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Community College Faculty: Exploring the Process by which They Determine and Manage Interpersonal Boundaries with Students

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COMMUNITY COLLEGE FACULTY: EXPLORING THE PROCESSES BY WHICH THEY DETERMINE AND MANAGE INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES WITH STUDENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

Higher education instruction is a relational practice that requires skill, reflection, and intentional effort. Faculty-student relationships are critical to learning. Interpersonal boundaries between community college faculty and students are a dimension of the faculty-student relationship that is under-researched and minimally understood.

The purpose of this research was to qualitatively and phenomenologically explore faculty perceptions of their awareness of boundaries between themselves and community college students. Data were collected from seven faculty who work at a large Northwestern community college. Interviews were conducted to explore faculty perceptions of how they become aware of, arrive at, and negotiate change of their interpersonal boundaries between themselves and community college students.

Data resulted in themes that gave insight to faculty experience of general boundaries, how course content and teaching strategies reflect their boundaries, and how opportunities to negotiate boundaries are inexplicably tied to the uniqueness of the community college student and setting. The results could assist ongoing teaching and learning opportunities for community college faculty.

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my Mom and Dad, Eileen and DeWayne Schmidt. My parents have instilled in me a love for lifelong learning. To my late Mom who passed in October of 2016. This finished degree is in honor of you. To my Dad, who continues to carry the torch and inspires me every day. You are my hero. I love you both so much.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

As the Conduct and Retention Coordinator for Student Development at a local community college, I had several opportunities to engage with faculty and professional staff in meaningful ways. In this role, I was charged with contributing to supportive and progressive professional development. A co-worker and I were asked to provide one such micro-learning experience, catapulting me on a journey I had not originally anticipated. Based on anecdotal feedback regarding staff training needs, we created a one-hour session for our weekly Teaching and Learning Center (TLC) titled *Boundaries: Strengthening Professional Boundaries to Support Student's Academic Success*. These TLC workshops were part of an ongoing effort to provide meaningful opportunities for professional staff and faculty to voluntarily participate, based on their interest level and time. Typically, these lunchtime TLC sessions yielded an average of 6-8 participants with topics such as technology tips, classroom management strategies, and general teaching and learning pedagogy. My co-worker and I were shocked and pleasantly surprised when 26 people arrived to participate in our *Boundaries* session, making this an event with standing room only! This led to another well-received presentation for our annual TLC district-wide conference and a follow-up presentation for staff and faculty at a remote campus. Each presentation gave me a new chance to dive deeper into this topic, refine our content, and continue this journey with interest and curiosity.

Our initial session yielded 26 people, and proceeded more like a therapy process group than a typical professional development session. Our faculty and staff wrestled with the nuances of the construct. They explored how their interpersonal boundaries interacted with students' own boundaries. They discussed various outcomes they perceived that were influenced by boundary

management. After the psychological honeymoon of discovering a topic of wide interest, I began thinking more deeply and reflecting about my own boundaries. As a higher education adjunct instructor, I have taught for more than 10 years in counselor education programs and I recognize how my own boundaries have formed and shifted over time. I have learned about my professional and interpersonal boundaries through experience and reflection on these experiences. Since I teach in adult professional programs, students often become colleagues after graduation. The shift that occurs at this time parallels a change or widening of my own boundaries with students. For example, I typically do not accept Facebook friend requests or a LinkedIn request from a student until they have completed the program. I only accept friendships as opposed to requesting a friendship or connection. Additionally, I have been in work situations that ultimately lead to social situations with previous students, such as Friday evening happy hour celebrations. In fact, after students graduate, these relationships may morph into mentor/mentee, collegial relationships, or occasionally a friendship.

As an adjunct instructor in higher education, I often consider what my impact is on student learning. I ask myself how I can continue to grow professionally and improve student learning. I consider ways to deepen and extend student learning. I have wondered how the interpersonal connection between myself and students enhance or limit learning. I am fascinated with the notion of a bi-directional influence that occurs in this relationship between instructor and student. I wonder what form these relationships take, what concepts make up this relationship, and how these concepts manifest and influence both students and instructors.

Prior to providing the TLC workshop on boundaries, I had not thought about my own interpersonal boundaries or considered how they may impact students, their learning, and the learning environment. I began to wonder how I arrived at my own interpersonal boundaries. I

reflected on the purpose of boundaries within the learning relationship. I considered how my own boundaries have changed and continue to change over time. I found an exciting link that connects my brain to my heart.

Exploring the intersection of interpersonal boundaries and teaching as a relational practice is a perfect complement to my experience, my unique position, and my desire to unify academia and student support services. I emphatically support and encourage a synthesis of student support services and academia. As a counselor, student support staff, and faculty, I help students navigate college systems, provide curriculum, assess and evaluate knowledge and skills, and nurture a smooth and accessible bridge between those who teach students and those who work to support students.

The faculty-student relationship is of strong interest to me. This relationship includes purpose, power, interpersonal interactions, and perceptions. The ultimate purpose of the faculty-student relationship is to positively impact student learning. However, it is important to explore the dynamics encountered when considering this relationship. Tom (1997) describes the inherent power ascribed to faculty and the awareness and care faculty must uphold when considering the relationship between instructor and student. Tom calls for a more deliberate faculty and student relationship that acknowledges the power differential and calls for responsibility, care, and an awareness of the strengths and limitations of the power differential. Booth and Schwartz (2012) introduce connection, boundaries, and authenticity as foundational constructs that surround the faculty-student relationship.

Grantham, Robinson, and Chapman (2015) qualitatively explore the meaning of faculty-student interactions, offering suggestions for faculty to gain more effective interpersonal interactions with the expressed purpose of improving the learning environment for students.

They suggest that students want and appreciate connections with their instructors, and for faculty development to include soft skills that focus on the interpersonal relationship between faculty and students.

The effects of faculty-student interaction have been studied in varying contexts. Komarraju, Musulkin, and Bhattacharya (2010) propose that faculty may not always be aware of the impact and influence of interactions between themselves and students. Furthermore, Komarraju et al. identified eight aspects of the faculty-student interaction and considered how these conditions predict student's academic achievement, motivation, and academic self-concept. These aspects, studied from the perception of students, included: respect, guidance, approachable, caring, interactions outside of class, connected, and accessible. These features "offer strong empirical support for the notion that students' relationships with their faculty members are associated with important psychosocial and academic outcomes" (Komarraju et al., p.339).

Frisby and Martin (2010) quantitatively considered the effects of faculty and student rapport on the classroom environment and student perceptions. They concluded that rapport is a set of faculty behaviors that positively contribute to a prosocial classroom environment, higher levels of student engagement, and learning. "Perceived instructor rapport was the only variable that consistently emerged as a significant predictor of … learning and participation" (Frisby & Martin, p. 158).

The faculty-student relationship should be studied considering the position of power and influence the instructor brings to the relationship. It must also be studied within the dimensions of behavior and interpersonal nature of interactions between faculty and student. And the relationship must consider the perceptions of faculty and students.

Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) offers a foundational frame for exploring this relationship. Central to RCT is the idea that people grow [learn] and develop through relational connections. Jordan (2008) said, "We grow through and toward relationships" (p.2), meaning the relationship between faculty and student significantly impacts opportunities for learning. Frymeier and Houser (2000) further this concept by quantifying the unique relationship between instructor and student, asserting that teaching is relational, and exploring interpersonal variables within this relationship that contribute positively to student learning.

One dimension of teaching as a relational practice is the interpersonal boundaries enacted to establish a safe and secure relationship from where learning can occur. These are not the type of ethical boundaries that may involve physical relationships between faculty and adult learners (i.e., sexual in nature). Nor are they the type of work-home boundaries that one enacts to separate and differentiate between work life and home life. Rather, these are the interpersonal decisions, sometimes made on demand, that position faculty and student on a continuum of getting to know and relate to each other. Examples of these are: making disclosures of a personal nature, meeting off campus to discuss career and educational pursuits, and being electronically connected through social media, email, or phone.

There is great value for faculty to develop a reflective teaching practice in order to determine personal boundaries. Schwartz (2012a) encourages self-reflection and building intention even before faculty interact with students:

Setting boundaries with students is …. a deeply reflective process that challenges us to consider and reconsider our assumptions and understandings of ourselves, our students and our position as educators. Moreover, by acting with intention and transparency, we help our students deepen their awareness of power and positionality, distance and

connection. Through these moments, boundaries are not only about differentiation but also about the deeply connecting energy of authentic teaching relationships. (p.102)

The literature on this topic includes the exploration and outcomes of the faculty student relationship at the undergraduate and graduate levels (Edwards & Richards, 2002; Booth & Schwartz, 2012; Schwartz, 2012a; Schwartz, 2012b; & Tom, 1997). Additionally, rapport with faculty and the effects of interactions between faculty and students have been quantitatively and qualitatively researched at the undergraduate level (Frisby & Martin, 2010; Grantham, Robinson, & Chapman, 2015; Komarraju, Musulkin, & Bhattacharya, 2010). However, there is little information available that addresses the interpersonal relationship and the understanding of boundaries between community college faculty and students. And yet, clearly, there is a great need to explore the phenomena. This rings true to my experience as I remember the time when my co-worker and I offered that one-hour TLC workshop addressing boundaries, yielding more participants than any other workshop offered in this series.

Statement of the Problem

Faculty-student relationships are critical to learning, and these relationships are connected to interpersonal boundaries of the professor. There is literature that analyzes interpersonal boundaries between elementary and secondary teachers and students (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2008; Bernstein-Yamashiro & Noam, 2013a, 2013b, 2013c, 2013d; Pantić & Wubbels, 2011), and literature that explores boundaries between post-graduate students and faculty (Booth & Schwartz, 2012; Dunn-Haley & Zanzucchi, 2012; Edwards & Richards, 2002; Schwartz, 2012a). Hagenauer and Volet (2014) authored an article review and made recommendations about the teacher-student relationships in higher education. When considering connection, interpersonal relationships between instructors and students should be balanced.

They conclude, "the findings suggest that the teacher-student relationship in higher education, particularly regarding closeness, can be perceived as a balancing act in which both teachers and students must be mindful of boundaries, and the relationship not be overly amicable or informal" (p 377). However, there is a gap in the literature that addresses the unique relationship between community college faculty and students. Additionally, there is a gap in the literature that addresses faculty awareness of interpersonal boundaries and how they develop their own boundaries with students. It is valuable for community college faculty to have knowledge of their boundaries with students and develop deep insight into the process by which they determine, develop, and change interpersonal boundaries with students. Given that teaching is a relational practice requiring reflection and skills, further research and data may inform community college faculty to deepen their insights to include boundary creation, management, and intentions when creating the most optimum learning relationship between themselves and their students.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to understand and explore faculty perceptions of interpersonal boundaries between themselves and community college students at one community college. I used personal interviews to explore faculty reflections of their process for decision-making when developing and negotiating their own interpersonal boundaries with students. The objective was to document and explore community college faculty perceptions of interpersonal boundaries between themselves and their students.

Research Questions

This qualitative study addressed two research questions, one with two sub questions. The questions were intentionally broad and were designed to deeply explore and expand faculty's reflective process and practice as it related to interpersonal boundaries.

1. How do community college faculty characterize their interpersonal boundaries with students?

2. How do community college faculty describe the process in which they arrive at or change their interpersonal boundaries with students?

    a. How do community college faculty come to an awareness of their interpersonal boundaries with students?

    b. How and why do community college faculty change their interpersonal boundaries over time?

Key Terms

Andragogy

Adult learning theory, separate and distinct from pedagogy – youth learning theory (Knowles, 1978).

Boundaries

The basic ground rules for relationships (Barnett, 2008). [In professional relationships], "boundaries act to constrain, constrict and limit. Boundaries delineate the edge of appropriate behaviors, helping us to rule in and rule out what is to happen within the relationship" (Austin, Bergum, Nuttgens, and Peternellj-Taylor, 2006, pp. 77-78). Relational-Cultural Theory adds to the boundary definition by additionally defining a boundary as a "place of meeting, learning, differentiation and exchange" (Jordan, 2010, p. 14).

Interpersonal relationship

Connections between two or more people that are characterized by continuity, interdependent interactions, communication, varying levels of intimacy, trust and affect (Wenztel, 2012).

Power differential

The natural differences in power that exist between faculty and student. Faculty have

responsibilities that include delivering content, mentoring, professional gatekeeping and fair and

objective evaluation of student work (Barnett, 2008).

Relational-Cultural Theory

The psychological developmental theory that places relationship at the core of learning and

growth (Miller, 1987). This will be further discussed in Chapter 2.

Teaching as a relational practice

"The intentional engagement with students with a commitment to create learning spaces that are

safe, hospitable, rigorous and energizing" (Schwartz, 1:20, 2012b).

Limitations and Delimitations

This study had limitations and delimitations. It aimed to qualitatively consider the

awareness community college instructors have about their interpersonal boundaries with

students. The study elicited volunteer instructors from the communications department of one

community college. These faculty members likely had some basic knowledge of interpersonal

boundaries, based on the content they teach. However, this study was limited to a single

department at a single community college in a large metropolitan area. Additionally, although

this study was designed to explore an awareness from the instructor perspective of the

phenomena of interpersonal boundaries between faculty and students, it was not designed to

generalize to all community college instructors or higher education instructors in general.

This study was also limited by my lack of experience in conducting qualitative research. I

have 20+ years of experience providing counseling and 10+ years of experience teaching

counseling in higher education graduate programs, but I had very limited experience conducting

research. Although bracketing was implemented, the nature of qualitative research is often open-ended. Data elicited from research participants ranged and differed based on questions asked, content attended to (by the researcher) or even depended upon how the research participant felt on that particular day. Finally, a purposeful sample was used. This research was limited to those faculty who volunteered from a pool of faculty who work in one particular department.

There were several delimitations to this study. Because it used a phenomenological qualitative research design, it was not designed to measure faculty awareness of interpersonal boundaries. Rather, it was designed to explore the awareness of their boundaries with students and how and why these boundaries have changed over time. Additionally, this research was not designed to consider boundaries other than the interpersonal boundaries defined.

In addition, this research was not designed to explore the student perspective of their interpersonal boundaries with instructors. Setting boundaries can be a bi-directional process. This means both instructors and students have interpersonal boundaries and both manage boundaries. The process can be a complex and multi-variate process. This research sought to deeply explore the thoughts, beliefs, and awareness of instructors. Instructors were solicited because of the unique position of inherent power, and thus it was assumed instructors set the stage for boundary management between themselves and students.

This research assumed interpersonal boundaries are embedded within higher education teaching. It also assumed teaching is a relational process between instructors and students. This research did not plan to investigate the type of boundaries discussed in work-life balance and/or the type of boundaries that are ethically necessary (i.e., sexual boundaries between instructors and students) for teaching in higher education. Using Relational-Cultural Theory as an overarching framework, this research was designed to give voice to community college faculty

perceptions of their interpersonal boundaries between themselves and their students. It was important to explore the broad perspective of relationships as well as consider a laser-like focus of boundaries. Chapter two reviews the literature surrounding the topics of community college learners, Relational-Cultural Theory, instructor-student relationships, and interpersonal boundaries.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relationship between college faculty and students has been studied from various

perspectives. Malcolm Knowles (1978) pioneered the concept of andragogy as a distinct adult

teaching and learning construct. Researchers have studied the impact of faculty-student

relationships from lenses of persistence and academic outcomes. For example, Kim and

Lundberg (2015) identified the impact of interaction between students and faculty on the

cognitive development of students. Frisby and Martin (2010) explored the concept of instructor-

student rapport and how it influences student participation, learning outcomes, and a connected

classroom. Coldren and Hively (2009) explored instructor teaching style in relationship to

student perceptions. Dobransky and Frymier (2004) investigated student perceptions of

interactions with faculty, related to out of class communication. DeVito (1986) discussed the

relationship between faculty and student as a necessary developmental and interpersonal process.

Additionally, dynamics of the instructor-student relationship have been explored. Richard

Baker (1996) discusses the ethics of a student-faculty friendship. Barnett (2008) identifies the

challenges and opportunities presented through the unique relationship between faculty and

students. Akkerman and Bakker (2011), Booth (2012), Booth and Schwartz (2012), Edwards and

Richards (2002), and Schwartz (2009, 2012a, 2012b) examine the unique nature of the faculty-

student relationship and characteristics of power, interpersonal boundaries, and intentional

engagement.

Allison Tom (1997) refers to the faculty-student relationship as a "deliberate

relationship" (p.3). This deliberate affiliation is one where both instructor and student

consciously enter a unique relationship. The relationships between adult students and instructors

crosses traditional student-teacher boundaries. It is valuable to explore this relationship and begin to identify key relational content and processes.

The purpose of this literature review is to explore a variety of related topics found in the literature. First, the characteristics of the community college learner will be discussed, distinguishing this student from students at more traditional 4-year universities. Then, the construct of Relational-Cultural Theory will be examined as an overarching theoretical framework to support and guide further exploration. This chapter will also highlight the higher education faculty-student relationship as a valuable interpersonal construct, including a discussion about the power differential between faculty and students, and an exploration into the construct of interpersonal boundaries. Finally, the idea of interpersonal boundaries between faculty and students as a key relational process rooted in Relational-Cultural Theory, and one that is necessary for learning and growth to occur, will be explored.

Characteristics of Community College Learners

According to the American Association of Community Colleges (2017) our nation's community colleges serve about half of all undergraduate students. While the average age of a community college student is 29, younger students are accessing community colleges in increasing numbers. "Half of all the students who receive a baccalaureate degree attend community college in the course of their undergraduate experience" (American Association of Community Colleges, 2017, Students at community colleges section, para 1). According to Goldrick-Rab (2010), students who enroll in community colleges typically have a wide range of goals. For example, students may take courses for personal fulfillment, a career-technical certificate or degree, to improve pay and employment opportunities, or to transfer to a 4-year institution.

Community colleges are open access institutions. This double-edged sword both encourages students who may not attend more selective institutions to enroll, as well as allows students to enroll who may be unprepared or underprepared for taking college level courses. The level of preparedness has an impact on courses students can take. For example, 61% of students take at least one below-college level, remedial, or developmental class; 25% of students take two or more remedial courses (Goldrick-Rab, 2010). Additional characteristics of the community college student may include first generation college students, parents or single parents, working adults, or high school students. Other common characteristics are students who are racially-diverse or of low-income or socio-economic status. These characteristics are negatively associated with college completion and success (Burns, 2010). Most community college students arrive at school with low odds of success. The drop-out rates are high, the completion rates are low (Burns, 2010; Goldrick-Rab, 2010).

Goldrick-Rab (2010) acknowledges the heterogeneity of community college students requires instruction and pedagogy that is practical and contextual. The range of student characteristics, and developmental station of the community college student require teaching strategies and approaches that match student needs. However, these needs span far and wide. Burns (2010) reviews community college student success variables and encourages individualized blueprints that incorporate features of engaging pedagogy, student-focused teaching practices, and evidenced based instructional practices. The emphasis is on creating educational plans with interventions that work within institutions. However, the plan is intended to focus on each student and their success since the majority of students who attend community college are considered adults. A combination of teaching practices would include pedagogical and andragogical teaching.

Merriam and Bierema (2014) highlight the works of researchers and educators who have developed the construct of andragogy. They identify teaching and learning for adults as a unique field of practice. Adults focus on process rather than content. In addition, Merriam and Bierema cite Knowles' assumptions regarding the adult learner. They (a) are self-directed, (b) have a deep reservoir of experience to draw from when learning, (c) see the importance of adult development and their roles for learning readiness, (d) desire meaningful content that is applicable and relevant, and (e) are internally driven. Although educators have challenged andragogy as a learning theory, per se, those who do ascribe to it find the aforementioned assumptions helpful and also relatable, and thus use these insights when planning learning activities with adults (Merriam & Bierema, 2014).

Booth (2012) identifies characteristics of adult learners as experienced learners with sometimes similar life experiences to their instructors. In other words, some adult students may be peers and members of the same community as their instructors. They may be parents of children attending the same schools as their children. They may attend the same church or socialize in similar circles. When teaching in community colleges, it is important to recognize the unique teaching approaches that address the needs of a heterogeneous group of students, as well as maintain a focus on the faculty-student relationship. As we acknowledge this particular relationship, we must also consider relational dynamics that occur between the instructor and student.

Relational-Cultural Theory

Relational-Cultural Theory, with counseling and psychology roots, seeks to position the relationship in the center of learning, growth, and development. Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) is rooted in early feminist therapy. In 1978, Jean Baker Miller, Irene Stiver, Judith Jordan,

and Janet Surrey combined efforts to give recognition to the missing voice of women in traditional psychodynamic theories (Jordan, 2010). The creation of the Stone Center later gave way to The Jean Baker Miller Institute (1991, Jordan et al.) as feminist theorists began moving away from a fundamental perspective and included multiple, diverse perspectives. During this time, RCT has broadened to include the idea that individual development is shaped by cultural, racial, sexual, and economic contexts (Jordan, 2010). "More recently, the delineation of the impact of race, class, sexual orientation, and all types of marginalization on individuals and groups of individuals—both men and women—has been at the center of this work" (Jordan, 2010, p. 12). RCT is a model of human development that holds relationship at the center of growth and learning.

The core RCT model was originally developed to characterize women in therapy by theorists from the Stone Center, Wellesley College (Jordan et al., 1991) and then further broadened to all people (Jordan, 2000). This theory includes the following basic premises:

- People grow through and toward relationship throughout the life span.

- Movement toward mutuality rather than movement toward separation characterizes mature functioning.

- Relational differentiation and elaboration characterize growth.

- Mutual empathy and mutual empowerment are at the core of growth-fostering relationships.

- In growth-fostering relationships, all people contribute and grow or benefit; development is not a one-way street.

- Therapy relationships are characterized by a special kind of mutuality.

- Mutual empathy is the vehicle for change in therapy.

- Real engagement and therapeutic authenticity are necessary for the development of mutual empathy. (Jordan, 2000)

RCT posits that traditional western thought of human development is based on constructs of self and separation. Whereas "autonomy, individuation, firm self-boundaries, separation and the increasing use of logical, abstract thought are seen as markers of maturity" (Jordan, 2010, p.2). The individual self learns, grows and develops in relation to others as opposed to in relationship with others. This leaves little room for learning and growth through collaboration and cooperation. Jordan (2010) characterizes this individualist model of the self as one that functions best independently, has power over others and has no need for others. "In most models [the self] is portrayed as functioning best if it has a strong containing boundary protecting it from the potentially dangerous surrounding context" (p.2). This universal dominant myth is based on the mastery of power through independence, authority, and competition.

Instead of focusing on the self as independent and autonomous, RCT places an emphasis on mutuality, empathy, and growth-fostering relationships. Miller (1987) identifies the outcomes of growth-fostering relationships as characterized by sense of zest (energy/vitality), the increased understanding or clarity of relationship (self and others), creativity and/or productivity, having a greater sense of self-worth, and a desire for more connection. The conditions created through authentic communication, empathy, connection, and addressing culture and context provide an optimal environment for growth and learning.

Applications of RCT have meandered beyond the counseling office. Miehls (2009), Abernethy and Cook (2011), Barnett (2008), and Robertson and Lawrence (2015) have applied RTC principles to concepts of supervision and mentoring students in higher education programs. Comstock, Hammer, Strentzsch, Cannon, Parsons, and Salazar (2008) and Frey (2013) have

explored the application of RTC concepts to social justice and advocacy issues. Wang (2012)

and Edwards and Richards (2002) have applied RTC to teaching in social work programs in

higher education. And finally, Booth (2012), Booth and Schwartz (2012), Duffey (2007),

Schwartz (2009), Schwartz (2012a), and Schwartz (2012b) focus on the use of RCT principles

when educating students in undergraduate and graduate level programs. However, teaching [and

learning] in higher education is a distinct and unique relational experience. This relational

experience is described by these authors as having specific faculty and student characteristics, an

awareness of a power differential between faculty and students, and a unique lens to view

interpersonal boundaries within this relationship.

Instructor-Student Relationships

Interpersonal relationships have been explored through various lenses. For example,

interpersonal relationships have been studied as a key contributor to shaping human development

over time. In fact, interpersonal relationships are opportunities for both a source of stability and a

source of change throughout the lifespan (Collins, 1997). Interpersonal relationships are

characterized by having a sense of relatedness between two people. This relatedness is

represented by interactions and connectedness. Positive interpersonal relationships are informed

by levels of trust, communication, affect, and intimacy (Wentzel, 2012). Additionally,

researchers have investigated the impact of interpersonal relationships to academic motivation

(Wentzel, 1999), pro-social behavior in schools (Wentzel & McNamara, 1999), academic

success, and academic engagement (Opdenakker & Minnaert, 2014).

Malcolm Knowles (1978), who pioneered the advancement of adult learning, highlights

the relationship between instructor and adult student. He identifies the most important element to

teaching adults as "establishing a climate that is conducive to learning … characterized by trust,

by informality, by openness, by mutuality, by mutual respect, warmth and caring" (p 209). In a special issue of the *Cambridge Journal* dedicated to deepening and advancing the conversation, Hodkinson (2005) highlights the complex nature of learning. He says, "Learning in all situations can be understood as complex and relational, with no simple lines of cause and effect, and no factors or influences that are self-evidently more significant or foundational than others" (p. 116). This broad assertion of learning as a complex process is further explored as influenced by an intentional relationship (Booth, 2012; Booth & Schwartz, 2012; Friesen & Saevi, 2010; Tom, 1997; Walton, 2011; Schwartz, 2012a, 2012b) and teaching as a relational practice (DeVito, 1986; Schwartz, 2012b; Walton, 2011).

Walton (2011) believes effective learning in higher education is a result of the relationship between teacher and learner. In constructive alignment, factors that influence learning include the dynamic process that occurs as a result of the faculty-student relationship. So, instructors do not pass on their own knowledge to students; rather, they create conditions for, and guide students to their own learning.

Frymier and Houser (2000) explore the faculty-student relationship as an interpersonal one; they also identify how this relationship influences indirect and direct learning outcomes. The authors highlight constructs of immediacy, or a perceived close relationship, and providing ego-support as key features of motivating and empowering learners in the classroom. Their research focuses on the balance between instructing content and the instructor-student relationship. Historically, higher education instructors have been expected to be experts in their content field. However, there is more contemporary support for higher education instructors to develop skills in delivering the content associated with their expertise. "When teachers and

students move beyond the formal teacher/student roles and begin to see each other as individuals, interpersonal relationships form" (Frymier & Houser, 2000, p 217).

Expanding on the basic ingredients that compose the faculty-student relationship, DeVito (1986) highlights teaching as a developmental and relational process that has stages and parallels a process for developing interpersonal relationships. These stages encompass initial contact, involvement, intimacy, and dissolution. In addition to defining a relational process, DeVito describes several necessary proficiency skills for relationships. These include effective communication, listening with intention to deepen the dialog, bringing dialog from surface to deep conversations, and controlling degrees of openness and self-disclosure. DeVito identifies additional skills: complimenting and rewarding as reinforcement for positive behavior, maintaining classroom control, dealing effectively with conflict, sensing and responding productively to verbal and non-verbal communication strategies employed by students, and repairing relationships through meaningful dialogue as needed. He ascribes these skills to instructors and places the responsibility for these relational skills on them.

Kim and Lundberg (2015) explore the effects of faculty-student interaction to college students in a study that analyzed data from the University of California *Undergraduate Experience Survey*. They examined a large sample of 5169 senior students and considered the college student's experience as affected by student-faculty interaction over the time students attended the institution. They concluded that positive social faculty/student interactions led to student persistence, a sense of belonging, and greater levels of self-challenge.

Schwartz (2012b) describes teaching and learning as a relational practice and this relationship serves to provide meaningful experiences that deepen and enhance student learning. From a faculty perspective, "relational practice is the intentional engagement with students with

a commitment to create learning spaces that are safe, hospitable, rigorous and energizing"

(Schwartz, 2012b). This relationship between higher education faculty and students is unique,

particularly because there is a power imbalance.

Higher education instruction carries the inherent power differential of one individual

evaluating another's product. The contract between faculty and students is for faculty to provide

opportunities for students to learn a specific set of objectives and then evaluate the student output

of such learning. Melanie Booth (2012) describes this relationship:

> Within our role as instructor, we typically not only design the curriculum, facilitate the
>
> course, and create a community of learners, but we also must evaluate each individual
>
> student's performance and learning and thus provide feedback and determine grades. In
>
> other words, a lot is a stake in student–teacher relationships. (p.45)

The power differential described by Booth (2012) assumes higher education instructors

have an awareness of their power over students and work to ethically address these differentials

through maintaining ethical standards and providing equitable treatment to students. Tom (1997)

asserts that teaching carries a duty of intention and focus on the goals of cultivating learning. She

said:

> There are many temptations to persuade myself that the formalities of the teacher-student
>
> relationship can be abandoned. But the requirements of the teaching relationships are not
>
> determined by the relative ages of the teacher and student, nor by the relative external
>
> social power of teacher and student. The primary obligations of the teaching relationship
>
> are determined by the task of teaching, of taking responsibility for nurturing the other's
>
> intellectual growth…teaching demands that one person expose vulnerable parts of
>
> themselves to another. Students of every age and social status have the right to be

vulnerable before their teachers and to come with questions, uncertainty and developing ideas. Students have the right to expect that the power their vulnerability gives their teachers will be used on their behalf. (p.5)

One can reduce teaching and learning in higher education to simple key ideas such as pedagogy, andragogy, instructor knowledge, goals, outcomes, and student preparedness. The reasons for entering into this faculty-student interpersonal relationship typically differ based on their role as student or instructor. Students are seeking knowledge, mentorship, and academic gains. Instructors offer knowledge, experience, and evaluation. They are typically seeking this relationship for reasons such as pursuing a passion, maintaining a role related to their career, and needing a paycheck.

Conversely, higher education instructors need students, but are not always aware of this need or even understand the function of students within the faculty-student relationship. Faculty typically do not consider the student's contribution toward faculty professional development. Yet, there is a sweet spot for optimal learning, which lies somewhere within these relationships. Frelin and Grannas (2014) refer to this space as the "middle ground." The Swiss researchers qualitatively interviewed 23 secondary students (ages 16-19) and five teachers to gain insight into professional boundaries from variable perspectives. They concluded that the creation of a "middle ground …. demonstrates the value of both parties recognizing each other, and holds a view of the student as not only an object to fill with knowledge …. By meeting half way, parties create a middle ground" (p. 64). They contend that this abstract space is intended for both parties and is created through interactions and the intersection of authentic communication, information, power, connection, culture, relationship, and boundaries. High levels of learning and growth occur within the intersection of these constructs.

Interpersonal Boundaries

The construct surrounding the instructor-student relationship encourages an exploration of interpersonal boundaries between faculty and student. "Boundaries are the basic ground rules for the professional relationship" (Barnett, 2008, p.5). Barnett further follows up by characterizing boundaries to include "dimensions such as touch, location, self-disclosure, time, gifts, fees, and personal space" (p. 6). Boundary discussions cover a wide range of perceptions. Dialogues explore boundaries through a lens of boundedness, giving a sense of protection and safety, and creating an imaginary line that keeps information, people, and experiences out. Or they may include a perception that viewing boundaries is an intentional process that is conditional and changeable with an ultimate goal of connectedness.

Earnest Hartmann (1997) explored the concept of interpersonal boundaries when he initially conducted research on sleep, dream, and nightmare states. Searching for a common characteristic between people who have and/or remember nightmares, he began to correlate people's personality traits to descriptions of how these individuals manifest the metaphor of boundaries in their mind. He characterizes boundaries of the mind as a degree of connectedness among one's own mind as well as between the self and the world. He describes an individual as having relative thickness or thinness of boundaries. Harrison and Singer (2013) further this description:

On the thin end of the spectrum, boundaries signify permeability and fluidity. For example, a person with very thin boundaries may have difficulty separating his or her sense of self from the environment and consequently be very emotional. Others with thin boundaries may have difficulty in distinguishing dreaming from reality. Thick boundaries, on the other hand, imply a degree of separateness. Examples may include a

person who seems detached or unaffected by his or her environment, a person who is removed from close relationships. (p.205)

Petronio, Ellemers, Giles, and Gallos (1998) review communications literature and present interpersonal and intergroup boundaries as a metaphor that incorporates individual and group domains. They pragmatically unpack boundaries as a communication and relational tool. They describe boundaries as a complex set of interactions within an individual and between groups of people that draw an imaginary line, provide a sense of safety and limits, as well as bridge and connect people. Petronio et al. describe it this way:

We fit in our environment by drawing a line around those things that are important to us, and we control them through rules. Yet we also recognize that to fit within the environment successfully, we must have enough flexibility in these boundaries to allow a degree of integration between ourselves and the world in which we live. (p. 657)

Petronio et al. (1998) posit that the balance of tension between safety and connection is a vital function of communication. They discuss the idea that tension often leads people to make choices between how and when they will negotiate their own boundaries to fit into an environment or fit with others within the environment.

In addition, Austin, Bergum, Nuttgens, and Peternellj-Taylor (2006) identify boundaries in professional helping relationships as an "act to constrain, constrict and limit. They delineate the edge of appropriate behaviors, helping us to rule in and rule out what is to happen within the relationship" (pp. 77-78). The authors proceed to discuss the construct of a power differential between client and practitioner, and how healthy outcomes for clients are negatively impacted by subtle and/or flagrant boundary violations. According to Barnett (2008), equally as damaging are rigid boundaries:

Boundaries may be rigidly enforced, crossed or violated. Rigid enforcement of boundaries may mean never touching clients, students, supervisees, or protégés, never meeting outside of one's office or lab, never sharing any personal information, and never allowing a meeting to run over the previously agreed upon time. It can easily be seen that rigid enforcement of all boundaries may be impractical and likely to interfere with the development of functional and appropriate professional relationships. (Barnett, 2008, p.6)

Arnold Lazarus (1994) encourages a practical, well intentioned, and personalized approach to maintaining boundaries within a helping relationship. He says, "Practitioners who hide behind rigid boundaries…. will fail to really help many of the clients who are unfortunate enough to consult them" (p. 260). Instead, Lazarus encourages helping professionals to consider each client on a case-by-case basis rather than apply a blanket set of rules from which to operate. [This does not include the obvious boundary violations of a sexual nature.] Lazarus relates, "Truly great therapists were not frightened conformists, but courageous and enterprising helpers, willing to take calculated risks… One of the worst professional or ethical violations is that of permitting current risk-management principles to take precedence over humane interventions" (p. 260). Lazarus encourages the practice of a sense of caring and compassion when working in helping relationships.

This research stems from the fields of communication, counseling, and psychology. However, it is a natural shift to apply the same principles to teaching and learning. The instructor-student relationship is of such a critical nature in the field of education, whether the students are K-12 children, adolescents, or adults.

Boundaries as an interpersonal process between faculty and students have been studied over time (Autlman et al., 2008; Booth, 2012; Booth & Schwartz, 2012; Schwartz, 2012a, 2012b;

Tom, 1997; Walton, 2011). Much of the theory regarding boundaries between teacher and student focuses on the separation between teacher and learner, rather than on the development of a "mutually informing relationship" (Walton, 2011, p. 568). Relationship, including interpersonal boundaries between and around student/s and instructor, is a valuable construct that contributes to the quality and viability of learning.

In their exploration of boundary dilemmas, Aultman et al. (2009) create a typology of boundaries that exist between elementary and secondary school students and teachers. These boundaries include curricular, emotional, relationship, power, institutional, financial, communication, temporal, cultural, expertise, and personal boundaries. However, Schwartz (2012a), Schwartz & Booth (2012), Harrison & Singer (2013), Barnett (2008), Hagenauer and Volet (2014), Rasmussen and Mishna (2008), Sarapin and Morris (2015), and Wang (2012) provide us with more complex and deeper understandings about boundaries between higher education instructors and students.

Areas of interpersonal boundaries between the higher education instructor and student include characterizing the unique relationship between adult students and higher education instructors, instructor self-disclosure, the use of social media, and interactions outside of the classroom.

Booth and Schwartz (2012) identify some key features of this unique relationship that may present instructors with opportunities to consider the interpersonal boundaries between themselves and their students. For example, the instructor and student may live in the same community, go to the same church, share mutual friends and social circles, have children who attend school together, and/or share similar roles outside of the academic environment. These shared experiences may serve to assist the instructor in planning and designing ways to deliver

curriculum that serve to connect instructor and student. However, the power differential between instructor and student still exists and can create relational conflict outside of the classroom if (for example) a student is dissatisfied with the instructor and the two still need to peacefully coexist beyond the classroom.

There are a range of responses to instructors who use self-disclosure within the classroom. Hagenauer and Volet (2014) identify this faculty-student relationship as a professional one that requires a balance between formalness, friendliness, and closeness between instructors. For example, students prefer for instructors to be kind and friendly, but not too friendly. Rassmussen and Mishna (2008) explored the impact of instructor self-disclosure on the faculty-student relationship with social work students. They concluded there are positive impacts to the relationship between faculty and students and for student learning when the objective of self-disclosure is for the benefit of student learning. Typically, this consists of instructors bringing in real-world (sometimes personal) experiences to give a voice or narrative to the lesson being taught. Additionally, Schwartz (2012a) identifies two times when intentional self-disclosure may enhance the instructor-student relationship. In working with graduate students, she relates discussing one's own process for choosing this career as well as sharing with students one's pivotal moments as a student in order to make explicit the process of becoming an active and engaged learner. Therefore, the idea of sharing about oneself in a higher education classroom is a boundary negotiation with purpose and intentional forethought.

Schwartz (2012a), Booth and Schwartz (2012), and Sarapin and Morris (2014) explore the use of social media and out-of-classroom communications as a tool in faculty-student relationships. From the instructor perspective, Sarapin and Morris (2014) conclude higher levels of relational satisfaction between themselves and students through social media:

The findings supported the assumptions of uses and gratifications theory in that those

instructors who communicated socially most often with their students on Facebook were

those who had expected satisfaction of their needs for using the medium in this way.

Further exploration revealed that these same instructors who disclosed more about

themselves on Facebook also scored higher on our proposed uses and gratifications.

(p. 21)

However, institutions and faculty in higher education grapple with the appropriate use of

social media and out-of-classroom communications. These types of communications and

relational strategies represent both opportunities for positive connections and opportunities for

boundary transgressions. In an exploration between graduate students and faculty, Schwartz

(2012a) discusses every-day boundary considerations. For example, faculty are frequently faced

with deciding how much time to give students out of class, meeting with students off campus,

and connecting with students through social media. Schwartz asks instructors to consider these

concerns in the context of interpersonal boundaries and also reflect on boundary management as

a person in a position of power and authority. This position of authority places a high level of

responsibility on the instructor to model and express relationships in professional and meaningful

ways.

Summary

The instructor-student relationship has been studied through various lenses (Aultman et

al., 2008; Booth, 2012; Booth & Schwartz, 2012; Schwartz, 2012a, 2012b; Tom, 1997; Walton,

2011). One such lens characterizes the boundaries—and boundary negotiations—faculty and

students encounter that optimize learning for both parties. Relational-Cultural Theory

characterizes a healthy boundary space as connected, empathic, empowered, and growth-oriented

for all parties involved in the relationship (Jordan, 2008). The literature focuses on faculty-student relationships that exist between teachers in the K-12 system, undergraduate, and graduate level instructors and students (Aultman et al., 2009; Barnett, 2008; Hagenauer & Volet, 2014; Harrison & Singer, 2013; Sarapin & Morris, 2015; Schwartz, 2012a; Schwartz & Booth, 2012; Rasmussen & Mishna, 2008; and Wang, 2012). However, there is a gap in the literature that addresses relationships and boundaries between community college faculty and students. This research gave voice to experiences of community college faculty. It explored faculty awareness of how they arrived at, held, negotiated, and changed their boundaries with students.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

To conduct this research study, I used a qualitative method through a phenomenological research design. The study addressed two main research questions, one of them with two sub-questions. The questions were intentionally broad and were designed to deeply explore and expand on faculty participant's reflective teaching process and practice. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. How do community college faculty characterize their interpersonal boundaries with students?

2. How do community college faculty describe the process in which they arrive at or change their interpersonal boundaries with students?

   a. How do community college faculty come to an awareness of their interpersonal boundaries with students?

   b. How and why do community college faculty change their interpersonal boundaries over time?

Setting

Anytown Community College (ACC—a pseudonym) is a large post-secondary educational system. Between 2015-2017, ACC enrolled about 89,900 students per year. As of this writing, the average age of students enrolled was 29, while the most frequent age was 20. About 54% of students enrolled identified as female, while 46% enrolled identified as male. All students commuted to one of the four major campuses, one of the eight smaller centers, or the multitude of community spaces where a small number of classes were held. There was no residential program, dorm, or housing associated with ACC. As of this writing, there were 472

full-time faculty and 1,529 part-time faculty employed for a total of 2,001 faculty. There were 1,034 full-time staff and 220 part-time staff employed for a total of 1,254 staff employed by ACC (ACC, 2017).

Participants

The communications department at ACC was home to seven full-time and 16 part-time faculty. These 23 faculty taught at all campuses, centers, and online for ACC. In the department, there were 10 faculty who identified as male and 13 who identified as female. Of the 23 faculty, three held terminal degrees of PhD or EdD and the remaining 20 held master's level degrees. They taught a variety of courses such as Introduction to Communications, Oral Communications Skills, Introduction to Intercultural Communications, Mass Communications and Society, and Public Speaking. All faculty in the department were invited to participate in my research, with the goal that five to seven volunteered to participate in a personal interview. In total, seven faculty participated in a personal interview. A profile of each participant is included in Chapter four.

Faculty from the communications department were recruited for two reasons. It was assumed that because they teach about the concept of boundaries, the faculty had some notion of boundaries and may have reflected on their own boundaries within their teaching practice. Additionally, I had a professional contact within this department who was willing to help me recruit faculty for participation in this study. More detail on procedures for acquiring participants is outlined under the section on data collection.

Research Design

The qualitative research design followed a phenomenological approach. Creswell (2013) describes phenomenological research as the process of capturing the lived experiences and

perceptions of a group of people. He encourages researchers to explore the what and the how of individual experiences. Flood (2010) describes phenomenology as "an interpretive, qualitative form of research that seeks to study phenomena that are perceived or experienced" (p. 13). She differentiates this type of research from other qualitative theories by highlighting the focus of lived experiences rather than proving or arguing any specific position. In this case, the concept of interpersonal boundaries [phenomena] within a faculty-student relationship [context] was explored to better understand the lived experiences of the participants. Through seven interviews, I gained insights into the perceptions and understandings of faculty participants as they shared their perspectives on becoming aware of, characterizing, and changing their own interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students.

Phenomenological research has been studied through different lenses (Creswell, 2013; Flood, 2010; Lindseth & Norberg, 2004). Flood describes hermeneutic phenomenology as focusing on the experience in context, or "dasein (the situated meaning of a human in the world)" (p. 9). This research focused on a group of individuals' (instructors in the communications department) experiences, within their own specific teaching contexts. For example, faculty are in positions of power within the classroom context. However, these faculty have interpersonal boundaries that span the classroom and enter into their personal lives, informed by experiences, culture, history, professional development, and personal development.

Creswell (2013) proposes that the defining features of phenomenology are to explore common events or incidences with a group of individuals who all experience this phenomenon. According to Creswell, this approach aims to provide a philosophical discussion about the common elements, collect data through interviews or use of other observational data, follow a systematic procedure in data analysis, and capture the essence of experiences related to the

explored phenomena. In this study, all faculty solicited for this research experienced a faculty-student relationship in the community college setting. Each faculty member had their own unique perception of interpersonal relationships, boundaries, and their own processes for arriving at and negotiating boundaries. Although the faculty may or may not have considered their interpersonal boundaries with students, they all experienced—at some level—a form of interpersonal boundaries. The aim of this research was to gather several faculty's lived experiences of this phenomena through individual interviews.

Initially, I attempted to gather three to five faculty together to review and give feedback to the interview questions. However, because I gained permission to research and access to the institution at the beginning of a new school year, faculty availability schedules were tight. Therefore, I met individually with three faculty to pilot the questions and obtain feedback and faculty insights related to the interview process. This was a valuable activity in that based on feedback from these meetings, I adjusted several of the interview questions and also added a clearer written introduction document for faculty to read; I introduced myself, the research, the interview process, and provided a written definition of boundaries (see Appendix A). I was disappointed when I could not gather faculty together for a small group to provide feedback and insights; however, I also did not want to hold up the interview process any longer due to scheduling issues.

Data Collection

Creswell (2013) sets out a simple, yet defined protocol to collect data: to frame research within an established research method and format research with a singular focus, yet, be open to data that emerges. In addition to a rigorous and ethical data collection protocol, Creswell identifies several characteristics of a thorough data collection process to include: locating a site

and/or an individual, gaining access and developing rapport, having a purposeful sample, finding ways to collect and record data, resolving issues and concerns in the research field, and storing data.

To this end, I executed the following process and protocol: I completed research at a community college where I used to work. I used my personal connection with one particular faculty member who recently occupied the department chair position within the communications department. My contact was my employee sponsor who then helped with the following tasks: (a) communicate with the institution to obtain permission to complete research there (see Appendix B); (b) assist me in accessing three current faculty to review and provide feedback to the interview process and questions, and (c) assist me in accessing seven current faculty for a 1:1, face-to-face interview.

Over the course of four weeks, I arranged individual interviews with those faculty participants who volunteered. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and occurred on or near campus in a location decided by the interview participant. We used semi-private and quiet places to talk and I yielded to the participant's choice of locations. We met in the library, at a restaurant nearby the campus, in faculty offices, and in conference rooms. If we met in a private room or office, the door was left open. Prior to the interview, I gathered consent to participate in the study and to use a smartpen to record the conversion (see Appendix C). Additionally, prior to asking interview questions, I re-read the definition of interpersonal boundaries and I asked faculty if they had any questions.

I then asked general, broad questions (see Appendix D) designed to elicit and encourage faculty participants to give voice to their experiences and their awareness of interpersonal boundaries with students. Additional questions included an inquiry about how faculty arrived at

their boundaries and how their boundaries have changed over time. Immediately after each interview, I allowed participants to look at my notes if they choose to do so. Additionally, I listened to the recordings, read through the smartpen-created notes, and wrote my own observational notes about the time together.

I collected data digitally, both orally and written with the smartpen and paper. A smartpen is a device that records voice and provides a synchronous audio and written version of an interview. The hand-written notes are captured on a distinct dot-matrix paper, while the smartpen records the interview. The notes and recording are then uploaded to a specific application called Livescribe. The notes and voice recording are then available in an accessible portable document file (pdf), for listening and viewing. Additionally, the interviewer can access any part of the auditory interview by tapping on the written notes.

As I collected data, I kept in mind that "contemporary phenomenological research is animated by the desire to do justice to the human experience" (Halling, 2002, p.20). Creswell (2013) clearly lays out a valid and rigorous data collection process. He directs researchers to use multiple data collection strategies in order to strengthen data results. For this study, I met with three faculty to review and obtain their insights and feedback regarding the interview process, I conducted individual interviews with a purposeful sample of seven faculty, and I documented my observations and insights after each interview and throughout the process.

Data Analysis

Flood (2010), Creswell (2013), and Lindseth and Norberg (2004) offer data analysis models when conducting phenomenological research. Hermeneutic interpretation includes a continuous circle of naïve readings, structural analysis, and a comprehensive understanding or interpreted whole.

Flood (2010) encourages researchers to maintain the integrity of phenomenological exploration and philosophical content instead of adhering to a strict data analysis method. Lindseth and Norberg (2004) offer a simple process of reading the text as a whole while allowing the text to guide and direct the researchers focus. They encourage researchers to be attuned to the messages and open to the phenomenon. This open and attuned attitude "is regarded as a first conjecture and it has to be validated or invalidated by the subsequent structural analysis. Thus, the naïve understanding guides the structural analysis" (p. 179).

Each time I listened to the recordings and read the transcripts, I set aside my own experiences and perceptions, and exposed myself to the data as if I were listening or reading it for the first time. I searched for meanings and underlying philosophical constructs, attempting to understand the participants' experiences of interpersonal boundaries with students. Lindseth and Norberg (2004) describe text interpretation as a "structural analysis of the data" (p. 149), through a process of identifying themes. Their definition of a theme is "a thread of meaning that penetrates text parts … it is seen as conveying essential meanings of a lived experience" (p. 149).

I attempted to use Creswell's (2013) more specific method for analyzing and providing a deep and rich interpretation of phenomenological data:

- I described the personal experiences with the phenomenon under study.

- Developed a list of significant statements.

- Took the significant statements and then grouped them into larger units of information (themes).

- Wrote a description of what the participants said about their experiences with the phenomena (provides 'textural' description of specific events).

- Wrote a description of how the experience happened (structural description).

- Wrote a composite description of the phenomenon incorporating the essence and compilation of data. (pp.193-194).

Keeping Flood's (2010) and Lindseth and Norberg's (2004) data analysis models in mind, I also adhered to Creswell's (2013) data analysis process. I listed each faculty on a separate piece of paper, gave them a pseudonym, identified demographic data, and captured key words, quotes, and phrases. I initially listened to interviews and took notes of words and phrases that stood out in terms of faculty tone and inflection. I then read, reflected, and re-read transcriptions. I used a continuous process of reading, reflection, color coding, and naïve reading (Lindseth & Norberg). I placed 77 words and phrases in groupings and further categorized the data into broad constructs and meanings related to boundaries and faculty perceptions. I then organized and re-organized words and groupings of words that held meaning and thematic meanings. I condensed an initial nine themes to four themes. Of the four themes, the first and second themes each have four sub-themes. I arrived at these themes and sub-themes through an analysis of aligning what I believed faculty meant through their words, examples, and stories.

For me, the data analysis process was analogous to using a camera with a telephoto lens for a laser-like focus on each detail, and then panning out to a wide-angle lens, experiencing broad, sweeping panoramas of ideas and context. This continuous process of a telephoto to wide-angle lenses and back seemed to coax out the specific details of interpersonal boundaries within a rich and colorful background of general personal and professional boundaries.

Role of the Researcher, Research Ethics, and Bracketing

My role as researcher was to provide a basic understanding of interpersonal boundaries, and then create a safe environment for community college instructors to explore, explain, and thoughtfully highlight their own experiences of interpersonal boundaries between themselves and

a student or a group of students. Additional roles included designing and conducting an ethically sound research study. Creswell (2013) offers a particular challenge to the researcher of a phenomenological study. He believes the purpose of the research is to explore an individual's perceptions of a particular experience. In other words, the researcher needs to simultaneously bracket or suspend their own perceptions while viewing their research subject's perceptions through their own personal, professional, and thus, phenomenological lens. Creswell encourages researchers to suspend their judgements and instead, approach the research with curiosity. It was my intention to do this as best I can. I believe my training as a counselor helped me approach each faculty with curiosity and to elicit their authentic experiences.

As in most professional practices, ethical issues need to be considered throughout the process of research. My research proposal was accepted by my dissertation committee on August 17, 2017. Then, I obtained permission from the George Fox University Institutional Review Board (IRB) and IRB chair (see Appendix E). On September 25, 2017, I met by phone with my community college sponsor and a representative of the community college to obtain permission to conduct research at the community college (see Appendix B). With permissions granted, I continued with the data collection process.

In her 2007 article outlining ethical guidelines for phenomenological research, Walker identifies the following considerations when conducting research: do no harm, provide informed consent, disclose the nature of the research topic, be aware of the activating nature of phenomenology, be sensitive to the subjects lived experience, maintain confidentiality of subjects and their experiences, and maintain integrity and authenticity in data analysis. I attempted to follow these guidelines as I proceeded with the data collection and analysis.

Creswell (2013) relates that ethical considerations may emerge at any point in a study. In this research, I disclosed my professional connection to this study as well as my professional role as a counselor and counselor educator. Additionally, I am a doctoral student at George Fox University, and this research study is the culmination of a terminal degree in Educational Leadership. I have a vested interest in completing the study. Also, faculty were offered a nominal gift card for coffee or movie tickets as a thank you for participating. Additionally, I was aware of the potential ethical concern of having a dual role with my employee contact at my research site. I am personal friends with this person, which is how I gained entry into the site as a research setting. I did not include my friend's voice and experiences in this study.

I had two ethical concerns that arose during the research. At the end of the first interview, the faculty participant asked me if I was doing research at other community colleges around the area. I told him I was only interviewing faculty at this particular community college, in this particular department. He made a comment of how small the department was, and if there was any identifying information in the study, then people who read the study may be able to identify the participants (even by their demographic information). I reassured him that all identifying information would be kept confidential. As I thought further about his comment, I realized that I should not be disclosing the limits of the research participants to the faculty who volunteered for this study. I consulted my dissertation chair for advice, and then I reached out to the faculty by email to let him know I would not be disclosing the limits of the participants (one college, one department) to any further volunteers. I offered to eliminate the data from his interview and/or if he wanted to read the transcripts and strike anything he did not want included, then I would honor either of these choices. He gave permission for me to use his interview and declined my offer to show him the transcripts and redact any information.

Secondly, during the third interview, my smartpen malfunctioned and no longer took auditory notes. When I discovered this at the end of the interview, I immediately wrote as much down as I could recall from the time the pen malfunctioned. I used this information for data analysis, but not for quoting the instructor. Additionally, I learned to always have a back-up auditory recorder, so I purchased a voice recorder to use for the remainder of interviews. All notes are currently stored in a private, secured, and locked location with access only available to me. Upon completion of this dissertation, I will keep the digital and physical content for 5 years and then destroy and erase the information.

Creswell (2013) specifies that bracketing includes the researcher remaining unbiased and taking themselves out of the process, allowing for exploration and discovery to occur. I was cautious to bracket my own biases and experiences, and rather, was mindful of and present for faculty to describe their perceptions and their experiences. It should be noted that I have extensive training and experience in the field of counseling; therefore, I possess some level of expertise in listening skills and communication skills that encourage others to describe their lived experiences. I believe I was able to employ my counseling and listening skills during the interviews.

Potential Contributions to the Field of Education

Halling (2002) explores the nature of phenomenological research. He presents compelling arguments for making this type of research available to a wide audience. He relates the creation of rich understandings of unique experiences, making sense of quantitative research, and highlighting meaning from these experiences as the contribution cornerstones of phenomenological research. Halling (2002) posits ways to make this type of research accessible to a wide audience:

- Emphasize the value of this research for understanding human phenomena.

- Include in the research report the story of the project as a process of discovery.

- Use language and examples creatively.

- Write different versions of a study for different audiences or have several levels within one study.

- Engage in dialogue with other writers who explore human phenomena. (p. 23)

As the researcher, I aspired to participate in ethical, meaningful, and useful research. As a result of my research, higher education instructors—particularly community college instructors—may learn how to have greater or more satisfying interactions between themselves and students. The results and findings of my research are outlined in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Phenomenological research explores and seeks to understand the essences of human experiences (Creswell, 2013). The purpose of this phenomenological study was to qualitatively explore the human experiences and community college faculty's perceptions of their interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students. Furthermore, the questions were designed to elicit faculty awareness of how they become aware of, choose, negotiate, and explore the ways their boundaries have changed over time. "At its best, phenomenology deepens people's appreciations for the depth and nuances of experience" (Halling, 2002, p. 35). This study aimed to give voice to community college faculty's insights and deepen their appreciation of boundary experiences between themselves and students.

Chapter 4 describes the findings and analysis of data collected. First, I will provide a brief summary and description of the data collection and analysis. Second, I will briefly describe and provide demographic information for each interview participant. I will then present my findings and identify thematic representation of data collected and analyzed.

Over the course of four weeks, I interviewed seven faculty who teach at three community college campuses. I used a purposeful sample of community college faculty who taught communications courses. These faculty were intentionally chosen because in their own coursework, they teach about the concept of interpersonal boundaries; therefore, I assumed they would already have some working knowledge of the construct of boundaries. The data analysis consisted of reviewing interview notes, listening to interviews, and reading the transcriptions and field notes. I used a combination of phenomenological reflection (van Manen, 1990) and Lindseth and Nordberg's (2004) phenomenological hermeneutical method. van Manen (1990)

suggests analyzing data through a process of looking at the whole, capturing essences, and then analyzing the parts and meanings of texts. I frequently sat with this process for several days and engaged deeply with the material. Insights occurred to me at odd times (e.g., while I was driving or in the middle of a meal), so I recorded my thoughts on my phone voice recorder or in writing. Later I checked to see if my insights were in alignment with the data, and if so, added the ideas into my field and observation notes. It reminded me of van Manen's (1990) comment, "Phenomenological engagement is always personal engagement: it is an appeal to each one of us, to how we understand things, how we stand in life, how we understand ourselves." (p.156).

During the data analysis stage, it was easy to become overwhelmed with data. I needed a way to sort through the interviews and find relevant content. I considered and reconsidered which statements and phrases were most important. I searched for words and text that seemed to capture the faculty general sentiments as well as the subtext, or meaning of their narratives. Lindseth and Nordberg (2004) simplify the hermeneutic method of data analysis by highlighting a cyclical process of naïve reading, creating a structural analysis—identifying themes and sub-themes, and then delving into the texts for more comprehensive understandings. What follows is a description of the faculty participants, and then an account of the research findings.

Research Participants

Because of the nature of the research questions and interview questions, it seemed important to profile a few demographics of my participants. The following is a brief introduction to each faculty interviewed:

Faculty A is in his 30s and identifies as a Caucasian male. He holds a Master's degree and has been teaching in higher education for nine years. He has been teaching at this

community college for four years. He is currently teaching full-time and is a permanent instructor.

Faculty B is in her 50s and identifies as a Caucasian female. She holds a PhD. and has been teaching in higher education for 29 years. She has been teaching at the community college, on and off, for the past 22 years. She is a part-time instructor.

Faculty C is in her 50s and identifies as Caucasian, female. She holds a Master's degree and has been teaching in higher education for 20 years. She has been teaching at the community college for that past nine years. She is a full-time, permanent instructor.

Faculty D is in her 50s and identifies as Caucasian female. She holds a Master's degree and has been teaching in higher education for 13 years. She has been teaching at the community college for the past four and a half years. She is a part-time instructor.

Faculty E is in his 50s and identifies as male, Japanese-American. He holds a PhD in communications, and has been teaching in higher education for 15 years. He has taught at the community college for the past three years. He is a part-time instructor, and also concurrently teaches three-fourths time at a local, private college.

Faculty F is in his 40s and identifies as a Caucasian, male. He holds a PhD in communications and rhetoric, and has been teaching in higher education for 19 years. He has been teaching at the community college for five years. He is a part-time instructor.

Faculty G is in her 30s and identifies as Asian female. She holds a Master's degree and has been teaching for four years and three months. She has been teaching at the community college for four years. She is currently a full-time, temporary instructor.

Research Findings

The results of my research (findings) are a product of data analysis. Through the process of analyzing my data, themes began to emerge that highlighted the essences of faculty perceptions (Creswell, 2013). From the very beginning, it was obvious that faculty responses to the interview questions seemed to span a wide range of insights, reflections, and beliefs related to boundaries that included interpersonal, personal, and professional boundaries. This led me to determine that faculty hold very personal and distinct ideas of their own boundaries, and how they think about and experience those boundaries. Additionally, faculty all referred to their subject material (communications) as an opportunity to explicitly and implicitly model and teach boundaries. Finally, faculty addressed the idea that working with community college students is a unique opportunity to manage and negotiate boundaries. These findings are represented through four themes, which are described in detail later in this chapter. Both the first and second themes have four sub-themes to further describe the data analysis.

Theme 1: Boundary Characterization. Faculty in this study did not distinguish between boundaries of an interpersonal nature and other types of professional and personal boundaries. After reading the aforementioned definition of interpersonal boundaries, when asked to characterize these, faculty described a wide variety of types of boundaries they enact with community college students. These boundaries included: treatment of students, expectations of students, course management, and work-life boundaries.

Treatment of students. Faculty participants indicate that at the beginning of each term they attempt to treat all students similarly. For example, Faculty B stated, "My boundaries … at the beginning of the term are similar [for] all students because I want to be open-hearted and open-minded with the class." Faculty F stated, "I want to be there equally for my students."

Faculty A referred to equity within his grading policy when he said, "… I try to grade everybody the same, whether or not they're rich or poor, white or black, straight or gay …" When asked a follow up question clarifying his thoughts on grading as a boundary, Faculty A replied:

> My subject material is very subjective, with competent communication and good speeches, or well written papers … [I] try to keep myself blind on whose test I'm grading when I'm reading essays or something. With speeches, it's impossible to do that …. but I try not to think about any of those kinds of biases that are sometimes subconscious. I try to think anybody of any demographic category can get the same educational experience from me.

Yet, the equity faculty strived for in terms of initial student treatment and grading did not hold true for students who sought extra assistance from instructors. In fact, most participant instructors (B, C, D, F, and G) said they generally assist and spend more time with students who asked for help. Instructor C captured this:

> If they are willing to put in the time and effort, I'll work with them to help them be successful. I try to be fair, but [for] those students who come to me and let me get to know them, I'm more likely to provide extensions or accommodations.

Instructors described the way they spent their time for and with students as a boundary characterization. For example, all instructors mentioned they write letters of recommendation for students who make this request. In addition, when characterizing boundaries, instructors also identified the extra assistance they gave to students. For example, instructor F described his expanded time boundaries extended to students toward the end of a trimester. He related this outreach and desire to assist students with their final speech, which has historically been a difficult assignment for students:

I tell them, 'It pains me to fail you on that, so please, please, come to me if you're really struggling and you feel like this assignment is going to make you quit the class. Send me an email. I'll meet you whenever. I'll fit your schedule. I really want you to finish.' I express a lot of concern and care within the boundaries.

When asked a follow-up question to determine if students ever take him up on his offer for extra help, this instructor indicated it is rare, but then proceeded with a story he shared with his class to indicate his availability. He used an example of a former student who was going to drop the class to encourage his current students to accept his assistance:

I give them this little pep talk [where I say]: 'I sat with him for three hours—I basically helped him write the whole speech. We did research together. I was teaching him how to marshal evidence and make claims—basic argumentation stuff ... I didn't do the work for him … and he was very happy at the end. I could tell that he really got it.' That's gratifying enough for me. I think he was very appreciative of it, so I use him as an example.

However, not all instructors felt an affinity for students with greater needs. Instructor A, for example, holds firmer boundaries when students monopolize conversation or over-share personal information in class. This instructor shares a personal story when students share a story. However, if a student shares many personal stories, the instructor will stop sharing his own. "I want them to feel included, but if they move to the point of wanting a more meaningful relationship out of me … I guess, I try to draw a harder line." Additionally, Instructor G identified enacting firm boundaries when students are too needy. This instructor equated the behaviors of these students to be driven by achieving a specific grade—an A. Instead, she is more interested in helping students who are less demanding and more focused on learning. When

she believes students are aggressively reaching out to her in order to achieve a certain grade, she enacts a more restrictive time boundary and does not respond immediately. This instructor described her thought process as if she was conversing with the student, "'You think I'm just here at your beck and call?' And I know the type, you want to get the A … I hope that at some point maybe she will realize she was too pushy."

The commitment to time spent with students as a characterization of boundaries also manifests through care and concern for student's well-being. For example, instructors C, E, F, and G all said they referred students to counseling when students had disclosed personal problems. On the other hand, instructor D described the care and concern she felt for students presented her with a boundary dilemma. She was worried about two students, and later discovered both these students experienced trauma:

> I got too emotionally invested to the point where I'm thinking, 'Can I do something? Can I help these people?' And so, then I realized that's not my role … I learned, you've got to do what you can do in your assigned role … probably my biggest problem initially was getting too close, too involved in their lives."

In general, faculty felt comfortable with their level of care and concern for students, and they had all, at least one time, either referred students to counseling or walked a student to the counseling office.

Expectations of students. In addition to the way faculty said they treated students, they also characterized expectations for student behavior as a boundary. For example, Faculty B and C mentioned how they are addressed by students. Faculty B further explained that her boundaries had been tested by online students who question her competency. Additionally, Faculty A referred to managing student interactions within the class. For example, this faculty does not

allow, and will redirect, language in the classroom that is discriminatory or marginalizes other students:

> A student will say something – ist, racist, sexist, homophobic, whatever, in some version of inappropriate language, and sometimes I'll have to explicitly say, 'Please refrain from saying that again,' or, 'We don't say those words here. Shut it down. We're all family.'

Course management. While some faculty focused on the interactions between themselves and students, others discussed details of their course management when characterizing boundaries. For example, Faculty F described boundaries he enacts most often related to course management and expectations for students. His initial characterization of boundaries included expectations for work, attendance, and grading policies. He described his boundaries regarding course expectations as "firm but fair." Similarly, Faculty E characterized expectations for students and related a story when he re-iterated these expectations. He consistently breaks down behavioral expectations, attendance expectations, and even teaches students how to respond to an email, "I call it personal responsibility … these are professional commitments. So, I expect professional behavior."

Work/life balance. As stated, some faculty described course management expectations, others identified ways they treat students, while others identified expectations of students as boundaries they enact between themselves and students. Still other faculty considered the way they manifest a boundary is to establish a balance between work and home. For example, when asked to characterize their interpersonal boundaries with students, Faculty A, C, and G identified maintaining a work/life balance. One of the ways these instructors maintain this balance is by not being available for synchronistic electronic communication with students outside of the classroom. Instructor A has a 24-hour turnaround policy for communicating with students.

However, if students email him at nights or on the weekend, he will return a student's communication when he can, rather than stop what he is doing to return communication. He said, "It's ironic as a communications instructor I do build up a wall so it's hard for [students] to communicate with me whenever they want." Faculty C also commented on a well-defined work/life boundary: "I try to maintain my work in a certain timeframe … and I need my private time." This same instructor characterized her boundaries as being available to students from 9-5 on Monday through Thursday.

Not all instructors found managing a balanced work and home life simple. Instructor G had recently moved from a part-time to full-time instructor position. In response to the increased work load, she placed time frames around availability to electronically answer student communication and attempted to structure time off from work. She commented, "Other people have told me to try and create a balance, a work life balance, on the weekends instead of answering [emails] immediately. I'll designate a break day." All three of these instructors shared the importance of enacting an intentional work/life boundary because students have such easy access to communication through electronic means.

Theme 2: Boundary Processes. The processes by which community college faculty become aware of, establish, negotiate, and change boundaries between themselves and students is a personal process driven by external influences and a reflection of those experiences. When discussing how faculty become aware of and arrive at their boundaries between students and themselves, instructors tended to cite external influences. The influences described below are sub-themes to this second main theme.

Boundary awareness. Each faculty participant described a unique process of boundary awareness to include citing institutional rules and social mores, developmental processes, and

emulating role models. Faculty A stated, "Some of it is [related to] explicit rules by the college. Some of them are just social norms …" While this instructor identified following institutional and social rules, other instructors (B, D, E, and F) took a more developmental approach, citing a process of personal insight and understanding related to early experiences as a teacher or teaching assistant. They attributed these experiences as opportunities to learn about themselves in relation to a new role. Faculty F captured this:

> I remember those first few years. I was younger … I think I wanted to be liked more, and I don't think I had nearly as many boundaries as I do now—at least, not official boundaries. I was more about being friendly than about being firm, which was very empathetic, and nice, and I did love them and care about them. It was genuine.

Faculty G identified emulating early role models as one of her early experiences. She described it this way: "I think I used the teachers who I held at high esteem [as] my exemplars. Those are who I try to mirror … from high school, college, grad school. I feel like I'm a byproduct of them." In general, instructors indicated some external force acted as a catalyst for boundary awareness.

Thinking about and conversing about boundaries is not an organic occurrence. It occurs infrequently. In general, faculty identified their need to think about or talk through the question related to boundary awareness. Faculty A said he had not thought about his boundaries prior to our discussion. Faculty B, C, and E were able to identify early experiences and requested some time to think about these experiences, and then talked through their insights about boundary awareness. Faculty D, F, and G identified having thought about this topic prior to meeting with me because they had spoken to other instructors who had been interviewed and took some mental time to consider some of the questions. This need to think through some of their answers

further supports the idea that boundaries are a complex phenomenon. Typically, some outside influence encouraged or, in some cases, forced faculty to contemplate their boundaries and their boundary stances.

Boundary negotiation and change. Additionally, instructors expressed that experiences and reflections of those experiences led to negotiating or changing boundaries. Faculty A expressed he negotiates his boundaries according to student response:

> There are certain boundaries that have evolved over time, and based on my experience or my experimentation with those boundaries, I've had more positive or negative reinforcement [with] that type of boundary being tightened or loosened. And if X boundary is loosened and students didn't like it, I might loosen it even more, or vice versa.

Faculty D expressed her processes for negotiation or boundary changes, relies heavily on trial and error. Faculty F described a process of coming to the community college with an entirely different set of boundaries, and learned over the course of his time teaching that he needed to make academic standards and student behavior explicit. He said, "It comes with experience." Additionally, Faculty G discussed the experience of a change in her previous part-time teaching assignment, to currently full-time. She stated with this change, she now has little time, and is required to negotiate boundaries with students. She said, "I'm just so busy I don't have time to be personally connected with students … I don't have time."

Boundary violations. Most faculty (A, B, C, D, F, and G) indicated there were times they experienced boundary violations, characterized by students who behaved either inappropriately towards them or towards other students. These violations are identified by the things students say and do that cause faculty to pause, reflect, and potentially change their treatment of students,

often times enacting more firm or strict boundaries. Faculty A, B, C, D, and F related examples

of student behavior that made them feel unsafe. They cited disgruntled students, students with

mental health concerns, and students with historically violent histories who may behave

inappropriately with instructors or students as clear experiences that caused a response of

enacting a more firm or tighter boundary.

For example, Faculty A related a story of placing students in a group for a project. He

described one of the group members as "sociopathic," based on feedback from group members.

This caused him to think more deeply about assigning group projects and in fact, he did not

assign this same project the following term. He recounted his reflections this way:

> I was really trying to reanalyze that work, particularly at a community college, where
>
> they don't all live in the dorms together … I have reintroduced that particular group
>
> work, but I try to give more in-class time so that we could theoretically do it all in class
>
> … It does kind of concern me ... their safety, or even some issues of students meeting
>
> each other outside of class, where their only contact is through me. If those other students
>
> do something unethical to each other, I feel partially responsible … [because] my
>
> assignment was the reason those students met outside of class.

Faculty F related his thoughts about a student who was volatile: "That guy I worried

about all quarter long. I was thinking he could be the one who shows up with a gun, but I've had

many that I think that about."

Female faculty (B, D, and F) in particular, indicated receiving unwanted attention from

male students. For example, Faculty D identified an uncomfortable experience. After she had

spent extra time helping an international male student, he gave her a handwritten poem in

calligraphy at the end of the term. She shared, "I shouldn't elicit that from him."

Not all student behavior that crosses a boundary for faculty is intentional. For example, Faculty A described an experience when he disclosed to his class that he lived near campus. One day, he walked out his front door to see a student from one of his classes.

> He [student] was like, 'Oh, I knew you lived nearby. I didn't realize it was this close.' I'm thinking, 'Yup, that's my worst fear, you knowing where my house is.' It was actually a very genial student and I haven't seen or heard from him since, but that was one of those, well, this student knows where I live. That doesn't feel right to me.

Regardless of student intention, faculty expressed boundary violations as a precursor to reflection, negotiation, and boundary change.

   Boundaries and electronic communication. A final sub-theme related to boundary awareness, negotiation, and change was the idea that electronic communication has provided opportunities for faculty to explore and negotiate boundaries between themselves and students. Faculty grappled with giving out their cell phone numbers to students, accepting students as friends or followers on social media, and expectations for student communications through email or text. Some faculty gave out their phone numbers, yet preferred limited text communication (B, D, E, and G). Faculty E related how technology has taken the place of office hours. He likes to have synchronous communication opportunities with students, so he gives out his cell phone number, and students use it for quick content questions, as well as communication about attendance and assignments. "I don't know if it's wise for me to give them my cell number, but that's the way they feel comfortable [communicating]. I just tell them—we're not buddies."

   On the other hand, three faculty responded to student requests for communication via email or face-to-face (A, C, and F). Faculty F captured this by letting students know they can get the quickest response from him by email. He related, "I will always meet students on campus.

Rarely do community college students want to meet face-to-face. They'll stay five minutes after class or so, but office hours—they don't just drop in." This same faculty illustrated his point by estimating that one of 40 students may drop in to his office each term.

Instead of office hours, faculty tend to communicate electronically with students outside of class. Most faculty have either an immediate or timely (within 24 hours) response time to student questions or requests for content clarification via email. However, three faculty (A, C, and G) related they work a typical weekday, 8-5 schedule, and will not respond to student emails until Sunday evening on the weekend. When this is the case, students are notified of this communication boundary within the syllabus.

The wide variety of faculty responses to the interview question of characterizing interpersonal boundaries support the idea that boundaries are a deeply personal construct. And the wide range of responses suggest interpersonal boundaries are not easily separated from other types of personal and professional boundaries. Additionally, time, experience, and reflection influence faculty perceptions of negotiating their boundaries. A third theme that emerged illustrates faculty's use of communications subject material and instructional practices to model and teach boundaries.

Theme 3: Boundaries and Instruction. The content communications faculty teach, and the ways they teach their content, provide opportunities for faculty to teach and model interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students. Instructors talked about this theme in a few different ways, and they all related it to boundaries through the idea of sharing personal information about themselves. Five instructors (A, C, E, F, and G) disclosed they stay neutral in terms of sharing political and religious beliefs. Some instructors assign speeches and/or papers of a very personal nature (A, B, C, D, and G). Others build skills into the curriculum in a more

formative way (A, E, F, and G). Still others model sharing of personal information as a communications skill (A, B, C, D, E, and G).

Instructor D described assigning a first speech, titled *lit speech*. This speech occurs early in the term, and the instructor asks students to find a poem, a writing, a piece of music, or a passage from a book. Since the student takes on the role of the character of this artistic piece, "it reveals a lot about who that student is." The instructor assigns this particular assignment for the purpose of creating emotional safety, connection, and support within the classroom. Through completion of the assignment, she hopes students are more willing to give and receive feedback, and expand their comfort zones. She believed this expansion of personal boundaries, paired with a supportive response, can enhance and deepen learning. She described her thoughts this way:

> I do think that part of public speaking is learning to find a way to emotionally, intellectually connect with your audience. And if you can experience that sense of emotional connect and feel safe … you might feel freer to step out of your own personal boundaries, your own safe spot, and interact better with your audience, have a more fulfilling engagement and presentation.

Additionally, Faculty G assigns an *identity paper* and self-discloses about her own identity (Asian and female), hoping her disclosures will help other students think about and be able to reflect on their own identity. She said:

> I do that early on just to show them that they can feel comfortable with me … because it's really not for me to know more about their identity, it's for them to have the opportunity to unpack those different elements that maybe other classes or life circumstances haven't forced them to have to consider, regarding their own and different cultures.

While Faculty E does not assign speeches that disclose personal information, he implemented an informal communications practice at the beginning of class he calls, "media critic." During this time, he shares and critiques recent activities and restaurant experiences. In return, he asks students to do the same. He encourages them to do more than just identify the event, but to also discuss and critique it. He said, "If I expect them to share, especially media critiques, then I feel like I need to do the same."

In general, instructors shared personal information and they modeled communications skills. However, when instructors revealed personal information, they tended to do this in a contextual way. For example, to illustrate a lesson main idea, to provide an anecdote that applies the current lesson to real life, or to share a personal story to encourage or match a student's story. However, assignments and in-class exercises are not the only way instructors elicit personal information from students. For example, instructor B models self-disclosure, in hopes of eliciting it:

> I feel like I get a lot of information about students …. I get a lot of that reciprocity in
> terms of them telling me who they are, and letting me into their lives at the same time.
> I'm happy to retain that same level of openness; that's how I thrive in my teaching.

Additionally, Faculty C told a story of noticing a behavior change in one of her students whose family was being impacted by the fires in Sonoma County, California this past fall. She reached out and emailed the student to check in on her. The instructor had identified being open to student disclosure. I followed up by asking how comfortable she is with student disclosure. Faculty C said, "I don't want to impose any idea that they have to share with me … what we talk about [in class] is so human, and it's about connections and support." This faculty member

believed her outreach to this student was a manifestation of modeling healthy and engaged boundaries in a relationship, with no expectations of the student in response to her outreach.

All instructors have varying degrees of comfort when sharing personal information with students as well as receiving personal information from students. For example, instructors B, D, C, E, and G tell stories in class about their family, including the names of their spouses, partners, and/or children. While instructor A does share anecdotal stories about his family, he does not share his wife, child, or any other family member's name. This is also the same instructor who enacts and tightens boundaries when students over-share personal information within the class.

All faculty interviewed perceived their content and pedagogy to be a manifestation of modeling and teaching interpersonal boundaries. Yet, each faculty participant seemed to embrace a unique level of comfort for self-disclosure. In addition to the content providing opportunities for boundary management, all faculty also believed that instructing the community college student was a distinct experience yielding exploration of boundaries.

Theme 4: Boundaries and the Community College Student. Community college is a unique higher education setting and provides opportunities for faculty to deepen their reflection of boundaries and relationships with students. Faculty discussed the uniqueness of the community college setting and student, and how these qualities intersect with boundaries. Most faculty interviewed had previous work experiences at four-year universities and contrasted the community college student to the more traditional and typical university student. They described the basic demographics of a community college student as one who is typically older than a traditional college student, has a job, may have a family, and lives off campus. Additionally, within one class, faculty may teach students of a very wide age range. Faculty E responds to this by noting a difference when communicating with students who are much older than him: "Some

of the dynamics are different because I'm talking to someone older than I am. It's a new experience … a first for me."

Faculty participants identified other unique characteristics of the community college student as economically and racially diverse, or students who have had harsh and challenging life experiences such as addictions, time spent in jail, or mental health issues. Faculty B and D referred to working with Veteran students, and related this population as having unique life experiences and unique needs. Five faculty (A, C, D, F, and G) shared about students who are marginalized in our culture and referred to the community college as a setting that actively addresses issues of social justice, as well as seeks to provide support and resources for students. Faculty A captured this idea by stating, "Most community colleges try to really celebrate diversity and inclusion and making sure … all are welcome. I try to foster [that] sense of community within the classroom."

This distinct group of community college students lends itself to opportunities for unique boundary negotiations. Faculty seemed to have a sense of the characteristics of this population, and they explained attempts to connect with, communicate with, and provide layers of support in order for students to be successful. For example, four faculty (B, D, E, and G) related they frequently communicate with students through texting, primarily as a means of urgent communication. Faculty D characterized both the student population and the way she uses texting as a communication tool. She related that students sometimes need to take two buses and travel for over an hour and a half to get to class. If these students are stuck in traffic or miss their bus on the same day they are supposed to be presenting a speech in class, she prefers they text (over email), so she will know they are late or won't be there to present an assignment. She said, "That's what it's primarily for is just to alert me on the day of something."

In addition to negotiating communication boundaries, faculty know there is a need to occasionally negotiate typical class/assignment expectations. To illustrate how faculty may perceive their boundary management in various and occasionally contradicting ways, the same faculty member (F) related the following statements regarding managing and negotiating class expectations: "Especially at community college you have to be firmer, because you get a lot more … shenanigans, and people trying to bend the rules and not do work." On the other hand, when asked if he accepts late assignments, he also related if a student was serious all term and had "proven herself" then he may be more "empathetic and overlook" a due date. So, on the one hand, he describes his course policies as firm; on the other hand, he is willing to provide some allowances and no grade penalties for students who have an established track record of attendance and assignment completion.

Six faculty (B, C, D, F, and G) highlighted the importance of having a flexible due date for assignments when there was a hindrance to completing the assignment that was out of the student's control. However, four of these faculty reiterated that the student would need to ask for the accommodation, and also related they have the final say as to whether or not an extension is granted. Faculty F identified this type of boundary (class expectations) as a boundary he most often has to enforce: "I think in terms of the boundary I have to enforce the most is expectations and deadlines. Otherwise, they don't pass. I do it for their own good. Once [they] aren't doing the work, they never catch up."

In general, faculty have a positive view of the uniqueness of the community college setting and student. They value their mentor role with students. Faculty C stated, "I think I have a really good relationship … I want to be a mentor. I don't want to be a friend, more like support, and be kind, and help them open up their horizons." She also articulated a sentiment shared by

many participants about the community college students: "I like our students…I see our students as students who are on their way up."

Summary

Community college faculty hold a wide range of perceptions regarding their boundaries with community college students. Even when given a definition and examples of potential interpersonal boundaries, instructors tended to link or lump multiple boundary types with interpersonal boundaries. Additionally, the processes by which community college faculty arrive at, negotiate, and/or change their boundaries over time is a highly personal process that is manifested through experience and reflection of those experiences. Faculty cited the unique content of their curriculum, their pedagogy, and the distinct setting where they teach as potential factors that influence their characterization of, awareness of, and changing of boundaries. Chapter 5 will further discuss the research questions and faculty answers to these questions. Furthermore, it will explore potential implications for this research and further research recommendations.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

This phenomenological, qualitative research study explored faculty perceptions of their interpersonal boundaries between themselves and community college students. After analyzing the data collected, four themes emerged related to: (a) Boundary Characterization, (b) Boundary Processes, (c) Boundaries and Instruction, and (d) Boundaries and the Community College students. These were described in chapter 4. As I reflected on the data, I arrived at four key understandings related to community college faculty boundaries with students. In a nutshell, this is what I learned:

- Faculty do not distinguish between boundaries of an interpersonal nature and other types of professional and personal boundaries.

- The processes by which community college faculty become aware of, establish, negotiate, and change boundaries between themselves and students is a personal process driven by external influences and a reflection of these experiences.

- The content faculty teach, and the ways they teach their content provide opportunities for faculty to teach and model interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students.

- Community college is unique higher education setting and provides opportunities for faculty to deepen their reflection of boundaries and relationships with students.

For me, the themes and understandings outlined above capture the nature and quality of faculty insights regarding their boundaries with community college students. Lindseth and Norberg (2004) encourage researchers to remain unbiased. Through critical reflection, revision, and deep awareness, they encourage the researcher to position themes within the context of culture, history, and the literature. When analyzing the data, it was important for me to consider

participants' experiences and awareness. And, it was valuable for me to pay attention to the interviewees' narrative and context from which they were speaking. Faculty clearly saw themselves in positions of an educator, having some power, and working with a population of higher education students that are oftentimes under-resourced and marginalized.

This chapter will answer and discuss the research questions, explore insights and surprises I had while conducting and analyzing this study, identify research implications and recommendations for further research, and propose applications for instructional practices. This research addressed two research questions, with one question having two sub-questions:

1. How do community college faculty characterize their interpersonal boundaries with students?

2. How do community college faculty describe the process in which they arrive at or change their interpersonal boundaries with students?

   a. How do community college faculty come to an awareness of their interpersonal boundaries with students?

   b. How and why do community college faculty change their interpersonal boundaries over time?

Research Question One: How do Community College Faculty Characterize their Interpersonal Boundaries with Students?

Faculty were asked a series of eight questions designed to explore their perceptions of boundaries between themselves and their students. They were given a research context, a definition of interpersonal boundaries, and examples of potential interpersonal boundaries (see Appendix A). All faculty provided a wide range of responses in answering a question to characterize interpersonal boundaries between themselves and community college students.

However, with prompting and occasional re-focusing, faculty also addressed their specific awareness of these boundaries. For example, all faculty addressed ways they communicate with students outside of class, use of personal cell phone, email, or face-to-face communication. Additionally, faculty addressed their ideas of allowing students to friend or follow them on social media. One faculty (G) was a former media professional; therefore, her social media was available to students as an example for her mass media course. One other instructor (A) accepted LinkedIn and an occasional Facebook request from students, but only after the course was completed. Four instructors (B, C, D, and E) acknowledged they did not accept social media requests from students. One instructor (F) provided a thoughtful accounting of a student who had created a Facebook group for his class (even naming the Facebook group after the instructor), and the process he worked through to decide not to join the group, even after several invitations. He indicated he could have "cleaned up" his account, but stated he was not technologically savvy enough to issue various privacy settings per group member/student. In addition, there were students in this class with whom he was uncomfortable having access to his private life, which included pictures of his children and his partner. Therefore, he said he continuously declined invitations.

In addition to social media requests, all faculty were open to meeting with students, either face-to-face on campus or even outside of office hours. Instructors cited the desire to be available to students when they needed extra assistance in understanding and completing course content and assignments. Additionally, three faculty (C, D, and G) believed that accepting gifts from students was appropriate, while the other four instructors did not disclose this information. However, what interested me was faculty awareness of their willingness to continue a relationship with a community college student beyond the bounds of the classroom.

Three of the seven faculty acknowledged at least one experience where they maintained an ongoing relationship with a student after the course had ended. Faculty E related when he first began to work at the community college, he had a student in his class who was approximately his age, and they both had similar interests. After the course had ended, they had coffee outside of the classroom and college context and have been "buddies" ever since. Another faculty (F) related he had a stellar student in one of his classes; when the course was finished, he asked this student if she babysat. She has now been his babysitter for four consecutive years. He stated she "was one of the best students I had at this community college." And Faculty G indicated when she was first teaching at the community college certain students piqued her interest; therefore, if these students had expressed a desire for an ongoing relationship beyond the course, she was willing to go for coffee, tea, or on a hike with them. She said, "Early on there were some students who I found super fascinating, and I just wanted to pick their brains … I just have a natural curiosity about everything and I like to ask a lot of questions."

When asked what factors were involved in deciding to pursue an ongoing relationship with students, faculty cited being close in age, interest similarities, and having the time to spend with someone outside of class. One faculty (F) summed it up this way: "I think that there is a commonality in values, worldviews, and life experience. You know who those people are from their speeches—from interacting with them after class."

Three of the faculty participants shared they had engaged in an enduring relationship with a student beyond the classroom. However, all three of these faculty identified this being a rare experience. Faculty F captured this best: "It's rare … how many students have I had in 18 years? Thousands and thousands." Yet, out of the thousands he had taught, he was only able to identify two students with whom he is still connected.

The other four faculty did not disclose lasting relationships or friendships with students. When asked about why they did not choose to pursue one, they pointed to the faculty-student power differential or an imagined boundary that governs this relationship. Faculty D stated, "I don't socialize with students … that's just not what I need, and they probably don't need that either." Faculty A captured his feelings about this decision:

> I lament that I won't ever socialize with them, even the ones who try to Facebook friend me or the ones I've seen in a normal context or on a neutral ground after class. Because of the history of … that student-teacher relationship, I felt I could never just hang out with them.

Research Question Two: How do Community College Faculty Describe the Process in which they Arrive at or Change their Interpersonal Boundaries with Students?

The first research sub-question of the second question was: How do community college faculty come to an awareness of their interpersonal boundaries with students? All faculty cited external forces when becoming aware of their boundaries. This includes knowing and following institutional rules, social mores (Faculty A), trial and error (Faculty D), experiences as a student teacher (Faculty E), and boundary violations (Faculty B). Faculty B stated, "I don't become aware of them [boundaries] unless they have been violated." So, student behavior plays a role in assisting faculty to become more aware of their own boundaries. Experience also contributed to faculty insights into their boundaries. Even this research and the interview itself provided an impetuous action for faculty to become familiar with their boundaries. As Faculty A said, "to be honest, even at the start of this meeting I'm not sure if I actually knew where my boundaries with students are or were."

The second sub-question of the second research question was: How and why do community college faculty change their interpersonal boundaries over time? When discussing the processes of responding to boundary violations, negotiating, and changing boundaries, faculty referred to not only an experience (or force outside of them), but also a more intuitive and reflective process to guide their decisions and respond to students. This idea of experience and reflection was echoed throughout all interviews. In fact, some faculty expressed doubts if their boundaries with students were correct, "right," or healthy (Faculty D and F). Many instructors also related stories of experience-reflection-awareness-adjustment-experience, as the following comments illustrate:

"I don't know if it's a boundary, but it's the type of thing that's evolved recently, or a shifting belief" (Faculty A).

"I think it started as a student teacher, when you start testing things. The student teaching was a good experience because I wasn't a professor. I wasn't a fellow student" (Faculty E).

"When I first then came back to start teaching, I was probably more 'I'm your friend,' probably a little too relaxed … to the point where maybe I didn't have very good control over the class, and so I learned pretty quickly that this is not helpful for me and this is not helpful for them" (Faculty D).

Instructor A cites insights arising from "a lot of personal experience."

"One point where I had to negotiate those boundaries was that whole Facebook thing. I actually put a lot of thought into it" (Faculty F).

To best capture this process, instructor G stated:

There are certain boundaries as far as like social media and meeting outside of class … I feel like I'm led by my intuition which has been getting stronger as I'm getting older. I

use that as my guide. And so sometimes I know that my intuition may be wrong and I might disclose … a little bit too much. And I'm like, 'Ah … Oh, that conversation. Maybe I shouldn't have said that.'

Discussion

Aultman et al. (2008) qualitatively explored boundaries between teachers and their elementary and secondary school students. Although the student population in Aultman et al.'s study is younger than the community college student, there are parallels between the research I conducted and this research. The authors studied teacher perceptions of the relationships between themselves and students attending schools in K-12 settings. In addition to studying relationship, they also researched faculty perceptions of boundary concerns between themselves and students. From their research, the authors created a typology of 11 different types of boundaries that occur between teachers and K-12 students. Additionally, when reviewing the literature, I re-discovered the construct of boundaries between faculty and students was connected to rapport (Schwartz, 2012; Frisby & Martin, 2010), communication (Docan-Morgan, 2011), and instructional practices (Edwards & Richards, 2002, Grantham et al., 2015).

My initial attempts to ask faculty to characterize their interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students were met with a very broad range of answers. This occurred even after I provided faculty with a definition and examples of interpersonal boundaries. If interpersonal boundaries between faculty and students are studied in tandem with either multiple types of boundaries or with other relational constructs, then it follows logic why faculty would have a harder time characterizing just one type of boundary they encounter with community college students. Faculty seem to think there is a natural intersection or coalescing of various types of

boundaries that contribute to their relationships with individual students, among classes, and between students.

I have wondered for what other reasons faculty may not have initially characterized interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students. Some other reasons may be: it is not an important topic for them, they have never thought about it before, or perhaps the leading boundary definition, examples, and context were too vague. However, I found instructors willing to volunteer and engage in this research. Given time to process and reflect, they were able to discuss experiences and processes for boundary awareness, negotiation, and change. Faculty were able to characterize some interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students. When I followed up with focused questions on boundary awareness and negotiation that leads to the development of lasting or enduring relationships, three of the seven faculty acknowledged this event. However, given the lack of volume and instances, it stands to reason these types of boundaries and processes would be difficult to characterize. In fact, faculty consistently began identifying boundaries to include work/life boundaries, course management boundaries, the boundaries around how they treat students, and student behavior expectations. These boundaries are on the forefront of faculty's minds because they negotiate and manage them on a daily basis.

I was surprised that after reviewing the definition of boundaries, faculty generally did not address their boundaries as a dynamic phenomenon that encourages growth and learning between themselves and their students. Relational-Cultural Theory (RCT) deepens our understanding of boundaries. Traditionally, boundaries rely on the idea that the "self always exists within a dangerous environment, a self that needs protection from, rather than good connection with, others" (Jordan & Hartling, 2002, p. 8). However, RCT encourages us to redefine boundaries as a space that fosters exchange and growth. Jordan and Hartling (2002) describe optimum learning

that occurs in connection to, rather than protection from, each other. This small shift in belief and perception has monumental implications in education. However, faculty in this study did not generally address boundaries as a space to meet, exchange, and connect with their students. Instead, faculty tended to characterize their boundaries in protective ways.

Another surprise I encountered was faculty's knowledge of and commitment to working with a unique type of student. In this case, it is the community college student. Four of the seven instructors had previously worked for a more traditional four-year university before working at the community college. Yet, all instructors discussed the community college student and setting as unique. Over and over, they tied a student's story into a story that illustrated their perceptions of boundaries and boundary processes. Faculty were specifically aware of the possibility of a community college student being under-resourced or marginalized in our current culture. They discussed ways they provide extra support for students or occasionally bend and shift the rules. And although a few faculty referred negatively to students when their behaviors violated an instructor's boundary, all faculty also expressed true joy in teaching this population. Faculty C captured the general sentiment for appreciation and desire to support community college students when she said, "I love that I get to learn about humanity as part of my job. I have a great gig here. I get to learn about others and they teach me things, too. And, I get to be a part of helping them process their experiences."

Another surprise I experienced was that all faculty reported feeling satisfied with their current boundaries between themselves and their community college students. Although I did not interview any faculty who were in their first three years of teaching, the participants with more experience provided perspective and identified how different, more firm, and more intentional their boundaries are now, in relationship to their first few years of teaching.

While all faculty expressed satisfaction with their boundaries, several of them (A, D, E, F, and G) mentioned, at some time during the interview, doubts about whether the boundaries they set are right or correct:

"A cell phone is a very personal thing, right? So I question whether I should be using it" (Faculty E).

 "Like I said, it's trial and error, and I think I've gotten pretty good, and I may be incorrect" (Faculty D).

[Regarding sharing personal information] "It's great to illustrate a theory, and it humanizes you. It's fun to share, but how much is too much? ... This is one thing I wonder about a lot. Because of my boundaries … am I scaring people away?" (Faculty F)

A final insight I can claim is that I am personally more acutely aware of how my own boundaries manifest themselves in relationship to the students I teach. I have taught as an adjunct instructor for 10+ years in Master's level counseling programs. For the first seven years of my teaching, I only thought about my own boundaries between myself and students when an experience forced me to express, clarify, or negotiate a boundary. It was not a conversation I had with colleagues; nor was it a professional development topic. As I have learned more about this construct, I have been able to more clearly articulate what and why I have specific boundaries. I am more thoughtful about the types of boundaries I enact with students. Additionally, I realize students have boundaries as well. I have learned to be more attuned to and inquisitive of students exploring their boundaries. I encourage open and direct dialog about boundaries which tend to, in turn, put a different frame around potential conflicts. I acknowledge boundaries as a dynamic process. It is not a static process. Instead, they tend to be an organic process that when given a voice, can contribute to growth and learning. Since immersing myself in this research, I have

been able to incorporate some intentional discussions with students to better understand how our dynamic boundaries are contributing to a safe and productive learning environment.

Research Implications and Recommendations for Further Research

As mentioned, the interviews in this study provided a rare opportunity for faculty to explore and talk about their boundaries with students. Most faculty expressed interest in this topic during our small talk before and after the interviews. Additionally, there was consistent interest in our workshop presentations on boundaries. Given the interest and the potential for boundaries between faculty and students to positively impact academic outcomes, the implications for this research are substantive. Faculty value and benefit from conversations about the dynamics of their relationships with students. Ultimately, students benefit as well.

Faculty expressed doubts about their boundary enactments. They wondered out loud if they were always doing the right thing. When given time to discuss their practice with other faculty, they seemed to gain greater clarity. In turn, I believe they will enact more purposeful and intentional boundaries that encourage growth and learning. I would also support more group discussions and professional development workshops around boundaries so that faculty could collectively arrive at essential baseline characterizations of interpersonal boundaries between themselves and students. And although I did not interview any new faculty, I would encourage community colleges to introduce the idea of boundaries and assist new faculty in developing a mutually informing and growth-oriented relationship with students.

Phenomenological research seeks to understand the essences of human experience and gives voice to perspective (Creswell, 2013). The construct of boundaries between community college faculty and students is a phenomenon. And while this research sought to give voice to a faculty perspective, it would be interesting to hear from a student perspective as well.

Additionally, community colleges tend to house career-technical programs where students attend classes as a cohort, and then earn a degree or certificate in a specific career such as nursing, dental hygiene, veterinarian technician, etc. Sometimes, these students ultimately end up working in the field alongside their part-time or adjunct instructors. An interesting extension of this study would be to interview faculty and students who work in and attend the same career-technical program, to hear their collective perspectives on boundaries.

Another direction for research may include a quantitative study that addresses the categorization and quantification of boundaries between faculty and students. While this may be a bit idealistic, I wonder if researchers could ultimately answer faculty questions about the "correctness" of their boundary enactments.

Finally, when thinking deeply about the processes by which faculty arrive at, negotiate, and change boundaries, I wondered if the construct and processes of interpersonal boundaries between faculty and students is an implicit or explicit one. The implicit process (awareness) seemed to become an explicit (negotiation and change) process when faculty described an experience that reinforced, tested, or violated a boundary, leading to insights of that experience, as well as boundary changes. Creswell (2013) identifies grounded theory as a research method that seeks to unify and explain concepts and to identify underlying processes related to the idea. I would recommend a grounded theory study to address a potential theoretical guide for boundary processes.

Applications

I can envision several applications for this research. First, this research was inspired by a one-hour teaching-and-learning workshop for faculty at a local community college. The workshop was titled *Boundaries: Strengthening Professional Boundaries to Support Student's*

Academic Success. Surprisingly, this workshop brought in more participants than the typical

Teaching and Learning Center workshop. As a result, my co-worker and I were asked to present

further iterations of this workshop at least two more times. Community college faculty are

generally interested in strengthening and building their teaching practice. However, there seems

to be little attention paid to the constructs of how one's boundaries can either constrict or support

students.

Hagenauer and Volet (2014) argue for more research related to the teacher-student

relationship in higher education. They cite high retention rates (that counteract human and

financial costs), faculty job satisfaction, and a universal emphasis on the scholarship of teaching

and learning as reasons for focusing on the important relationship between faculty and students.

Their findings suggest that degrees of closeness within this relationship are difficult to balance,

and because of the power differential ascribed to faculty within this relationship, they need to be

mindful of boundaries within the teacher-student relationship. I would encourage faculty to

continue conversations with their colleagues, and to raise awareness of the purpose and functions

of their boundaries. As faculty become more aware of the power of their relationship with

students, these connections would intend to support student learning at the highest degree

possible. Although this research addressed faculty in one discipline, I foresee the results

benefitting all community college faculty, regardless of the subject matter they teach.

This research will contribute to literature that could be applied across all disciplines since

the topic of my study is not content-specific. For example, the study could be relevant to

communications, psychology/counseling, education, higher education, teaching and learning, to

name a few. I may present my findings at professional conferences to include the above content

areas. Finally, I may continue to research the construct of interpersonal boundaries and assist

new higher education faculty with an intentional and well-informed process of navigating and managing boundaries with students.

Conclusion

For the faculty participants in this study, the event of discussing the topic of boundaries and wrestling with its more nuanced impacts was an important act, both during our workshops and during the interviews. I believe talking through the questions was a valuable process in helping faculty clarify and articulate their relational boundaries. When we discuss our boundaries and how they intersect with other valuable constructs, we increase our awareness and insights of our relationships. Illumined boundaries provide opportunities for increased clarity, and a space for meeting, learning, differentiation, and exchange (Jordan, 2012). For me, this has been a process of appreciation and growth. I am thankful for my own opportunity to research and learn more about boundaries between faculty and students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

George Fox University
Doctoral Dissertation Research

Introduction Letter, Context, and Definitions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Suzanne Schmidt and I am a doctoral candidate at George Fox University. For my dissertation research, I am interested in your experiences and perceptions about the interpersonal boundaries of community college faculty with their students. The research is a qualitative study exploring the phenomena of interpersonal boundaries between community college faculty and students.

Boundaries are defined as the basic ground rules for relationships (Barnett, 2008). Relational-Cultural Theory adds to the boundary definition by additionally defining a boundary as a "place of meeting, learning, differentiation and exchange" (Jordan, 2010, p. 14).

Examples of boundaries between faculty and students may include (but are not limited to): personal information you disclose to students, personal information you are willing to hear from students, giving students your phone number, communicating with students outside of class and outside of office hours, meeting a student for coffee or lunch, and communicating with students through social media such as Facebook or Linked In.

Often times, faculty have general boundaries, that manifest through general classroom guidelines. And they also have boundaries individually with students. When we discuss boundaries today, your responses may include exploring a variety of situations and experiences. I appreciate your willingness to openly explore your thoughts, ideas, experiences and perceptions of your own boundaries as an instructor with community college students.

I realize discussing boundaries is both a professional and personal process. Additionally, I realize the questions may evoke new awareness for you. Any answer you give is valued (even if the answer is "I don't know"). If at any time you need time to think through your answer, please feel free to take this time. Again, thank you for participating.

Appendix B

George Fox University
Doctoral Dissertation Research

Permission to Research Letter

August 14, 2017

Dear Anytown Community College,

I am currently completing a Doctorate in Educational Leadership at George Fox University. Between August 21 and September 22th I will be collecting data for completion of my dissertation at several community colleges. As an adjunct college instructor myself, I am interested in how faculty form, change, and negotiate their interpersonal boundaries with students. With your approval, I respectfully request to conduct five to seven individual interviews and one small focus group of three to five faculty.

The information gathered from this study will be used to complete my dissertation and will only be shared with the chair of my research and my committee at George Fox University. Any data and information collected in regards to faculty will be kept strictly confidential and names will not be used. Data will include recordings of individual interviews, a focus group, and professional observations of the process. Additionally, I will make audio recordings of the interviews and focus group conversations between myself and faculty. Faculty will be informed through an informational letter and will sign a permission slip noting their voluntary participation.

I would be honored to have the opportunity to interview your community college faculty and contribute to the research base regarding community college faculty practice. Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns regarding my project. I can be reached at sschmidt11@georgefox.edu. You may also contact my dissertation chair, Dr. Ginny Birky, at gbirky@georgefox.edu. I appreciate your feedback and thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Schmidt

_____
Signature/Title of Community College Personnel Granting Permission   Date

_____
Signature of Researcher   Date

Appendix C

George Fox University
Doctoral Dissertation Research

Informed Consent Statement

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Suzanne Schmidt, a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership program at George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon. This study will consist of individual 1:1 interviews and a focus group with community college instructors. The questions will center around interpersonal boundaries between community college faculty and students. All names and personal information will be kept confidential and no names will be used in the final report.

If you are willing to participate, please read and sign your consent below.

For this study, I agree to engage in a one-hour, interview scheduled at my convenience. I understand the interview will be voice-recorded by a smartpen and voice-to-text dictated by google speak. With this tool, my recorded words will be transcribed for the researcher during the interview. I will have the opportunity to review dictation for accuracy. In addition, I will have access to the final summary of this study.

I understand that the researcher will attempt to protect confidentiality via the following strategies:

1. Offering me the opportunity to review and correct dictation of my interview
2. Removing my name and other identifying information from the transcripts and final report
3. Keeping all notes and digital content secured in a locked space for five years.
4. Destroying the electronic recordings and transcripts upon completion of the study

There is no financial remuneration for participating in this study, however I will receive a nominal gift card from the researcher as a thank you gift.

I understand my participation is voluntary and I may discontinue participation at any time. I have the right to express my concerns to the University Committee on Research Involving Human Participants at George Fox University. I understand if I have any additional questions regarding my rights as a research participant, I may contact the investigator, Suzanne Schmidt, at sschmidt11@georgefox.edu, or her dissertation advisor, Dr. Ginny Birky, at gbirky@georgefox.edu

I understand the use of this research and agree to participate.

_____
(Name of participant – please print)

_____
(Signature of participant)

_____
(Date)

Appendix D

George Fox University
Doctoral Dissertation Research

Interview Questions

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is Suzanne Schmidt and I am a doctoral candidate at George Fox University. For my dissertation research, I am interested in your experiences and perceptions about the interpersonal boundaries of community college faculty with their students.

Boundaries are defined as the basic ground rules for relationships (Barnett, 2008). Relational-Cultural Theory adds to the boundary definition by additionally defining a boundary as a "place of meeting, learning, differentiation and exchange" (Jordan, 2010, p. 14). Examples of boundaries with students may include (but are not limited to): personal information you disclose to students, giving students your phone number, communicating with students outside of class and outside of office hours, meeting a student for coffee or lunch, and communicating with students through social media such as Facebook or Linked In.

Interview and Focus Group Questions:

1. Characterize or describe your boundaries with students. (Tell me about your boundaries.)

2. Can you give me an example of one of your boundaries that you use most often?

3. Are your boundaries similar with all students? Or are they different? If different, how are they different and why?

4. How do you enforce your boundaries with students? Can you give me an example?

5. How did you come to an awareness of where your boundaries lie with students?

6. Have your boundaries changed over time? If so, how have they changed? Tell me what you can about the process of change over time.

7. Why do you think your boundaries have stayed the same over time/changed over time?

8. Are you satisfied with the boundaries you currently have? Why or why not? If not, what would you like to change?

Appendix E

IRB Approval from George Fox University

For Committee Use Only

GEORGE FOX UNIERSITY
HSRC INITIAL REVIEW QUSTIONNAIRE

Title: Community College Faculty: Exploring the process by which they determine and manage interpersonal boundaries with students

Principal Researcher(s): Suzanne M. Schmidt, MS

Date Application Completed: September 5, 2017
(The researcher needs to complete the above information on this page)

COMMITTEE FINDING:

XX 1) The proposed research makes adequate provision for safeguarding the health and dignity of the subjects and is therefore approved.

_____ (2) Due to the assessment of risk being questionable or being subject to change, the research must be periodically reviewed by the HSRC on a basis throughout the course of the research or until otherwise notified. This requires resubmission of this form, with updated information, for each periodic review.

_____ (3) The proposed research evidences some unnecessary risk to participants and therefore must be revised to remedy the following specific area(s) on non-compliance:

_____

_____

_____

_____
(4) The proposed research contains serious and potentially damaging risks to subjects and is therefore not approved. _____

Winston Seegobin.
Chair or designated member

09/05/17
Date