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GAINING UNDERSTANDING OF CAPITAL DISPARITY IN THE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE CLASSROOM FROM A FACULTY PERSPECTIVE THROUGH ACTION
RESEARCH

DISSERTATION

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the
Doctor of Education degree in Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation
at the University of Kentucky

By
David J. Heflin

Lexington, Kentucky

Director: Dr. Jane M. Jensen, Professor of Educational Policy Studies and Evaluation

Lexington, Kentucky

2015

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

GAINING UNDERSTANDING OF CAPITAL DISPARITY IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE CLASSROOM FROM A FACULTY PERSPECTIVE THROUGH ACTION RESEARCH

Positioned between the engagement rich secondary school and the highly social four-year institution, the community college has limited opportunities to connect with students. If community colleges are to meet challenges of providing access to education for students who have traditionally been underserved by higher education, and hold up to new measures of accountability in graduating students, two-year institutions must recognize that faculty-student engagements occurring in the classroom are crucial. Perception and appreciation of student's capital by faculty through purposeful engagements grounded in theory provide opportunity for understanding capital disparity that exists in the community college classroom.

Active participation of experienced faculty in an action research study was conducted and identified potential gaps of student-faculty interactions in the classroom, determined best-practice methods for increasing student-faculty interactions, incorporated identified best-practices in the classroom, and reflected upon their efficacy in improved student engagement. Sharing lessons learned by participants in an action research process with other practitioners, holds promise to increase our understanding of faculty funds of knowledge in the community college setting as well as processes that can be employed to help bring up capital and level out disparity.

Keywords: action research, capital, community college, faculty

David J. Heflin

Student's Signature

11/24/2015

Date

GAINING UNDERSTANDING OF CAPITAL DISPARITY IN THE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE CLASSROOM FROM A FACULTY PERSPECTIVE THROUGH ACTION
RESEARCH

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Date

*Dedicated to all community college faculty
who work to level the field of play
and explain the rules of the game to their students.*

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How do you thank the people who have helped and supported you along an educational journey that is decades long? To my wife, Carla, you have been my true compass, a friend and guide in our life together that has included education from its onset. I could not have accomplished any stage of our journey together without your support and love.

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To my college family, thank you for the opportunity and support to continue my educational journey. You have given me a gift that I will work to repay by giving back to the students, faculty, and staff. Your tireless work to help level the field of play and help students reach their goals inspires me, and I will work to continue the high standards you have set.

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CHAPTER 1 - Context

Introduction

With multiple missions that serve a growing number of diverse students, two-year institution faces many challenges. Limited resources and low retention rates are hallmarks of the community college, and finding what works in two-year institutions is difficult (Caralee, 2011; Horn and Nevill, 2006; Tinto, 1993; Zumeta, Breneman, Callan, & Finney, 2012). Positioned between the engagement-rich secondary school and the highly social four-year institution, the faculty and staff at the community college have limited opportunities to interact and connect with students. Theories of retention and pedagogy in higher education, originally designed for four-year institution and secondary schools respectively, have been used to try and explain engagement and involvement issues within community colleges with limited success (Astin, 1990; Bean, 1980; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1975). Increasing our understanding of classroom engagement practices and the goals and expectations of faculty who teach in community colleges is warranted, and holds promise in broadening the research of two-year institutions. Identifying processes faculty find meaningful and worthwhile in the classroom holds potential in gaining understanding of students whom are culturally different than the higher education institution which is open to all.

Community college research has often focused on student entry characteristics, or their perspectives garnered by surveys, interviews, and/or focus groups. This line of research has led to partial explanation for community college success using student outcome measures such as course completion, term-to-term retention, graduation, or transfer to a the four-year institution (Ansperger, 2008; Barnett, 2011; Bers & Smith,

1991; Craig & Ward, 2008; Deil-Amen, 2011; Halpin, 1990; Horn & Nevill, 2006; Tinto, 1993 & 2012). Also of note in community college research literature is the recognition of a “disarticulation” (McGrath & Spear, 1991) of culture between student and institution, the latter often represented by the faculty member teaching in the classroom (Bensimon, 2007; Berger, 2000; Kuh, 2001; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tierney, 1999). With consideration to quality faculty-student interactions as a common theme within the research, there appears a need for some form of recognition by community college practitioners of differences in culture and varying backgrounds brought by students to the classroom environment (Astin; 1990; Barnett, 2011; Deil-Amen, 2011; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Karp, Hughes, & O’Gara, 2010; Rendon, 1994; Tinto, 2012). However, scant attention has been paid to the perspective of faculty members and how their engagements with students help them understand and cope with the variety and disparity of backgrounds they encounter in their classrooms. Higher education researchers note the quantity and quality of interactions between faculty and students hold potential for building understanding and helping lead toward community college success. With a lack of out of class activities with which to engage students, community colleges must look toward faculty driven, purposeful interactions for processes that hold potential in understanding varied student cultural dispositions and attitudes in the classroom (Barnett, 2011; Deil-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010; Ortiz, 1995; Thompson, 2001; Tinto, 1997).

Capital and the Potential for Disparity

The concept of student capital relates to the resources, social practices and cultural assumptions individuals have acquired over time and the ways they apply those resources in different social fields. Student capital includes but is not limited to; cultural

(that which is gained in the household and family), social (that which is gained from interactions with friends and others), and academic (that which is gained in the educational environment), with each form of capital carrying value and meaning for the individual (Berger, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; Deer, 2008; Moore, 2008). This value and meaning of capital for individuals provides them the opportunity to make sense of the social environments they engage in and interactions that occur. The varied degrees of cultural assumptions brought to social interactions may or may not allow individuals to understand the rules and expectations of a given social context. The misalignment of individual cultural assumptions and the expectations of a given social arena create a disparity of capital between the two, leading to misunderstandings for those involved (Bensimon, 2007; Maton, 2008; Thomson, 2008; Tierney, 1999). For community college students, the capital they bring with them to the institution of higher education, whether it is cultural, social, and/or academic has the potential to be misaligned with the culture of the institution creating student capital disparity. This disparity of capital creates problems for the student in understanding the expectations and rules of the community college, as well as issues for faculty who interact with the student in the context. This study attempts to ameliorate the effects of this cultural disparity by working with faculty to recognize cultural differences and improve classroom interactions.

Community College Dilemma

The call for higher education attainment at all levels grows, and finding what may increase community college success metrics is demanded as a means for America to thrive in today's knowledge-based global economy (U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2006). Increasing the educational level of Americans holds potential to increase

the salaries of those who obtain higher degrees as well as increase the tax base for communities. With increasing number of citizens with degrees, the opportunity for an enhanced quality of life for everyone, not just the student obtaining the degree is touted (Jones, 2011; National Governors Association Chair's Initiative [NGACI], 2011; Zumeta et al., 2012). These calls are not new to community colleges. However, what has changed is the growing number of nontraditional students entering higher education via open access institutions. With nearly half of the higher education student population entering the community college environment, and considering community college's long-standing low retention and "success" rates, finding methods to increase the number of students who obtain degrees that in turn may lead to an increased quality of life for all is becoming complicated (Caralee, 2011; Horn and Nevill, 2006; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System [IPEDS], 2013; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tinto, 2012; Zumeta et al., 2012).

Understanding processes within two-year institutions, and how those processes influence success for the student and community college, has been a limited focus of researchers for decades. Some believe the opportunities afforded by two-year institutions serve as a democratizing effect, providing a path toward higher education for individuals who may not be deemed educationally adequate by the academic elite or who lack the funds and mobility to attend four-year institutions. Others note that the community college aids citizens who could not "afford" higher education in some degree, be it educational wherewithal and/or monetary means. Still other researchers think the community college, in its many incarnations, has served as nothing more than a diversion, a cooling-out place (Clark, 1960) for students who may have had the academic

wherewithal to achieve even higher educational attainment, but remain stratified within an educational and economic hierarchy, often times due to their inability to navigate and acclimate to a new educational culture (Beach, 2011; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Grubb, 1989; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tinto, 1993 & 2012).

Based on existing research, one should consider two-year institutions as neither a failure to those who come to the institution, as their education may provide training and offer an opportunity for employment, nor a successful high-performing transfer-machine generating large numbers of student's access into four-year institutions. Rather the current incarnation of community colleges appears to be a metamorphosis of an institution that responds to influences of decreased state funding, ever-changing educational policy focuses, and complicating student populations, in an attempt to still serve all who enter the doors toward whatever educational endeavor they may be seeking (Beach, 2011; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; Grubb, 1989; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tinto, 2012). Today's higher education reality is that the American two-year postsecondary institution serves as both a gatekeeper and a gateway (Dowd, 2007) for nearly half the undergraduate students in the United States (Horn & Nevill, 2006) with postsecondary educational aspirations.

Although student entry characteristics may be beyond the two-year institutions control, appreciation of a student's background may allow higher education institutions the opportunity to adjust efforts to be more effective for students they serve. Two-year colleges in particular, with their high attrition rates (Caralee, 2011; Horn & Nevill, 2006; Tinto, 1993), their open-access missions that cater to individuals who are often entering the educational institution with unique attributes (Bensimon, 2007; McGrath & Spear,

1991; Tierney, 1999), and their limited institutional-student engagement opportunities must understand their own particular organizational culture and ways that it might be supportive to students they serve. For the community college, it falls to faculty on the front-lines of these limited interaction opportunities to understand students in their classroom and find processes that work toward helping the student comprehend the culture of the institution (Bensimon, 2007; McGrath & Spear 1991; Tierney, 1999).

With recognition that two-year faculty-student interaction opportunities happen in the classroom (Ortiz, 1995; Thompson, 2001; Tinto, 1997), the role that faculty and student interactions might play in understanding and countering forms of capital disparity holds potential for community colleges. Unfortunately, a mere ten percent of the scholarly literature has focused on two-year institutions over the last decades of higher education retention research (McClenney & Marti, 2006). Community college faculty receive slightly more attention, with Twombly and Townsend (2008) noting eleven percent of all articles published in three major community college journals from 1990 to 2000 focusing on faculty in any form. Most of this research, however, tends to focus on faculty satisfaction, career pathways, and recommendations for teaching rather than faculty's role in finding processes that lead to student success. Student perspectives of what may or may not be working to keep them at the institution has been explored with mixed results (Astin, 1990; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Bers & Smith, 1991; Halpin, 1990; Tinto, 1993; Wild & Ebbers, 2002) and range from variables under some control of two-year institutions such as the quality and quantity of faculty-student interactions in and out of the classroom, to variables under student control such as high school G.P.A., work and family obligations, and enrollment status. We are left to wonder how decisions are made

by faculty concerning the engagement of students with varied backgrounds, and how those decisions fit into their recognition of potential student capital disparity existing in their community college classroom.

Purpose of Study

This study sheds light on the ways in which a small group of faculty teaching general education courses in a rural area of the southeast region of America came to understand the student capital disparity in their classrooms, what processes they chose to help “level up” capital in their community college classrooms, and what they learned from this process. As author, I engaged in an action research project, exploring faculty perceptions and engagement experiences with students in their classrooms. Specific attention was paid in the conceptual framework of the project to participants’ “funds of knowledge” (Bensimon, 2007), i.e. faculty “know-how” and understanding garnered as experienced community college educators.

Through collaborative interactions with purposefully selected, experienced faculty teaching credit-bearing general education courses at what I will call East Side Community and Technical College¹ (ESCTC) during the fall 2014 and spring 2015 semester, faculty understanding of capital disarticulation identified in the literature that affects faculty-student engagements was explored. Participants reviewed conceptual models of best practices, reflected upon previous experiences engaging students in the classroom, identified actions they could apply in their classrooms, generated data regarding the efficacy of these practices through interviews, self-reports, journals, and

¹name of institution has been changed

observation, and produced recommendations for best practice in the context. The results of this action research hold promise in finding interactions that are working for faculty to help them understand student capital disparity within the community college classroom and how purposeful processes employed by faculty in the classroom might help students increase their success in navigating their collegiate environment.

Significance of Study for Community College Leaders

Institutions often rely on an evaluation model based on inputs, processes, and outputs to help make sense of what is or is not occurring within organizations or programs (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2011). Practitioners and administrators of community colleges should look toward the process portion of the logic model in gaining understanding of context, and what components in the environment may be under some control. As open enrollment institutions, community colleges have minimal control of inputs. These inputs range from gender and age, to high school GPA and test scores for students. Outputs for community colleges are defined in a variety of ways and are often intertwined. Outputs may be measured by the institution as a student's success through course completion or learning of specific course objectives. However outputs can be a more complex measure such as retention through graduation and transfer on to a four-year institution. While inputs and outputs are important and a focus of the community college, it is in the processes (in this particular study, the faculty perception and use of engagements in the classroom at the community college) that the institution has the opportunity to influence (McClenney & Marti, 2006; Reason, 2009).

Although the specific sample of the study cannot be generalized to the full population of community college faculty, the qualitative approach of this action research

permits a richer and deeper look at what may be affecting the success of students in the community college classroom from a faculty perspective, allowing the opportunity, “. . . to demonstrate how participants’ perspectives may diverge dramatically from those held by outsiders.” (Yin, 2011). Therefore, the potential for generalization for the study does exist with institutions that are similar to the one studied.

Literature Review - Overview

Theory can provide clarity for individuals, serving as a starting point for building understanding of complex and intertwined dynamics occurring within an environment. Theory holds potential for helping practitioners save energy by looking toward variables that may be influenced or are under some control of the practitioner, providing a process for learning and growth by limiting redundancy from repetition of past mistakes or fallacy of subjectivity. The following literature review will take a look at the community college as a whole moving to the needs of students in community colleges and then onto the role engagements play in helping students understand the environment. I then provide a foundation of theories developed to bridge the gap between academic culture and student capital that provide a conceptual model for the applied action research project (Bandura, 1986; Dassance & Harr, 1989). I next move to explore the status of faculty in community colleges and expand upon their role regarding interactions with students in their classrooms. In higher education, theories of student socialization and involvement tend to meet practice in the multiple environments of the typical campus. Within the context of the community college these engagements are often limited to the classroom (Ortiz, 1995; Thompson, 2001; Tinto, 1997).

Community College

Created from a desire to provide education for individuals beyond secondary school, with an understanding that not all students may be ready or desire a four-year higher education, today's community college provides many individuals the opportunity for a higher education. From humble beginnings as a junior college and a continuation of high school thru the 13th and 14th level in the early 1900's, through the technical college evolution and into our current incarnation of community and technical college state systems, the history of the two-year postsecondary institution has been full of multiple missions (Beach, 2011; Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2007). Today's community colleges are an American invention serving nearly half of all students who desire to continue their education, providing an introduction to higher education for many students who have been traditionally underserved in higher education, while remaining a cost effective choice when compared to four-year institutions in obtaining the first two years of an undergraduate degree or a vocational and technical degree which may lead to employment.

Unfortunately, the community college mission of serving all who enter her doors creates problems which are difficult to handle. Whether it is enrollment and retention issues, vocationalization versus transfer focus, or minority and low-income student education concerns, the two-year institution faces a reality of changing focusses and competing demands. The community college is seen by many as a democratizing institution allowing access to higher education to everyone, but also viewed by others as a diversion, or as Clark (1960) posited a "cooling-out" institution for students who may be capable of even higher educational attainment but are diverted to vocational and

technical degrees (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Community colleges serve as neither a failure to those who came to the institution and diverted into training that provided them an opportunity for employment, nor as successful, high-performing transfer-machine, generating large numbers of students access into the four-year institutions. Rather the current incarnation of the community college is a natural metamorphosis of an institution, designed to adapt to an every-changing educational dynamic, student population, and economic demands by serving all who enter her doors toward whatever educational endeavor they may be seeking. (Beach, 2011; Brint & Karabel, 1989; Clark, 1960; Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2007; Grubb, 1989; Horn and Nevill, 2006; & U.S. Department of Education [USDE], 2006)

The Needs of Community College Students

Students entering community colleges are often those whom have been underserved by education in some capacity, with a variety of existing characteristics that are out of the control of the institution (Beach, 2011; Dougherty, 1994; Dowd, 2007; Tinto, 2013; Zumeta et al., 2012). These input variables tend to run counter to the academic culture of two-year institutions (Astin, 1990; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Bers & Smith, 1991; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1993 & 2012), and often contradict understood and empirically tested input variables that influence student success in higher education (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Bers & Smith, 1991; Halpin, 1990; Tinto, 1993 & 2012; Wild & Ebbers, 2002). These weighted community college student input characteristics include, but are not limited to; ethnicity, minority-status, commuter, part-time enrollment, non-traditional age, and low socioeconomic status (Astin, 1990; Zumeta et al. 2012) which can classify a community

college student as being “nontraditional” according to McGrath & Spear (1991). But where minority students and students of differing ethnicities have been studied in regards to faculty-student interactions and how those engagements play a role in retention of the student in higher education (Cabrera, Castaneda, Nora, & Hengler 1992; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendon, 1994; Tinto, 1993 & 2012), students of low socio-economic status have often been lost in the research data (Tinto, 2006). This distinction is important, with research noting lower graduation rates of low-income students compared to high-income students, regardless of race or ethnicity, and across the gamut of higher education institutions (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2014; Zumeta et al., 2012).

Low-income student success issues directly affect community colleges. Community college students are more likely to be first-generation students from lower socio-economic backgrounds, having little support or understanding of the academic environment and culture of higher education, especially when compared to four-year institution students (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tinto, 2012; Zumeta et al., 2012). Two common themes have emerged from the limited two-year institution interaction research which relate to this incongruence of student expectations and backgrounds with the demands of the two-year higher educational institution; (1) recognition of the role that multiple conflicting priorities and time constraints of the community college student play in limiting interactions with faculty and the institution (Astin, 1990; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Bers & Smith, 1991; Halpin 1990; Lundberg, 2003) and (2) a lack of understanding by entering community college students of the culture and expectations of the two-year institution as well as a lack of

recognition and understanding by practitioners of the dispositions and cultural assumptions the students brings to the institution (Berger, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tierney, 1999).

Unlike students at four-year residential colleges with the possibility for multiple and varied interaction opportunities, community college students find themselves almost exclusively engaged in the classroom of their institution, interacting with the faculty member teaching the class and working to understand the new environment in which they have entered with the capital they have at hand. For community college students, faculty in the classroom become the embodiment of the institution and represent the culture of the organization, and from the student's perspective, interactions with faculty members in the classroom play a pivotal part in their understanding of the context and how their cultural assumptions may or may not match with what is expected in the environment (Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000b; Karp et al., 2010; Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011; Walpole, 2003).

Faculty-Student Interactions Role

Researchers have noted that in-class interactions, perceived by students as being engaging, validating, and inviting by faculty, lead to positive engagements that increase motivation, self-efficacy, and involvement of the student in the classroom (Barnett, 2011; Deil-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010; Purkey, 1992; Rendon, 1994; Tinto, 1989, 1993 & 2012). Researchers also note that pedagogies that are active and engage students in meaningful classroom interactions hold promise in improved student achievement and persistence (Bonwell, 1999; Braxton, Bray, & Berger, 2000a; Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan, 2000b; Lundberg, 2003; Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson, 2005). Overall,

these positively perceived interactions between faculty and students influence student understanding of the context and how their capital may fit with the culture and expectations of the institution. The cited research, based on student perspective, suggests that faculty interactions and processes help students appreciate their place in the educational culture, and hold potential in allowing the student to achieve academic success.

The role interactions play with respect to retention of higher education students has been explored for decades with varied findings at four-year institutions (Bean & Metzner, 1985; Craig & Ward, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Spady, 1970; Tinto, 1993). Vincent Tinto's (1975) social and academic integration theory holds the distinction of being the most thoroughly studied and debated by educational researchers and scholars regarding student attrition and retention over the past few decades, that is tied to faculty-student interactions (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005). Tinto (1975) defined academic integration as relating to the students adjustment into college academic life. This includes faculty-student interaction in and out of the classroom, quality study habits of the student, and academic support services. Social integration relates to the student's assimilation into the social fabric of the institution. This includes peer relationships, involvement in student activities, and cultural and ethnic harmony. Stated simply, Tinto's (1975) integration theory posits that with other characteristics being equal, the more involved the student is in the social and academic parts of the institution, the more likely they are to acclimate and persist at the institution.

Validation Theory

Rendon (1994) posited that validation (being recognized, respected, and seen as valued) of a student's ability and self-worth by faculty was a key component for persistence and success of the student in a two-year institution. In a qualitative purposeful sampling study, Rendon and a team of researchers interviewed 132 first year nontraditional students (low socio-economic class, first generation student, ethnically diverse) from 4 geographically and ethnically diverse higher education institutions that included a community college. One of the important findings from the research, relating to community college practitioners, was that nontraditional students who felt academically unprepared and inadequate begin to believe in their educational abilities and aspirations through validation. Through validation of the nontraditional student, the researchers found higher degrees of academic and social involvement by students. One of the key components of validation noted was the quality and quantity of instructor engagement with the student. Faculty who treated students with respect, who were approachable, who showed a genuine concern for students, as well as exhibited a student-centered pedagogy, created validation for interviewed students that led to feelings of adequacy and potential for educational success. Other community college scholars have supported Rendon's (1994) findings, through qualitative and quantitative exploration in the two-year environment, noting validating experiences led toward persistence and success of the student from the student's perspective (Barnett, 2011; Deil-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010). Rendon's (1994) theory suggests that faculty who valued the capital students brought with them to the classroom and that use processes of engagement that help the student understand how their cultural dispositions may fit within the context,

help students acclimate to the environment. Validation theory holds potential in understanding what and how processes employed by faculty help them understand student capital disparity existing in their classroom.

Involvement Theory

Astin's (1990) involvement theory explains multiple issues relating to persistence and attrition of the undergraduate student and is based on Freud's concept of "cathexis" where people invest psychological energies on others. Astin (1990) explores faculty-student interactions in the classroom, and the learning experiences that occur within its confines, making a strong case for the importance of having students take an active role in their education experience, be engaged in the learning process, and expend efforts to obtain knowledge.

Involvement theory recognizes time constraints students' face in being involved in their learning and with the institution, noting the distinction between two-year and four-year institutions and their varied student populations. Astin (1990) considers community colleges as places where the involvement of both faculty and students seems to be minimal, noting that most students are commuters, and a large proportion attend college on a part-time basis, presumably manifesting less involvement simply because of their part-time status. Where Astin concedes that one of the important characteristics of involvement theory is the quality and quantity of involvement by the student in academia in general, he suggests that it is the engagement of the student by the institutional member, often represented by faculty at two-year institutions, as being a key component to involvement by the student with the learning process and environment. Involvement theory highlights when purposeful engagements and active learning strategies should be

used by faculty and how those processes by faculty may help students become involved in the classroom environment, even when the student's capital may hinder their understanding and involvement from a faculty perspective.

Invitational Theory

Purkey's (1992) invitational theory provides another possible process that may work for community college students with differing kinds of cultural capital for practitioners to consider. With a focus at the open access elementary and secondary levels of education that are full of varied student capital, invitational theory holds potential for two-year institutions and practitioners to help counter existing capital disparity. Purkey (1992) suggests that an inviting environment, one that is filled with; trust, respect, intentionality, and optimism can lead to student success. Invitational theory is founded on the idea that individuals perceive their environment from unique perspectives, therefore influencing their interpretation. Invitational theory stresses the importance that individuals involved need to gain an understanding of who they are, and the environment in which they exist. These concepts of invitational theory highlight the role capital plays for individuals in understanding one's context and how they "fit" into the context.

Purkey's (1992) invitational theory focuses on five areas of interaction that exist in the educational environment an individual will encounter. These five areas of interaction within the educational environment are; people, places, policies, programs, and processes. Purkey (1992) notes that four levels exist for individuals involved within the environment. These levels of engagements with participants are; intentionally disinviting, unintentionally disinviting, unintentionally inviting, and intentionally inviting. Based on Purkey's (1992) invitational theory one may posit that an intentionally

inviting culture established in the community college classroom by faculty using purposeful processes would allow students to perceive themselves as being welcomed into a supportive environment, and create understanding of the environment by the student with their own cultural resources intact.

Combining faculty-student engagements occurring in the classroom under the concept of integration theory holds promise in helping explain student understanding of the community college environment. However, these sociological theories place sizable responsibility for understanding community college students squarely on the shoulders of faculty in the classroom. Research regarding afore mentioned faculty-student engagement theories has continually explored the perspective of the student. One could hypothesize that students who feel academically unprepared, or those “lacking” academic capital valued by the educational institution, may begin to believe in their abilities through engagements with validating faculty providing an intentionally inviting classroom environment. We could imagine faculty who treat students with respect, who are approachable, who showed a genuine concern for students, and who have a student-centered pedagogy may be creating involving environments, especially for those students with different social and/or cultural capital compared to that of the educational institution, thereby increasing their understanding and involvement in the context.

Student Capital Disparity

Critical to our understanding of faculty-student interactions occurring in higher education is the concept of capital or cultural resources (assumptions, dispositions, attitudes, and cultural practices) that students bring with them to the institution of higher education. Using a basic definition of capital from Merriam-Webster (2014) as being “a

store of useful assets or advantages” as our starting point, community college students have varying degrees of capital. Students often enter two-year institutions with characteristics that appear to limit their capital. These entrance cultural resources of the student may hinder their ability to gain understanding and/or their abilities in navigating the culture of the community college.

As the meeting place for students and faculty, the higher education institution may seem like an extraneous land to students, with its own language, rituals, and culture that are unfamiliar and different from their own. Faculty are often seen by students as “natives” to this culture of the higher education institution, and students perceive themselves as being “foreigners”. This disparity between the student’s cultural resources and the institution’s culture can create misunderstanding and conflict for the student. The student may believe she is faced with a choice as she enters the academic institution; (1) decide whether she should stay, and find ways to conform with the new culture of the educational organization, which may seem to require that she give up part of her social and cultural capital, or (2) leave the higher education institution and its foreign culture, thereby maintaining the value of her existing social and cultural capital, and potentially perpetuating an attrition cycle often seen with nontraditional students who don’t “fit” the mold of the institutional culture (Bensimon, 2007; Bourdieu, 1986; Kuh, 2001; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tierney, 1999; Tinto, 1993 & 2012; Valdez, 1996; Wells, 2008).

Expanding our definition of capital, we look toward a definition of a student’s cultural capital through the work of Tierney (1999), who notes the work of Bourdieu (1986) regarding cultural capital of individuals;

Bourdieu coined the term “cultural capital” to refer to the set of linguistic and cultural competencies individuals usually inherit and sometimes learn . . . the

culture in which individuals reside determine whether or not they have the cultural capital to attend college. (p. 83)

In this sense, all individuals own capital, but the cultural assumptions they have acquired from their family and home community may not be that required or valued by the higher education institution they attend.

Further development of our capital definition highlights the work of Wells (2008) and the concept of social capital. Wells (2008) provides us with a definition suggesting that social capital is what the individual gains and learns through interactions with others, and proposes that cultural capital (that which is inherent in the family dynamic in which an individual is raised), and social capital (that which is learned through the interactions of the individual with others), is often intertwined and cannot be separated.

Finally, our definition of capital turns to academic capital. A student's academic capital is the student's abilities and confidence to perform in the learning environment and is provided from previous educational experiences or inherited from their family and home community. When looking at community college students, researchers note characteristics that denote a lack of academic preparedness and skill, a deficit of academic capital. A community college student's dearth of academic capital is often correlated with a lack of academic success, and can be measured by characteristics such as a student's high school GPA, placement scores, and/or parental educational level (Astin, 1990; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Tinto, 1975, 1993, & 2012). However, McGrath and Spear (1991) note that community college students may not "lack" academic capital, rather they may simply not understand the academic culture of college or be able to apply the academic dispositions they do have to the new setting and suggest that ". . . such students need to be invited and enticed to join and to stay".

Incongruence of Student Capital and Institutional Culture

In 1993, Tinto noted the role of incongruence, or lack of fit, of the student with the institution being as much as 75% of the explanation for attrition of students in higher education. Other researchers (Spady, 1970; Astin, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Bean & Metzner, 1985) have acknowledged a need for the student to be a part of the institution in some form or capacity in order to find a measure of success. These foundational researchers of attrition/retention appear to place the onus of congruence with the institution's culture on the student. Tinto (2006) notes that the early attrition/retention research often blamed the student, "Students failed, not institutions. This is what we now refer to as blaming the victim." (p. 2)

In 2001, Kuh noted that organizational culture is what defines the institution as distinctive, as well as what it does in supporting and understanding its students. Educational researchers studying diversity and student success find that many institutions of higher education have an existing organizational culture that is founded on a white, middle-class perspective (Bensimon, 2007; Berger, 2000; Tierney, 1999; Valdez, 1996). Community college's high numbers of nontraditional students, with different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds, creates a student population with varied academic, social, and cultural capital that does not necessarily match the culture of the community college which is often white, and middle-classed (McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tinto, 1993 & 2012; Zumeta et al., 2012). For the two-year college with its diverse student population who are unlikely to share the institution's mainstream cultural, having all students "fit" into the culture of the institution seems unrealistic.

By recognizing existing organizational culture and student capital differences, we see a need to shift the onus of congruence from the student, with limited understanding of the educational culture in which they are entering, to two-year institutions of higher education and the practitioners within the field. Bourdieu (1986) theorized that any social environment, including education, creates an un-level field of play for participants, highlighted by differences in understanding of the context and rules, especially for those who are just entering on to the field. Education researchers support and build upon Bourdieu's theory and its application regarding students as they enter the realm of higher education institutions. Valdez (1996) suggests that when an educational institution's culture fails to recognize the uniqueness of student's that enter their institution, with their varied cultural capital, disconnect may occur which often times leads to misunderstanding for students. McGrath & Spear (1991) note that the community college should work to embrace nontraditional student's "disarticulation" of culture with the institution and find faculty processes that help to close the existing "disarticulation" gap. Bensimon (2007) argues that the responsibility for understanding the importance of a student's capital falls upon the practitioner at the higher education institution.

Educational researchers re-positioning of cultural "fit" efforts as the responsibility of institutions of higher education and their practitioners, suggest that colleges need to explore ways to affirm the multiple social and cultural capital of their students, allowing them the opportunity to acclimate to the culture of the institution with their own cultural resources intact (Bensimon, 2008; McGrath & Spear, 1991). Tierney (1999) posits that understanding of student's cultural differences by educational institutions may actually create a, "more democratic spheres of educational opportunity". Bensimon (2007) as well

as McGrath & Spear (1991) suggest that the institutional practitioner, the faculty member, represents the link between student and institution of higher education, and this link hinges on faculty members abilities to recognize the role they play in helping students understand the culture of higher education.

Classroom Focus

If we want to begin to understand the role faculty play in helping to create positive student outcomes, we must consider the work of Bensimon (2007) regarding the importance of institutional practitioners (faculty members) in student success. The community college classroom is where the process of education occurs and is where the potential for processes used by faculty begin to take shape. However, one should note that processes used by faculty to engage students are not well understood by researchers or even by those faculties who are themselves employing the processes.

Bensimon (2007) notes that faculty tend to use processes in the classroom based on their own “funds of knowledge” that have been developed through academic experiences occurring over time. Funds of knowledge encompass the understanding of situations, the defining of problems, and the sense-making of the environment and its members by practitioners. Processes, based on funds of knowledge, being employed by faculty may or may not be grounded in developed and understood theories of education or faculty-student engagements, but may instead just be “know-how” practices which provide faculty a basis in which to engage students with varying degrees of knowledge and effectiveness in accomplishing the task of education. However, what appears lacking in Bensimon’s definition of “funds of knowledge” is a consideration of capital resources of the practitioner, which can also shape their practices and processes within the context.

The Role of Community College Faculty

Two-year institutions rely on a combination of full-time and adjunct (part-time) faculty to teach courses at their institutions (American Association of Community Colleges [AACCC], 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2014). According to the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (IPEDS, 2014), community college faculty are predominately white (81%), tend to hold a Master's degree (63%), and spend nearly 20 hours a week in the classroom engaged in teaching. Most community college faculties are discipline/content experts, and lack formal training in pedagogy when compared to secondary instructors. Many faculty members spend their first few years in community colleges focused on gaining expertise in teaching. Community college faculty members are no different than four-year faculty members in this regard. However, what is unique to community college faculty, when compared to four-year faculty, is the large number of nontraditional students with different levels of dispositions populating their classroom (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Dougherty, 1994; McGrath & Spear, 1991; Tinto 2012; Zumeta et al., 2012).

With 80 percent of community college faculty activity being instruction in the classroom (NCES, 2014), and the majority of community college student time spent with faculty in the classroom (Ortiz, 1995; Thompson, 2001; Tinto, 1997), it appears prudent to explore processes that center on faculty-student interactions that are occurring in the classroom environment. Unfortunately, where higher education research has glanced at the community college student (Astin, 1990; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Tinto, 1993, 1997, & 2012), research on community college faculty is sparse, and where it does exist, is either tied to four-year faculty experiences or basic quantifiable data (McClenney &

Marti, 2006; Townsend, Bragg, & Kinnick, 2001; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). The lack of attention given to faculty who are teaching nearly 50% of students entering higher education pose problems in finding processes and policies that may build our understanding of the context that is the community college and what is or is not working within that context. With more than 60 percent of community college faculty having more than 10 years of experience (NCES, 2014), the potential for gaining understanding of processes used in the classroom by exploring the faculty perspective of faculty-student interactions from faculty with enough experience to engage in the endeavor (Richlin & Cox, 2004; Murray, 2002) can provide valuable insight into what is happening, and perhaps working, in the community college classroom. However, what is missing from the research is the faculty perspective of the what, how, when, and where of interactions being used to engage the student in to their classroom.

Faculty Learning Communities

One area of community college faculty research that does exist, is faculty learning communities and their effects on improving not only student achievement, but understanding by faculty of the critical role they play in helping the student understand their role within the context (Cox, 2004; Dufor, 2004; Jackson, Stebleton, & Laanan, 2013; Little, 2003; Murray, 2002; Richlin & Cox, 2004). Well-developed faculty learning communities have been touted as a means for finding insights and improvements of practices among faculty who participate, and have been shown to provide a positive impact on student achievement (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2007). However, concerns with faculty learning communities have been brought up regarding their implementation as well as their overall effectiveness. This troubling line of research regarding faculty

learning communities note that they tend to either focus on the first year or two of faculty instruction, when the faculty member is limited in her ability to understand the context, or that programs fail to follow through on measuring outcomes of student achievement and/or what was learned by faculty after their participation (Murray, 2002). While faculty learning communities that focus on expanding the knowledge of faculty on their student's needs and the faculty role in student achievement hold promise (DuFour, 2004), some argue that faculty learning communities may actual create "highly isolated and insular groups" (Little, 2003) that don't allow opportunities to share gained knowledge with other practitioners.

Researchers have noted the importance of reflection by faculty learning community participants as holding potential in helping enhance teaching practices as well as gaining insight into what may or may not be working in the classroom (Caffarella & Zinn, 1999; Kreber & Cranton, 2000). Hubball, Collins, & Pratt (2005), in a study of two cohorts of faculty learning communities consisting of twenty-four University of British Columbia faculty covering two different eight-month periods, noted that the use of a quantitative tool (Teaching Perspectives Inventory) to allow measurement of faculty reflection and its effect on teaching methods. However, the authors highlighted that it was the addition of a qualitative method (semi-structured questionnaires in regards to faculty cohort member's reflections) that allowed for a richness of data that helped link the practice in the classroom to specific changes in faculty thinking. These studies lend credence to further exploration of the role that faculty learning communities at community colleges may hold, in particular their role in garnering the perspective of faculty engaged in a collaborative process. Faculty learning communities at community

colleges could provide opportunity for faculty to share insights with one another regarding the students that populate their classroom, the backgrounds they as faculty bring to the classroom, as well as processes used in the classroom.

In a qualitative study specific to community colleges, Jackson, Stebleton, and Laanan (2013) looked at faculty involved in a student learning community at a large Midwestern urban community college. Of note in interviews with fourteen faculty participants involved in the study was insight into individual student's stories, the background students were bringing with them to the classroom, as well as a clearer understanding by participants of the importance of quality engagements with students in the learning community. The authors provided quotes from participants, highlighting faculty learning garnered from their participation in the study, but the snippets of interviews also revealed reflection by faculty on their processes and engagements occurring in the classroom leading to insights on student's background and potential for processes that could be employed to create parity for students with the expectations of faculty and the institution.

How Can Faculty Help Students Bridge the Divide?

Faculty who create positive environments and use quality practices in their classrooms matter to students involved in the context and determines their perception of the environment (Bonwell, 1999; Braxton et al., 2000a; Braxton et al., 2000b; Lundberg, 2003; Smith et al., 2005). Chickering & Gamson (1987) note the importance of how the faculty member teaches the subject matter in the classroom, i.e. the processes that they employ, as being pivotal to improving undergraduate education. Their concept of seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education speak to established theories of

interaction in higher education and have been noted in the research as a positive predictive influence on student persistence.

In their look at engineering education, Smith, Sheppard, Johnson, & Johnson (2005) highlight our understanding of Chickering & Gamson's work, and noted that faculty should look beyond content of courses, and look toward processes of teaching and how engagement of students matter. The researchers noted that when faculty focused on the process of actively engaging the student, student learning and achievement increased. In a study of full-time, first-time students, Braxton, Milem, & Sullivan (2000b) found that "faculty classroom behaviors play a role in the student departure process." Braxton, Bray, & Berger (2000a) also noted in a quantitative research study of 696 first-time, full-time students, that what faculty do in the classroom, particularly their perceived teaching skills by students, matters toward student persistence. When we consider Smith et al. (2005) and Braxton's et al. (2000a & 2000b) studies, looking exclusively at 4-year institutions and a private research university, we begin to see how purposeful faculty processes could be of considerable importance to community college practitioners and constituents.

In an empirical study using the Community College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CCSEQ) from over 5,000 student participants from 56 community colleges across the nation, Thompson (2001) suggests that faculty should consider practices that are inviting and engaging with consideration of who their student is in mind. Thompson (2001) posits that faculty who are employing effective classroom strategies may help improve student outcomes and self-efficacy. However, this research only looked toward the student's perception of how engagements were occurring in the

classroom. What was lacking, and is lacking throughout higher education research, is the faculty perspective regarding engagements employed to help better understand students in their classrooms.

Putting It Together

For community colleges, faculty who teach in the classroom represent the institution, and how they teach matters to community college students they teach. With varied student cultural assumptions that may not fit with the culture of the two-year institution, or the faculty that represent that culture (Berger, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; Tierney, 1999), the community college needs research that looks at what is occurring between the student and faculty in the classroom. This research should be grounded in theory and applicable to the practitioner, allowing for a clearer understanding of the environment and an ability to assess processes that are being employed.

Overall, research specific to the community college, particularly the role of faculty, is deficient (Townsend, Bragg, & Kinnick, 2001; Townsend, Donaldson, & Wilson, 2005). With regards to the role faculty-student interactions in the classroom may play in persistence of the community college student, McClenney and Marti's (2006) work with Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) noted that less than ten percent of the engagement research literature was focused on two-year institutions. Where research has consistently noted the importance of faculty-student interactions in higher education, a lack of attention has been given to the faculty perspective and practices employed regarding faculty-student engagements. Expanding our understanding of faculty-student interactions at two-year institutions with a focus on faculty processes grounded in understood theories of education is long overdue. Gaining

an understanding of processes employed by faculty from faculty themselves, holds potential for understanding what is working in the classroom that helps counter existing student capital disparity (Cabrera et al., 1992; Deil-Amen, 2011; Barnett, 2011).

Study Focus

Empirical research regarding theories of higher education has centered on the perspective of the student. However, the faculty member in the classroom plays a critical role in the process of education. What is lacking in the research is the perspective of the faculty member engaging the student in the classroom. This dissertation tested the application of interaction theories described by working with a group of experienced community college faculty over the 2014 fall and 2015 spring semester in an action research study at one institution. Through shared experiences and collegial discussion revolving around faculty-student engagements occurring in the classroom, exploration of faculty practices that garnered insights into the capital resources students bring to the classroom, and the how, when, and why of faculty-student interactions used in the classroom to assess and balance the capital was obtained. Beginning by understanding faculty perceptions of student cultural attitudes, their funds of knowledge, laid the foundation for development of individual action plans, and provided participants an opportunity to understand the capital disparity existing in their community college classrooms. The dissertation research study explored how the use of purposeful actions centered on established theories of engagement might provide students an opportunity to gain capital and understand the field of play that is the community college classroom from a faculty perspective. Reflection and analysis of action plans by participants garnered insight into faculty perception of student capital disparity existing in their

classrooms and processes that could be employed to level the playing field and explain the new set of rules for students in the community college classroom.

Explanation of Terms

Throughout this dissertation certain terms will be used interchangeable requiring a clear explanation. The term capital will be used when referring to capital theory as proposed by Bourdieu and others, when referring to the study focus, or when using the qualifiers cultural, social, or academic. The terms cultural resources, cultural assumptions, cultural dispositions, cultural attitudes, and cultural practices will be used interchangeably with the term capital. The use of these synonyms for capital reflects the inherent characteristics and qualities of students entering the community college classroom, and for the purpose of this study imply a neutral stance when considering one's capital. These synonymous terms of capital used in this study highlight the diversity and levels of capital individuals possess when they enter community colleges, while also recognizing that community colleges have historically been open to all who want to enter her doors no matter ones' cultural resources. The term field will be used during theory-based discussions throughout the dissertation, with the synonym of arena used when the discussion turns to the community college classroom and the institution. The use of a variation of terms carrying similar meanings helps alleviate concerns regarding repetitiveness when reading the dissertation, while providing clarity of meaning throughout the dissertation, as discussions move between theory, practice, and findings.

Chapter Map

The first chapter of the dissertation serves as an introduction, providing an overview of the focus of the research study and the need for research into the effects of cultural disarticulation in the community college classroom. I provide a basis for the importance of a faculty focus in this study, as well as a basic rationale for methodology in the dissertation research. The chapter highlights what community college leaders might gain from the study. Chapter one contains a literature review, providing the reader a theoretical overview of community colleges, their faculty, and their students. The chapter details the case for using a qualitative action research approach to garner the perspective of participants in the study, and provides an explanation of the theoretical-based engagements highlighted in faculty learning community meetings and interviews during the action research study and employed by participants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the purpose of the study and explanation of terms.

Chapter two is the methodology of the action research study employed. I provide an overview of action research and its role in this particular context. I provide the reader the rationale for selecting participants, the time-line of the study, and expectations for the educational research based on the area of focus as well as generated research questions. My multiple roles within the research are mapped out for the reader as well as insight into challenges encountered during the study. The chapter concludes with limitations and research concerns.

Chapter three provides individual participant insights starting with an understanding of each participants funds of knowledge and their own personal capital, the ways in which they came to recognize the capital disparity that may be occurring in

their classroom, selection of their action plan based on their funds of knowledge and review of theories of engagements and capital, and their thoughts regarding the role action research played in helping them gain understanding of student capital disparity existing in their classroom and the role they as faculty play in helping “leveling out” capital.

Chapter four provides a reflection of the study based on my role as facilitator from review of collected data and information. General themes developed across the five individual cases are discussed, with exploration of themes relevance to theory and practice being a part of the chapter. I also cover ideas for future research based on the action research study.

Chapter five provides recommendations for faculty development activities based on the action research study. I provide an explanation of why activities used in the action research study hold enormous possibilities for community colleges, and their faculty as a faculty development tool. I highlight how faculty development activities hold potential for faculty learning which extends beyond a basic exchange of pedagogy practices and concepts of student learning and into a holistic, long-term approach which provides faculty the opportunity to reflect and gain a deeper understanding of their role in the community college classroom.

CHAPTER 2 - Action Research Design and Methodology

Overview of Research Design

This study describes an action research project with active participation of experienced community college faculty teaching general education courses in a large-size community and technical college located in the southeast region of America. The goal of the project was to gain an understanding of student capital disparity occurring in the community college classroom from a faculty perspective. The participants were invited to engage in a faculty learning community centered on the concept of understanding differences between faculty and students' capital and faculty funds of knowledge. During their first meetings, participants identified potential gaps of faculty-student engagements occurring in their classroom, explored the faculty perception of student capital resources, and determined best-practice methods to increase and enhance faculty-student interactions with an emphasis in understanding student capital. Participants then incorporated these identified best-practices in their classroom, and reflected upon their efficacy in improved faculty-student engagements as well as their own funds of knowledge. Using participant observations of the faculty learning community along with analysis of faculty journaling, observations of classrooms, and interviews with participants, I was able to gain understanding of their processes of student engagements in the community college classroom during the 2014 fall and throughout the 2015 spring semester.

Action research is about involving the participants in the research, from the beginning to the end of the study (Creswell, 2012). Stringer (2014) notes that action research focuses on what participants within the context find meaningful and worth the

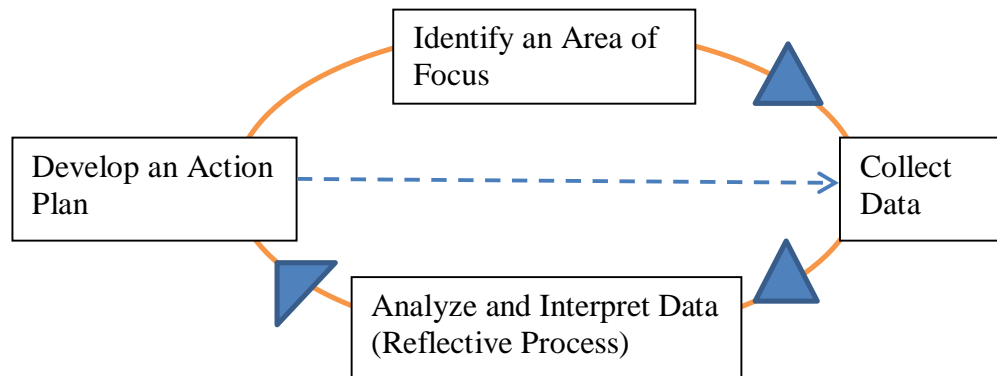
effort, in order to actively participate in helping find processes that may help clarify their environment. Action research strives to gain understanding of social context from those directly involved in the environment, thereby building a basis of knowledge that may improve practices and increase efficacy of one's work. Action research allows for exploration of experiences by participants, allowing for sense-making of phenomenon occurring within an environment.

Ferrance (2000) notes that a key of educational action research is that it, “. . . is carried out within the context of the teacher's environment—that is, with the students and at the school in which the teacher works—on questions that deal with educational matters at hand.” (p. 1). Exploring processes under some control of practitioners and administrators at two-year colleges by actively involving those who are engaging students on a daily basis, lends itself to taking a collaborative action research approach. Action research is fundamentally about gaining knowledge and using garnered information to improve practice from those who are actively involved in the context. Action research allows for consideration of theories of education with an understanding that theory alone may be lacking in providing an explanation to the dynamics occurring in the environment. Taking an action research approach helps to counter arguments that educational research may not take into consideration the everyday reality of practice within the environment, and allows for the development of a better understanding of the funds of knowledge practitioners employ in the context.

The dissertation study followed a dialectic action research approach similar to one proposed by Mills (2007) which begins with identifying an area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data, and developing an action plan. The basic components

of a dialectic action research approach are connected in a loop with arrows beginning at identifying an area of focus and working clockwise to connect the different components as illustrated.

Figure 2.1
Dialectic Action Research (Mills, 2007)



An important component of collaborative action research is the analysis and interpretation of data by participants, also known as the reflective process. The reflective process of action research allows for interpretation of gathered information by participants who are actively engaged in the context of the environment. Gathered data and analysis, allows the opportunity for dialogue to occur among participants, sharing insight into what and why things occur in the context. Reflecting on what is happening in the classroom environment, allows participants to consider how practices may be improved, rather than concentrating on why things are done in a particular way.

Discussions among participants involved in action research should occur in a collegial and open manner in collaborative action research. The open and honest atmosphere of collaborative action research should be encouraged by all participants, thereby creating an environment that allows for discovery, conducted without judgment, and amenable to honest deliberation. Identifying best-practices and developing an action

plan do not sound the end of the collaborative action research process. Instead, attempting learned practices within the study environment restarts the cycle of collecting data, sharing, thinking and reflecting on newly gathered information among participants, and allows for continued growth and gained knowledge by all who are participating in action research and is noted by the dotted line of the dialectic action research approach (Ferrance, 2000; Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2014).

Essential to a collaborative action research process is for the researcher involved to assume a non-researcher role, remembering that action research seeks to create a “community of inquiry” (Stringer, 2014) founded on a democratic, equitable, and reciprocating relationship among participants. Action research is not about a researcher doing a study on others (Mills, 2007). Action research is about recognizing that “Without intimate knowledge of local context, one cannot hope to devise solutions to local problems.” (Guba, 2014). By involving individuals engaged in the environment to be active members of the research process, the researcher allows for accumulation of knowledge and potential for improvement by individuals directly involved in the context.

As facilitator in the study, I assumed a critical action research approach, working with participants to look for processes of enlightenment, freedom from the trappings of tradition and habit in education, and seek a democratic process through active participation of others (Mills, 2007). I assumed multiple roles inherent to the action research process. As needed I acted as facilitator, host, scribe, listener, associate, and questioner (Ferrance, 2000; Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2014). I attempted to perform these roles without judgment or preconceived notions of the participants or their practices, helping to establish evaluative validity as noted by Mills (2007).

I assumed a postmodernist stance as defined by Mills (2007), recognizing that social contexts of the study does not allow for one testable truth or impartiality. Qualitative methods are useful in helping describe relationships among a variety of “realities” within a particular setting, and an in-depth exploration using interviews, observation, journals, and group discussions through collaborative action research, allows the possibility for understanding the complexity of social contexts in the community college classroom. The community college is an organization where people interact with other people, and those human interactions are open to multiple and complex interpretations. These interpretations create multiple “realities” based on subjective understanding of the interaction. Therefore, listening to individual’s “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) of the context that they actively engage in, garnered a better comprehension of the interactions occurring and the environment in which they occurred.

Hara (1995) acknowledges the strength of a qualitative approach in helping explain the complexity of psychological dynamics of individuals. Within community college settings, interactions most often occur between students and faculty, thereby creating meaning of context for individuals based on their perspective of engagements. However, individual constructs of one’s environment are not based on just engagements occurring within the environment. Individual perspectives and meaning are also influenced by what individuals bring to interactions, often defined in the educational research literature as being an individual’s entry characteristics (socio-economic status, years of experience, race, gender, etc.) or as one’s capital be it social or cultural, (i.e. that which is learned through interactions with others or learned through a family dynamic) (Bourdieu, 1986; Tierney, 1999; Walpole, 2003). Therefore, using a collaborative action

research to gain an appreciation of multiple subjective interpretations of interactions occurring in the community college classroom from a faculty perspective was accomplished (Ferrance, 2000; Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2014).

Setting

The study was conducted on the campus of East Side Community and Technical College¹ (ESCTC), which is a rural, large-sized, public two-year institution as defined by Carnegie Classifications, and accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). ESCTC is a traditional, open access college offering students a variety of higher education attainments, with a dual focus of Associate of Science, Arts, and Fine Arts degrees for transfer to four-year institutions, as well as Associate of Applied Science degrees, diplomas, and certificates for technical programs toward career fields and employment opportunities.

From the combination of the technical college and junior college, ESCTC serves students from four bordering states. However, the majority of the student population comes from ten counties which surround ESCTC. With a student enrollment of approximately 7,000, ESCTC is a predominately Caucasian campus with over 85% of the student population designating themselves as white according to 2012 data. ESCTC is similar to most community colleges in the nation with a majority of part-time enrollees (65%), a higher ratio of female students versus male students (58% versus 41%), and a large percentage of “older” students (44% of students over 24 years-old.) (Zumeta et al., 2012). Of particular note for this study is the near 90% of the student population

¹name of institution has been changed

receiving some form of financial aid at the institution, over 60% of the student population being Pell-eligible (East Side Community and Technical College [ESCTC], 2014), and over 60% of respondents to the 2012 Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) at ESCTC having neither parent with any type of college degree. Although not serving a diverse population as studied by other community college researchers (Cabrera et. al, 1992; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Rendon, 1994), ESCTC does serve a population that represents many of the criteria attributed to community college students that results in a disarticulation of capital in the classroom.

The faculty of ESCTC is composed of an approximately 45/55 mix of full-time and part-time faculty (ESCTC, 2014) which is unique compared to a national 33/66 mix of full-time and part-time faculty (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2014). Based on full-time ESCTC faculty responses to the 2012 Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), 78.8% (63/80) of respondents hold the rank of Assistant Professor or higher, with 81.4% (65/80) having 5 plus years of teaching experience in higher education. Sixty of the eighty full-time faculty respondents noted a Master's degree or higher level of education, with 87% (52/60) noting a Master's degree. With 80% (64/80) of full-time faculty respondents being 40 years old or older, and an equal distribution of males and females, ESCTC faculty demographics align with national community college faculty trends (NCES, 2014).

Ensuring student preparedness and degree quality has become increasingly challenging for the institution of higher education that has continued to accept those who are most academically underprepared or underserved with open arms. With limited opportunities to engage students at the community college, the classroom becomes a

pivotal area for interaction between faculty and students. General education courses provide the foundation for two-year degrees and are where many faculty/student interactions take place at ESCTC. These 100 and 200 level general education courses serve as gateways to higher level courses at four-year institutions as well as gatekeepers into many healthcare technical programs offered at ESCTC.

The focus of this study was therefore on general education courses that serve as a gateway and sometimes the barrier to community college degree attainment at ESCTC. Two of seven divisions contain the majority of general education courses offered at ESCTC. These two divisions are; Humanities, Fine Arts, & Social Sciences (HFASS) which house soft sciences such as sociology, psychology, English, and communications, and Science and Mathematics which house hard sciences such as anatomy and physiology, college algebra, chemistry, and trigonometry. During the fall 2013 semester, 5,979 students were enrolled in nearly 250 offerings of 56 courses in the HFASS division, and in the Science and Mathematics division 3131 students were enrolled in 82 offerings of 34 courses. Courses for consideration for the action research project within these two divisions were selected based on a high number of sections offered, high student enrollment, and a success rate of less than 80%. With these parameters in mind, the project included faculty teaching in the soft sciences of English (ENG 101 or ENG 102), communications (COM 181 or COM 252), and general psychology courses (PSY 110) as well as hard science courses of science (BIO 137 and BIO 139).

Table 2.1
ESCTC Course Breakdown - Fall 2013

Course	Number of Sections	Number of Students	Success Rate (A, B, C, or D)
ENG 101 (Writing I)	44	938	67%
ENG 102 (Writing II)	13	297	67%
PSY 110 (General Psychology)	20	702	76%
COM 181 (Basic Public Speaking)	16	391	83%
COM 252 (Interpersonal Communication)	9	212	78%
BIO 137 (Anatomy & Physiology I)	9	385	57%
BIO 139 (Anatomy and Physiology II)	4	128	80%

The Participants

Participants in this qualitative research study were faculty with at least five years of teaching experience in the credit-bearing, general education courses described above who taught face-to-face courses in both the 2014 fall semester and 2015 spring semester. Faculty were recruited based on their teaching a similar course from the previous academic cycle at the institution of study. Based on targeted courses in the soft and hard sciences listed, five faculty members at ESCTC agreed to participate, meeting the requirements of teaching at least five years in the general education courses selected, as well as teaching in said courses in the previous academic cycle.

Area of Focus Statement

The area of focus for this action research study was on how this group of faculty recognized capital disparity in their classroom based on their own capital and funds of knowledge and how they created involving, validating, inviting, and integrating experiences to acknowledge these differences in student capital through an action plan working toward leveling the capital within the classroom.

Research Questions

A sub-set of research questions was generated from participants during initial faculty learning community meetings, journals, and interviews. This sub-set of questions helped create understanding of their perception in exploration of faculty-student engagements relating to student capital differences that were occurring in their classroom and processes that were being used and developed during the study to provide capital opportunities for students.

- How do funds of knowledge develop for faculty?
- Why does the type of engagements with students' matter in helping level capital in the classroom?
- How do faculties manage disparity of capital occurring in their classroom?
- What engagement strategies employed by faculty helped level the capital in the classroom?
- What role may action research play in the development of community college faculty?

The Research Project

Faculty first engaged in an action research practice in the form of a faculty learning community experience (Appendix A). Participants attended a 2014 fall semester faculty learning community (FLC) meeting where they were introduced to the focus of

the research study. I provided participants information which examined theories of student capital and interaction. The handouts and articles focused on Tinto's integration theory (1975), Rendon's (1994) validation theory, Astin's (1990) involvement theory, Purkey's (1992) invitational theory, as well as theories of student capital developed by Bourdieu. Participants discussed and reflected on processes they had used in the classroom relating to understanding their role in faculty-student engagement through the interaction theories provided, and their "funds of knowledge" as suggested by Bensimon (2007). Participants were also provided information regarding capital disparity and disarticulation of culture as discussed by Berger (2000), Tierney (1999), McGrath & Spear (1991), and Bensimon (2007). Faculty discussed and reflected on their comprehension of student capital and student capital disparity within their classes and processes they employed or might consider employing to help students garner capital. Faculty were asked to consider the information that had been provided and how they might use the information in developing an action plan for processes in their classes for the spring 2015 semester.

Establishing a time when all participants could meet was accomplished through survey-style software (Doodle) which allows individuals to choose from a set of dates and times I had selected, thereby providing them the opportunity to pick one or more times to meet which were not in conflict with known scheduled events. I choose dates and times for participants to choose from that did not conflict with participant class times, college-wide meetings, or division meetings. However, even though all participants selected to meet on one particular date and time for FLC meetings, issues (one participant was involved in a car wreck and the other had to attend a meeting called by leadership at

the college) arose limiting the involvement of participants in the initial meeting. Three of the five participants were able to attend the initial FLC meeting, and I met one-on-one with the other two participants in their offices at a time of their choosing to provide them the information and insight on the discussions that occurred during the initial FLC meeting.

Journaling was also a part of the study. The journal allowed for personal reflection on considerations made and processes employed in engaging students in the classroom during the study. Participants were asked to reflect on personal growth, improved engagements, their action research, and expound on their understanding of student capital in their journaling. Faculty were asked to journal after the first FLC meeting, reflecting on their thoughts about the study and processes they might employ in the classroom based on the provided information. Faculty were asked to journal after the second FLC meeting, reflecting upon the upcoming semester and the processes they would employ in the classroom based on their specific action research project. Participants were encouraged to reflect throughout the spring semester with suggestions and prompts provided by me with emphasis on how faculty/student engagements may relate to discussed theories and developed questions suggested for journal entries. The journal entries provided me insight on faculty reflection regarding action plans and specific engagement processes used in the classroom as well as participant's funds of knowledge and issues with capital disparity occurring in their classrooms. Faculty shared their journal entries with me via email and their fellow participants during FLC meetings throughout the action research study, opening a line of dialogue on the garnered data and information. The provided journals gave a set of data I used to triangulate other data

generated during the study, and provided a basis for developing semi-structured questions for the final set of one-on-one interviews with participants.

Although a valuable tool in triangulating data and providing insight to participants understanding of the context and study, journaling was a time consuming process. I provided several friendly reminders to all participants to please journal, eventually sending individual friendly reminder emails asking for completion of journal entries. Participant's journal entries were filled with insights and depth, but I believe the journaling component to my research, highlights the time constraints community college faculty face during any given semester. Other activities in the study were planned and provided an allotted amount of time. However journaling was left to participants to carve out time to complete. Most participants taught five classes with 20 or more students per class, each class carrying planning and grading demands. All participants serve in some capacity on two or more committees at the college, each carrying time demands and have family obligations carrying a higher priority than journaling for the study. Even with these demands on time, each participant provided at least four journal entries, with the most journal entries by one participant being seven, all of which contained valuable information helping in my comprehension of their understanding of the context.

Participating faculty were interviewed at three different points in the research study (beginning of study, middle of study, and after conclusion of the study) using semi-structured interview questions. Three sets of interviews were conducted with each of the participants at their convenience in a location of their choosing, with each participant choosing to interview in their office at a date and time of their choosing based on suggestions provided by me via email. Interviews were recorded for later transcription

using two different recording devices, allowing for a back-up if one device failed during an interview, which did occur during one of the interviews.

The first interviews took place after the initial FLC meeting during the fall 2014 semester. Attention was paid during these initial interviews with participants to processes already employed in the classroom, student engagement concepts, and participants own educational experiences to help build my understanding of their own capital and funds of knowledge. I worked to bracket my own knowledge during the initial interview, striving to gain participants perspective and knowledge of the context (Stringer, 2014). The beginning interviews with participants built rapport, alleviated concerns, and answered questions regarding involvement in the study for participants. Initial analysis of FLC meeting data was garnered from participants during these initial interviews, and I reviewed questions generated and discussed from the initial FLC meeting with a focus on how these questions might be answered and explored in the spring 2015 semester through action plans generated and employed by participants. All initial interviews were completed before the winter break, and participants exhibited a general excitement regarding the study. Questions asked by participants centered on clarity of their role in the study and expectation of findings generated by the research. I answered questions honestly, providing them a verbal time-line of the study and expounding on the details of the study discussed in the initial FLC meetings. These questions provided a member checking process of the initial FLC meeting, as well as a confidence boost in participant's role in the research and clarity on my role as facilitator.

At the beginning of the spring 2015 semester, participants attended a second FLC meeting. Discussion began with previously discussed interaction theories and student

capital and cultural disparity issues from the fall semester's initial FLC meetings. All but one participant was able to attend the second FLC meeting. The participant who was unable to attend was provided the second FLC meeting information with discussion regarding other participants insights provided to them at a different time of their choosing. Faculty were asked to share their action plan with each other, taking time to highlight the processes they would employ during the upcoming semester based on reflection of the information provided during the initial FLC fall meetings, initial interviews, and reflection of processes and practices used in previous semesters to engage students. I shared with participants the action plan of the one participant who was unable to attend, helping to create understanding of the engagements to be employed and expectations to be achieved. Each attending participant shared their action plan, generating discussion on individual items and actions used and how they would employ them. Several participants used tools (survey, assignment, and video links) as part of their action plans which were shared with the other participants digitally via email from me after the FLC meeting.

Observation of participating faculty classrooms was conducted after the second FLC meeting during a time individual action plans were in progress. The observation sessions were conducted during a "normal" class day for the course, in which the faculty member had the opportunity to engage students in the classroom. The observations helped inform my understanding of information gleaned from the FLC meetings and one-on-one interviews to date as well as add questions for me to ask during subsequent interviews.

As a faculty member of ESCTC, I acknowledge my own bias, and I assumed a participant-observer role during the observation of participants in their classroom. I observed the classroom from the back of the classroom, watching faculty-student engagements and limiting my interactions with those in the classroom. I introduced myself using my first name, and identified myself as a graduate student and faculty member at the college. However, I acknowledge at times I needed to take part in the environment. Student's seeking assistance as well as questions asked of me by the students and participants were answered to the best of my ability (Stringer, 2014; Worth, 2004).

Field notes were used during the observations as well as all FLC meetings following an observational protocol for recording information. The observational protocol used was a three column approach, noting time in the first column, descriptive notes in the second column, and reflective notes in the third column as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). I strived to follow the verbatim principle as suggested by Stinger (2014) in the descriptive column of my field notes, working to capture thorough and accurate data. After observations and FLC meetings, field notes were typed as soon as possible to help maintain accuracy and clarity of data generated, while recognizing that I “. . . can't physically record everything that is happening during an observational episode, nor should I try.” (Mills, 2007), I worked to record as much information as possible to provide an accurate and clear description of my understanding of the events.

Following observation of participant's classroom, I conducted a second set of individual interviews during the mid-portion of the spring 2015 semester. This set of one-on-one interviews focused on faculty's perception of student engagements occurring in

the classroom and insights into actions and processes attempted in the classroom relating to student engagements and capital disparity. The interview allowed analysis of gathered data to date, with individual participants' "member-checking" through review of information as suggested by Stringer (2014). Reflection by participants on what processes were being employed, why they were employed, and what result were being garnered from the process employed was a focus of the semi-structured questions during the second set of individual interviews.

A final FLC meeting was conducted near the end of the spring 2015 semester. All participants were able to attend, where we briefly reviewed interaction and capital theories discussed in previous FLC meetings. Participants then expounded on the what, where, how, when and why of processes they had used during the semester based on their action plans. Participants shared their experiences with each other and expanded on what they had learned about themselves, students, and action plans. Future considerations based on participation in the action research study were discussed and centered on continuing the FLC meetings, allowing participants to continue to share ideas and expand on their action plans. Participants also conveyed a desire to share what was learned with other faculty members at the college, suggesting a professional development activity for the fall semester.

A follow-up one-on-one interview with participants was conducted after the final FLC meeting. The final interview worked to explore knowledge gained by study participants and how that garnered knowledge affected processes and may affect future processes relating to interactions and capital disparity in their classrooms. I repeated some of the questions asked during the final FLC meeting, allowing for individual

answers in a private setting to develop. The last set of individual interviews allowed me the opportunity to check discrepancies and answer questions that arose from gathered data and analysis during the study, as well as an opportunity to thank the participants for their participation in the study. All participants conveyed the value they found in their participation with fellow experienced faculty and the overall experience of the study.

Overall, the amount time for formal meetings in the study took 8-10 hours of participant's time over eight months represented in the following table. However, I am not suggesting that this was the only amount of time participants spent in the study. As noted, time for journaling during the study was left up to participants. Participants are experienced full-time faculty of ESCTC, with responsibilities extending beyond the classroom and their part in the study. Participants serve together on committees and actively participate in division and faculty senate meetings at our college. These activities created opportunities for the exchange of ideas and conversations relating to their participation in the action research study. Although limiting in nature, these interactions between participants lent themselves to building rapport with one another beyond the confines of planned formal meetings and built upon the established open and collegial communication of the study which was noted during discussions at faculty learning community meetings and one-on-one interviews. I limited public conversations with participants regarding the action research study to one-on-one moments initiated by participants, providing instants to share insights and ideas in a friendly yet private manner while helping to maintain confidentiality of participants and established relationships within the college.

Table 2.2
Action Research Study Time-Table

<p>October- November 2014</p>	<p>Initial Faculty Learning Community (FLC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss study and expectations (area of focus, journaling, and active role) • Review theories of interaction and student capital • Discuss processes currently used in the classroom • Consider how to employ discussed theories in the classroom that may improve engagements with students and recognize unique student capital • Develop questions for consideration
<p>November-December 2014</p>	<p>Initial one-on-one interviews with participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer questions or concerns regarding study • Reflect on information, including questions from initial FLC, and discuss actions and processes that may be applied in the classroom from gained information
<p>January 2015</p>	<p>Second FLC meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review theories and sub-set of questions from initial FLC meeting. • Reflect on how to employ actions and processes based on theories in the classroom in upcoming semester from each participant.
<p>February 2015</p>	<p>Observation of participants classrooms</p>
<p>March 2015</p>	<p>Second one-on-one interviews with participants after classroom observations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss what, when, why, and how of processes used in classroom that center on engagements and recognition of student capital disparity • Reflect and analyze data collected to date with participants.

April 2015	<p>Final FLC meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflect on what actions and processes were used in the classroom by participants creating involving, validating and inviting experiences in the classroom that acknowledge differences in student capital. • Consider answers to questions generated in initial FLC from individual participants. • Actions to take in future regarding interactions and student capital disparity based on information to date.
May 2015	<p>Third one-on-one interview</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obtain final impression, analyze, review, and member check data • Find out what was learned by participants.

Analysis

Data analysis used verbatim transcribed interviews of individual faculty, field notes from observations of classrooms and faculty learning community meetings, and faculty journals. Transcribed interviews, journal entries, as well as field notes from observations and FLC meetings were coded using a scheme developed from multiple readings of the data. Analysis and coding of interview recordings, journals, and researcher field notes from classroom observations and faculty learning meetings, looked for emergent themes from which to draw preliminary conclusions that helped tie participant understanding of student capital in the classroom, engagements used by participants, and educational theories. Triangulation of collected data, seeking interrelationship of gathered information, helped build my understanding of multiple

engagements and processes used in the action research study (Creswell, 2009; Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2014).

Looking Within Ones' Institution

The onus on me as the researcher is to be certain that I understand the ethics involved in my research, as I studied my own backyard. Failure to do so, invites loss of reputation, relationships, credibility, and trust that can never be recovered, and could sabotage future researcher's work at my institution. Studying my institution, I took into consideration that participants in my research had an established relationship with me before the research.

My role as a program coordinator in the Allied Health and Personal Services (AHPS) division, allows me access to faculty and staff across all divisions at the college, through faculty senate meetings, work on college committees, and college-wide events throughout the academic year. As an active faculty member at the college with the rank of Associate Professor, I have the opportunity to work with fellow faculty members across divisions, building friendly professional relationships. Although I do not work in either of the five participant's divisions explored in this study, I do come in contact with them, as well as other faculty members, at our college several times throughout a semester. These interactions create a working relationship with individuals at my institution, which allows for collegial communication and personal exchanges.

My relationship with participants carry a defined trust and honesty component embedded within them. I openly used my faculty standing and collegial relationships to gain access and participation of individuals for the action research study. While using established relationships as a means to gain access and cooperation allowed me the

opportunity to explore the context more thoroughly, these established relationships bring up the potential for power concerns between myself and participants. Overt power was not an issue for I am an experienced faculty member outside the divisions studied, serving with equal standing in the faculty senate and on college committees. However, I was concerned with the possibility of participants perceiving covert power during the scope of the study. Therefore, I worked to highlight my participatory and facilitator role and understate the role of researcher during the study. I worked to relieve potential concerns of concealed power by emphasizing the active role the participants played and the reciprocity of relationships in the action research study. I shared my own pedagogy techniques and personal stories regarding faculty-student engagements during planned interactions when appropriate to build camaraderie with participants and emphasize my role as a fellow educator and faculty member. I shared information participants brought up in conversations relating to articles read or techniques employed in the classroom, helping to build and maintain the collegial atmosphere of the study. I built understanding among participants that the research was not solely focused as a step toward completion of my dissertation, communicating to participants involved the benefits of the action research study, and the opportunity for them to actively participate in research which held meaning to them. Participants acknowledged insights gained through their involvement in the action research study during our formal and informal discussions, and noted the role they could take in sharing garnered knowledge with other faculty at our institution, highlighting understanding of the shared experience of learning, which is an important component of action research.

I understood the importance of confidentiality for participants, paying particular attention to maintain the confidentiality of the action research participants, who will undoubtedly be able to identify themselves in the study, by changing names and eliminating as many identifiers as possible, i.e. college, vernacular, and specific classroom assignments. I protected participant's identity from all levels of leadership at ESCTC, with names of faculty participants not appearing on any Institutional Review Board (IRB) documentation at the college.

I practiced sound research methods, with unquestionable ethical practices to build and maintain my credibility and reputation among participants. Data was and will continue to be stored in a secure safe at my home. I took into account the language and tone of my research as I wrote, considering the portrayal of individuals I work with, and the institution where I work, in a truthful light. I sought feedback and assurance from participants that I portrayed their discussions and insights in a truthful and honest manner through review of data and chapters of the dissertation. I acknowledge my bias from the start of the study and reflected throughout the research process my position and relationships within the institution. To not do so would have undermined the integrity and credibility of my work and the work of the participant in the study.

Validity

Research is subject to questions of validity whether it is quantitative or qualitative in nature. Without the open presence of one's bias and ethics within our research, the "T" (Peshkin, 1988) in research, an underlying question regarding the veracity of one's research exists. Trustworthiness extends beyond data collection, carrying into the analysis, interpretation, and dissemination of the study. The basic tenants of ethical

considerations for my study are no different than any other researchers. As researchers, our ethical compasses must be true and the ethical concerns of research involving human subjects should be a constant for quality work to be accomplished.

I established validity of the action research study by following several qualitative research strategies. Trustworthiness was established through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as noted by Guba (1981). Conducting the study over two semesters, observing the context, triangulating data, member checking, and acknowledging my presence and bias in the study established trustworthiness validity. I followed Wolcott's strategies for action research validity as noted by Mills (2007), by emphasizing listening on my part rather than talking during the action research study, gaining the perspective of participants rather than interject my perspective. I worked to report accurate information that provided a full, detailed, and candid account of the action research experience. I sought feedback to help check for bias and assumptions in my writing as well as to provide a thorough analysis of the collected data.

I kept member checking and transparency of collected data and analysis as a central theme throughout the study. Review of a final version of the dissertation study was provided to participants for review, helping verify data garnered as true to what was learned and discussed during study. I acknowledge the "I" (Peshkin, 1988), as well as my bias within my qualitative action research. Having multiple "I's" represented in the collaborative action research study necessitated clear and accurate descriptions in the analysis and findings to keep individual perspectives intact. I checked or "suspended" preconceived notions regarding faculty and student engagements, in order to remain

open, thereby gaining a better understanding of participant's perspective of meaning within the context through the "voices" of the participating individuals.

Understanding of analysis of data, coding, and development of emergent themes was garnered from the works of Mills (2007) and Stringer (2014). Member checking procedures used throughout the study followed suggestions described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Allowing participants to review my writing to establish transparency and credibility of the perspectives from participants built validity and enhanced the action research study (Stringer, 2014).

Limitations and Research Concerns

The qualitative collaborative action research study was limited to faculty at one institution making transferability of the study difficult. This is an inherent part of action research in which the specific context and participants are the focus of the research. However, gaining an understanding of engagements occurring in the classroom from a faculty perspective and how those interactions are used to recognize student capital and potentially affect student capital disparity existing in the community college classroom holds potential for generalization among similar settings in higher education, particularly two-year institutions. The study is also limited by its focus on faculty with five years or more of community college teaching experience in general education courses. This limited the study by not assessing new faculty, part-time faculty, faculty who taught other courses, or those who are teaching a new course. This study was also limited by design with its focus on the faculty perspective alone, and not garnering the perspective of the students in the classroom. However, it should be noted that the perspective of the student has been explored and the perspective of faculty, particularly community college faculty,

is limited. Finding understanding of student capital and potential disparity occurring in the community college classroom lends itself to seeking the perceptions of faculty with enough experience and who are able to spend valuable time discussing theoretical concepts and employing planned actions.

Limitation of the study to experienced faculty who taught general education courses from two divisions at one institution provides insight on why faculty may or not agree to participate in a study, highlighting the role of the researcher and type of study attempted. Several faculty who were asked to participate declined to do so, with time constraints being the number one reason. Faculty who were asked to participate and said, “Yes” committed to a learning process that encompassed approximately eight months over two semesters with combined participatory interactions taking approximately 8-10 hours throughout the entire study. Perhaps providing a more detailed time plan to those asked, with additional assurances of confidentiality in the study may have allowed for more participation.

Chapter two sets the stage for the dissertation study and its focus. Consideration of setting, and an explanation of the rationales used regarding the pieces and players has been established in both chapter one and two. A look into the schedule of events and how they help to shape our understanding of the action research studies and exploration into gaining an understanding of student capital disparity from a faculty perspective are provided. In chapter three we delve into the specifics of the faculty participants and their action plans. I begin to frame what was learned by participants, as well as myself, during the study with discussed theories from chapter one in chapter three, building toward a reflection of discovered themes discussed in chapter four.

CHAPTER 3 – Individual Action Research Plans

Introduction

Action research involves the individual in the research, striving to focus on what practitioners within the context find meaningful in order to identify processes that may help clarify their environment. Action research works to gain understanding of social context from those directly involved, thereby building a basis of knowledge that may improve practices and increase efficacy of one's work (Creswell, 2102; Stringer 2014). How individuals come to understand social environments they are involved in ties directly to the work of Bourdieu and expanded by other researchers (Berger, 2000; Deer, 2008; Maton, 2008; Moore, 2008; Thomson, 2008) who suggest that social environments are inherently unique for those involved, with individuals bringing their own varied levels of capital resources into the environment. These sets of cultural assumptions are used by those involved to make meaning or gain understanding of the context. For individuals involved in social interactions, the understanding and cultural resources they bring with them create a sundry of perceptions of the environment and reflect an un-level field of play with its own set of rules for participants to consider, which may or may not be well understood by those entering the arena. Considering the focus of this study was to gain understanding of capital disparity in the community college classroom from a faculty perspective, using a collaborative action research approach was a logical choice to allow exploration of multiple perceptions of the context and how those perceptions translate into meaning for the participants involved.

Each participant was charged with developing their own action plan based on discussions during a faculty learning community meeting and interviews during the fall

2014 semester. These initial conversations helped me gain an understanding of each participant's funds of knowledge as well as their own capital resources, and how they used these tools to understand student capital disparity in their classrooms. Conversations throughout the study regarding student capital disparity, and the role engagements play in understanding student cultural resources in the classroom, framed participants' perceptions about the environment of the community college classroom and determined what purposeful actions could take place to help counter student capital disparity within the context from their perspective. The qualitative focus of experienced faculty perceptions of this study helps build our understanding of faculty processes used in the classroom geared to help manage student capital disparity. Increasing our understanding of faculty-student engagements from a faculty perspective using a qualitative approach is lacking and has been called for in higher education (Bensimon, 2007; Keller, 1998; Pena & Thomas, 2006).

Conversations throughout the study revolved around faculty meaning-making of the context and their relationship to accepted theories of capital and faculty-student engagements, playing a pivotal role for participants in shaping and implementing their action plans. Action plans were implemented at the beginning of the spring 2015 semester by participants after initial analysis and reflection of classroom processes used in previous semesters. Individual action plans were designed by participants in such a way as to acknowledge student capital disparity and provide means for students to understand rules of the arena(s) which may have been unfamiliar to them, thereby helping them use their existing cultural resources or perhaps garner capital to find understanding of the context that is the community college. Participant's implementation of action plans

and how action plans were progressing in regards to understanding and countering student capital disparity, were shared throughout the 2015 spring semester of the study, beginning with the second faculty learning community meeting, individual interviews, and journals. Each participant's action plan involved combinations of established engagement theories discussed in the learning communities and interviews and were based on participant's interpretation of the role engagements play in helping to counter student capital disparity.

The five individual action research plans presented, provide insight into faculty perspectives and understanding of student engagements and capital disparity issues faced in the community college classroom. Embedded within individual action plan analysis is my interpretation of what was learned, based on findings that emerged from the action research study regarding faculties understanding of student cultural dispositions related to higher education theories, and were reviewed by participants involved in the study. These interpretations help build our understanding of the faculty perspective of student capital disparity in the context, shedding light on processes which can be employed to help counter existing disparity of student cultural resources in the community college.

Brandon: "I would say definitely they are unaware of how college works"

Brandon¹ has nearly two decades of teaching experience in communications, and recently assumed a leadership role within his division at ESCTC. Helping mentor new adjunct faculty and setting schedules for courses within his division each semester has given Brandon a new level of responsibility, reinvigorating his interest in education as

¹ study participants' names have been changed

well as creating a willingness to participate in the action research study. With a Master's degree in his field, Brandon's personal cultural resources are worthy of note with his admission of coming from a lower socio-economic class and having a disparity of cultural capital during his own educational journey. Brandon's cultural capital did not provide him much insight or value in education per se, but his social capital, developed during secondary education, helped create a foundation from which his personal capital was able to develop and grow.

“I would say from a family perspective, I am a complete abnormality. . . I did well in school, but I was from a family who thought school was just a nuisance . . . my cultural experience in that sense is not at all supportive . . . I had no point of reference on how that would work other than some friends.”²

Brandon's social capital continued to grow during his undergraduate and graduate experience, providing him additional personal capital resources and allowing him to fit into academics in ways his cultural experience did not allow. In fact, Brandon's social and academic capital, gained at college, provided him the opportunity to find his calling for becoming an educator.

“I got into a much better experience in college . . . I was with a large group of people . . . that were similar to me, and we were attempting the same thing. It was a good mix of different types of people . . . In grad school, I thought that (teaching) was the coolest job you could possibly have, it was fun . . . it was kind of like being a celebrity. I just admired my instructors. The more I got to know my instructors, I wanted to be them.”

Through his teaching experiences at the community college, Brandon acquired funds of knowledge from which to draw upon in his classroom and use in engaging students similar to other participants in the study. Although participant's personal capital

² quotes have been edited for vernacular without change in content or meaning

and funds of knowledge will be discussed, it is Brandon's personal capital that helps us explore the role participant's cultural resources combined with their funds of knowledge plays in their perception of student capital and the potential disparity existing in their classroom. Providing an explanation of how participant's funds of knowledge are shaped by personal capital, through Brandon's story, helps us begin to understand how participants acknowledge student cultural assumptions in the classroom as well as shape and implement their action plan to help level disparity of capital.

Brandon's cultural capital disparity with education created sensitivity to student cultural disparity existing within his classroom. Brandon perceived cultural disparity with some students in the form of conversational tone and/or lack of understanding in how to interact with him and other students in the classroom. Brandon believes his funds of knowledge and personal capital resources provide him a unique perspective, allowing him an ability to quickly assess and recognize students in his classroom who exhibit these cultural capital disparities. Through engagements with students in the first few weeks of the semester, Brandon is confident in his insights regarding the cultural resources students bring to his classroom through verbal and nonverbal interactions. These subjective assessments create a perception of student cultural attitudes for Brandon, motivating him to help students fit in and do well in the classroom by "bring(ing) them up" through faculty-student engagements.

"I can spot them and have a naturally tendency for me to help bring them up even more. They don't know about me until I say it. From their perspective they probably think that he (Brandon) did not come from that (low socio-economic class). They don't know it and they would not know it. There is no way for them to know it until I connect with them. . . . those are the ones I want to help more."

“Because I have lots and lots of classes under my belt, I can look at a student, talk to him for a few minutes, and know that this is how I need to deal with that person.”³

Brandon uses his subjective assessment of student cultural resources as a foundation in developing processes which hold potential in bringing up or leveling student capital disparity in his classroom. But Brandon also believes processes might be employed which provide an understanding for students of the expectations of the context, holding potential in helping students navigate the culture of the community college. For Brandon, classroom activities and pedagogy techniques centered on presentations in the classroom are processes which provide students the best opportunity to gain capital and better understand the context.

“. . . they (students) are unaware of how college works. They don't know exactly how to deal with me. . . . Obviously, most of them don't have any college experience or it is limited.”

Recognizing student cultural assumptions in his classroom was not unique for Brandon. In fact, all the participants acknowledged the existence of student capital disparity in their classrooms, and gave credit for this understanding to their funds of knowledge - their years of experience teaching in two-year institutions no matter the subject. But Brandon hints at the limits of funds of knowledge and their ability to provide faculty an understanding of student capital disparity in their classroom.

“It's (student capital disparity recognition) happening . . . not going in thinking I'm going in to do this . . . it's not deliberate . . . I have a sense of people in the class. . . I think I've got it . . . but I'm sure there are things I'm completely missing.”

For Brandon, his perception of student capital disparity in the classroom seemed

³ Comments occurring during separate discussions but relating to each other are shown as separate statements throughout the chapter.

heightened based upon his personal capital resources and his admitted cultural capital disparity as compared to other participants in the study. This disparity of Brandon's cultural capital helped him chose an action plan which would benefit students who "have trouble interacting with each other" and highlight his ability to subjectively assess student cultural attitudes and practices in his classroom. Brandon's personal capital played in integral part in not only what actions he chose to use in interacting with students, but when he chose to engage students. Brandon noted the important role early engagements with students in the classroom have, in his ability to assess the cultural resources of students.

"The first thing I figure out is where they are and build on that."

Action Plan

Brandon's action plan worked to create opportunities for social engagements between students, striving to "bring up" the capital in the classroom for students whom he identified as having disparity of cultural resources. Through initial conversations and course assignments, Brandon assessed student capital in the classroom using his insight to determine individual student capital resources. However, Brandon recognized a need to use another tool that was less subjective in order to refine his perception of student cultural assumptions, developing a student survey to help quantify his subjective opinion of student capital and build his understanding of student expectations of his class. Using these student capital assessment tools to develop his perception and understanding of student cultural attitudes, Brandon created cohorts of students, striving to balance the capital of students in his classroom. Brandon placed students he perceived as having lower cultural resources (those who seemed uncomfortable or awkward in the classroom

interacting with others and Brandon) with those who seemed to have higher cultural resources (those who appeared comfortable and confident in the classroom interacting with others and Brandon) into cohorts of 8-12 people. Brandon spent time with each of the three cohorts he created, reviewing the student survey and discussing expectations of the proposed action plan assignment and schedule.

. . . this (action plan) has helped me to think critically about what each student might need, what they bring to the class, and who (*emphasis added by Brandon*) each student might need, meaning which fellow classmates would help each other as part of a working cohort.⁴

These actions by Brandon created involving moments for students and established an intentionally inviting environment created to help level the arena of play for those involved, striving to help everyone within the context understand the new rules of the field. Brandon noted the importance of these purposeful engagements, and how they allowed him to “know” his students, reaffirming his perception of their capital resources.

“I have to get to know who they are and how they respond to the situation. Once I get a sense of them, I can talk to them deliberately. My intention is to ask them, more importantly have them do most of the talking.”

Through the use of an online learning management system for basic content work, Brandon created time in his classroom for the main focus of his action plan and the rationale for creating purposefully selected cohorts - pre-graded performances for individual students.

Pre-graded performances conducted in the classroom with the created cohorts were structured in such a way as to allow each student in the cohort an opportunity to practice their presentation in front of their fellow cohort members and Brandon.

⁴participant comments without quotes come from journal entries provided to the researcher by the participants during the study.

Individual performances were critiqued by students in the cohort through written and verbal constructive criticisms with additional suggestions for improvement, encouraged and supported by Brandon. For Brandon, the pre-graded performances allowed students the opportunity to become involved in the classroom, while finding validating moments along the way, and created opportunities for students to understand the expectations of the course through the use of social engagements. Brandon noted how these social engagement moments played a pivotal part in providing academic and social capital opportunities for students helping to level capital within the context.

“. . . clear to me that some students don't feel comfortable in the room . . . putting them in small groups . . . it helps them get past how unsure they were . . . gave them that they are on track and similar to everybody else.”

Interesting to me is how generous they sound to their peers, and I think it's sharpened my ear to those who respond positively just before adding a helpful criticism. The person receiving feedback usually recognizes what the cohort is recommending in a way, I'm sure, that is useful and different than coming from me. And their peers want to help . . .

By involving students in the academic process, and defining the purpose and expectations of the pre-graded performance assignment, Brandon created an environment which allowed students to better understand the rules of the arena and encouraged small group discussion after presentations to allow students the opportunity to share their understanding of the rules of the game with one another. By actively engaging students to work together and help one another improve academically, Brandon created situations supported in two-year educational research, regarding the role social interaction opportunities occurring in the classroom can play in social and academic integration for students (Diel-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010). The social engagements occurring in the

classroom created opportunities for students to gain academic and social capital along the way helping to “bring them up” as intended by Brandon.

Hearing them critique and comment aloud to their peers has given me much more of an idea of what they think I expect, what they aren’t noticing, and how they adjust their assignment based on prior feedback. That adjustment is what I wanted!

“Especially socially as I see it. Just their degree of comfort, I want to say degree of confidence in their opinion. It is a simple idea. Get a smaller group, some to talk and encourage the others to speak up. It is harder for them to hide, frankly in the class when there are not 28 people in there. I can’t say it was perfect. It was not all equal participation but it made a difference for those students. I heard people speaking up that I would not ordinarily hear from.”

What Was Learned

Brandon’s abilities to assess student cultural dispositions through his funds of knowledge, personal capital, and use of a student survey provide us insight into his perception of student capital and the disparity existing in his classroom. Researchers (Argyris & Schon, 1996; Bensimon, 2007; Polkinghorne, 2004) have suggested that funds of knowledge are used by faculty to create understanding of students and the cultural resources they bring to the classroom. These funds of knowledge, or as noted by Bensimon (2007) “the “know-how” that individuals call upon (mostly unconsciously) to accomplish their work.” (p. 451), allow faculty to make sense of the context and those involved. Brandon acknowledges using his past experiences in the classroom to engage students as well as to create an action plan, but Brandon balanced his unconscious “know-how” of classroom experience with his personal capital, rich with social and academics, but limited culturally, to help create a conscious understanding of the context and his role within it.

Brandon's insights suggest that faculty with an understanding of their personal capital resources may be more in tune to understanding the cultural assumptions of their students, especially if those student dispositions are similar to their own, which has been supported by other community college researchers (Schreiner, Noel, Anderson, & Cantwell, 2011; Thompson, 2001). Brandon's comments allow us to hypothesize that faculty with an accurate perception of student capital in their classroom are more willing to use engagements and pedagogy techniques which allow students the opportunity to understand their environment and the new rules that exist within it. Brandon's participation in the action research study allow us to consider the idea that personal capital resources may actually frame and balance funds of knowledge for some faculty, helping shape student engagement processes and pedagogies employed in their classroom. This balance of personal capital and funds of knowledge by faculty may allow for growth and learning for faculty regarding their role in the classroom, moving beyond the basic sharing of content and into understanding student backgrounds and creating pedagogy techniques which allow for students who may have a disparity of capital to "bring up" their capital as well as actively participate with their own cultural resources intact.

Brandon's biggest take away from his action plan was how small cohorts of students purposefully created to help balance capital disparity in the classroom, provided socially and academically integrating opportunities through the presentations and discussions which occurred. These social moments in the classroom helped create a better understanding of expectations of the course for students as well as provided social and academic capital gaining opportunities.

“. . . it (pre-graded performance) brought people that otherwise were not talking in class, it allowed them to do that. It did help them to do that. . . Every little bit of that, that opportunity to have spoken up in front of others, and it works for them, or it was not a bad experience, it should help them in the future.”

Brandon’s action plan revolved around discussed theories of engagement during the initial faculty learning community meeting and one-on-one interview, and provided him a framework to combine with his own funds of knowledge and pedagogies he had been using in previous semesters. The results of Brandon’s action plan gave him a clearer understanding of the range of social, cultural and academic capital disparity existing in his classroom, beyond his earlier subjective assessments. Brandon provides us an understanding of how experienced faculty funds of knowledge and perceptions of student cultural assumptions may be enhanced through the use of a survey tool, helping create validity in one’s assessment of student cultural resources and provide a clearer understanding of what processes might be employed to best counter disparity of student cultural practices brought into the classroom.

“So, they could add to that, even if I am sizing them up, it is from my own judgment; my own perception so adding what they had to say is only going to sharpen that. . . It is still a judgment call, kind of a “years of experience” type of thing. Technically, it is not guaranteed.”

Brandon’s renewed perception of student capital disparity existing in his classroom, was enhanced by his quantitative tool, which allowed him to hone in on students he had previously identified exhibiting academic and cultural capital disparity. The student survey tool allowed Brandon to realize students he had subjectively identified as having cultural capital disparity, acknowledged their capital disparity by their admission on the survey of a lack of understanding of the role preparation and practice plays in performance assignments in the communications class.

His action plan and participation in the action research study provided Brandon the opportunity to recognize the role theoretically-based engagements with students align with his funds of knowledge, which for Brandon were clearly intertwined with his personal capital.

. . . recognizing the specific role that degrees of student equity have played in their success. . . . I've been helped to see how simple, early steps, with emphasis on "early", are worth the effort and class time to increase learning, student efficacy and retention. Specifically, making myself more directly aware early on of students' background, personal support and degree of comfort with others on campus can help me better match them in small cohort groups for teamwork and feedback. I'll continue to devote more time to students providing direct feedback to each other. This plan of action has led to improvement in assignment success and in specific, students' integration in the class.

Brandon's perspective supports the work of researchers (Barnett, 2011; Diel-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010; Rendon, 1992; Tierney, 1999) who suggest simply letting faculty understand the important role they play in faculty-student engagements which help students understand the rules of the arena, may allow student's cultural resources to co-exist with other student's capital within the context.

"If they get some failures down, they never come back to class. That affects them. You know what I am saying. Like make that teacher connection."

Brandon's action plan allows us to gain an understanding of how funds of knowledge and personal capital of faculty are connected, and how they are both used by faculty to try and understand student cultural resources, and the potential disparity which may be occurring in their classroom. For all the participants in the study, perception of student capital disparity occurring in the classroom was based on two distinct variables; 1) the practitioners own capital (cultural, social, and academic) gained from their family, friends, and education and 2) their years of teaching experiences in the community college classroom. Although some researchers (Bensimon, 2007; Tierney, 1999; Valdez,

1996) have hinted at the potential disconnect between practitioners funds of knowledge and their understanding of student capital in their classrooms, Brandon's personal capital highlights the role faculty's cultural resources may play in shaping their perception of student cultural assumptions and creating understanding of the importance of employing integrating, validating, involving and intentionally inviting processes in the classroom which may help to "bring up" student capital. His action plan allows us to consider what is possible for community college practitioners if they are able to balance their funds of knowledge, garnered through experience in the classroom, with their personal capital and how it was acquired. Based on Brandon's participation in the study, we are able to posit that practitioners who are able to frame their funds of knowledge with their personal capital may be creating environments which allow acknowledgement of student cultural resources, and develop and encourage social engagements in the classroom which strive to provide students' academic and social capital gains helping to balance cultural capital disparity. When asked if his action plan helped students with cultural capital disparity in his classroom, Brandon noted his belief in why purposeful engagements are so important to students in providing them social and academic capital gaining opportunities.

"Like the ones that we were talking about, the ones that don't feel comfortable socially for whatever reason, because it is a mix and they get some positive feedback from. I have to remember this about younger people, they feel stressed about it but if they get the cooler people feedback that validates them, they hear it out loud. . . They did it and there was 7-8 people right there. . . I think they feel validated they are getting it from a person who isn't rendering a grade for one thing. I mean, when it comes down to it, they are trying to make me happy so I give them a certain grade. Peers, there is no consequence. There is nothing driving their peers other than they genuinely mean it, they are trying to help."

Brandon begins to develop our faculty understanding regarding student's cultural, social, and academic capital and the role a balance of personal capital resources with

funds of knowledge by practitioners in the context can shape faculty perceptions. Brandon's action plan shows how theoretically-based faculty-student interactions can help students understand the context, and gain social and academic capital in the classroom. Further development of our understanding of faculty perception of the role theoretically-based engagements play in understanding student cultural assumptions and the potential capital disparity existing in the classroom is provided by our next participant's insights and action plan.

Shayla: “But our community college students have busy lives that leave little time for them to do anything on campus outside of attend class.”

Shayla has an abundance of funds of knowledge, with over twenty-five years of science teaching experience at the community college level, as well as a wealth of personal capital. With parents who valued education, including one parent who taught at the community college level, and a strong cultural and social capital geared around education to fall back on, Shayla acknowledges her personal capital resources were strongly supported by her family.

“... there was never any question, we were going to college.”

Shayla has worked diligently to achieve her educational goals, helping to increase her personal capital resources. She has obtained a high level of leadership responsibilities within ESCTC, providing her a unique perspective regarding the culture of the organization when compare to other participants in the study. Although Shayla's view of the cultural of the institution is from a leadership perspective, all the participants believed that the culture of the institution was “student-focused”, and assumed most faculty within the organization would place student's interest first in their educational decisions.

Shayla understands who her audience is at the community college, and recognizes the multitude of challenges students face when they enter her classroom. For Shayla, these student issues center on competing outside priorities which create time constraints for students. This student issue is combined with a lack of understanding by students of the demands and expectations of the college environment. Shayla's understanding of student cultural practices has been honed through her own research study in obtaining her doctorate degree, building her academic capital. But even with Shayla's firm grip and research-based perception of student capital and potential disparity existing in her classroom, Shayla acknowledges the struggle she, and other community college faculty, face in comprehending the magnitude of student misunderstandings of the educational environment, their misinterpretation of the arena and new set of rules represented by her classroom.

“But they are coming to us with a lot of them having no clue how to study. They don't know time management. They don't know how to make effective use of their time. . . . They have been told they needed to get a college education to get a good job. Here they are and that is as far as it has gotten. They do not know what it takes to be a successful college student. They do not know how to prioritize school over family responsibilities, social responsibilities, and work responsibilities. They don't know!”

Shayla's acknowledgement of student misunderstanding of field and apparent student capital disparity mirrors the perception of the other participants in the study. This lack of understanding of the rules of the arena by students, perceived by participants in the study, is what Bourdieu noted as doxa with the field.

Doxa is the unseen set of rules inherent to the field one is engaged. For those familiar with the field, (in this particular study the faculty in the classroom) doxa is taken for granted and is thought to be common knowledge. However, for those unfamiliar with

the field (students in the classroom with varied backgrounds and levels of capital) doxa is not readily seen nor understood. Shayla is clear on what it takes to counter existing capital disparity and the misunderstanding of the arena and new set of rules by students in the context – social integration leading to academic integration.

Shayla's grasp of Tinto's integration theory, and how it relates to the community college and her students, was emphasized throughout faculty learning community meetings, interviews, journal entries, and observation. Shayla's input on discussed engagement theories provided a valuable perspective for other participants, as well as myself, and supported the engagement processes employed during action plans. Shayla believes students in her classroom can find success through social interactions, specifically finding someone to study and work with in and out of the classroom, and that these social interactions can lead to social and academic integration of the student with the two-year institution.

“You (student) need to feel that you are sufficient, you belong, that you can do this. So emotionally you connect with the college setting. Once you have connected with the college setting, then you can settle down and actually get to the academics, learning the content. . . . So you need to do that in the classroom. . . . We have students that need that social integration probably more than they do at the 4 year. They feel they are in over their heads.”

Shayla underlines researchers (Dial-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010; Tinto, 1975, 1993, 2012) insights regarding the role social engagements play toward student social and academic integration with the higher education institution, particularly the two-year institution. The concept of social integration leading to academic integration for students in higher education links to Bourdieu's social theory involving his concept of capital and field - individuals entering the social context have an existing capital which affects their understanding and ability to interact and integrate with the environment.

However, Shayla used more than just social integration techniques to help counter student cultural practices over the past few years in her classroom. Shayla informed students of behaviors and attitudes, both in and out of class, that are linked to success in her course. These behavioral cues (consistently working on course material throughout semester, read material within 24 hours of covering it in class, and find someone to study with) are something she strives to instill in her students from day one in the classroom, emphasizing Shayla's understanding of the important role early faculty-student engagements can play in helping students understand the expectations of the context.

“I think it is because I feel like I do a pretty good job of defining what the academic rules are. These are the rules of the game, this is what you have to do to be successful . . . We don't have the time or the energy to play games.”

Action Plan

Shayla's action plan worked to encourage social integration through the formation of active study groups (3-4 students) and activities (review assignment from previous chapters covered, and worked on with another student) highlighting the expectations of the classroom beginning the first day of her class. Shayla used the action plan to re-emphasize to students her belief that success in her class was tied to working with one another, both in and out of classroom throughout the semester. Shayla worked to establish multiple social engagement moments for students in her class by having them share contact information with one another, encouraging creation of “study buddies” that could help keep one another accountable for content in the course as well as provide someone to lean on for encouragement. Shayla used pedagogy techniques that encouraged involvement of the students by providing Cornell-style notes (handouts with bits of content information for the day's lessons provided for students at the beginning of

class to add to and fill out). Shayla also provided reflective moments for students in her classroom, seeking their input on what they might need from her and/or the college.

“Everything counts, the research tells me and my own research tells me. Students want to know that someone knows them and cares about them and is there to help them, support them.”

Shayla’s action plan started the first day of class by using intentionally inviting and involving techniques. She asked each student to introduce themselves during roll call and share a “success tip” they had learned from previous classes with the entire class. Shayla also required students to have a signature and contact information of their “study buddy” at the bottom of the homework assignment to be turned in at the end of the second week. She extended her engagement techniques during the semester by having students write on a notecard the behaviors that would help them do better on their next exam based on the review of their last exam. Through these student-student and faculty-student engagement techniques, Shayla crafted purposeful social interaction moments during the semester, in hopes of providing social and academic capital for students, while working to create social integration that lent itself toward academic integration.

“Especially for the weaker students, and especially for the ones that are first generation that are really clueless about the college experience, if they can latch onto somebody it can make a difference between sticking it out or not. Just having someone encourage them and tell them – no you can’t quit, I need you to help me study. It helps them a lot.”

Shayla found value in her action plan, recognizing the important role faculty play in helping level the field for students and create an understanding of the new rules of the game that are shaped by course content and her expectations. This recognition was already well understood by Shayla, but was heightened by her involvement in the action research study and her renewed energy to create intentionally inviting environments that

sought to involve students early on in the classroom with an emphasis on active learning pedagogy techniques. Shayla provides us insight into the enormous responsibility placed on, and the energy required of, faculty and their engagements with students, working toward creating an understanding of the changing arena students have stepped into and the new set of rules they must now play by in the classroom.

It is imperative that the culture of positive practices that encourage students to feel a part of campus, to form lasting relationships, and the building of study and time-management skills to be successful students takes place within the classroom. Good teaching matters. Good teaching takes a lot of work. It also depends on faculty members caring about their students and making the efforts to help them succeed.

Shayla understands student capital and engagement theories which were on display throughout the formal interactions of the study. But even Shayla acknowledged that her perception of student cultural practices could be further refined by pedagogy techniques which would encourage involvement and social interactions.

I intended to add (near daily) “muddiest point”, one-minute summaries, etc. to either the beginning or end of each class period. I have done this a couple of times and have found the feedback immensely interesting and worthwhile. I need to do more of these!

Shayla was realistic regarding her role in creating faculty-student engagements, and the ramifications if her engagements lapsed.

“I work so hard at coming up with activities that make good use of our time in class but also encourages them to stay engaged with them outside of class. I give them take home quizzes almost every day. But, if I don’t do that, I have a good bunch of students that will not crack a book unless I give them a reason to. And just saying you have to read ahead in your book, they won’t do it.”

But even with her understanding of the limits of student involvement, Shayla recognized through her own research that it falls to faculty to understand student cultural assumptions and the disparity capital resources in the community college classroom, and

she as a faculty member must find engagement processes which provide students a chance to understand the rules of the game and help to level their field of play.

“ . . . students have very strong appreciation and need for that feeling of belonging. They need to feel like they belong. They have those very close family ties . . . They needed that sense of belonging. . . I had some that they (faculty) said they really put a lot of time and energy purposely changing their outlook, so they would fit and match with the students. Those were the programs that were very successful that had those as an under tone, you belong here, we want you here, we are going to help you, we are going to hold your hand when it needs to be held, we are going to get you through. The students really appreciated. Those were the programs that worked.”

What Was Learned

Shayla’s consideration of pedagogy techniques that create social interaction between students underlines recent research (Weiman, 2014) which looked at the role active learning techniques may play in helping students gain academic and social capital in the classroom. Shayla’s use of pedagogy techniques like paired student work on assignments in the classroom, the one-minute paper (students take one minute to write down something they learned in class) muddiest points (students write down the concepts they are still unclear about in the course), and her version of Cornell notes, invited students to be actively involved in their learning, and created opportunities for students to become engaged in the environment within the classroom that moved beyond basic lecture and listen pedagogy techniques.

Recent meta-analysis regarding research involving active learning techniques (Freeman et. al, 2014) show an increase in learning for undergraduate students in the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields, supporting the active learning pedagogy techniques selected by Shayla and other participants in the study. But embedded within these active learning techniques is an understanding that

engagements used by faculty matters for students, particularly for those students who may not understand the expectations of the context. The use of active pedagogy techniques that seek to involve students in their learning generates opportunities for students to gain academic and social capital, helping students understand the rules of the game and level the field of play within the classroom. It should be noted that Shayla still employed lecture pedagogy techniques, but for Shayla, the combination of lecture and active learning pedagogies were based on her understanding of the student capital resources in her classroom and the varied cultural and academic capital students brought with them. Shayla recognized the needs of students to learn about the different arena of play they had entered with its new set of rules, providing the opportunity to gain social and academic capital, while maintaining their existing cultural resources.

“It (action plan) is making me more aware of the variety of cultural capitals in the classroom. . . I need to creatively seek activities that will further bring them (students) together in class and encourage them to get together outside of class.”

Shayla’s take away from her action plan was an increase in her funds of knowledge, and a re-emphasis of the important role purposeful engaging actions in the classroom can play in student learning, gaining capital, and providing understanding for students of the expectations of the classroom, helping students feel that they are “a part of campus”.

“I can’t change their family, their kids but I can help them make a connection. You know with someone else in that class. I can do what I can but I can’t be with every student 24/7. They need that study buddy. They need that push, that source of encouragement. I can help build that in the class room - How to be better students, how to manage your time better. And the other part of that is that academic integration, helping them be better students, how do you manage your time. You are not going to get through this by showing up for class three times per week.”

Shayla's recognition of action research's potential in creating a clearer understanding of student cultural assumptions isn't surprising considering her depth of understanding of student capital and theories of engagement based on her own research. Shayla helps us answer how faculty can use Tinto's integration theory to help level student capital disparities in the community college classroom through the lens of Bourdieu's capital theory. Shayla created social interaction opportunities in her classroom, which she perceived as helping create social integration for students that lead to academic integration, thereby providing opportunity for students to gain academic and social capital. Shayla's action plan highlights how experienced faculty funds of knowledge may actually mirror well-established theories of education.

“We (faculty) talk about capital disparity, the students don't know the rules of the game, the rules of academia. So, if I say yeah, they don't. The next question is what are we going to do about it? We tell them! You know, why do we think that we can't tell them about how to study or what the rules are. Why do we think that they have to figure it out on their own? It is kind of ridiculous.”

Shayla's participation in the action research study sharpened her understanding of educational theories; in particular the role an intentionally inviting environment can help create involvement and integration for students. This insight by Shayla helps us recognize that theory and practice can co-exist in the community college classroom, especially for faculty with openness to enhancing their personal capital and funds of knowledge.

“I got to know my students better. I was really trying to get them more socially integrated into my classroom. Trying to get them to make those friendships and those study cohorts. It made me realize there were some that were so reluctant to do that. I would just rejoice when I saw them do that. I can't even tell you. I always realized that was important, I just did not even know how much it was. And how important it was for me to instigate that. . . because it does not happen naturally for a lot of them.”

“Trying to get those study groups together, getting those groups together in class. I really have made an effort but this time I made more of effort.”

Shayla hints at the potential action research may hold for faculty and students. Her use of purposeful actions, centered on social integration in the classroom, may not only help faculty understand the varied backgrounds of students in their classrooms, but may also help students appreciate the cultural resources of other students taking the course with them.

“Appreciating the person sitting next to them is different for them. That is part of life and that is you always need to respect the other person. You don’t have to agree with them, you don’t have to like them but you have to be respectful of them. . . they are forming friendships with people they probably would not had.”

With a wealth of understanding of varied student cultural dispositions existing in her classroom, and how that variety of student cultural assumptions may not fit with the expectations of her course or the institution, Shayla found substantial benefit in her participation in the faculty learning community meetings. The sharing of funds of knowledge and perceptions of students that populate the community college with other experienced faculty from other divisions in the college provided Shayla the opportunity to cultivate her previous studies in capital and engagement theory. Shayla’s social integration focus in the classroom leads us to our next participant, and how their insight and action plan frames our understanding of the effort required by faculty to understand the disparity of student capital in the classroom.

Robert: “What you can change is what goes on while they’re on your campus, while they’re in your classroom.”

Robert has a decade of teaching experience in English courses, and is actively involved in the ESCTC campus community, serving on multiple committees and working with student groups outside of class. Robert’s funds of knowledge are founded on his cultural, social, and academic capital brought about by his upbringing and educational

background. Robert's cultural, social, and academic capital have not affected his understanding of who the student is, nor the variety of backgrounds students bring to his classroom.

“. . . where I am teaching right now is the complete opposite of my undergraduate experience. . . . I was at a small, liberal arts college, education for education's sake, like no one dropped out . . .”

Robert recognizes the role cultural and social capital of the student plays in their comprehension of the educational environment, as well as the role student cultural assumptions plays in their understanding of the expectations of the classroom. His perception of student cultural resources as an experienced faculty member is established on how students express themselves in the classroom and interact with him as a faculty member.

“. . . this idea that cultural and social capital affects a student's social and cultural capital, and affects how they interact with us. I mean that's the bottom line of it, is that I will treat you differently because you sit in the back of the room and . . . I will treat you differently because you sit in the front row . . . those are just expressions of your cultural capital or social capital.”

Robert is well aware the variety of student backgrounds in his classroom is a result of factors out of his control or the control of the institution. However, Robert realizes the role faculty-student engagements might play in helping students find their place in the institution and perhaps obtain social and academic capital within the classroom.

“. . . the classroom is the time I got control over . . . what can I do in those three hours a week . . .”

“If what changes our interactions is the fact that you know how to raise your hand or . . . you know how to take notes or you know how to do readings . . . is just a matter of . . . training for students, in a sense, why can't we (faculty) just, even if you're not getting it at home, why can't we provide that? . . .”

Robert helps us understand that faculty may have acquired funds of knowledge which recognize the varied backgrounds and student cultural assumptions existing in their classroom. However, faculty may recognize the capital disparity of students in their own way and interpret the disparity of capital in their own terms.

“. . . the writing is on that wall in three of four places. . . . the majority of faculty might talk to you about students being unprepared, they might talk about students being disrespectful, they might talk to you about students being lazy . . . it's the same thing. Those are all the results of a lack of this capital.”

For Robert, identifying student capital disparity isn't that difficult, and he believes academic capital is a tool to be taught in the classroom which may help to counter existing disparities of student cultural and social capital. However, Robert recognizes that there are limitations in providing this academic skill set to students in the classroom. Providing student's the opportunity to gain academic capital centers on Robert's acknowledgement of his limited time in which to engage students and limited opportunities in which to provide student capital gaining opportunities.

“You know in my mind it doesn't really matter, to sit around and talk about why these students lack the capital or it's less important. This is a skill we can train . . . even if you lack it, even if you're not getting it at home, why can't we provide that for you as a skill set? Because it's ultimately that you're lacking these skills . . . the school is not going to change what is going on in your life. The minute you start trying to do that you're probably stretching yourself thinner than you need to be. What you can change is what goes on while they're on your campus, while they're in your classroom, so why not provide them with these strategies.”

Robert realizes connections between faculty and students in the classroom may be the only opportunity the student has in understanding the context, but he is also cognizant of the amount of work and responsibility placed on him as a faculty member to instigate involvement in the classroom. For Robert, the effort to engage students' has to be balanced, and his insights on finding this balance shed light on how community college

faculty might rationalize their engagement of students as they work to understand the variety of student cultural resources and attitudes in their classroom.

“(Students) may have same amount of . . . capital but not helped. You need to be aware of that in order to figure out why one student is helped through these (engagement) practices when another who you interacted in the exact same way doesn’t succeed.”

Robert acknowledges that as an educator a balance needs to be maintained between the demands of the classroom and demands in his personal life, noting limits in what faculty are able to accomplish. The balancing of priorities by Robert is mirrored in research (Astin, 1990; Bean & Metzner, 1985; Deil-Amen, 2011; Karp et al., 2010; Rendon, 1992; Tinto, 1993, 2012) of community college students and their search for balance between outside priorities and the responsibilities and expectations of the educational environment. The balancing act of competing demands for faculty and students enhances our understanding of part of Bourdieu’s capital theory - those with enough capital or capital that is valued by the social context they are involved, have an advantage in navigating the environment in which they have entered.

“It’s that personal relationship which is so vital and important for our student body. What is so at odds with that personal relationship which is so needed is also the capital of the time in the day, and when you (faculty) have a five/five load and you’ve got 150 students. Odds are at least of third of those students need this high level of interaction inside and outside of the class, I don’t have the time to do that for all of them and they probably don’t . . . it takes *emotional capital* (*emphasis added by researcher*) to engage with the students like that, and you only have so much, people only have so much that they can do.”

Action Plan

Robert’s action plan chose to use a student questionnaire (Appendix B) to help identify capital resource disparity in the classroom at the beginning of the semester. The questionnaire asked students basic information regarding work and family responsibilities

as well as educational variables such as current G.P.A. and goals. He used answers from the questionnaire as a “springboard” for classroom discussion regarding specific behaviors and actions that successful college student’s exhibit (study-skills and varied levels of thinking required in college) providing students opportunity to gain understanding of the expectations of the context through academic capital gains. Robert met individually with students to further emphasize skills and pathways toward academic improvement after initial review of their work in class. Robert’s action plan used intentionally inviting and involving engagements to recognize academic capital disparity existing in his classroom, developing processes in which to provide academic capital for students.

By comparing individual survey answers against results of the first assignment in class, Robert worked to understand issues students may be facing outside the classroom. Robert found that many students struggled with managing time due to outside demands and responsibilities. Based on Robert’s understanding of these “emotional capital” limitations for students as being similar to those he himself faced as a faculty member, Robert worked to provide students insight and suggestions to help balance these competing demands. The questionnaire provided a perspective for Robert that led to a deeper understanding of student lives outside the classroom, allowing for “more precise” individual discussions which strived to help students manage the expectations of the classroom with the demands of their lives.

Robert realized from his questionnaire that many students have a disparity of academic and cultural capital, and this student capital disparity manifests itself as an inability for students to understand time management skills in and out of the classroom as

well as a lack of understanding of the academic demands of the context. For Robert, this lack of understanding of academic demands centered on students' inability to move past rote memorization learning skills and into analysis and critical thinking skills demanded of his English course.

“. . . you see really early which of those students is really unprepared . . . and it's not that these students aren't intelligent enough to do it they are not aware enough of the importance of doing stuff.”

Robert worked throughout the semester to provide students capital gaining moments through validating engagement techniques in the class and social interaction moments. Using lecture intermixed with small group work Robert acknowledged student academic capital gains in their gained understanding of expectations in the course. Robert highlighted student capital gains by writing student comments and group interaction insights on the board in front of the class, while also validating student input verbally in the classroom. Robert strived to build momentum toward deeper learning by students, encouraging them to stretch their thinking about the content in the course past memorization into analysis and critical thinking skills. Robert placed students into similar groups based on degree plans noted on the student questionnaire. However, he worked to mix groups up throughout the semester to allow for exchange of information among students, helping to further build their understanding of the different arenas and new sets of rules they were encountering in their classroom(s).

“I think writing things on the board, mainly during class room discussion. If someone says something, it goes up on the board. I think when I write on the board, it is showing them how to take notes - how to group a discussion into ideas that you could return to later. In terms of their work on the page when they get things back, I mark-up extensively. Check mark, good point, awkward, I try to mix more validation when I grade things.”

“I discuss that abstract idea of critical thinking idea, why it is so important. That is a skill that will translate across almost any course or profession, even if the rules how you study might change. . . We talk about the ideas of what education is. We try to wrap it up during the semester. How to think, that is what is going to translate. . . you have to have the ability to analyze regardless if you are in the health care field or (other fields) . . . The rules changes but the underlying skill of critical thinking is the same.”

What Was Learned

Robert’s insight regarding “emotional capital” disparity underscores the balance students and faculty must find in their use of capital resources to help navigate the multiple contexts they will encounter. For Robert, recognizing and understanding “emotional capital” as a faculty member, played an important role in the quality of his faculty-student engagements. Emotional capital issue for students often manifest themselves in outside factors, i.e. family responsibilities and work responsibilities, which create limits on the amount of time and energy available in which to engage in course responsibilities. Similar time and energy demands affect faculty as well as, and may reveal themselves in the engagement and pedagogy processes employed in the classroom. The concept of “emotional capital” and its limits proposed by Robert speaks directly to Bourdieu and other researchers (Bensimon, 2007; Berger, 2000; Tierney, 1999) discussions on the role cultural, social, and academic capital play in individuals understanding of the context in which they are involved. These researchers stress the varied types and amounts of cultural resources students enter the educational arena with creates limits in understanding of the context for students. Robert’s insights suggest faculty may also have varied amounts and limits of cultural resources which affect their ability to interact with those involved in the context.

“we think that drilling them in the textbook is all that matters. . . you have to engage them in a way to keep them coming back, you have to engage them in a

way to keep them coming to the classroom . . . what does it take to get your students in position to even have a chance to take what you are trying to give them?”

Upon reflection of his action plan, Robert plans to pair students who have similar “emotional capital” challenges and perform better academically, with students who are struggling academically. Robert hopes this purposeful engagement technique can provide a means to level capital among students through social interactions that lead to social and academic integration.

“This semester seemed like a test run of this questionnaire, it has given me a closer snap shot of the student. It is going to be useful. Now I know how to use it, it is going to get better. . . I might rethink how I group the students. . . I can have those students who struggle . . . grouped with students who are successful. Then when students who need help have gotten to rub elbows with those students, we can switch groups again to their goals.”

Robert’s idea of having students share their understanding of the arena and new set of rules as well as their cultural practices with one another, may actually allow students the opportunity to balance classroom expectations with outside responsibilities. Robert’s idea for further development of his action plan, highlights the role social interactions may play for students in the community college classroom.

Social integration and academic integration occurring in the classroom is suggested by Diel-Amen (2011) as a naturally occurring process at the community college. But Robert’s consideration to create social integration moments that lead to academic integration through an academic and social capital leveling process, provides a new perspective on actions faculty in the classroom may employ to help counter student capital disparity. Robert’s action plan helps us understand how faculty may gain a perspective of student capital disparity occurring in the classroom from a quantitative approach. But it is Robert’s insights regarding “emotional capital” that allows us to see a

faculty perspective of how disparities of student cultural resources plays a role in faculty interacting with students and understanding their capital.

“Anyone who is talking about capital, it is a means of how to use resources and mostly limited resources. . . . And how you distribute that wealth, resources, is what ultimately makes a difference. Now, you can wish that there will be an endless supply of . . . products, or money, but that is not going to happen. So the biggest thing faculty can realize - that capital is limited. There is only so much time you have to figure out how to increase their capital by building off what they already have. Or by realizing there are certain things you can't change at this time. I think that is really the biggest hurdle our students face, we only have so much time. That being said, you can always teach them how to use their time more efficiency. You cannot magically create time. But, there are things you can change and things you can't. You have to ultimately figure out how to work within and around the student's capital disparity, to teach them how to gain more capital in their own way. I think once you do that, you have taught them how to make themselves more fertile. Like what you do to soil in the winter to make it more fertile. When they use that time better they are going to produce more fruit.”

Robert noted a finding in his understanding of student capital disparity and his exploration of methods used in his action plan which should be highlighted. Robert perceived students struggling with understanding the different academic skill sets needed in his class and how those necessary skill sets were different than those used by students in their past academic experiences. These student academic skill sets manifested themselves as limitations of student understanding of the academic requirements needed within the context. These understood rules of the educational environment (doxa) perceived by faculty, are often not understood by students. Robert acknowledges that students may not recognize the change of arena and the new set of rules that is occurring between levels of education as well as courses within the two-year institution. This lack of academic understanding by students of the multiple layers of academic expectations (multiple doxas of varied fields) emphasizes the pivotal role faculty play in providing

students opportunities to understand the change of arena and new set of rules they must contend with in higher education.

Many simply seemed not to understand that different skills are needed for different subjects. Many of my students who struggled attend class regularly and claim to be “great note takers” on their survey. I now understand that I need to have an open discussion with students at the start of each semester about the different skill sets needed for different subjects. They cannot expect to prepare for (my course) in the same way they prepare for (another course) . . .

Bourdieu emphasized how cultural capital plays a significant role in one’s understanding of their context and how individuals make sense of the educational setting and its expectations based on their existing cultural capital. Cultural assumptions were recognized by Robert as playing a role in how student’s perceived education, creating an understanding for Robert of the cultural resources students bring into the classroom as well as the expectations students may have of the environment. However, Robert’s understanding of student cultural resources was balanced with his recognition of the role he as a faculty member plays in providing student opportunities to perhaps gain cultural capital through his engagements in the classroom which help to balance capital disparity for students.

“ . . . low-income people tend to think of college as just a means to an economic end, you are discouraging them from pursuing anything in the arts, you are discouraging them from this idea of kind of finding, learning more about yourself, becoming more culturally fluent . . . there’s got to be this balance.”

Throughout the action plan, Robert worked to gain perspective of the multiple levels and varieties of student cultural resources and the disparity that existed by returning to the questionnaire he had created, using responses to further shape and guide the when, where and how of student engagements occurring in the classroom.

. . . it (questionnaire) highlights how simple it would be for me to identify students at the beginning of a semester as needing additional help. The survey

also indicated that students in my class who struggled also tended to work (on average) over 20 hours a week. Again, this wasn't shocking information, but it reinforced the importance of using class time effectively and not relying upon students to be able to "make time" for additional help outside of class.

Robert's biggest take away from his action plan was his reaffirmation of the time demands community college students have outside of the classroom, their lack of understanding in managing those demands, and the role he as a faculty member plays in using limited class time to provide capital gaining moments for students socially, academically or culturally.

. . . one of the biggest things I have taken away is that many students have misunderstandings about what is needed to be successful in college and that they have many pressing commitments outside of the classroom. . . . I must figure out how to address that within the class time I am given. Because of life outside the classroom most students are unable to get the help they need to shore up their fundamentals of college success.

Another take away for Robert was the ability to exchange and share his funds of knowledge with other participants and the importance of carrying on the conversations to faculty outside the study. This particular insight counters researcher's argument that faculty learning communities may create faculty who are unwilling to share outside of the faculty learning community.

I have also learned that there is an amazing wealth of knowledge and expertise among my own faculty members. To become a better teacher and serve my students better something as simple as more regular conversations with my own faculty members would help tremendously. I hope that in the future we are able to build upon what we have learned through our research and the very act of conducting an organized research project. Such a process would be invaluable to almost any faculty member and surely increase the success of their students.

Robert's action plan and insights helps build our knowledge of when faculty should employ engagement strategies to help level the capital in the classroom. Robert noted

during the action research study the need to quickly assess student cultural assumptions, even suggesting that faculty could look at student academic capital before class begins.

“I think in a lot of ways it reinforced in me, the disparity I already thought my students already had. The disparity in terms of time management, lacking time management skills or lacking even the time outside of the classroom they might devote to becoming better writers and students. It showed me things I didn’t expect, how key your overall GPA might be to your success in this course”.

Robert’s suggestion that faculty could gain understanding of student academic capital and potential disparity by looking at student data even before the course begins, highlights research emphasizing faculty’s need to engage students early and often if students are to understand the expectations of the institution (Barnett, 2011; Rendon, 1992; Tinto, 1975, 1992, 2012). Robert recognized this early look at student cultural assumptions should be a part of the culture of the community college.

While Robert believed the culture of the institution was student-centered, his suggestion that providing a student input characteristic such as high school GPA or cumulative college GPA on a class roster to provide faculty the opportunity to better understand student capital disparity they might be facing in the classroom, brings to light processes that institutions could employ to help those on the front-lines of student engagements. Recognizing a process which would allow faculty the chance to prepare their engagement of students in purposeful, meaningful manners before day one in the classroom, highlights experienced faculty understanding of student cultural resources and the disparity that may exist. Faculty perception of student capital disparity may be further underscored by their recognition of the incongruence of student capital with the culture of the institution, and our next participant provides us insight into this particular level of student capital disparity from a faculty perspective.

Jessica: “We forget what it is like to be them I think. Or we can. Some of us were never them.”

Jessica has community college capital, with family members who were leaders and instructors at the community college, and she herself a community college graduate. Jessica understands community college’s role in higher education as well as the student population the community college serves and the cultural resources they bring.

“I think it is a combination of academic and kind of I don’t know if I want to call it cultural or socio-economic. I don’t know. I think it may be a mix of both. Socio-economic being the financial issues that they have, sometimes the money management issues they have. The culture when it comes to money. And then a lot of them come from the first generation household where they don’t have the good example and they may very well have people who are very well meaning, but they don’t have a concept of what we do or what our expectations are, the rules. . . . it is culture shock to them.”

One might assume based on Jessica’s community college background that her personal capital resources would closely align with the cultural dispositions of many of her students who are entering her English classroom. However, Jessica acknowledges students entering her classrooms often exhibit a range of cultural resources which are quite different than her own. For Jessica, the capital disparity differences she perceives in her classroom often manifest themselves as a disarticulation of student capital with the culture of the institution. Jessica’s recognition of this level of student capital disparity should come as no surprise, since Jessica’s personal capital closely aligned with the educational institution she attended as well as where she works. For Jessica there is minimal incongruence between her capital and the culture of the institution, and what misalignment that did exist was easily countered.

To Jessica’s credit, she understands that for her student’s the cultural resources they are entering her classroom with is not lacking, just different than the culture of the

institution. Jessica rationalizes the student's difficulty in understanding the culture of the institution through analogy, highlighting the important role she as a faculty member of the institution plays in creating connections for students that help bridge the incongruence between the institution's culture and the capital of the student.

“The first time I went to . . . (a particular sandwich shop) . . . , I had never heard of any of these sizes. So, I go up to order and the sandwich person, I could tell he thought I was an idiot. . . . It did not matter how good the sandwich was because I felt so stupid in the process of ordering the sandwich. It was a completely unfamiliar place. . . . I feel like some of our students have had (a similar sandwich shop) experience and I don't want to be the jerk behind the counter. But the jerk behind the counter works their everyday and thinks, “How hard is it to order a stupid sandwich you idiot?” . . . if the person behind the counter would have said, “Is this your first time here? Let me tell you this is how we do this . . . I would recommend this sandwich.” If that person would had been more welcoming, or more understanding to the fact that I had never been there before, it does not mean I am stupid. It just means I have not had this experience, it is not familiar . . .”

Jessica works diligently to understand who the students are in her classroom taking time to learn all of their names by the second day of class, and strives to gain insight into student interests outside of the classroom. These connections are limited in depth, but highlight the importance Jessica places in trying to comprehend the cultural assumptions her students bring to her classroom, and how those cultural attitudes and practices affect their understanding of the educational context.

“They all bring different experiences and perspectives. It could be something tiny or dramatic. I think if you take any amount of time to look into their live at all, I think we all find similarities that will surprise us as well as differences.”

“I hope I always . . . look at them as people, individual people. That sounds so simple, but we (faculty) don't do it. You know we don't think about each one and what they are bringing and what their individual struggles are. And a lot of that is outside the classroom. I think if we thought to know them a little bit, we would be more invested, more respectful.”

However, Jessica struggles to rationalize the academic capital disparity of students in her classroom compared to her own capital, reflecting on the differences and similarities.

Where Jessica understands the incongruence students face culturally and socially, Jessica struggles to understand the academic disparity students' exhibit and how those disparities conflict with educational goals she has set for her students in the classroom.

“They (students) are absolutely socialized with the idea of just tell us what you want us to know. We will regurgitate it . . . they come to us with you know a crutch they have used all their lives, they have been spoon fed.”

Jessica concedes that understanding student capital disparity at any level is complicated, and comprehends the incongruence between the culture of the institution and the capital of the student requires time and reflection on the part of faculty in order to gain clearer understanding.

I tend to forget sometimes that not everyone has a similar experience and what those differences look like. It's hard to "unknow" what you know sometimes and put yourself in the shoes of someone who doesn't know things you have just kind of always known. So this has required me to reflect about myself as well as my students.

Jessica recognizes the role engagements in the classroom can play in helping the student learn and build academic capital and how those engagements may help counter the disparity of academic capital she contends with in her classroom. Jessica works to establish a sense of community, which allows for a leveling of cultural resources, by having students work on projects together. Jessica's creates these social interactions during class through a pedagogy technique that has students work on course content individually then pair up with one another to share what they learned.

“. . . really making sure they had opportunities to interact with each other. That they were in groups a lot, and I mixed up the groups a lot. They had tasks they accomplished together. We built community.”

“I am a big believer in think, pair, share. Where you are working on your own and then you work with a partner. There is just less risk in that. It takes a certain student to say yes I will read my paragraph to everybody. So we do a lot of that. They will work with their buddies. Then I am going around checking with groups

trying to get feedback. Then I will have them turn something into me and they will get written feedback. It is kind of a workshop. I view our class time as a workshop.”

For Jessica, finding a connection with the student is important, and from her perspective key in making faculty-student connections that recognize and appreciate student differences. But Jessica realizes where she is comfortable and well aware of the rules of the arena she is involved in, students struggle with the different arena and their understanding of the rules, which for Jessica appear to manifest themselves as incongruences between the culture of the institution and their own cultural resources.

“We (faculty) are in our element. We are in our comfort zone. We are doing something most of our waking hours that we feel good about. We are good at it, we feel confident. We don’t have those experiences most of the time where we are not on our top of the game. You know what I mean. It has been so long for most of us, where we are put into any situation where we feel incompetent, lost, silly, embarrassed because of where we are in our careers, hobbies, and I think when you try something new. You take yourself out of that zone, here I am. . . We tend to forget what it is like to be outside of our comfort zone. We need to remember what it is like. Probably most of our students are not in their comfort zone when they are in our classes. We need to be mindful of that and I think we forget to be mindful of that. That you know, (this) class is not the comfort zone for people in the class; and college is not the comfort zone for a lot of people just because college was my comfort zone doesn’t mean I need to make that assumption about everyone else.”

Action Plan

Jessica’s action plan focused on capital disparity issues community college students’ face with the organizational culture, and how engagements within the organization can play a critical role in helping student’s recognize that their cultural resources have value within the community college context. Jessica’s action plan had students complete a process paper, having students identify a student support services available at the college that included, but was not limited to; tutoring, TRIO, counseling, advising, and financial aid. This assignment required students to interview an individual

in their selected student support service, finding out where the service was located on campus and what the service provided for students.

Jessica's intent was to not only have students identify services available at the institution, but to also share garnered information regarding student service with fellow classmates through presentation and open discussion occurring in the classroom. Jessica hoped classroom presentations and discussions would help bridge the gap for students in understanding the culture of the institution as well as how the culture of the institution may fit with their cultural resources, or even provide students the opportunity to gain capital by finding and using services available at the institution.

“Well, I think there are several different kinds of capital they are getting here. One, is that institutional capital being able to maneuver within and building that confidence . . . they need to be able to do that and aware of that. Certain things exist. Then there is the day to day capital of functioning in the academic environment. . . So there is that kind of thing the functioning within an institution . . . interacting one-on-one with faculty members.”

Jessica built short office visit with each student during class time to help discuss the paper's content and her expectations of the assignment, engaging with each student outside of the classroom. By showing students where her office was in the college (literally ten steps from her classroom), Jessica built connections between the student and herself as well as the institution, creating opportunity for involvement by students through intentionally inviting processes. Jessica continued to use social interactions through the presentation of the process paper assignment and small group discussion in class, re-enforcing her belief in engagements to help level the capital in the classroom. Jessica's one-on-one visits with students in her office allowed students the opportunity to integrate with the institution and build a relationship with her.

“I think it will increase integration to campus . . . this is more about getting the students familiar with me and with the campus. An office visit can be humanizing, and maybe they’ll be more comfortable engaging with me this way. Plus, I think it lets them know I care.”

Jessica took her action plan one step further by focusing on validation of students work. Handing back students’ papers with “best of tidbits” – positive feedback of work. She used validation to help build positive relationships with students, acknowledging their particular cultural dispositions were worthy of the college environment. Jessica strived to have validating moments carry meaning, not simply handing out positive reinforcement on everyone’s paper, but working to provide constructive, purposeful words of wisdom that encourages the student to take pride and an active role in their work.

“Well, there are examples for lots of students with various forms of capital. Obviously their academic capital was changed dramatically. . . I think people have realized, number one, it really is about the skills you are gaining.”

What Was Learned

Jessica emphasized the overall performance of the project and its relationship to course content and personal insight through feedback with students both individually and as a group during class time. Through these engagements, Jessica learned she may not understand the community college student capital disparity as well as she thought she might have, based on her background and perceptions.

“I certainly have begun to think more about what I take for granted and the assumptions I make about what our students know. . . I am not sure there is a huge amount of disparity in terms of . . . capital in . . . (the) classroom. They all, for the most part, seem to be lacking in . . . capital. . . I’m realizing that some students haven’t been taught these things, and I shouldn’t assume they have.”

Jessica reaffirmed her understanding of the importance of creating a bridge to help close incongruence between the student and the institution through her action plan, validating her own perception of the cultural capital disparity existing in her classroom

while highlighting the role faculty play in helping students understand the culture of the institution.

I have always known that students need at least ONE (*emphasis added by Jessica*) person on campus with whom they have a relationship and a comfort level. They need a person who will answer their questions, point them in the right direction, encourage them, and make them feel of value. I encourage students to find that person, and I encourage faculty members to be that person for someone.

Jessica's action plan helps us put a finer point on our understanding of experienced faculty perception of why certain types of engagements with students' matter. By helping students understand the culture of the institution, Jessica provided student the opportunity to see existing cultural resources and the culture of the institution can co-exist with one another, helping students gain a clearer understanding of the rules in the arena. Jessica's action plan helped students find and share with one another student support services offered at the community college, allowing students the opportunity to see how the culture of the institution may be designed to help them. Jessica's action plan created integration moments for students with the institution helping them recognize the organization may actually be populated with individuals that have similar cultural dispositions, or have capital which respects the students existing capital.

It should be noted that Jessica readily acknowledged that the main focus in her action plan (content paper that helped students integrate with the institution and its members) was not her original idea. She had borrowed the idea from another faculty member in her division (Robert), believing in its ability to successfully accomplish her goals during the action research as well as the outcome for her course. Jessica places enormous value in sharing of ideas, exchanging funds of knowledge with other faculty, and the role these faculty-faculty engagements play in helping create better understanding

of the context for students. Jessica displayed how much value she placed in the action research study's focus, by suggesting participants conduct a professional development conference for ESCTC discussing what they had learned about student capital and the potential for disparity, the theoretical-based engagements faculty might consider employing, and their personal take-away from participating in an action research project.

“I think, this is probably a side note, it is important that we start talking about this, I really do. I think a lot of people see things but don't have a name for it. Until they name it you can't really do much about it. How do you have a vision, plan, if you don't really know what you are fighting against. Honestly, it is important work we need to share. We see it. We all see it, until you really try to make this conscious effort to part a solution. That may be the part out in the world, but in my class, I guess what I am trying to say, when they come to me, I have a chance to really do something.”

For Jessica and the other participants, finding explanation for their perceptions regarding student capital and potential disparity occurring in the classroom was important. Recognizing how purposeful engagements based on established theories may help build understanding for those involved in the context and provide clarity for why, how, and when processes are used held value for everyone involved in the study, including the students in the participant's classrooms. Our next participant's discussion and action plan closes out our action research discussions and helps us put a sharper focus on experienced faculty understanding of student capital disparity occurring in the community college classroom.

Samantha: “I think in teaching you have to be willing to have a lot of things in your tool box, depending on the environment, student population, (and) their previous experiences.”

With two Master's degrees, a family full of educators, and twenty plus years of teaching, Samantha has abundant funds of knowledge and personal capital resources from which to draw from when engaging her students. Her role in the college is highlighted

with committee membership and mentoring new full-time faculty both in and out of her division. Samantha has a clear sense of what she believes her role as an educator is, and what the culture of the institution she works at is, while recognizing that not all faculty may have the same perception of role and culture.

“I think it is characteristics of teachers that are dedicated classroom facilitators that are trying to find other ways to engage students. . . . maybe it is the culture we have cultivated over the last couple of years that we want people not to be afraid to fail, but we want them to try. So you are constantly looking for things that will improve your class. And I think when you get to the point that you don’t want to do anything new, that it might be a good time to re-evaluate your goals.”

Finding a balance of helping students in the classroom without “just spoon feeding them” is a focus for Samantha. She strives to find engaging pedagogies in which to employ in her psychology classrooms that help “break-up” her lectures. These techniques include study-stops which seek insight in to student understanding and clarity of content covered in the classroom. These study-stops involve quick student surveys, videos of content, and group discussions helping to seek clarity in the material covered in class. Samantha recognizes the inherent cycle of new educational concepts and pedagogy techniques may not necessarily produce what is important to her in the classroom – student learning. Samantha recognizes that student learning is tied to existing student cultural resources, and is well aware of her role in helping students understand their cultural dispositions can help them learn in the context.

“If you (the student) don’t have the capital you can’t set a goal because you don’t understand what the outcome will be. You have no idea. . . For the most part, they (students) come in like a new born in a first semester class, pick any class. My role is to help them learn to set goals, to learn to be able to sit at the table. To be proud of who they are with every wart life has given them.”

Samantha's recognition of student capital disparity existing in her classroom as well as outside issues community college students face is based on her extensive funds of knowledge as well as her personal capital.

“I recognize there are differences. People have different talents in different areas. I see that in my student population daily.”

But what is unique for Samantha in regards to her funds of knowledge compared to the other participants, is her background in both the technical side and general education side of the two-year institution. This particular fund of knowledge for Samantha has helped shape her perception of student involvement in the learning process as well as her role in creating opportunities for student to be involved in the learning environment. Samantha relies upon pedagogy techniques shaped from her technical education background which focus on connecting real world examples and personal stories with concepts she is covering in her classroom. Samantha's perception of student involvement in the classroom is moderated by her understanding that the cultural resources students are bringing with them into the classroom may not allow for understanding of the expectation or the amount of involvement necessary for her class. Samantha is also keenly aware of how student commitment to involvement in their learning ties to their future endeavors.

“Time management . . . They may have a family and/or a job, relationships, I think students don't always realize the amount of time that is necessary for reading, studying or preparing for class.”

“I don't want them (students) to come and sit there and be passive. But until they buy in, that they are responsible for their learning and their own education, their personal goals and achievement . . . are limited.”

Samantha balanced concerns of maintaining academic rigor in her class and providing too much hand-holding for students by understanding she has to assess student capital in the classroom and recognize student capital disparity when it exists. Samantha

understands that assessing student cultural assumptions and finding processes to counter existing student capital disparity takes time and is accomplished through purposeful faculty-student engagements.

“The students that I have are just learning to walk and we take baby steps at the beginning, and by the end of the semester I want them to run. Now some of them come in to the class room and they are ready to run . . . but I have to balance my class room so I am challenging for those students who are ready to transfer and I still have the students over here that are afraid.”

“So my job as an educator is not to just teach the subject matter, but to show them (students) how they can expand their personal capital no matter what they are doing. . . . As the semester goes along, I take away more of the support and allow them to stand alone. So at the time I that I get to the end of the semester, I am not spending as much time demonstrating the process of education than I am showing them how to be self-educated.”

Samantha realizes providing capital to students may potentially incur a cost for the student. She tempers this concern with an understanding the student doesn't necessarily need to give up some part of their cultural dispositions, but that they may simply need to understand the expectations of education, and find a compromise of priorities and time management skills which allow congruence between the demands of the institution and their existing cultural resources.

“So as your students gain personal capital, they have to make decisions. . . . They may need to learn to let go of some things that one time they thought they could not live without. . . . So yes, as they gain capital they make harder and harder choices, more difficult choices. . . . It is not that increasing the tool box isn't helpful . . . So, they have gained a skill set. . . . But it may be a great trade off. . . .”

Samantha recognition of personal choices faced by students as they interact with the educational institution acknowledges concerns noted by researchers (Bensimon, 2007; Berger, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; Tierney, 1999) that the cultural dispositions of the student may not match the culture and expectations of the institution. But where researchers have noted the students are faced with a choice of giving up their capital in order to integrate

with the institution, Samantha provides us insight on how gains in capital may actually be necessary for some students in order to allow the process of education to occur. For Samantha, she sees her role in the classroom as one which helps students find balance of cultural resources, allowing them to understand the expectations of the classroom and college.

“Do what we do as faculty help our students? Does it really help? Am I doing a service or am I doing a disservice? I want to enable my students to be good students and engage them in my classes . . . Some students have abilities that have never been exposed to them because they have not been in an environment.”

Action Plan

Samantha chose an action plan based on her belief students must take an active role in their education, while still recognizing student capital disparity existing in her classroom. Samantha embedded a set of study-skill videos (Appendix C) in her courses for students to watch, with the intent of exposing students to concepts and skill sets of higher education she believed necessary for students to be a successful in college. Specifically aimed at closing capital disparity in the classroom through her action plan, Samantha created assignments based on the videos, requiring students to summarize and reflect on what they had learned from viewing the videos. Samantha took her action plan one step further by including “low stakes” reading quizzes in her course to build analysis and critical thinking skills through reading, recognizing existing student capital disparity in her class may create a “fear” in opening a college text and reading for some students. Samantha used the action research study to inject a fresh perspective of her assignments and the cultural resources students may bring into her classroom, making a conscious effort to provide a wider variety of talking points and engagement opportunities through associations which she believed would carry meaning for students.

“If you are in the class room for a long period of time, you continue to improve your classroom to make it better. Even if you are teaching the same subject. . . . So the more that you learn about their (students) structure at home, their personal knowledge base, the better you can make an association for something that is usable.”

Samantha encouraged the use of videos and reflection by student, and how its content applied to them. Samantha worked throughout the semester to encourage involvement of student through her purposeful actions and intentionally inviting environment she created. Samantha’s engagements focused on validation of the student’s cultural dispositions by continuing to provide analogies students might find relatable, thereby creating a connection for the student between the course content and their existing capital.

What Was Learned

Samantha emphasized her belief that understanding student capital disparity falls to the faculty member by stressing the importance of continual learning and engagements to provide students the opportunity to gain capital in the classroom through quality faculty-student engagements in her action plan. However, Samantha acknowledged during the study her concern that faculty may forget who their students are in the classroom. She balanced this concern of a disconnect between students’ cultural assumptions and faculty understanding in the classroom with an institutional cultural she believes works to remind faculty of student capital disparity and the faculty role in creating process to help level capital in the classroom.

“. . . if we have students in our class room that lack that capital, our (faculty) role is to continue to go to professional development or conferences, so we can continue to make our class room engaging, enlightening, and enhance the students learning so they can feel good they accomplished something. . . . you are building the personal capital of the student as well as the capital in your class room.”

For Samantha, the action plan helped students find capital gains, but she readily acknowledged her actions limitations. For some students in her class, the videos were excellent introductions to the expectations of the context, but they failed to recognize the grade component of the assignment attached to the videos, which Samantha emphasized multiple times to students. Reading quizzes, aimed at providing students opportunities to gain academic capital, were also emphasized by Samantha throughout the semester, but unfortunately for some students these capital gaining moments were lost. This acknowledgement by Samantha of a lack of understanding by students of academic responsibilities appears to suggest doxa may play a role in student understanding of the expectations of the course. Samantha found most of the students in her classes open to the involving engagements, appreciating the opportunity she had provided, but she still strived and contended with ways to create learning opportunities for all students.

“It is not that you are not always trying to be a better teacher but I think when you take time to stop and think, am I really looking at the whole picture of the student’s capital, what am I doing, a concrete thing that I am doing to help that student grow.”

Samantha’s biggest take away from her action plan has been her creation of engagements in the classroom that focus on student capital disparity, as well as her ability to interact with other experienced faculty across divisions, sharing knowledge and common concerns. Samantha’s insight of the role engagements with fellow faculty play in helping gain an understanding of student cultural assumptions, as well as processes which may be employed that hold potential in understanding disparity of student capital in the classroom, helps us clarify the role action research can play in the development of community college faculty.

I think it is important that teaching faculty have activities that allow peers to get to know and understand each other, regardless of teaching content and division. These short projects are excellent ways for seasoned faculty to share knowledge and to gain the trust in their peers.

For Samantha, finding a method which allowed the exchange of funds of knowledge and crossed divisions within the institution was an asset. Samantha's role at the college allows her the opportunity to work with faculty at the entry level, helping to provide first and second-year faculty insights to the culture and expectations of the institution. These entry-level faculty learning community meetings Samantha is involved in have been noted in the research as providing an opportunity for new faculty to find their footing in the institution, and lending themselves to the creation of congruence between the new faculty member and the culture of the institution in which they are employed. However, Samantha provides us insight on the potential action research studies may hold for "seasoned faculty", those with five, ten, even fifteen years of teaching experience. For Samantha, action research provides an opportunity for re-affirmation for experienced faculty with the expectations and culture of the institution, as well as a means to remind faculty of student cultural disparity issues that may exist in their community college classroom.

"I think no matter how long you have taught you need a project occasionally to give some zip to your step . . . maybe there needs to be another part . . . even after you are a professor once every four or five years there needs to be a project . . . it doesn't have to be someone's research, but you work with people outside your division like this" "If you continue to work 20-38 years that at least every five years that you have a project requirement . . . I really think it needs to be a group research or project . . . it could be a multitude of choices . . . we encourage first year faculty to go to things and meet people outside their division and expect them to be there . . . help them bond . . . professional as well as personal connections with first year faculty . . . and then we just sort of throw them out and the next thing they are going up for promotion and if some divisions do not have strong mentoring programs inside and outside their division which is something else we could do to improve the capital on campus . . . we can rejuvenate from

within by providing experienced faculty an opportunity to work on a project that holds meaning to them, framed by faculty-student engagements occurring in the classroom, faculty involved in the project could expand their funds of knowledge and re-invigorate their role in the institution.”

Samantha suggests that faculty who may feel comfortable in their funds of knowledge might be provided an opportunity to reflect on how their “know-how” may or may not match established theories through participation in an action research project. Samantha, and the other participants, realized that action research holds potential to help motivate colleagues who may feel caught up in the educational grind of instructing 100 plus students in the same five courses every semester at the same institution semester after semester, as well as an opportunity for the institution to recognize the important role experienced faculty in student success through their engagements in the classroom and their attempts to understand the cultural resources students bring with them.

Conclusion

Community college faculty are charged with educating students with varied backgrounds, and must contend with the variety of student cultural resources in their classroom which may or may not help faculty accomplish their task of having students learning the content. As experts in their respective disciplines, community college faculty must find ways to transfer knowledge to students who struggle with understanding the demands of the context. Student burdens of time and priorities outside the classroom affect faculty abilities to expand their work past the classroom. The enormous task of education is further complicated for faculty at the community college by the disparity of doxa between the student and faculty. While faculty are unconsciously aware of the rules of the fields which encompass their involvements with students, students struggle to understand and rationalize the unseen rules which comprise their engagements within the

context of the community college. Faculty are left trying to connect cultural, social, and academic capital of the student with the demands of the educational arena to help them make sense of the context. From our experienced faculty participant's perception, being armed with validating, involving, inviting, and integrating engagements to employ in the context appear to help students gain an understanding of the rules of the field, while still working to accomplish their original goal of educating the student and is worth the effort.

Participants showed an overall enthusiasm to increase their knowledge of theoretically-based engagements, and expanded their use of pedagogy techniques which incorporated the tenants of the theories to bridge the incongruence of student capital with the culture and expectations of the environment. Participants work hard to understand the cultural resources students bring with them into the classroom, recognizing that the capital students brings to the classroom may or may not allow the student to understand the expectations of the context. However, participants battled with their understanding of the disparity of doxa existing between students and themselves. Participants acknowledged their native role in their classroom and at ESCTC, based on their years of experience in the arenas of play. Participants understand the rules of all the arenas that encompass ESCTC, with a habitus and capital that allows them to move easily within and between the fields without much effort or thought. With many students entering the arenas of the participant's classrooms at ESCTC with a noted lack of understanding of the rules, participants suggested that the students' inability to understand the change of thinking and effort needed to be successful in their classroom was due to a lack of academic capital obtained at the secondary level. While perhaps rushing to blame the disparity of student capital they perceived in their classroom on those who taught their

students previously, participants also recognized the social and cultural capital aspects which shape student understanding of the context. Participants worked to level the arena of play for students exhibiting this variety of student capital disparity by helping students understand the rules of the game through engagements and pedagogies designed to provide academic, social, and cultural capital gains.

What a colossal task undertaken by the participants of this study, charged with educating students with varied backgrounds and understanding of the expectations of the course and institution, all handled with a professionalism and openness that underscores their abilities as educators. Using their funds of knowledge to scaffold upon their personal capital, participants worked to gain understanding of student capital and the disparity which may exist in their classroom. Whether consciously or unconsciously participants connected theory with practice throughout the study, drawing our attention to the role experience in the classroom plays in their understanding of processes at their disposal to help contend with the varied student cultural dispositions that populate their classrooms. Participants provided clarity of their perceptions of student capital in their classrooms and how they contend with the disparity, and we are left saying well done and please keep up the important work.

Chapter three allows us to see the faculty participant's action plans, while also providing us the opportunity to answer the sub-set of research questions generated and noted in chapter two. These answers are peppered throughout chapter three and help us gain an understanding of faculty participant's perception in exploration of faculty-student engagements occurring in their classrooms and processes that were being used and developed during the study to provide capital gaining opportunities for students.

Recognizing how funds of knowledge develop for faculty participants and why the type of engagements with students' matters in helping level capital in the classroom from participant's perspective reaffirms our intentions for the study discussed in chapters one and two. Gaining understanding of how participants managed the disparity of capital occurring in their classroom, as well as the engagement strategies they chose to employ to help level the capital in their classrooms, provides us a foundation for the theories discussed in previous chapters, and how those theories apply to practice in the classroom for our participants. Answering our last question regarding the role action research can play in the development of community college faculty will be discussed in chapters four and five, along with what I gleaned from my perspective in the study through my analysis of the data and information generated. The themes discussed in chapter four help solidify our understanding of the faculty participants perspective of student capital disparity.

Chapter 4 - Reflection

Introduction

For faculty participants, pursuing an area of focus which explored the variety of student cultural assumptions which populate their classrooms provided purpose for the time and energy they spent on the action research study. The use of a dialectic action research approach in this study, allowed participants to recognize their own funds of knowledge and personal capital resources, and how those funds of knowledge and personal capital shaped their understanding of student capital disparity in the community college classroom (Creswell, 2009; Mills, 2007; Stringer, 2014). Analysis of information gleaned through review of faculty learning community meeting notes, interview transcripts, observations, and journaling showed similar yet unique understandings of the context from a faculty perspective, creating themes which crossed individual action plans.

The participants' perspectives and their relationship to educational theories discussed, centered upon concepts of field and capital proposed by Bourdieu and expanded upon by other researchers (Bensimon, 2007; Berger, 2000; Deer, 2008; Moore, 2008; Thomson, 2008; Tierney, 1999). Educational research notes how a field is perceived by its members, may stem from the individual's cultural capital which may limit their "fit" or level of comfort with the institutional environment, as well as the individual's ability to understand the doxa or rules of the field represented by the culture of the institution. Researchers (Berger, 2000; McGrath & Spear, 1992; Tierney, 1999) note students with a cultural capital which closely aligns with that of the dominant members of the institution (e.g. faculty) have an advantage in understanding the rules and

field of play, and therefore exhibit the wherewithal to use their existing capital to fit in with the culture of the institution or exchange their capital for forms of capital that permit their acclimation to the new field quickly and with minimal effort. The belief by the individual that they have the means to not only “fit” into the context of higher education easily but engage in such a way as to succeed is often represented by the cultural elite of society (Berger, 2000; Deer, 2008; Moore, 2008; Thomson, 2008). The following reflection provides a finer point on what was learned from my perspective as facilitator during the study, helping further expand our knowledge of participant’s understanding of student capital disparity in the community college classroom. Following this reflection, I will explore future research considerations.

Participant Perception of Their Role in the Context

The social contexts that make up the field of education may be as broad as the institution of higher education the individual is attending or as narrow as a faculty member interacting with a student in a course. Unfortunately for many community college students, their cultural capital does not provide them the means to understand the changed arena nor the new set of rules that is the two-year institution and the classrooms they enter. This incongruence between existing student capital and the culture of the institution can limit student confidence and create issues in their attempts to understand the rules of the new field. It is clear that a lack of “fit” between community college students and the institutional climate creates issues that require actions by those who do understand the arena. The unseen rules or hidden curriculum must be interpreted if the student and institution are to find level ground to understand one another. Creation of

processes which allow understanding between the student and the two-year institution, fall on one set of individuals involved in the context - community college faculty.

Community college faculty are challenged to not only teach students with varied backgrounds and levels of understanding of course content, but also exhibit an ability to recognize varied levels of student cultural resources and how that disparity of cultural resources plays a role in education for students and faculty. This challenging dynamic occurs while the faculty member contends with understanding the potential ramifications disparity of student capital creates in the classroom through the misalignment of understanding by students with their environment. Community college faculty represent the key in creating understanding for students of the new set of rules in the arena through the use of engagement processes employed in their classroom, hopefully helping to level the field of play.

It is worth noting, from the beginning of the action research study through the end, participants recognized and understood the disparity of student capital existing in their classrooms, whether this disparity of capital exhibited by students was cultural, social, or academic. The recognition of student capital disparity by participants was noted early in the semester, usually within the first two weeks, and was a result of faculty-student engagements occurring in the classroom ranging from verbal communication to grading of assignments. Embedded in conversations with participants regarding their recognition of varied student cultural assumptions they faced in the classroom was their perception of students' misunderstanding of the expectations of the community college. These misinterpretations of the rules in the arena by students manifested themselves in participant's realization that students did not understand different learning requirements

and expectations for courses, as well as a lack of understanding by students of “common” educational language in the classroom.

Jessica: “All of those things that kind of become our culture here, but it is culture shock to them (students). . . . I’m realizing some of these students haven’t been taught these things, and I shouldn’t assume they have.”

Samantha: “They (students) just really don’t know how to study. They think studying is reading something over and over then regurgitating it. . . . They have seemed amazed that a “0” for no effort does impact a grade and that an acceptable grade on an exam does not mean you will pass the class.”

Brandon: “They (students) think if they show up in class that is all their responsibility to the class. If they just sit there, or just present in the classroom that is all they need to do.”

Participant’s comments regarding the lack of understanding of the rules of the field by students help to shape our understanding of Bourdieu’s concept of doxa.

Participants struggled to understand why students were unable to understand the basic rules of the context. It is the faculty participant’s position within the context, their perspective and understanding of the doxa of the field (their habitus), that seems to place a blinder to the students misunderstanding of the expectations and rules of the field.

However, participants were able to move past their habitus (represented in this study as their funds of knowledge) and concede that the struggle students showed in their recognition of the change of field and new set of rules stemmed from their cultural, social, and academic capital. Faculty perspective of student capital disparity centered on student’s academic capital, and was highlighted by faculty perceptions of students’ previous interactions in an educational environment. Unfortunately this previous ability of students to understand the arena and rules of play in an academic setting did not translate well with the new arena and doxa of the community college classroom from a faculty perspective. Participants realized that as natives to the field, with a clear

understanding of the unseen rules of the environment, that they play a significant role in helping level the field of play for students by creating understanding of the rules of the new arena through active learning pedagogies and engagement strategies centered on student involvement, validation, integration, and the creation of an inviting environment. These processes employed by participants allowed students the chance to obtain a feel for the game in the arena, developing their own habitus, and becoming more confident in their understanding of the doxa they were encountering with their existing capital intact.

Gaining an understanding of the context by faculty participants was based on their ability to frame their funds of knowledge, their previous experiences and involvements with the arena, with their personal capital, allowing them to recognize students who were struggling with understanding the rules of the field without discounting their existing cultural resources. Participants realized to counter varying levels of disparity of student capital occurring in their classroom they had to create multiple opportunities for students to “gain” capital through faculty-student and/or student-student engagements, from the beginning of the semester through the end of the semester. One participant sums up the faculty participant’s perspective in providing students the guidance needed to learn the doxa of the arena that is the community college classroom.

Jessica: “People deserve a good start and a fair playing field. I can’t fix everything, and I can’t meet all their needs. But if I can make my class a more positive and successful experience for a bigger variety of students, I’m really glad to have an opportunity to do that!”

But what about the bigger arena of play and the other set of new rules students face when they enter a new social context? This dynamic is represented by the incongruence of student cultural assumptions with the culture of the institution.

Participants were cognizant of this higher order of student cultural disparity between the

culture of the institution and student cultural capital. In fact, one participant went as far as to create an action plan which incorporated processes geared to helping students understand the culture of the institution and find “fit” with their cultural resources intact. Upon Jessica’s sharing the implementation of her action plan with other participants during the final faculty learning community meeting, all the participants noted the potential for the disarticulation of student cultural resources with the culture of ESCTC and students inability to recognize supports provided by the institution unless they as faculty provided students the opportunity and guidance.

Experience Matters

The understanding by faculty participants of potential “levels” of student capital disparity is worth noting, and highlights participant’s willingness to understand the student perspective. Hearing participants think past engagements occurring in their classroom and look at broader interactions students have with the institution, helped me understand the role experience obtained at the institution played in faculty participants recognition of student cultural resources and the levels of disarticulation that can exist. In this study, faculty participants recognized their role in the arena(s), and through the combination and their intertwined funds of knowledge and personal capital, found ways to circumvent missing data and potentially misleading information regarding student cultural assumptions. Participating faculty willingness to expand upon their understanding of the context and create engagement and integration processes which led to clearer directions and a better understanding of the new set of rules and the arena(s) by all was inspiring.

Participant's perception of their role in the field builds our understanding of community college faculty. For faculty participant's, their role in the context moved beyond content provider and into helping students understand the change of arena and the misunderstood rules of the game. But why is this important? Participants recognized learning could only occur if those involved in the learning process understand the rules of the field in which they are engaged.

Shayla: "Students say "College is hard! . . . and we just expect in college that they would hold our hand and it just stopped and I don't know how to deal with it" . . . students are waiting for someone to hold their hand . . . they don't know how to deal with it (college)."

Robert: "How soon can you identify in your class the student not needing their hand held but needing a lifeline! . . . you see really early which of those students is really unprepared . . . and it's not that these students aren't intelligent enough to do it they are not aware enough of the importance of doing stuff. . . I don't know how I can drag you to the trough but not drown you."

Jessica: "I think it's our duty to do more than give them the content knowledge in the class. These are people, and they have a lot of potential. But some of them need more of our support and more of an investment in their success. Sure, we will still have those students who just need to learn to write a paper, but the truth is that most of them need a bit more than that."

Striving for Balance

Whether it was faculty participants working to maintain academic rigor in their courses versus "spoon feeding" the student, or faculty and student time demands in the classroom versus faculty and student time demands outside the classroom, or the institution culture versus the cultural resources of the student, finding balance was noted by participants as being important throughout the study. Striving for a balance of student cultural resources was noted by all faculty participants when trying to engage students in the classroom. The struggle to find balance often began with issues of time-management noted by faculty participants. The perceived inability of some students to balance the time

demands of the classroom was tempered by faculty participants with an understanding of who the students were and the cultural resources they entered the classroom with, and well as the similar struggle with time balance they as faculty dealt with on a daily basis. Faculty participant's recognized that their own cultural resources provided them the ability to find balance through time-management techniques and prioritizing their lives, while noting student's cultural resources affected their abilities to find balance when faced with a new arena of play to navigate, representing a lack of understanding of the field and the rules of the game. Faculty perceptions of who the student was, what capital gains the student may need, how to best provide the student the opportunity to gain capital, and when they may need capital gains were balanced with the hope that as the semester continued, there would be less of a need to explain the rules of the arena ("hand-hold" or "spoon-feed") as the student gained capital and became more confident in their understanding of the expectations of the field.

Shayla: "The community college students, the group we have, it is so important to spoon fed them when they get here . . . If you don't do that, you will lose them, they are gone."

Robert: "I think spoon feeding gets a bad rap . . . you have to spoon feed. . . . If they have never been exposed to a utensil they need this is a necessary step to get there. . . . If they don't know it, they don't know it."

Samantha: "I think it is important for faculty to think about who is your audience, are they primarily right out of high school or are they close to the transfer point?"

Participants believed that keeping students existing cultural resources intact was important, and what was needed was a combination of processes (engagements and pedagogy techniques) that provided students opportunities to gain capital along the way. Faculty participants understood that students did not always understand the rules of the new social arenas that they were encountering. In participants' engagement endeavors

faculty worked to maintain the identity and cultural resources of the individual student, and worked to show students ways to garner understanding and additional capital to help understand the institutional cultures' expectations and demands.

Faced with a new social arena filled with new sets of rules and a dominant culture that may differ than their own, and surrounded by individuals in the context with varying degrees of cultural resources, students may believe they must make a choice; either keep their identity and cultural capital intact and not find ways to “fit” within the new arena or give up part of their identity and culture in order to acclimate with their new environment. Faculty participants provided students the opportunity to find “fit” within the arena(s) through designed validating, inviting, and involving processes, helping balance existing student cultural resources with potential to gain academic, social, and cultural capital. Participants strived to maintain existing student cultural resources without dismantling it or tossing it aside in exchange for new capital.

Jessica: “I want them to learn how to do college.”

Samantha: “. . . being able to maneuver within and building confidence . . . of functioning in the academic environment. . . they are learning more about the institution . . . a lot of them are very early in their career here at this school, so it is a good opportunity to take time and get them a little more familiar and comfortable.”

This does not suggest that students may not have felt a need to make choices regarding their identity and existing cultural capital, since this study focused only on a faculty perspective, but faculty participants provide us a basis for recognizing existing cultural resources of students whom populate community college classrooms and how engagement processes can be implemented that create an atmosphere of openness to

existing student cultural resources and a path to gain capital, hopefully providing students the opportunity to understand the new rules of the arenas they will face.

The idea of balance between one's existing cultural resources with the culture of the institution brings us to another one of Bourdieu's concepts – habitus, and the role it plays in faculty participants as well as students abilities to understand the new rules of the arena(s) in which they are engaged. Habitus represents one's understanding of their environment, which is based on past actions and history of situations and contexts. When we consider previously discussed capital (cultural, social, and academic) and field (two-year institution and classroom) components, Bourdieu theorizes habitus, capital, and field are “interlocked” with one another (Maton, 2008), with the combination and balance of the three (habitus, capital, and field) creating significance in the practices employed by those involved within a social setting. Taking apart the three concepts, and placing them within the context of our study, habitus represents what has been described in our study as funds of knowledge of faculty participants, their past teaching experiences in the context, and how those previous experiences shape participant's understanding and actions in the current incarnation of the context. When we combine habitus of participants with their personal capital, and add both to the field of play, we build our understanding of the why, when, and how of faculty choices made before and during action plans.

Participants balanced funds of knowledge with their personal capital to help create their action plans within the field. Action plans developed by faculty participants in the study enhanced their knowledge of educational theories of capital and engagements, building upon their habitus as well as providing participant's gains in their

own capital. Gaining understanding of faculty participants' habitus combined with their personal capital and added to the field, we begin to see participant's perception of student cultural assumptions and the rationale of engagement choices made in their action plans to help provide leveling opportunities for those students who may need it. Samantha helps us reflect on what faculty participants shared regarding finding balance as an educator.

Samantha: "When you participate in a group research study it encourages you to question what am I doing here. You might not take the time, particularly mid-career. If you are checking off learning outcome and you have data to support it, it is easy to worry about it but you do have other responsibilities . . . finding balance in the class room and balance in your career and your home life it is part of being a good teacher. I am teaching that to my students but they have to find time management skills and balance; I need to model that behavior."

Faculty participants were keenly aware of the disarticulation of student capital with the cultural of the institution and used discussed engagement theories to find ways to "level up" capital within the context. Finding a balance for students between ESCTC, other faculty and staff, and other students was a focus for participants. The focus on balance by participants strengthens the findings of Deil-Amen (2011) and Karp, et al. (2010) who noted social interactions in and out of the classroom hold potential in creating social integration moments which can lead toward academic integration for the student in the community college setting. Participants' purposeful creation of engagement opportunities for students provided student's opportunities to obtain cultural, social, and academic capital geared to increase understanding of the context as well as self-confidence and self-efficacy.

Jessica: "Sometimes we get a little overwhelmed with our work . . . and we are not always thinking about each person . . . I think bringing them in one by one, hopefully teaches them that you, yourself, matters to me and I am going to take time to invest in just you. . . . I have had classes before when some of those

students blend in so much, that the end of the semester and I wonder if we had ever interacted? Had we ever engaged at all? . . . I am not really willing to let that happen anymore.”

Purposeful engagements geared to help students understand their context, matter to students. But these engagements mattered to our participants as well. Faculty participants noted the need to refine engagement processes employed, striving to enhance their effect of providing capital leveling opportunities, recognizing that improvements in practices should not be about “fixing” the student. The engagements employed by faculty participants were not designed to “fix” a perceived lack of student cultural resources, in fact participants created processes that recognized students existing capital and balanced said capital against the culture and expectations of the institution, helping students to gain an understanding of the context and move forward with their existing cultural resources intact, while perhaps gaining capital along the way.

Connections Matter

Connections became a reoccurring theme during the study. Personal capital was connected with funds of knowledge for participants, providing a foundation for the willingness to gain understanding and insight into student capital disparity occurring in their classrooms. Participant’s recognized that student engagements needed to happen within the first few days or weeks in the community college if they stood a chance in understanding student cultural assumptions and creating processes to help counter student capital disparity recognized in their classroom.

A strong commitment to connecting with students in the classroom was evident throughout the study with all participants. Each participant worked to learn who their students were and how best to engage students within the first few weeks of class,

supporting Tinto's work and other engagement researchers explored during the study (Astin, Purkey, Rendon) on the importance of early engagements and their connection to student persistence and success. Participants realized that what was being discussed and learned during these early faculty-student engagements provided students an opportunity to understand the expectations of the classroom and quickly gain capital with potential to be used elsewhere.

Robert: "I flat out tell them in the second class period. . . . From the beginning I try to hammer home that what we are learning here, will help you. . . . This is not a bubble."

Jessica: "I learned all their names by the second day. I let them know that I noted you, I know who you are."

Faculty participants already had a wealth of funds of knowledge regarding engagements and pedagogy techniques. But their willingness to attempt "new" interactions and expand their funds of knowledge to assess student cultural assumptions and help counter student capital disparity occurring in their classrooms highlights a connection for participants between their funds of knowledge and established theories of capital and engagements. Participants came to realize theory and practice are connected. In fact, participation in the research study, enhanced participants understanding of practices they were employing in the classroom and allowed them to see the connection between discussed theories and practices occurring in the context.

Brandon: "It's happening . . . not gone in thinking I'm going in to do this thing . . . not thinking this as a theory, but not deliberate . . . this (action research) is what I need. I need to put a label on it and think of it in those terms."

Jessica: "I think this (action research) is articulating and sort of synthesizing everything we observe. This is who they are and what we do. . . hopefully?. . . I guess this is taking theory . . . scary academic theories and here's the face with these theories. . ."

Robert: “Getting us together in this room . . . encourages me to do things that have been on the back burner but formalizes it a little bit more . . . to look at it a bit more closely.”

Participants were engaging students in their classrooms in an attempt to understand and counter student capital disparity, but by providing a “definition” to the student cultural resources, practices, and attitudes encountered and the faculty-student engagements being used, value was added for participants.

Shayla: “Constantly looking for what we can do to help students, but I think the value in making it a formal research project is that you follow back through to make sure that what you did really worked. . . When you have to define it and put it into words it makes it more purposeful.”

Brandon: “Forced me to finally do it . . . not just talk about it . . . two semester process with meaning and forced round table.”

Tinto’s theory of social and academic integration and other discussed engagement processes connected to faculty participants in the study. Participants found action research plans invigorating and useful in understanding the cultural dispositions of their students and use of engagement tools that may help to counter student disparity of capital. The formalized process of faculty-faculty connections through faculty learning community meetings, the expectation of questions to be answered, and collegial one-on-one discussions created a sense of involvement as educators. Faculty participants exchanged ideas and provided each other tools to help better understand their context, validating others action plans and processes. Faculty participants used these formal social interactions as a means to create a higher level of academic integration to the action research project, but also to their role as educators at ESCTC. The academic and social integration of participants holds considerable significance for other community college practitioners and leaders.

Shayla: “I think that people . . . are constantly looking for things that we can do to help students. That is just who we are. But I think the value of making it a formal research project is that you follow that through and see that what you did really worked.”

Brandon: “I think the project, you just getting us in this room to force is the wrong word, encourage us to do things that have been on the back burner . . . like I could do this. . . .It makes me formalize a bit more. I wanted to try this idea, but this ultimately makes us try it.”

Robert: “. . . that we could take this (action plans) and what we are doing on a larger scale and if that student was in all three of these classes and being exposed to these things and what that effect is on student engagement and capital . . .”

Sharing with Others

Participants noted the importance of our action research study for faculty who are experienced, but who may need an activity to assess their skills or perhaps a refresher activity to remind them of who the students are that populate their classroom, as well as provide a means to help practitioners remember why they became educators. This understanding by participants of the importance of sharing their experience with other faculty helps counter concerns that faculty learning communities may create isolated pockets of knowledge and learning within an institution and its faculty.

Shayla: “The trend is people burn out . . . we need to keep people (faculty) involved, excited, enthusiastic.”

Brandon: “Not so much as an instructor feels like he is burnt out, but for me it kind of kick started me. I had been in so many classes, I felt I had it – then maybe I felt like I had it too much. I felt too great. So this (action research) put a finer point on it, gives you specific direction.”

Samantha: “I know people that do the same thing all the time. They get bored with themselves. They are not helping the student. They are not invested, therefore the student is not invested.”

Participants noted during the research a desire to follow through on their action plans and see how their purposeful engagements connected to student outcomes.

Although not a part of the study, faculty participants noted student outcomes which showed increases in persistence, learning, and achievement, and showed a strong commitment to sharing lessons learned and results with others.

Samantha: “We will see at the end of the semester. I will compare. I will do some minimum but do some statistics and look at if these points matter. I really think if I am to keep reading, if I am forcing them to look these questions up, it has to be impacting them in the long term. It has to be, it may be a negative outcome on their grade. But if I were not getting those questions, would they be opening the textbook? Would they be reading? Would they be looking up the answers. Yes, some students are. But some students are afraid to open up their text book. It is like they carry it around but they are afraid to crack the spine.”

Jessica: “I will tell you this, my attendance . . . has been markedly spectacular from . . . in the past. They will know I will notice. They know they will miss something. There is a reason to be there. They are going to miss something. Then I think they would miss engaging with each other.”

Participants need to share with others was strong enough to set-up their own professional development activity at East Side Community and Technical College. This professional development took the form of a round-table discussion with participants sharing their action plans and connection theories with other faculty members at the institution with a question and answer period at the end. This sharing of action plans and engagements by faculty participants with fellow faculty members emphasizes the importance of a well-designed and thought-out action research project can be to those involved in the process.

Building Self-Efficacy

Bandura (1977) defines self-efficacy as one’s belief in their ability to successfully perform tasks, and notes that one’s level of self-efficacy is directly related to accomplishments and performance of task. Although some may believe students should inherently possess the ability to understand the higher education context, in the

community college setting faculty must contend with the reality that the individual who is entering their classroom may not be aware of their academic strengths and weaknesses or may over-estimate their abilities. Faculty-student engagements help students gain capital and self-efficacy, tying to Astin's (1990) work on involvement of the student. Astin (1990) suggested that with multiple conflicting demands on time, that the academic success of the part-time or commuter student was limited. However, if we assume that the student has committed to spend time in the community college classroom, faculty participants creation of an environment that was engaging, inviting, and validating holds promise in building student's capital and self-efficacy, thereby generating the potential in the student to want to become more involved and return to the classroom.

Perceptions of adequacy and existing dispositions of students help shape their understanding of the expectations of the community college classroom. Confidence in the college classroom for students is related to the students' habitus and cultural capital and the extent to which those resources may match the dominant culture of the classroom. If we consider the theory of self-efficacy proposed by Bandura with our study findings, we begin to see the links between the purposefully designed faculty-student engagements used by participants in the action research study to help level capital disparity, with concepts of field, habitus, capital, and doxa explored by Bourdieu and other researchers (Bensimon, 2007; Berger, 2000; Bourdieu, 1986; Deer, 2008; Moore, 2008; Thomson, 2008; Tierney, 1999). The potential mismatch of self-efficacy of the community college student with the expectations of the classroom represents a disconnection between cultural resources the student is bringing into the institution and the expectations of the context. Faculty participants intentionally created environments designed to help students

understand the doxa of the field, thereby building our understanding of how purposeful engagements used by faculty participants may help foster feelings of adequacy for students in the community college classroom. Participants created connections for students between their cultural dispositions and self-efficacy through active pedagogies and validation of student work, helping us recognize that creating connections for students falls to faculty with enough experience to understand the variety and range of student cultural dispositions in their classroom, and how engagement processes employed must take into consideration the new set of rules students must contend with in the community college classroom and the existing cultural resources of the student if a leveling of the playing field is to occur.

Robert: “They are overworked, they lack even on top of that good time management skills and I think they are also lacking some essential fundamental skills. Now, as I look at these students, oddly enough attendance is not an issue. These are students who come to class every day for the most part. They are here, they are sitting there, they are trying. If you look at these, the 3 things to be successful - study, show up in class, take time to improve your grade, well organized, taking notes, you know, it might be she does fine in her (one) course where she can take notes. But there is a difference in (another course) you can’t just take notes. (She) says she is good at taking notes, good attendance. So they, have the start of good.... They think they know. They think they are good note takers, but wonder if they are taking the right notes. How their perception aligns with reality.”

Samantha: “The diversity of life experiences, training, and educational background makes the classroom a rocky and unlevelled playing area.”

Future Research Considerations

This research took a look at experienced faculty teaching general education courses from two divisions within one institution and their perceptions through a qualitative lens. Looking at other faculty groups; part-time, technical faculty, and/or faculty from other divisions is certainly worthy of further exploration by educational

researchers interested in using action research techniques. Student capital and faculty perceptions are certainly not limited to the focus of this particular study. Perspective from part-time faculty, technical faculty, and faculty from other division not part of this study holds potential in refining our understanding of faculty teaching in community colleges, as well as perceptions of student capital and the potential disparity occurring in the classroom from other contexts.

Garnering perceptions through a qualitative approach has been called for by researchers (Bensimon, 2007; Perna & Thomas, 2006). Expanding the research to include a mixed methods approach where a survey tool is created, distributed, and analyzed either before or after the qualitative piece as a means of gaining a more complete understanding of faculty perceptions certainly holds promise. Including the student perspective perhaps through focus groups, along with the faculty perspective, holds potential in refining theories of engagement at the community college level that help students gain capital and level the field of play that is the community college classroom.

Increasing our understanding of the role integration theory may play in creating social and academic integration for faculty with the institution, particularly community college faculty, was noted in this particular study and is certainly worthy of further study. Perhaps integration theory can help explain why certain community college faculty connect to their institutions, becoming actively involved in the contexts of the educational environment, while others chose not to do so.

Chapter four shows the themes that were discovered through review and analysis of faculty participant's learning community meetings, interviews, observations, and journals. These themes emerged across the individual participants and provide further

insight of the participants' perspective. The themes explored in chapter four link discussions of theory, anticipation of garnered knowledge, and scholarship gained in the discussions of chapters one, two and three. Chapter five provides a culmination of our study and provides my take on faculty development and how action research, as well as lessons provided by our faculty participants, can lend themselves to others searching for methods and practices to arm faculty with who are faced with similar issues discussed in this study.

Chapter Five - Faculty Development

Introduction

During the early years of the junior college, students entered right out of high school, and were taught by faculty who had themselves been a part of the secondary educational system. This past life of the current community college created a classroom environment that was simple to understand for faculty. Faced with a student population with limited backgrounds and similar educational levels, community college faculty could rely upon pedagogic techniques and understandings of the context similar to those used in their secondary backgrounds (Dougherty, 1994). However, as community colleges have evolved over the past century, students entering their doors have changed dramatically. Gone are the days of community college classrooms full of young people who have just graduated high school. Instead, today's community college classrooms are often filled with a variety of students with differing ages, ethnicities, and educational backgrounds (Beach, 2011; Zumeta et al., 2012). While faculty development may have been a part of community colleges since their inception in the early 1900's, the changing dynamics of the community college has created an increasing need for quality faculty development that equips faculty with tools to help educate today's community college students (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Murray, 2002).

Community College Faculty and Pedagogy

Faculty may enter the community college setting with limited knowledge of pedagogy techniques that can be used in the classroom or theories and tools to help them understand the varied backgrounds of students who populate their classrooms. Faculty knowledge resides in their respective fields of expertise, and the need to understand and

study pedagogy and educational theories has never been a focus for those entering the faculty ranks. When faced with the reality of teaching course content with a limited number of teaching tools at their disposal to a student population with varied educational understanding and backgrounds, faculty will rely on what has worked for them during their educational journey as a student to determine how to handle the context they are faced with in the classroom.

Faculty reached their place in the education hierarchy by being excellent students and excelling at understanding content presented to them, no matter the method of delivery. Faculty learned the “rules” of the classroom quickly as students, and felt at ease navigating through the multiple levels of the educational environment. Unfortunately students entering today’s community college find the educational environment is neither easy to understand nor traverse. Full of different rules and a variety of arenas to work through, many community college students attempt to learn and appreciate the expectations of the educational environment with apprehension and awkwardness. Faced with a student population in the classroom unfamiliar with the expectations of a community college education, faculty must find ways to equip themselves with a variety of tools in their tool box in which to engage the students in their classroom.

Faculty development at the community college provides a key opportunity to build faculty knowledge of pedagogy techniques and ways of engaging students that hold potential for educating and understanding the variety of students enrolled in community college classrooms. Today’s community college faculty need development activities that move past simple exchanges of best practices and into an emphasis of understanding the context of one’s institution. These concentrated and reflective development activities

create enormous potential for faculty, the community colleges they work at, and the students they serve (Bickerstaff & Edgecombe, 2013; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2007).

Levels of Faculty Development

Faculty development is an important part of American education. Four-year institutions use faculty development as a tool for tenure, stressing scholarly research and active participation in conferences and symposiums through presentations as well as attendance. This institutional focus on faculty development is shared with secondary schools, which require faculty development for educators in order to be employed and maintain a teaching certificate. Community college faculty are caught in the middle of these two faculty development-driven institutions of education, having neither the requirement of faculty development in order to teach (unless dictated by a technical programs accrediting agency) nor a focus in the development and advancement of a faculty members career (Murray, 2002).

Creating opportunities for community college faculty development often falls to the institution, but with limited resources and leverage in faculty development opportunities, community college administrators find themselves constrained in their ability to provide a quality faculty development experience. Faculty development at the community college level may often take the form of a limited number of semester offerings with inadequate depth and relationship to the context faculty may encounter at the community college. With a reduced focus on faculty development for community colleges, faculty may exhibit a lack of motivation or willingness to engage in faculty development opportunities on their campus.

Community college faculty are time constrained, teaching five or more classes a semester, serving on committees, and spending time with family which can conflict with professional development offerings. Community college faculty may find professional development opportunities taking the form of college-sponsored events throughout the semester which conflict with scheduled class times and meetings or perhaps a monthly flyer providing access to professional development opportunities that lack relevance to them and the institution. Community college faculty are left wanting faculty development, but facing the harsh realities as a member of the community college; limited time to engage in faculty development opportunities, and a lack of focus by the institution in providing quality faculty development. Finding professional development which has meaning and relates to community college faculty is left up to the individual faculty member, and their ability to find the funds and time to participate.

Faculty Development for Community College Faculty

My dissertation study sheds light on the type of faculty development practices which hold potential for community college faculty, the institutions in which they are employed, and the students they serve. Recognizing the role action research can play at community colleges provides institutions the opportunity to emphasize faculty development that may focus on pedagogic techniques, student engagement, educational theories, or other important issues faculty may face at the community college. Breaking apart the pieces of action research – area of focus, gathering of information, reflection, and action plan provide faculty opportunities to participate in faculty development activities which hold meaning to them and provide learning and growth on subjects which relate to their context. This synergy of faculty development, created through the

processes of action research, has the capacity to create a culture of faculty knowledge and learning which holds the potential in creating positive effects for those involved.

Faculty Learning Communities

Creating a faculty learning community holds enormous potential as a faculty development technique for community colleges (Dufour, 2004; Richlin & Cox, 2004). Using Mills (2007) dialectic action research approach, an area of focus is chosen by a facilitator and offered to interested faculty as the beginning discussion of a faculty learning community. The area of focus should be selected from issues which directly affects those involved in the context, and is of importance to faculty, the community college, and/or students (i.e. faculty-student engagements, student retention, pedagogy techniques, etc.). Participants are charged with the review of information, either provided by the facilitator or collected on their own, and bringing their insights and concerns to faculty learning community meetings to discuss with other participants. The facilitator should be knowledgeable of the context and take a servant stance with participants, creating opportunities for collegial discussions and reflection without judgement, but work to ensure participants stay focused on the selected topic. The facilitator should be an experienced faculty member, with intimate knowledge of the topic and a willingness to share insights without pretense. Recognizing the importance of time for participants should also be a focus for the facilitator and every effort should be made to allow participants to select the time and place for faculty learning community activities.

The faculty learning communities should be held throughout an academic cycle or semester, allowing for development of discussions, reflection, and sharing of information by participants. One goal of action research is action, and allowing enough time for

action to take place requires a time frame that allows for the endeavor to occur. Creating a two semester (fall and spring) time frame, where the first semester is used to discuss the area of focus, collect and share information, reflect, and create an action plan, followed by a second semester to have participants attempt the action plan and meet to discuss and share insights would be ideal. However, a one semester faculty learning community which meets to select an area of focus, collect and share information, reflect, and then discuss possibilities for action plans also holds enormous promise for faculty development that may be more appealing for community college faculty who are faced with time constraints.

An end product for faculty learning communities can take the form of a portfolio created by participants which shows what occurred during the faculty learning communities and action research processes. The portfolio should include the area of focus as well as gathered information, and should also include a section on reflection by participants, what was learned through participation in the faculty learning community process, and suggestions for improvements based on the area of focus. Consideration by community college administrators should be made to the portfolio created by participants, perhaps using the portfolio as an annual evaluation of performance for faculty or even as a tool for promotion. This type of accountability for faculty development helps answer initial concerns which may be brought up by community college faculty regarding this type of faculty development at their institution - What is the intent of faculty development?, and Why should we participate in faculty development?

Although action research has been used as a faculty development technique for faculty who are teaching in K-12 with positive results (Myers & Dillard, 2013;

Megowan-Romanowicz, 2010), little research exists on community college faculty involvement in an action research study as a form of faculty development. However, considering the faculty development limitations facing community colleges and their faculty, using some form of action research as a method to provide faculty development which holds meaning to both faculty and the institution and shows reflection and learning is certainly worth exploring (Kreber & Cranton, 2000). Action research by individual participants in a faculty learning community provides opportunity for individual learning and growth, which can then be shared with other participants in the faculty learning community. Providing faculty development in the form of action research allows those involved to take a long-term approach and outlook on their development as faculty members of the community college and may produce a ripple effect among constituents they engage with during the faculty development process.

Round-Table Discussions

Creating opportunities to discuss ideas and exchange best practices is the hallmark of many professional development activities at community colleges. However, using faculty learning communities as a foundation for round-table discussions provides meaning for faculty development opportunities. Round-table discussions are less formal professional development opportunities where one or more speakers openly discuss activities and ideas they have been developed and employed in the similar context, sharing, seeking input, and answering questions “around the table” with colleagues present . Having those involved in faculty learning communities share their experience and what they learned with others in a less formal and relaxed setting, creates opportunities for collegial discussion and exchange of insight and ideas that affect the

environment from those involved in the context. These focused round-table discussions can help establish a culture of learning for community college faculty and constituents. Consideration regarding round-table discussions by faculty could be made by the institution, by holding them at the beginning of the semester when a large number of faculty might be able to attend. Highlighting the focused round-table discussions provides the institution the chance to recognize the work of faculty at their community college, while developing prospects at the institution who may be interested in joining another round of an action research-focused faculty learning community. Round-table discussions could be taken to another level, where original participants of a faculty learning community host discussions within their respective divisions, highlighting how their garnered knowledge through their action research project may apply to those within their own field of expertise. Perhaps original participants may lead division-focused faculty learning communities with an action research emphasis helping create a division level of growth and learning.

One-on-One Opportunities

Matching up faculty with a mentor or fellow faculty member with similar years of experience for one-on-one discussion creates faculty development opportunities which may be overlooked by community colleges. Although these one-on-one moments may seem limited, creating a focus for the conversations around a topic the mentor and mentee find interesting and worthwhile holds potential, particularly if the topic is framed by educational concerns facing faculty at the community college. These action research-style conversations could take the form of discussions over articles relating to faculty-student interactions or pedagogy techniques, helping create the chance to reflect and then

exchange ideas and concerns in a private, less formal setting. One-on-one discussions could take place through an entire semester or academic cycle, cumulating in a joint paper for review by constituents interested in the respective faculty member's development, such as division dean's or community college administrators. The end product of the one-on-one conversations could also take the form of a formal paper submitted to a journal for publication or perhaps a joint professional development presentation to the respective division(s) of the participants or possibly the college as a whole. The one-on-one faculty development opportunity allows participants to learn, but also allows for connections to be made with another faculty members at the institution, serving as a step in faculty development for first or second year faculty as well as seasoned faculty.

Community college administrators could use the one-on-one faculty development opportunities to help acclimate first and second year faculty to the expectations of teaching at the institution as well as re-enforce a culture of learning and development for those involved. Consideration could be made by community college administrators to use mentors who have completed a faculty learning community, thereby helping mentees recognize the importance of faculty development at the institution, and creating an implied progression of faculty development.

Potential for Faculty Development

Considering the action research plans in my dissertation study, there is potential for faculty development and its role in gaining knowledge of best practices as well as an understanding of students' cultural dispositions through engagements. Faculty participants used their action research plans to reflect upon previous engagements used in

the classroom, and then developed techniques to interact with students with an area of focus on disparity of student capital. Best practices learned through the semester long action plans provide an opportunity to share theoretically grounded engagement techniques which could prove beneficial to other community college practitioners.

The use of a student survey at the beginning of the semester in order to garner basic information on students by the faculty member should not be overlooked. A student survey could be as simple as an ice-breaker where faculty ask students questions to assess their understanding of course demands, i.e. – What did you learn from the previous semester that will help you succeed in this class? More detailed surveys could explore student demands outside of the classroom, exploring time demands and other input characteristics of students which may affect student engagement in the classroom such as internet connection for hybridized courses, number of credit hours attempted, grades in a sequence of courses, and cumulative GPA.

Using a student survey to explore educational goals and commitment to success in the courses could also provide opportunity to engage the student throughout the semester. Consideration could be made by the faculty member in creating a student survey which not only delves into gaining a better understanding of the student, but one that develops a connection for the student and success by asking - What grade do you plan to receive in this course?, perhaps followed by - How do you plan to achieve this grade? These survey techniques and similar lines of questioning were used by faculty participants in my dissertation study to gain an understanding of student capital, with participants noting positive effects through enhanced perspective exhibited by what the student answered,

but also by opening the door to honest educational conversations ranging from what it takes to succeed in the course, to how to set and achieve educational goals.

Action research plans created by faculty participants provided insight to course assignments that can be used to engage students in theoretically-based practices which help create connection for students with the college and fellow students. Considering the potential disarticulation of culture between the student and the institution, techniques which help students recognize similarities of culture and provide an opportunity to connect with college services and personnel which can help the student acclimate to the demands of the context hold potential for practitioners and institutions. Creation of assignments which have students take an active role in the academic process such as practicing presentations in front of fellow students before a graded presentation, provide students the chance to gain confidence in their academic work, build social relationships with other students, and recognize similarity of cultural dispositions among fellow students. Creating opportunities for students to make connections with fellow students may not naturally take place in the community college classroom unless the faculty member creates the opportunity through purposefully designed pedagogic techniques.

Finding a way to connect students with services offered at the institution can also be created through an assignment, and holds enormous potential for the student. Creating an assignment which has the student find a service at the college which interests them, interview a representative from that particular student service, write a paper on the service with input from the instructor, and share with fellow classmates creates multi-leveled engagement opportunities for students. This pedagogic technique has the potential to show students the range of services offered at the institution which are

designed to support them in their educational endeavor, highlight commonality of cultural dispositions between students as well as those who work within the services explored, and work with faculty in and out of the classroom to accomplish an assignment that holds meaning for the student and fulfills the objective of the course learning outcome.

Another pedagogic technique highlighted in my dissertation study was the use of videos for students to watch and write on which explored study success techniques for college. This assignment, conducted early in the semester, provided students a foundation of expectations for the class while providing community college students a peek at what a four-year institution campus and demands might look like for them. This student engagement technique created the chance for faculty-student engagements on study-skills, which allowed students the chance to recognize how their cultural resources may help them acclimate to the demands of the course or how they may need to seek assistance from the instructor in finding ways to improve as students and do well in the course. Whichever the case for the student, the videos provided an avenue for the faculty member to encourage student study-skills, communicate expectations of the course, and build understanding of the variety of cultural assumptions of students populating the classroom.

Conclusion

Faculty development is important and needed no matter the institution or years of experience of the faculty. Creating faculty development opportunities that hold meaning to faculty, falls to the leaders who work with faculty and understand the demands of the community college context. Establishing a focus on faculty development by the community college, helps create an institutional culture that emphasizes faculty learning

and growth, and indicates a desire by the institution to find methods which positively affect learning and understanding for those involved in the context. Considering action research as a tool for faculty development holds potential in not only providing a method of development that holds meaning to those involved by exploring the context they are engaged in, but also creating opportunity to learn best practices specific to the institution and the students they serve.

Using faculty development techniques which allow for growth of participants is the hallmark of a quality activity, and requires time and effort. Community colleges which offer faculty development activities that are limited in time and focus, establishes a culture of disengaged faculty who are limited in their understanding and role with the institution. Faculty who are faced with inadequate development activity offerings become disinterested and have little motivation to seek faculty development, especially when little is to be gained by the endeavor. While offering a plethora of monthly faculty development opportunities has its place, and may provide faculty a breadth of development activities to choose from and learn, community colleges must also consider the opportunity to provide faculty development activities that hold meaning to those involved, helping them understand their role in the context and grow as faculty members. These focused faculty development activities centered on action research practices, provide the opportunity to develop faculty over time while working out methods which reward those who participate at the individual and institutional level.

Establishing an institutional culture that focuses on improved teaching and learning helps everyone who engages with faculty. Faculty development activities suggested in this chapter provide institutions a set of tools for faculty to explore, and

provides a means to garner methods to improve pedagogy and/or gain a better understanding of the context of their community college. With guidance and focus, the suggested faculty development activities could establish an institutional culture focused on understanding students who populate their classrooms with varied levels of means by providing a faculty armed with a multitude of engagement practices in which to help them recognize the change of field and the new set of rules that is the community college classroom.

Appendix A

First Faculty Learning Community Meeting Powerpoint

Gaining Understanding of Community College Classroom Engagements and Cultural Disparity

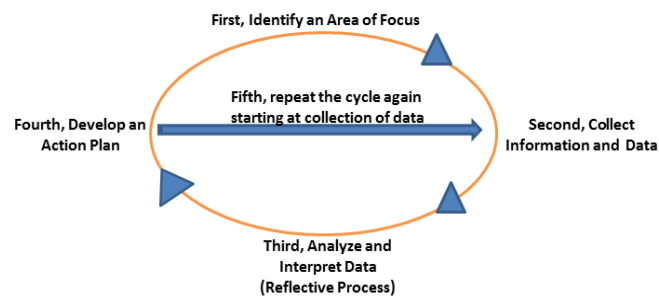
Agenda

- Welcome and Introductions
- What is Action Research?
- Area of Focus Discussed
- Introduction and Discussion of Capital and Cultural Disparity
- Introduction and Discussion of Interaction Theories
- Consideration of Processes Currently Employed in Classroom
- Discussion on Development of Actions and Processes for the Classroom Relating to Discussed Theories
- Development of Sub-Set of Question(s) for Action Research Study
- Adjourn

What is Action Research?

- Action research is about involving the participants in the research, from the beginning to the end of the study.
- Action research focuses on what participants within the context find meaningful and worth the effort, in order to actively participate in helping find processes that may help clarify their environment.
- Action research strives to gain understanding of social context from those directly involved in the environment, thereby building a basis of knowledge that may improve practices and increase efficacy of one's work.

What is Action Research?



First, Identify an Area of Focus

- The area of focus for this action research study will be on how you as faculty may be creating involving, validating and inviting experiences in the classroom that acknowledge differences in student capital.

Second, Collect Information and Data

- **Capital Disparity**
 - Critical to our understanding of postsecondary students is the concept of student capital.
 - Using the definition of capital from Merriam-Webster (2014) as being “a store of useful assets or advantages,” community college students have varying degrees of capital.
 - Students bring varying degrees of capital to the institution of higher education where their capital may be of limited value.
 - For community colleges, faculty negotiate and deal with varying degrees of student capital within their classroom.

Cultural Capital Disparity

- **Cultural Capital**
 - Bourdieu (1986) coined the term “cultural capital” to refer to the set of linguistic and cultural competencies individuals usually inherit and sometimes learn from family . . . the culture in which individuals reside determine whether or not they have cultural capital to attend college.
 - All individuals own capital, but the capital they have acquired from their family and home community may not be that required or valued by the higher education institution.

Social Capital Disparity

- **Social Capital**
 - Wells (2008) provides us with a definition that suggests that social capital is what the individual gains and learns through interactions with others.
 - Wells (2008) suggests that cultural capital (that which is inherent in the family dynamic in which an individual is raised), and social capital (that which is learned through the interactions of the individual with others), is intertwined and cannot be separated.
 - Some individuals may have acquired social capital that is valuable for higher education, where others have not.

Academic Capital Disparity

- **Academic Capital**
 - A student's academic capital is the student's abilities and confidence to perform in the learning environment that is learned during previous educational experiences or inherited from their family and home community.
 - A community college student's lack of academic capital is often correlated with a lack of academic success, and may be measured by characteristics such as a student's high school GPA, placement scores, and parental educational level.

Collect Information and Data

Interaction Theories

- For postsecondary students, the quantity and quality of interactions with faculty are important. For community college students, interactions with faculty are often limited to the classroom. How faculty perceive their student interactions is a "missing piece" in community college research.
 - Integration Theory – Tinto (1975)
 - Validation Theory – Rendon (1994)
 - Involvement Theory – Astin (1990)
 - Invitational Theory - Purkey (1992)

Interaction Theories

- Integration Theory – Tinto (1975)
- Integration theory holds the distinction of being the most thoroughly studied and debated by educational researchers and scholars regarding student attrition and retention over the past few decades, that is tied to faculty-student interactions (Braxton & Hirschy, 2005).
- Tinto defined academic integration as relating to the students adjustment into college academic life. This includes faculty-student interaction in and out of the classroom, quality study habits of the student, and academic support services.
- Social integration relates to the student's assimilation into the social fabric of the institution. This includes peer relationships, involvement in student activities, and cultural and ethnic harmony.
- Stated simply, Tinto's (1975) integration theory posits that with other characteristics being equal, the more involved the student is in the social and academic parts of the institution, the more likely they are to acclimate and persist at the institution.

Interaction Theories

- Validation Theory – Rendon (1994)
- Posited that validation (being recognized, respected, and seen as valued) of a student's ability and self-worth by faculty was a key component for persistence and success of the student in a two-year institution.
- The important finding from the research, relating to community college practitioners, was that nontraditional students who felt academically unprepared and inadequate begin to believe in their educational abilities and aspirations through validation.
- One of the key components of validation noted was the quality and quantity of instructor engagement with the student. Faculty who treated students with respect, who were approachable, who showed a genuine concern for students, and who had a student-centered pedagogy created validation for interviewed students that led to feelings of adequacy and potential for educational success.

Interaction Theories

- Involvement Theory – Astin (1990)
- Explores faculty-student interactions in the classroom, and the learning experiences that occur within its confines, making a strong case for the importance of having students take a more active role in their education experience, being engaged in the learning process, and expending efforts to obtain knowledge.
- Concedes that one of the important characteristics of involvement theory is the quality and quantity of involvement by the student in academia in general, and suggests that it is the engagement of the student by the institutional member, often represented by faculty at two-year institutions, as being key to involvement by the student with the learning process and environment.

Interaction Theories

- Invitational Theory – Purkey (1992)
- Suggests that an inviting environment, one that is filled with trust, respect, intentionality, and optimism leads to student success and the potential for retention of the student.
- Invitational theory is founded on the idea that individuals perceive their environment from unique perspectives that influence their interpretation.
- Invitational theory stresses the importance that individuals involved need to gain an understanding of who they are, and the environment in which they exist.

Interaction Theories

- Combining invitational theory, validation theory, and involvement theory under the concept of integration theory holds promise in helping to explain why some students are retained at community colleges and potentially finding success, while others may fail and/or not persist.
- However, these sociological theories place sizable responsibility for understanding community college students squarely on the shoulders of faculty in the classroom.

Consideration

- One could hypothesize that students who feel academically unprepared, those lacking academic capital, may begin to believe in their educational abilities through engagements with validating faculty who are providing an inviting classroom environment.
- We could imagine faculty who treat students with respect, who are approachable, who show a genuine concern for students, and who have a student-centered pedagogy may be creating environments that are inviting to students, especially those who may have different social capital compared to that of the educational institution, thereby increasing their involvement in the context.

Third, Analyze and Interpret Data (Reflection Process)

- **Capital Disparity Consideration**
 - What does capital disparity of the student mean to you?
 - Are there processes you are employing in your classroom that somehow relate to the idea of student capital disparities?
- **Faculty/Student Interaction Consideration**
 - What interactions are you currently employing in your classroom that relate to the interaction theories discussed?
 - Are there interactions that you use that help you understand the students capital?

Fourth, Develop an Action Plan

- Based on the discussed theories of interaction and student capital disparity, and considering what processes you are currently in the classroom, what sub-set of question(s) can we pose for our consideration next semester related to student capital disparity and faculty/student interactions?

Suggestions

- How do we (faculty) recognize student capital?
- Why do we (faculty) bother with understanding our student's needs? (i.e., capital disparity)
- What is our (faculty) perception of students who may lack capital?
- What processes do we (faculty) employ to negotiate and understand the disparity of student capital in our classrooms?
- When do we (faculty) employ specific interactions with students in our classroom?
- How do we (faculty) know when to use certain interactions versus other interactions with students?

What is Action Research?

- Participant Responsibilities
 - Participate in Faculty Learning Communities
 - One in fall semester and two in spring semester
 - Be Interviewed
 - One in fall semester and two in spring semester
 - Be Observed
 - Once in spring semester
 - Journal
 - Journal once in fall and six-eight times in spring
 - Prompts and suggestions sent by facilitator

Thank You!

Resources

Astin, A.W. (1990). Student involvement: A developmental theory for higher education. *Journal of College Student Development* 40(5), 518-529.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education*. (pp. 241-258). New York: Greenwood Press.

Mills, G. E. (2007). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher* (3rd ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

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Appendix B

Robert's Student Survey

Name: _____

Current GPA:

Grade in ENG 101:

List three things you think are needed to be a successful college student.

What are your biggest strengths as a student? For example, are you well organized, good at managing your time? Do you have good attendance; are you a good note-taker? Think along those lines. Be as specific as possible.

What are your biggest weaknesses? What stands in the way of your academic success? Are you disorganized, bad at time management? Do you work a lot or have other obligations that require a large commitment? Be as specific as possible.

What are some specific things you could do this semester to improve upon those weaknesses?

What career would you like to pursue and why?

How many semesters have you been enrolled in college?

Does either one of your parents have a college degree?

If you had any general questions about college or academic success, who would be the first person you asked?

Do you currently have a job? If so, how many hours a week do you work?

Do you have children or are responsible to caring for anyone else's children?

How do you get to and from school? How long is your commute?

Do you have reliable internet access at home?

Appendix C

Samantha's Videos

Videos: Dr. Stephen Chew - Samford University posted on You Tube.

1. How to Get the Most Out of Studying: Part 1 of 5, "Beliefs That Make You Fail... Or Succeed" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RH95h36NChI> (6:54)
2. How to Get the Most Out of Studying: Part 2 of 5, "What Students Should Know About How People Learn" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9O7y7XEC66M> (7:15)
3. How to Get the Most Out of Studying: Part 3 of 5, "Cognitive Principles for Optimizing Learning" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1xeHh5DnCIw> (5:46)
4. How to Get the Most Out of Studying: Part 4 of 5, "Putting Principles for Learning into Practice" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E9GrOxhYZdQ> (9:17)
5. How to Get the Most Out of Studying: Part 5 of 5, "I Blew the Exam, Now What?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-QVRiMkdRsU> (7:28)

This assignment is a **required** video assignment and valued at **10 points** in the written work grades. A grade of 0/"zero" will be recorded for any assignments have not been turned in by **January 21, 2015** by 4:00 pm CST (if class begins on **1/12/15**) and by **January 27, 2015** by 4:00 pm CST (if class begins on **1/20/15**) Please find a time that you have with minimum distractions and good internet access. A student lab on campus might be appropriate or your home if that works best for your schedule. Prepare by gathering paper and pencil to make notes as you view each video. Listen and makes notes in a distraction free zone.

For each video, write **5 (five)** concepts that you will have been introduced to in the video and **one summary** statement of how you may implement these suggestions. Use complete sentences, standard grammar and spelling is expected. Please type using Ariel or Calibri font in 11 or 12 points. Organization matters!

Video 1 - Title

1. Concept (some information that is presented, vocabulary that you have learned, a new idea or definition. Write in a complete sentence.
2. Concept
3. Concept
4. Concept
5. Concept

Summary: How I will or plan to use/implement this information to improve my study skills.

Repeat for each video.

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Vita

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EDUCATION

- 2009 - 2010** **Murray State University**
Murray, Kentucky
Master of Science - Organizational Communication
- 1990 - 1992** **St. Luke's Hospital School of Diagnostic Medical Sonography**
Kansas City, Missouri
Registered Sonographer in Abdominal and Obstetrics/Gynecology 1991
Registered Vascular Technologists in Vascular Technology 1992
- 1988 - 1990** **Cox Medical Centers**
School of Radiologic Technology
Springfield, Missouri
Registered Radiographer 1990
- 1986 - 1990** **Missouri State University**
Springfield, Missouri
Bachelor of Science - Radiology

POSITION SUMMARIES

West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Paducah, KY
July 2015 –present
Director of Curriculum and Instruction

West Kentucky Community and Technical College, Paducah, KY
December 2008 – June 2015
Radiography Program Coordinator – Associate Professor

Murray Woman's Clinic, Murray, KY
August 1997 – December 2008
Registered Sonographer and Registered Radiographer

Murray-Calloway County Hospital, Murray, KY
March 1992 – August 1997
Registered Sonographer and Registered Radiographer

PUBLICATIONS

Publications in fields of education, sonography, and radiography

Taylor, G. & Heflin, D. (2015). Sometimes, it takes a village. *Adult Learning*, 26:167-169.
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Sullivan A., Heflin D., Simmons R., Aho, P. Hasegawa, J. (May 17, 2013). Student success through reducing student costs. *The Community College Times*. (<http://www.communitycollegetimes.com/Pages/Campus-Issues/Student-success-through-reducing-student-costs.aspx>)

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Heflin D. (July/August 2008). The two extremes of sacrococcygeal teratomas. *Journal of Diagnostic Medical Sonography*, 24:242-245. DOI: 10.1177/8756479308320609.

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Heflin, D. (Nov/Dec 2007). Sirenomelia in the first trimester. *Journal of Diagnostic Medical Sonography*, 23:365-367. DOI: 10.1177/8756479307309416.

PRESENTATIONS

Thirty-one presentations at local, state, regional, and national conferences

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