use basic teaching strategies. Where he found the need to work with PBRTs was when they may already have seen some of the material before in the workplace or in prior classes. He may have a student "who has already seen all of this stuff and they really know nine-tenths of what I am going to say, I mean, just picking up a few items, I cannot upgrade the course for their sake." He had to explain to them that the course "is what it is" and they will have to be patient with the material. "They are pretty good about that, some of the busy [PBRTs] will miss more classes then, because they realize, OK I am not seeing a lot of new stuff." He also found PBRTs would want to share or validate their knowledge with the class. Many times their examples are good, but sometimes they were off-topic and he needed to try to "keep them on target" for the lesson of the day. He had to reemphasize patience:

I know that you have already seen what we are going to do four lessons from now, which is a better way to do it, but that is part of the plan....I cannot take them straight to the better way; you cannot take the rest of the students to that. We have to go here first...even though you sort of know what is coming.

Participant Seven was in a unique situation with her Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) course, which she teaches more frequently. "The Board of Nursing tells us what

we need to do. So, I kind of take the Board of Nursing's policies and procedures, and the college's policies and procedures, and I've started this new class." This being the case, a big part her CNA class "is performing a skill." Her class was "not a traditional class," she found PBRTs have a harder time grasping the hands-on skills they need to have. These skills need to be demonstrated and many are not successful the first time they try. "They're kind of shocked. They're surprised [because] they thought this would be a very easy class....They do great on my written exams....It's the return demonstrations of skills [that makes]...it [a] different class." What she did to help PBRTs succeed was to assist them with presentations and works with them on more of a "hands-on" basis. She had them do "lots of interactive assignments." In addition to working with PBRTs on their skills, Participant Seven had a strategy of seating assignments to force the PBRT students outside of their comfort zone.

They can never sit next to the same person in the classroom, and when they're performing the skills, they can never work with the same person. It's a short class; we're going to rotate....because I don't want any cliques developing.

Participant Seven also had found if she related her prior experiences with the class, it would help reduce the anxiety and struggles, particularly with PBRTs. She said:

I always tell them my stories of myself when I was in nursing school and say, 'I used to hate getting up in front [of the class] and having my classmates watch me perform a skill and I had to verbalize everything.'...I think telling them stories...hearing some life experiences, they realize we're all in this together, and we're all on this learning process together.

Thus enhancing the "relationships that have formed" during their time together.

Participant Eight found his best strategies were to challenge PBRTs to seek additional information on their own. He said:

I would... really encourage [them] to learn the process of where to find information on their own...We try the old adage about teaching someone to fish.

And, those students who have had some of the academic background are a little more familiar with how to go out and research answers to questions.

He found it worked well for PBRTs to be encouraged to “find their own answers,” thus challenging them while at the same time keeping them engaged with the class. In other words, he was helping them find meaning in their education. In addition to having PBRTs conduct outside research, Participant Eight would intellectually simulate and validate PBRTs by asking them higher level questions. He stated:

[I] try to challenge them more in the classes again with the level of difficulty of questions or have them tell me ‘What do you know about this? Why does this drug work in this particular instance?’, and have them explain it at their level. It feels like they’re being acknowledged in the classroom for having achieved something else or having had a more diverse educational background than maybe someone else in the class.

Bias

With all of the strategies the participants have developed to strengthen their experience of teaching and working with PBRTs, a few commented on some potential biases. The participants who commented on this topic say that it was not intentional, but that it was something to be aware of. More often than not, some of the participants realized that they needed to be mindful not to expect more out of PBRTs’ academic work. One participant said, “I don’t want to say that I expect more out of them because that would be unfair.” However, she said:

I [do] expect that [their work] will look better. So it will be formatted, they will put cover sheets where a lot of students will put their name at the top of the paper... if I don’t specify that they need a cover sheet. So I expect to see that.

When it came to grading, she also said:

As far as what the requirement of the assignment, as long as they are all met, I just kind of know if someone has done research at the bachelor’s level compared to someone at the CTE level. I don’t say ok well this now the ‘A’ paper because they went to 20 sites and you only went to two, so, you can’t have an ‘A’. I just

think that is unfair.

Participant Five had commented earlier that he has found PBRTs “usually do better work.” To help balance out his possible bias, he would grade the assignments in a certain order. He stated:

I will find myself grading certain papers last depending on the student. What I will usually do if I know a student whose work I have seen in the past as being above the others, I will grade those last....I don't want to read the best ones first ...I would rather start with the drop off one first, then get to the other ones, that way I can be fair when I go back and review the other ones paper and then go back and read them again, try to make any type of comparison or something like that.

Participant Three reflected on how he had developed his assignments based off of industry needs. He admitted that he did question himself from time to time whether or not he was being fair with his grading or not. On the other hand, he has experienced that PBRTs oftentimes “are really harder on themselves in terms of their expectations... than I am.” Another participant reflected:

I think one flaw, one error I do make, is that... [for example] a young student who is trying hard, verses [PBRT] students who has got a lot of this stuff, is doing good and yeah, I do start expecting more out of that [PBRT] student....I will catch myself, I mean I do like to push students and expect something from them so they work harder and get more out of it.

When the hypothetical situation of having a “pure” PBRT class (meaning a class comprised solely of PBRTs) was discussed, a couple of the participants had interesting comments. Participant One said he had never had one, but he would change his teaching style if he did to accommodate the PBRT students. He said he would be able to skip the basics and the class would be richer and more in-depth. Participant Two said that if she ever had a pure PBRT class, she would “up the assignments a notch.” However, with the content of her class, she still feels “everybody has to start from the beginning... Most

would have limited knowledge of the topic.” Finally, Participant Four said it would be much easier to teach a pure class because everyone would be there to learn.

Outside Role

During the course of the interviews, five participants touched on their experiences with PBRT students in a role outside of their normal teaching duties. These roles included being a career or guidance counselor, presentation coach, mentor, and/or advisor. Most commonly, the role involved helping PBRTs with career guidance.

Participant Two commented:

Some of them are afraid to really choose a career. So they are kind of exploring. I work with them in that area and focus during the lectures; focus on, you know, so here is an opportunity, you know a career opportunity that you may not have thought of.

She also focused on career preparation with PBRTs by having them create a “professional portfolio.” She did this to allow them to prepare for their job search and to build confidence as the program progresses. “It is really just a three ring binder, but we start with a resume, they have to submit a resume and a letter of reference... Everything that they achieve throughout the program goes into the binder and their goals.”

Participant Six found himself being a career counselor at times with some his PBRT students. He mentioned some PBRTs came to him expecting him to help. He provides job leads and gives them guidance about what jobs they should be looking for.

He stated:

They do come to me looking for some guidance about what to do, they are out there looking for what is the hot job of the day, which is really the wrong [way to approach it], if you chase that you are not going to get it....we are training people for the jobs, not, I mean, the ones that are there today, but also are going to be there in the future for them.

Participant Eight also experienced the role of offering career advice and assistance. He

mentioned:

Some of them will come to me, and I will be happy to assist them with whatever path they want and put them in touch with some of my contacts and friends that I've made throughout the years....So, a lot of it is facilitating the ability of interested parties to get together and talk about it.

In addition to the "professional portfolio," Participant Two had incorporated the use of technology with the practice of public speaking in her classes. She felt it was helpful for PBRTs to develop or improve these skills for their new careers. Participant Two also found herself becoming an informal mentor to her classes to help her students "figure things out." She went as far as to build in activities which lend to building self-confidence and self-esteem.

Participants Three and Five acted as program advisors for students in their specific programs. Even though this may be a required part of their teaching position, they utilized this opportunity to help PBRTs make the right choices for the program and their newly chosen career. Participant Three also found himself dealing with the insecurities of PBRTs. He said:

Usually, well the first thing that I will do during the advising is when [a statement] it comes up that ...will be something about, 'well I hope that I fit in, you know, I'm not sure that I am going to fit in.' I try to make sure that they realize that, at least half of the class is probably going to be their age or older.

Summary of Refining Teaching Styles to fit PBRTs

The master theme, *Refining Teaching Styles to fit PBRTs* described the participant's experiences with teaching PBRTs. The *Refining Teaching Styles to fit PBRTs* theme introduced four constituent themes: (a) teaching design, (b) adapting, (c) bias, and (d) outside role. Each of these constituent themes gave a more in-depth insight in how the participants attempted to meet the academic needs of PBRTs. The participants

found they needed to create a balance in the delivery of their course material to mixed classes. Each of the participants described their own experiences of how they modified their teaching styles or had developed new strategies to meet the academic needs of PBRTs. In addition, the participants found themselves participating in other roles outside of their normal teaching duties. It was this professional exchange that created a special dynamic between the participants and PBRTs.

Essence and Summary

As I reflected on the lived experiences of the participants at FLCC, *Professionals Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of Education* emerged as the essence of my study. The essence of *Professionals Working with Professionals* emerged when I thought about the participants' experiences as they were told to me. I was drawn into this feeling of professionalism and respect the participants had toward the PBRT students. As I listened to their stories, I heard how participants recognized PBRTs as professionals and connected with them. They could relate to these individuals who were there to make a career change or enhance the ones they already have. This career path was similar for the participants who all were once industry professionals and now community college instructors. Respect was evident in how they spoke of PBRTs. For the most part their examples were delivered with a tone of admiration; there was little negativity about PBRTs.

The essence of *Fluidity of Education* came from how the participants taught PBRTs. The delivery of education was not just the filling of an empty vessel; it was a circular exchange of ideas and information, resulting in collaborative learning. This transference of experiences and information between the participants and PBRTs

conjured up for me images of a lava lamp, two separate entities sharing ideas and information together in a warm free-flowing liquid. Circulating and unfixed, it became a fluid exchange of education.

The essence, *Professionals' Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of Education*, resembles a symbiotic relationship between the participants and PBRTs. They work together professionally, offer each other educational nourishment, provide support when needed, and spur growth of themselves. The following summary will describe how the findings are connected to the essence.

In summary, the manifestation of the essence exhibits itself through the six master themes described in this study: *Participants' Descriptions of PBRTs*, *Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms*, *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms*, *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs*, *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs*, and *Refining Teaching Styles to Fit PBRTs*.

In *Participants' Descriptions of PBRTs* the participants gave a portrayal of PBRTs as a group of students who represent a good portion of their classroom population; are typically older, back in school for career enhancement, and are very focused. According to participants PBRTs have a career mindset, a good work ethic, and bring life and work experiences with them into the classroom.

Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms indicated how participants determined who PBRT students in their classroom and program were if it was important that they know this information. The identification sets the stage for building relationships and for allowing the participants and PBRTs to acknowledge each others' existence and thus, begin their association.

The participants appreciated the academic capital that PBRTs bring with them, as well as the seriousness and focus that they display in class. These experiences developed the theme: *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms*.

Participants viewed academic preparedness as a key element of PBRTs being model students and professionals in the classroom. The participants valued the experience of professional level work and decision making that they get from PBRTs.

Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs highlighted the participants experience of mixed classes with both PBRT and non-PBRT students. In this small microcosm, the classroom, lived a diverse population of students with a variety of educational degrees and backgrounds. At first, PBRTs and non-PBRTs displayed fears and vulnerabilities towards each other. As time evolved, fear was replaced by bonding and vulnerability morphed into cross-learning relationships. Time became the equalizer and relationships evolved into communities. The classroom ecosystem became one in which there was a professional exchange of knowledge and information in a circular motion from PBRTs to non-PBRTs to teachers, back to PBRTs and so on.

While *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs* gave a glimpse into the world of the mixed class, *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs* tapped into the participants' inner-selves. The participants shared their feelings and thoughts about teaching PBRTs. They felt it is a natural fit to teach them because of the connectedness of being professionals. The participants were able to impart their skills and knowledge to PBRTs, fulfilling the metaphor of not just filling the vessel where prior knowledge or skills were missing, but quenching their academic thirst with the right nectar

In providing the nectar necessary to quench the academic thirst, the participants looked at how to deliver this libation to a group they consider the easiest to teach. The participants were able to formulate *Refining Teaching Styles to Fit PBRTs* that were both equitable and fair to PBRTs and non-PBRTs. Their goal was to create an environment which allowed the circular exchange of knowledge and information, with the added ingredient of acquiring skill sets, all without exclusion. In the end, the participants experienced being instructors, career counselors, advisors, professional coaches, and, most importantly, professionals working with professionals.

The phenomenological research method used in this study allowed me to interpret the lived experiences of the eight community college instructors and to discover what it was like to teach classes with PBRTs in them. In Chapter Five, I will discuss my findings and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Chapter Five presents a discussion of community college instructors' experiences with post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students. The purpose of this study was to learn, understand, and construct meaning of the lived experiences of faculty who teach PBRT students in the community college classroom. Although there was no specific literature on the experiences of community college instructors who teach classes with PBRTs in them, there were several topics in my findings which were closely associated with literature on PBRTs and adult learners. In the discussion section of this chapter, I revisit the literature for the associations to my findings. In the recommendation section I present my suggestions for further research.

Research Question Findings

The central research question for used for this study was: "From the perspective of community college faculty, what meaning is derived from their having PBRT students in their classrooms?" The following were the subordinate questions used to guide my research:

1. What is it like to teach PBRT students?
2. Have the instructors' teaching experiences changed over time?
3. What are the classroom dynamics in a mixed class of PBRT and traditional students?
 - a. What interactions do faculty observe between the two groups?
4. How do faculty teach to a mixed class of PBRT students and traditional students?

5. In terms of academic achievement, do faculty expect more from a PBRT student?

From the data collected, six master themes emerged: *Participants' Description of PBRTs*, *Participants' Knowledge of PBRTs in Their Classrooms*, *Academic Capital Displayed by PBRTs in Participants' Classrooms*, *Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs*, *Participants' Feelings of Teaching PBRTs*, and *Refining Teaching Styles to Fit PBRTs*. When reduced to their purist form, the essence of the phenomenon emerged: *Professionals Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of Education*. This essence depicts the professional interplay and exchange of knowledge between the participant and the post-baccalaureate reverse transfer (PBRT) students. It captures the feelings and lived experiences of the participants who teach PBRT students in the community college setting.

As I compared my findings to the literature, several common topics become apparent. The following are the topics for discussion: (a) describing the PBRT student, (b) PBRTs academic capital in the classroom, (c) dynamics and interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs, (d) general thoughts and feelings experienced when teaching PBRTs, and (e) final thoughts: an instructor's experience revisited.

Describing the PBRT

The participants offered different kinds of information that described PBRT students. For example, they described the numbers of PBRTs in their classes, how they refer to them, the age range of PBRTs, and their suspected reason for PBRTs coming back to the community college. Furthermore, all of the participants taught technical-based vocational programs or classes. According to the literature, the chances of having PBRTs in these programs and classes were greater. Computer science, nursing,

engineering, paralegal, health field, and horticulture courses were used as examples of technical programs typically populated with PBRTs (Pope, Turner, & Barker, 2001; Quinley & Quinley, 2000). Consistent with the literature referenced, participants for my study taught several of the programs mentioned.

The participants at Flat Lands Community College (FLCC) expressed that PBRTs represent a large proportion of students in their classes. They estimated that the number of PBRTs in their classrooms could be anywhere from 25-70% or higher. This estimate is well above the reported findings of 10-28% of students who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher in community colleges across the country (Phillippe & Valiga, 2000; Townsend, 2003; Quinley & Quinley, 2000). Additionally, Quinley and Quinley (2000) found as many as half of the PBRTs in the community college are there to prepare for a new career, whereas in my study no estimate was made by the participants.

Deleney (1996) and Klepper (1991) described students attending community college with a bachelor's degree or higher as "completer" reverse transfer students. Lambert (1994) was one of the first studies found in the literature that referred to this group as post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students. When describing this group of students, most of my participants were unfamiliar with the term post-baccalaureate reverse transfer or PBRT. However, when describing PBRTs, many of the participants in this study based their description on how they personally regarded them or experienced them in their classroom. For example, the term "older student" was used by almost all of the participants to describe the PBRT student.

The age of the returning students was discussed in the literature. McHugh (2003) reported that returning students were 30-35 years old. Pope, Turner, and Barker (2001)

reported the average age of returning students as 38 years. I found that participants estimated the age range of the PBRT students to be anywhere from 25-50 years old. Although these are estimates, it appears that the findings of this dissertation support the current literature.

When the participants of my study gave an account as to why PBRTs were coming back to the community college, it was unanimous: they felt PBRTs were there for some kind of career enhancement or career change because of being unhappy in the current career. Similar to my findings, Quinley and Quinley (2000) spoke to the idea that PBRTs are serious students and are back in the community college for a “second chance” (p. 1) at a career. They found many PBRTs were attending the community college for a step-up to “their first economically successful job” (p. 1), changing careers, or career exploration through course work. One form of career change that was not mentioned in the literature but was acknowledged by one of my participants was making the change from being a stay-at-home parent to a professional back in the workforce.

Townsend (2003), as well as Pope, Turner, and Barker (2001) agree that most PBRTs are seeking continuing education and not another advanced degree, thus they are in the community college to prepare for a career change or improve their career opportunities. Consequently, this was the same sentiment expressed by several of the participants at FLCC. One additional aspect addressed by the participants was PBRTs using the class as a stepping stone or gateway into loftier career ambitions.

Several participants mentioned that a job loss may be another reason why PBRTs have returned to FLCC. Windham and Perkins (2000) found the PBRT students need to return to the community college classroom due to changing technology and therefore the

need to upgrade skills. Windham and Perkins (2000) also discovered that PBRTs were primarily enrolled in vocational courses “for recertifying and or continuing education” (p. 61). This was similar to one of my participants who had PBRTs in her class to earn professional development credits.

PBRTs Academic Capital in the Classroom

The participants in this study held fond memories of their experiences with PBRTs and the academic capital these students brought with them into the classroom. The participants saw how PBRTs demonstrated their academic know-how in the classroom through class preparedness, asking questions, being more studious, and the desire to get better grades. They described strategies used by PBRTs to satisfy the need for earning good grades and for being successful in the classroom. Townsend (2003), suggested this drive was based on PBRTs having a prior educational graduate baseline by which to compare their current academic status.

In a study by Townsend and Lambert (1999), faculty and administrators commented that PBRTs have the capacity and know-how to navigate the “academic setting and demonstrate this knowledge in the classroom” (p. 74). The participants in this dissertation made similar observations. Understanding course documents, such as the syllabus or course assignments, made the PBRTs stand out from the non-PBRT students. In addition, several participants commented on PBRTs ability to write much better than non-PBRTs. They attributed this academic know-how to prior educational experience.

Another attribute of PBRTs recognized by my participants was the ability of PBRTs to ask deeper questions, respond to questions, and carry on meaningful discussions. Behaviors such as treating the course with seriousness, incorporating time

management and deadlines into their work, completing in-depth work on the assignments, and dressing better were addressed as professional qualities similar to ones found in the job place. Townsend and Lambert (1999) found similar characteristics in their study in which these same qualities were discussed. However, what was not mentioned in the Townsend and Lambert (1999) study was the level of professionalism PBRTs add to the academic capital they bring.

Dynamics and Interactions between PBRTs and Non-PBRTs

Having mixed classes of PBRTs and non-PBRTs was the norm for the participants at FLCC. They witnessed the two groups evolve from individuals into a community, watched the relationships build between them, and experienced the two groups helping each other out. In Townsend and Lambert's (1999) study, they developed the notion of institutional benefits gained by enrolling PBRTs in the two-year college. These benefits included the ways in which PBRTs assist "fellow students, positively affect classroom dynamics, demonstrate appropriate student behavior, [and] stimulate and challenge the faculty academically" (p. 73). The participants at FLCC experienced many of these same benefits in their classrooms. They saw the dynamic structure of the students change from two separate groups to a classroom community over the course of the semester while professional behavior and academic capital transferred from the PBRTs to the non-PBRTs. In addition, cross-learning relationships between PBRTs and non-PBRTs were developed which resulted in the sharing of academic and life experiences. Townsend and Lambert (1999) also found PBRTs to be a good resource for providing tutoring, academic advising, and helping with the formation of study groups which would result in PBRTs becoming good academic role models. The participants in my study also found this to be

true. This role modeling by PBRTs set an example for the younger non-PBRTs to follow, thus allowing them the opportunity to become better students. When study groups were formed, many times PBRTs and non-PBRTs would join together. In the study groups, the participants of my study witnessed PBRTs allowing the non-PBRTs to assume leadership roles.

General Thoughts and Feelings Experienced when Teaching PBRTs

The participants at FLCC expressed an enjoyment working with PBRTs. Generally the participants liked working with them and found them to be fun to teach and easier to interact with. Overall they favored the experience and were supportive towards teaching PBRTs. These same thoughts and feelings were found in Merrill's (2001) study in which instructors were asked if they like teaching adult students. The instructors overwhelmingly responded positively with "words such as highly motivated, enthusiastic and committed" (p. 13).

The participants in this dissertation described many positive attributes of PBRTs. Many of the participants appreciated the desire, focus, and dedication of the PBRT students. They admired the PBRT students' tenacity to speak up and not be afraid to share ideas, as well as to hold the faculty accountable to the policy and procedures of the course. All of the participants expressed some form of personal satisfaction of teaching PBRTs. Some of these same sentiments were found in Townsend and Lambert's (1999) study. They found faculty who saw PBRTs as a resource for non-PBRTs and a stimulant for faculty when PBRTs ask deep and meaningful questions. Pope, Turner, and Barker (2001) also determined that PBRTs are students who have returned to the community college with a purpose and have demonstrated high quality performance in the classroom.

Further, they found PBRTs life experience added to the total learning experience in the classroom. Pope, Turner, and Barker (2001) found the results of their study might have an impact on faculty teaching PBRTs. Giezkowski (1992) explained how the life experience of the adult learner adds a richness to class discussions, forcing both the instructor and student to challenge the theory being taught against what happens in the workplace. This was indicated by several of the participants in this study who found PBRTs wanting to go beyond the theory and into more detail and explanation to see how classroom information applied to real life scenarios.

Townsend and Lambert (1999) did discover some possible challenges presented by having PBRTs in the classroom. On an institutional level, they determined that the presence of PBRTs requires some adjustment for faculty. Unlike the traditional two-year student, PBRTs tend to challenge faculty on content and grades. Although being challenged on grades was not mentioned by my participants, there was some mention of being challenged on the course content. Several of my participants commented that some of the PBRT students found their classes to be too simple or not challenging enough and would either complain or not show up for class until the more challenging material was presented.

From a pedagogical perspective, Townsend and Lambert (1999) found PBRTs resent some teaching methods typically used by instructors and find them demeaning. This was the case in my study where one participant commented on a PBRT student who was upset with the teaching style of the participant. The PBRT student felt the instructor did not adapt specifically to his or her higher learning needs. Townsend and Lambert (1999) noticed that if an instructor tried to compensate and teach to the level of PBRTs,

they may do so at the expense of non-PBRTs. The participants in my study found this also to be true. It was not uncommon for a PBRT student to ask an in-depth question only to guide the discussion away from the subject matter. Sometimes these questions would be beyond the scope of the class which, in turn, meant that other students in the class would lose interest.

In order to meet the needs of a mixed class of PBRTs and non-PBRTs, participants at FLCC had refined their teaching styles. They accomplished this through adjusting teaching design, adapting their teaching style to meet the needs of PBRTs, and balancing the delivery of the course material to a mixed class. Examples of these refinements include incorporating equality in course design and evaluation, acknowledgement of prior learning, and establishing and clarifying ground rules for the class. When it came to adapting teaching styles, the participants each had his or her individual way of doing so. These strategies included establishing expectations of the course with PBRTs, deferring questions which were beyond the scope of the course until after class, and allowing the PBRT student to do additional independent research to enrich his or her learning. These strategies are similar to what Merrill (2001) found in a study about adult learners. The instructors in the Merrill study included more group work in order to make the courses comfortable to the adult learner.

When it came to teaching mixed classes of traditional aged students and adult learners, Merrill (2001) discovered that some instructors welcomed the older student to participate in class discussions and activities, citing “the adult voices help seminars to become interactive and dynamic” (p. 13). However, Merrill found that some instructors had problems with teaching mixed classes. The main problem was the older students

would tend to dominate the class discussion and, as a result, they found it harder to get any response at all from the younger, traditional-age students. Participants in this study found similar problems. In the beginning of the course, some PBRTs found the need to demonstrate their knowledge in class and, therefore, would tend to be energetic in answering questions, thus taking over class discussion time. Other participants had PBRTs dominate the discussion in their classes and as a result, the discussion would evolve into a one-on-one conversation between the PBRT student and the participant. Another participant incorporated the PBRT student's life experiences into the class. She found that allowing PBRT students to share their work and life experiences with the class helped to validate the PBRT student's knowledge and the course content.

One last area of discussion is the perceived role of the instructor. Several of the participants in this dissertation discussed roles they assumed beyond their normal teaching duties when working with PBRTs. These roles included being a career or guidance counselor, presentation coach, mentor, and/or advisor. From a different perspective, Giezkowski (1992) stated the instructor needs to manage several roles at once. In his study, older students look for the instructor to be more than just the traditional professor. For example, the older adult learner may view him or her as a traditional professor, where others may view him or her as a mentor figure. A third observation is the older adult learner may see the instructor as an equal whose expertise is in a different area. It may even be the case where an older adult learner is looking for a little of all three roles in the instructor. This multiple role identity, coupled with adjusted teaching styles ties back to my findings in which the participants do assume different roles at different times to meet the needs of PBRTs.

Final Thoughts: An Instructor's Experience Revisited

In talking to the eight participants in my study I have been given a glimpse into their lives as instructors through their own lived experiences. As it turns out, the participants and I have a lot in common with our experiences. Although I do not know exactly what it was like when they first realized they would be teaching a group similar to the EYD students, I did find there were some commonalities. We try to give these students all that we can in terms of academic satisfaction. We have to deal with some of the same issues, both positive and negative, and we have developed some of the same teaching strategies. The classroom dynamics and the interactions between the two different groups of students are very similar. We all share the joy of working with these “professionals” in the classroom, as well as creating an environment ripe for learning. In discovering the essence of *Professionals Working with Professionals - the Fluidity of Education*, I too can relate to this experience.

Recommendations for Further Research

In the previous section I incorporated my findings with the limited research on the experiences of community college faculty who teach PBRTs. In this section, I offer recommendations for future research.

This study provided an insight into the experiences of eight community college faculty at FLCC who taught classes with PBRT students in them. The findings chapter offered a glimpse into the phenomenon of their experiences teaching such a group. However, these findings prompt some questions for further inquiry. The following are two recommendations for further research.

The participants used words such as “good work ethic,” “focused,” and “responsible” when describing the characteristics of PBRTs. They also described how PBRTs presented themselves as mature students in the classroom. This brings about the question, does the experience of obtaining a bachelor’s degree contribute to the results and characteristics that were attributed to PBRTs or is it the factor of being an older student? The first recommendation for further study would be to look at the maturation of the non-traditional college student. Research could be conducted comparing PBRTs to older students without degrees to determine differences or similarities in academic maturity. Further research could explore the changes in academic maturity of students over the course of a four-year degree. In addition, research could determine the best academic practices of PBRTs versus those of mature non-PBRTs. These results may aid in the development of a course, seminar, or program to assist new students in becoming a “better college student.”

Post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students were noted as displaying a higher level of academic capital in the participants’ classrooms. The participants at FLCC viewed PBRTs as model students and acknowledged that they “know how education works.” The second recommendation for further study would be to look at what programs or teaching strategies could be used by the community college to assist non-PBRTs in becoming better students. What could the community college do to help younger students accelerate the acquisition of the academic maturity characteristics displayed by PBRTs? For example, research could be conducted to evaluate the application of several teaching theories, such as constructivism, to see if they can accelerate the progression of academic maturity.

The findings of my study show that the participants at FLCC experienced PBRTs as being academically well prepared for the community college. However characteristics of older students and accelerating academic maturity were beyond scope of my research. Thus, further study into these areas is warranted.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

LETTER TO COMMUNITY COLLEGE ADMINISTRATION REQUESTING SITE ACCESS

Date

Administrator Name

College Address

Dear (Administrators Name):

Thank you very much for meeting with me today to discuss the possibility of conducting my doctoral study at (*Community College Name*). As I mentioned, I am interested in understanding the experiences of faculty who teach classes with post-baccalaureate reverse transfer (PBRT) students in them. I feel that (*Community College Name*) would be an ideal site and would like your permission to conduct my study on the (*local*) Campus.

As part of my protocol, I will be submitting an application for approval to the Colorado State University Human Research Committee (HRC) along with a draft of the participant consent form and a letter of approval from the host site. Once I have received the authorization to proceed from the HRC, I will forward you a copy of the approval letter. As for the selection of participants, my research will only involve interviewing about 10 faculty members who meet the criterion of having taught classes with PBRT students in them. Each participant will receive and sign the consent form before the interviewing process begins and in order to protect the confidentiality I will create a pseudonym for each participant and (*Community College Name*). Once the study has been completed, the results will be compiled in my dissertation; I will send you a copy of it when it is finished.

Thank you once again for your time and consideration in this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (*phone number*).

Respectfully,

Scott R. Smith

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE E-MAIL SCRIPT TO PARTICIPANT

Instructor name
Address

Hello (*Name of Instructor*),

My name is Scott Smith and (*Gatekeepers name*) suggested that I contact you. I'm conducting a research study to understand the experiences of community college faculty who teach classes with post-baccalaureate reverse transfer students (students who have earned a bachelor's degree or higher and have returned to the community college for courses) enrolled in them for Colorado State University under the guidance of Dr. Clifford Harbour in the School of Education (please note: this study is not sponsored by (*Community Colleges name*)). I am looking for participants to be interviewed for 60-90 minutes on the topic of these experiences. There are no benefits in participating and your participation is voluntary. Would you be interested in hearing more? Please reply to this e-mail or call me at (*phone number*).

Thank you in advance for your consideration and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Respectfully,

Scott R. Smith

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FOR FACULTY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

Consent to Participate in a Research Study Colorado State University

TITLE OF STUDY: Community College Instructors Experiences with Post-Baccalaureate Reverse Transfer Students: A Phenomenology

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Clifford P. Harbour, J.D., Ed.D., Associate Professor, School of Education, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO, 80523 Tel: 970.491.5425 E-Mail: cliff.harbour@colostate.edu

CO-PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Scott R. Smith

WHY AM I BEING INVITED TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH? We are asking you to participate in this study because you have been identified as someone who has taught a community college class in which post-baccalaureate reverse transfer (PBRT) students were enrolled. If you agree to participate in the study, we will ask you about your perspective in two private confidential interviews which will be recorded using a digital recorder. The first interview may last up to one and a half hours. The second interview may last up to one hour. You will be asked a series of open-ended and focused questions about your experiences of having taught classes with PBRTs in them.

WHO IS DOING THE STUDY? This study is being conducted by Scott R. Smith at Front Range Community College. Scott is a doctoral student at Colorado State University and is conducting this research as a part of his doctoral dissertation. Scott is the Co-Principal Investigator in this study. Cliff Harbour is an Associate Professor in the School of Education at Colorado State University. Cliff is Scott's dissertation advisor and is the Principal Investigator in this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY? The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand community college instructor's experiences of teaching classes with PBRT students in them. Participants will be interviewed to understand these experiences. Private, individual, face-to-face interviews will be conducted, and transcript data will be analyzed to identify emergent themes reflected in the participant's stories. The interviews will be open-ended and in-depth to discover the unique, layered experiences and allow the participants to discuss relevant and perhaps unanticipated topics related to these experiences. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the data will be applied.

Page 1 of 3. Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHERE IS THE STUDY GOING TO TAKE PLACE AND HOW LONG WILL IT LAST? The study will take place at Front Range Community College. The study is scheduled to run from August 1, 2007 to May 31, 2008.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO? This study will collect data through an analysis and interpretation of interview transcripts. If you agree to participate in the study we will interview you in private at a date, time, and location that we both agree upon. You will be asked to participate in a follow-up interview. Your identity and the identity of your institution will remain confidential.

ARE THERE REASONS WHY I SHOULD NOT TAKE PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known reasons why you should not take place in this study.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS? There are no known risks or discomforts to you if you participate in this study with the exception of possible embarrassment by disclosing information that may adversely reflect on you. It is not possible to identify all potential risks in research procedures, but the researcher(s) have taken reasonable safeguards to minimize any known and potential, but unknown, risks.

WILL I BENEFIT FROM TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? There are no known benefits to you if you decide to participate in this study.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART IN THE STUDY? Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate in the study, you may withdraw your consent and stop participating at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

WHAT WILL IT COST ME TO PARTICIPATE? The only cost to you for participating in the study will be the time needed to conduct your interviews. We estimate the first interview will take approximately one and half hours and the second interview approximately one hour.

WHO WILL SEE THE INFORMATION THAT I GIVE?

The information that you give will be seen by the Principal Investigator, Co-Principal Investigator, and a professional transcriber. Selected excerpts from your interviews may be reviewed by the members of my dissertation committee. They may also be included in my dissertation or incorporated into journal articles or conference presentations. In all such cases, pseudonyms would be used to identify you and your institution.

CAN MY TAKING PART IN THE STUDY END EARLY? We are unaware of any reason why your participation in the study would be ended once your interview begins.

WILL I RECEIVE ANY COMPENSATION FOR TAKING PART IN THIS STUDY? No, you will not receive any compensation for taking part in this study.

Page 2 of 3. Participant's initials _____ Date _____

WHAT HAPPENS IF I AM INJURED BECAUSE OF THE RESEARCH? The Colorado Governmental Immunity Act determines and may limit Colorado State University's legal responsibility if an injury happens because of this study. Claims against the University must be filed within 180 days of the injury.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS? Before you decide whether to accept this invitation to take part in the study, please ask any questions that might come to mind now. Later, if you have questions about the study, you can contact the principal investigator, Clifford P. Harbour, at 970-491-5425. If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Meldrum, Human Subjects Administrator at 970-491-1553. We will give you a copy of this consent form to take *with you*.

WHAT ELSE DO I NEED TO KNOW?

Your signature acknowledges that you have read the information stated and willingly sign this consent form. Your signature also acknowledges that you have received, on the date signed, a copy of this document containing three pages.

Signature of person agreeing to take part in the study

Date

Printed name of person agreeing to take part in the study

Name of person providing information to participant

Date

Signature of Research Staff