The Private University Faculty Perspective Of Community College Transfer Students: An Ethnographic Interview Study

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THE PRIVATE UNIVERSITY FACULTY PERSPECTIVE OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE TRANSFER STUDENTS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC INTERVIEW STUDY

by

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DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate this dissertation to my family. To my children, I hope this will inspire you to develop a love of learning and to become intellectually curious throughout your lives. To my husband, Jeff, thank you. Thank you for all the long days, late nights, support and love you have given me. This would not have been possible without all you have done for me and our family.

With sincerest gratitude for all they have given me, I dedicate this work to my parents. Throughout my life you have modeled and taught me to work hard and set high goals. Your support, lifelong accomplishments and unconditional love continue to inspire me. Finally, I am forever grateful for my in-laws, Wayne and Susan. I do not deserve the encouragement and support you have given me; thank you for being such a blessing in my life.
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I cannot express enough appreciation for my dissertation chair and mentor, Dr. Douglas Smith. Thank you for your support and for providing me opportunities I did not think were possible, from co-authoring with me, to showing me career and research possibilities I believed were out of reach. You have remained invested in my success throughout my PhD, for which I am immensely grateful. I also wish to acknowledge the rest of my committee, Drs. Tran, Platt, and Ohrt. You have each pushed me to produce my best work from my comprehensive exams, proposal, and defense, thank you. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the faculty, staff and administration at Queens University of Charlotte. Many of my colleagues at Queens have not only helped me complete this project, but supported me and made it possible for me to earn my degree.
ABSTRACT

Faculty/student relationships have a significant impact on student retention and success (Tinto, 1975, 1993). However, little is known about how faculty perceive community college transfer students and how they make meaning of their interactions with these students. This qualitative, descriptive, ethnographic interview study describes faculty/student interaction and the ways in which community college transfer students are perceived by the faculty at one small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university. The research questions used for this study were designed to investigate the faculty’s perception of community college students, the students’ academic experiences and the faculty/student relationship.

The researcher gathered data during 12 in-depth interviews. The site was selected because of the limited research available on community college transfer students at small private colleges. An ethnographic design captured the distinct cultural influences of the study site and helped to answer to the study’s overarching research question: how do faculty perceive community college transfer students and the institution from which the student transferred? The findings from this study can guide meaningful conversations on private, four-year campuses directed toward improving how faculty/student relationships, systematic transfer processes, transfer programs and campus culture influence community college transfer student success.

A thematic analysis of the interview data revealed four themes. The first, Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-Way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance, describes
how both community college transfer students, and the faculty that teach them, are
hesitant and reluctant to work with one another. The second, A Balancing Act: Aligning
Faculty and Student Expectations, relates to the fact that what a faculty member expects
of a student, and what students perceive to be expected of them, should align for the
student to be successful. The third, A Second Class Institution: The Community College
as a Stepping Stone describes how faculty perceive attending a community college as a
stepping stone towards more prestigious goal of attending a four year institution. Finally,
the fourth theme, Isolation: A Community College Transfer Experience, details the ways
community college transfer students are perceived as intentionally, and unintentionally,
given a separate university experience, and the ways in which this Isolation
disadvantages these students. These findings are significant for both universities similar
to the study site and for those that wish to understand the community college transfer
student experience across institutional types.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AACC ............................................................. American Association of Community Colleges

AAUP .............................................................. American Association of University Professors

FTE ............................................................................ Full-Time Equivalent

IPEDS ................................................................. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System

IRB ............................................................................ Institutional Review Board

NCES ................................................................. National Center for Education Statistics

SACS ................................................................. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools

SES ................................................................. Socioeconomic Status
DEFINITION OF TERMS

Articulation Agreement – Articulation is defined by as, “the coordination of lines of work. This is accomplished by means of the interactional processes of working out and carrying through of work-related arrangements. Articulation varies in degree and duration depending upon the degree to which arrangements are in place and operative.” (Stauss, 1993, p. 87). In this work I adopt the meaning of an articulation agreement to be the coordination between a four-year institution and a two year institution with the goal of creating a pathway for student from a two year institution to a four-year institution. This often means having a set degree pathway between the two schools.

Emic Approach –"Emic is used to refer to first-order concepts—the local language, concepts, or ways of expression used by members in a particular group or setting to name their experience." (Schwandt, 2007, p. 81). Counter to an etic or theory directed approach, an emic perspective allows the researcher to approach the data and analysis openly without the intentions of testing/applying a particular hypothesis or theory.

Hayworth Student – The study site defines a student to be considered a Hayworth if student he/she must be over the age of 23 years. “Nontraditional age prospective students (age 23 or older) are served by the Hayworth School Program” (Catalog 2015, p. 29). These students also pay a reduced tuition rate which also reduces the number of programs and opportunities available to these students.
Native Student – Native students are, “students who entered four-year institutions as freshmen” (Glass & Harrington, 2002, p. 416). In congruence with Glass & Harrington’s definition, this term is used to describe students whose full post-secondary academic career exists within a single institution.

Post/Nontraditional Student – A nontraditional student can be defined as over the age of 25, not living on campus and enrolled part-time (Bean & Metzner, 1985). Often students over a certain age and enrolling full-time are still viewed as nontraditional; however, in general one or more of these variables can be used to distinguish the term from a traditional student – age being the most prominent. The site selected for this study uses age, 23 years or older, as the determining variable. When discussing the study site’s students this term is synonymous with “Hayworth Student.”

Sticker Price – A university’s sticker price is its “gross tuition” (Winston, 1999, p. 14), meaning the total published cost of one year of annual tuition for a single student. This amount does not accurately capture the amount an individual student might pay for a year of tuition out of pocket because it does not account for any financial aid, grants, scholarships, tuition discount or other kinds of subsidy the student might receive.

Traditional Student – There are three variables that distinguish whether or not a student in higher education is viewed as traditional or nontraditional: age, residency, and enrollment status (Bean & Metzner, 1985). For this study, a student is deemed traditional if he/she begins higher education for the first time under the age or 23 years. These students pay a comprehensive tuition rate that allows them access to services and programs not available to post/non-traditional students.
Transfer Student – “Traditional studies of transfer typically define transfer students based on the number of credit hours earned at the first institution attended” (Whitfield, 2005, p. 534). Therefore, for the purposes of this study, transfer students are defined by transferring three or more credits from the first institution they attended. Within this study, students described as transfer students can be either post/non-traditional or traditional students.
CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

A student’s relationship with a faculty member can be life changing. According to Tinto (1975, 1993), student interaction with faculty and staff is part of one of the two systems used to predict student attrition. A faculty member’s perceptions of a group of college students can influence his/her interactions with them. Because of what is known about the importance of student/faculty relationships, it is critical that the faculty lens and perception of students be valued and explored. The following single site, ethnographic interview study provides a window to the faculty perspective on community college student transfer students at a small, private, nonprofit university. The carefully crafted research questions investigate how faculty make meaning of their relationships with community college students, as well as their relationship with the community college sector of higher education in general.

The community college sector makes up more than 41% of students in higher education today; 57% of students attending a public institution are attending two year schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2014). Due to the sector’s size and low cost, state and federal government officials, as well as students, are looking to the two year sector as a catalyst to baccalaureate attainment.

Obama’s recent completion agenda and the call to invest in community colleges is one of many indications that the community college pathway to a four year degree is
not only important, but there is a growing interest in research and financial investment around this sector of higher education. This interest comes from the understanding that community colleges will continue to increase access to higher education and degree attainment for a growingly diverse student population.

Due to the low cost of a community college enrollment as a gateway to baccalaureate degree, the post transfer student has been well researched, particularly from the student perspective at a four-year public university (Chrystal, Gansemer-Topf, & Laanan, 2013; Owens, 2010; Wilson, 2014; Ellis, 2013; Schmitigal, 2010; Gerhardt and Ackerman 2014; Rios, 2010). However, the literature from the faculty perspective of the community college transfer student’s experience is thin. Further explained in Chapter Two, only one study was found that gives a glimpse of the faculty perception, and it takes place at a public institution. This study illustrates a glaring need for future research, particularly within other institutional contexts (Castellino, 2014).

Not only is the faculty perspective absent from the literature but new research has presented a need for greater attention on faculty/student relationships, particularly for community college students (Townsend and Wilson, 2009; D’Amico, Dike, Elling, Algozine, & Ginn, 2014). Recent scholarly publications have illustrated dysfunction within the faculty/student relationship (Rosenthal, et.al, 2000; Cotten & Wilson, 2006) and community college transfer students having difficulty building relationships with faculty (Townsend & Wilson, 2009). To better understand the interactions between faculty and community college student transfers, the researcher interviewed 12 faculty for this study. The faculty interview data provided results that illustrated institutionalized challenges community college transfer students face, as well as a description of how
developing relationships with those students is difficult for both the students and the faculty.

**Statement of the Problem**

The literature on community college transfer students is deep and wide and is discussed in Chapter Two; however, almost exclusively, researchers focus on students at public institutions. The private sector of four-year institutions is nearly completely absent from the literature related to community college transfer students, particularly those considering the faculty/student relationship. This lack of exploration made selection of a small, private institution an obvious choice. The absence of literature on private universities on the topic is fully developed in Chapter Two.

Interest in the United States on community colleges as a pathway to a baccalaureate degree is growing. Therefore, it is fair to expect, in years to come, that an increased number of students could be choosing community colleges as a transfer pathway. This means research on the community college transfer experience is also of growing importance. As detailed in Chapter Two, students currently using the community college path into a four-year institution are reporting problems in developing relationships with their faculty at four-year institutions and once they transfer, they are not achieving at the same rate as their native student counterparts (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015; Castellino, 2014). These obvious problems inform this study and help illustrate the significance of the study’s findings.

Recently, researchers have deeply explored the community college transfer student experience at both private and public four-year institutions. Among other things, the researchers found there was a greater importance of academics vs. social integrations
for community college transfer students. Using Tinto’s student attrition theory (1975; 1993), researchers have shown a deeper focus is warranted on the academic system vs. the social system for community college transfer students (Townsend & Wilson, 2009; D’Amico, Dike, Elling, Algozzine, and Ginn, 2014). This focus on academics then places a greater emphasis on the faculty/student relationship; which, according to Tinto (1975, 1993), is key for student success, particularly within the academic system.

Just recently, Jenkins and Fink (2016) suggested community college transfer students are not as successful upon transfer to private nonprofit institutions as they are upon transfer to public universities. According to the researchers, “the average bachelor’s completion rates were more than 10 percentage points higher for students who transferred to public four-year institutions than for those who transferred to private nonprofit four-year institutions” (Jenkins et. al. 2016, p. 38). Although this study is not designed to investigate that phenomenon specifically, this new research highlights a problem for community college transfers attending private universities and calls for more research within the private sector in general (Jenkins et. al, 2016).

The community college transfer student perception of their relationship with faculty was researched by Townsend and Wilson in 2009. What the researchers found illustrates a problem for community college transfer students and faculty. Community college transfers at the various institutions studied found it difficult to build meaningful relationships with their faculty (Townsend & Wilson, 2009). Their findings warrant further research into how this might be occurring within different institutional contexts.

There is a limited amount of research from the faculty perspective on community college transfer students; however, what does exist was conducted exclusively at a
midsize public institution and calls for more research (Castellino, 2014). In a mixed methods study, Castellino (2014) interviewed faculty and found that they often expected community college transfer students to underperform their native counterparts. Using institutional data, Castellino (2014) found that the community college transfer students were underperforming when compared to the native students. Castellino (2014) asserts that there is a connection between the faculty perception and the students’ underperformance. Castellino (2014) called for further study to better understand the faculty perception of community college transfer students in other institutional contexts.

Castellino’s (2014) study used a structured interview protocol, which focused very specifically on the differences between disciplines at a public institution. Castellino (2014) found a possible connection to faculty perception and student achievement, as well as the discrepancies between the faculty perceptions and the quantitative data, further explained in Chapter Two. Castellino (2014) calls for a deeper understanding of the faculty perception, particularly using other kinds of qualitative design and in other institutional contexts, as well as the faculty perception. If more qualitative research was provided from the faculty perspective, “faculty could begin to unpack and better understand them [faculty perceptions of community college transfer students] and how these perceptions influence their work” (Castellino, 2014, p. 140).

**Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to examine how faculty describe their interactions with community college transfer students at a small, private university. The researcher sought to understand how these students were perceived by the faculty; specifically, the faculty’s perception of the students’ academic preparedness and success, the faculty’s interactions with these students, and the faculty’s perception of the community college.
In an effort to develop the appropriate protocol and rigorous qualitative inquiry, an ethnographic interview study design was conducted, conceptually informed by Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1975, 1993).

This study contributes to a body of scholarship on a topic previously unexplored, as well as informs four-year campuses about how faculty perceive community college transfer students at one, small private university. The results of this study are important for four-year campuses, particularly private campuses, because it can help faculty and administrators have informed conversations about community college students and how these students might be perceived by the faculty. Not only does this study have greater significance for a larger audience, but I also plan to take the results of my study back to the study site to inform meaningful conversations with the campus on faculty/student interaction and institutionalized Isolation of community college transfer students.

**Research Questions**

1. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe their interactions and experiences with community college transfer students?

2. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States perceive community college transfer students’ academic preparedness?

3. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe the community college transfer students’ overall academic success?
4. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the southeastern United States describe the institutions from which community college transfer students transferred?

**Background and Significance**

Baccalaureate attainment is a pressing issue, not only for students and families, but for employers, politicians, higher education faculty/staff, and even the average American. The most cost efficient means to baccalaureate attainment is successfully transferring community college students to four-year institutions, both public and private. Private, nonprofit, institutions are able to provide services such as individual attention and small class size that might make this sector of increased interest for these transfers (Rios, 2010). The literature indicates that attention to the community college sector, particularly considering the proven benefits, is warranted. However, an understanding of the faculty perceptions within this sector is missing and could provide meaningful insights, helping transfer receiving institutions best serve this growing population of students.

There are clear challenges for students seeking this pathway, such as transfer shock or difficulties with integration to the four-year university, as further explained in Chapter Two. One of the clear and well researched ways for students to overcome these challenges is by building positive relationships with faculty. However, currently the faculty perception of these relationships is absent from the literature. The findings from this study enable transfer receiving campuses to better understand faculty/student relationships and can help them to unpack why community college transfer students might find it difficult to build relationships with their faculty (Townsend & Wilson, 2009).
This study not only provides practical implications for practitioners, but it also provides scholarly significance. The findings of this study shed light on how faculty make meaning of relationships with community college students and their perceptions of these students. This topic provides scholarly implications for future research as well as previously unexplored knowledge from within a private university context. Researching the faculty perspective helps shape what is known about faculty relationships with community college transfer students, as well as helping to create a deeper understanding of how faculty develop meaning from their interactions with community college transfer students. My research contributes to the scholarly community though describing the private, four-year college faculty perspective, a previously unidentified lens. Practitioners benefit from my research at private, four-year institutions because they are able to use these findings to inform meaningful conversations about faculty relationships with community college transfers at their institutions.

**Methodology**

Because of the types of research questions employed in this study, the most appropriate method of inquiry is qualitative research. A qualitative design allows for a deep investigation into how meaning and interpretations are developed by participants, which specifically addresses the research questions. According to Rolston (2010), the purpose of ethnographic interview design is “to explore the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language” (p. 19). Therefore, I used an ethnographic interview study design to investigate and describe the faculty member’s perceptions, assumptions, and experiences with community college transfer students, as well as the institutions these students previously attended.
This study explored the faculty’s perspective and interpretation of interactions they had with community college transfer students. The participants were at the center of the study’s overarching research question: how do faculty perceive community college transfer students at a small, private university? A constructivist theoretical framework informed a method that allowed for the co-construction of knowledge between both myself, as the researcher and my participants. An ethnographic interview design was the most appropriate because of the study’s deep focus on a single population: full-time faculty at a small, private, masters-level university. According to Seidman (2006), “at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience” (p. 9). The study’s ethnographic focus presents a lens that allowed for individual and cultural interpretations as well as allowing me to provide rich description of lived experience.

I selected a hermeneutic lens which adopts interpretation and a value on lived experiences, because of the level of meaning I wanted my participants to develop. (Roulston, 2010). I considered other types of methodological approaches, such as case study; however, the most appropriate method to explore the faculty perception is through in-depth interviews. In a case study the researcher often seeks triangulation between three different kinds of units of analysis. I also considered student interviews and document analysis, but those methods would not help me understand the topic of inquiry: how faculty perceive community college transfer students. Chapter Two details the student perspective at both private and public colleges, the depth at which the student perspective is provided supports a focus on the faculty perception prior to considering other forms of data.
A pilot study was conducted in November 2015. The findings generated from the pilot study have informed the methodological design and protocol used for the larger study. A full discussion of how the findings of the pilot study informed the current study are also discussed in Chapter Three. Overall, the experience and knowledge gained through the pilot interviews helped shape the coding process and interview protocol. For example, through coding the pilot interviews it was discovered there were differences in how faculty used the term “academic preparedness;” therefore, the interview protocol was altered to ask faculty how they define academic preparedness prior to asking the original questions on the topic.

During the full study, conducted in the summer of 2016, a total of 12 faculty were interviewed. Faculty with experience teaching and/or advising community college transfer students was important; therefore, both criterion and snowball sampling were utilized, explained further in Chapter Three. Noy (2008), asserted that when using a hermeneutic research lens, snowball sampling “can generate a unique type of social knowledge—knowledge which is emergent, political and interactional.” (p. 327).

A private institution was selected because of the healthy amount of recent research on public institutions and community college transfer student experiences (Chrystal, G anesthesia-Topf, & Laanan, 2013; D’Amico et. al., 2014; Fee, Prolman, & Thomas, 2009; Gerhardt & Ackerman, 2014; Wilson 2014; Owens, 2010;) and what little is known about faculty/student interaction and community college transfer students has taken place at public institutions (Castellino, 2014; Rios, 2010).

The specific university site selected for the study was chosen using Patton’s (2015) description of purposeful sampling as well as a convenience sample. Patton
(2015) described purposeful sampling as a method that helps the researcher identify cases that are saturated with information that applies to the research questions. Using this method, Queens University of Charlotte was selected because it is both a private university, and it has a high number of community college transfers. According to an informant at the university’s office of institutional research, over 40% of the student body is transfer students, and over half of the transfers are from community colleges. As explained later in the positionality statement section of Chapter Three, I am employed as a faculty member and administrator at Queens University; therefore, in addition to purposeful sampling, Queens was also selected for convenience. As someone whom works at the university I had a great deal of access to the site and my participants.

I sought to interpret faculty interviews using coding analysis; specifically, the analytic process was thematic. Rolston (2010) spoke specifically about thematic representation of data through the use of an interview study design. She describes “findings that would fit this model [thematic representation] might include ‘participants’ perspectives’ concerning ‘benefits’ or ‘limitations’ of some phenomenon of study” (p.154). This type of analysis was appropriate for my study because I investigated participant perspectives. Thematic analysis also lends itself to finding themes and saturation within the participants’ comments, and reduces as much as possible the researcher’s agenda (Roulson, 2010). Because I employed a thematic analysis, I developed categories, which are presented as a level of interpretation, within interviews and gathered themes across the interviews (Glesne, 2011; Saldaña, 2013). I used analytic memos throughout the study to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of my data
A full representation of how both validity and trustworthiness (reliability) was achieved is explained in Chapter Three.

Using twelve, 60-90 minute faculty interviews, many rounds of coding, analytic memos and member checking as the primary means of data collection and analysis, four main themes emerged from the data. The first theme, Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-Way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance, describes how both community college transfer students, and the faculty that teach them, are both hesitant and reluctant to work with one another. The second theme, A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations, describes how the faculty perceive misalignment between the faculty and the students’ academic expectations and how both the faculty and students try to find balance to achieve student success. The third theme, A Second Class Institution: The Community College as a Stepping Stone, provides rich description of how faculty perceived attending a community college as a stepping stone towards achieving the higher and more prestigious goal of attending Queens University of Charlotte. Finally, the fourth theme, Isolation: A Community College Transfer Experience - this theme is a description of the ways in which community college transfer students are perceived as intentionally and unintentionally given an experience separate from other students at Queens University and how being isolated disadvantages these students. These findings describe not only how faculty perceive the faculty-student relationship, but also their perceptions of community college transfer students and the institutions from which these students transferred.

Conclusion

The body of literature on community college transfer students in growing, but what remains absent is the faculty perspective of community college transfer students at a
private university. These findings are important for both a scholarly audience and practitioners. Researching the faculty perspective using an ethnographic interview study design helps shape what we know about faculty relationships with community college transfer students and provides a deeper understanding of how faculty create meaning from their interactions with community college transfers.

Practitioners at private four-year institutions can use these findings to inform meaningful conversations about faculty relationships with community college transfer students at their institutions. These initiatives should be directed toward improving the faculty-student relationship, systematic transfer processes, transfer programs and campus culture, all which can influence community college transfer student success. A full list of recommendations for practice and research using these findings are presented in Chapter Five. Specifically, student attrition/success (Tinto, 1975, 1993) can be impacted due to enabling campuses to strengthen the faculty-student relationship. The student success gains of the faculty-student relationship, along with the study’s conceptual framework, are more fully described in Chapter Two.

In Chapter One I was able to articulate the overall problem that exists for community college transfer students, as well as the purpose of my study: to describe how faculty perceive community college transfers at a small, private, nonprofit university. I also provided the carefully crafted research questions designed to address the problem, as well as the knowledge the study’s findings provide both scholars and practitioners. Finally, a broad explanation of the methodological approach, an ethnographic interview study design, was provided. The synopsis and research questions presented in this introductory chapter provides a focus to the literature review presented in Chapter Two.
Once the existing knowledge on the topic of inquiry is described through the literature review, Chapter Three will present a deep discussion into my methodological design, design choice, positionality and epistemic identity, as well as how validity and trustworthiness (reliability) will be asserted and how the pilot study informed the full study’s protocol. Chapters Four and Five will then present the study’s findings, and implications.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter One the purpose of this study was outlined as seeking to understand the faculty member’s perception of the community college student at a small, private, nonprofit university. The following chapter is a detailed account of the research that has been conducted on community college students and the student/faculty relationship, with an underpinned focus on the gaps and spaces within the literature I address though my study’s research questions.

Specifically, there has been increased attention not only from scholarly works, but from policy makers and media on community college students and the community college as a gateway to obtaining a baccalaureate degree. The literature presented in this chapter represents over 60 reports, scholarly works, and other sources. The works presented will cover the following topic areas as they pertain to my research questions: 1) overall profile of the community college student, 2) the overall profile of the community college and private college faculty member, 3) a discussion of the pathways from a community college to a four year institution, 4) the significance of the community college pathway to baccalaureate attainment, 5) an overview of community college transfer programs and practices, 6) the student perspective of the community college transfer experience, 7) what little is known about the faculty perspective of the community college student, 8) the influence of faculty perceptions on student/faculty relationships, and finally, 9) the theoretical framework supporting the significance of the faculty/
student relationship as well as the predictors of academic success specifically for community college transfer students. Each of these topics are presented with an underpinned focus on the gaps and spaces for continued research.

The Community College Student Profile

The following section will present from the literature the overall profile of the community college student, as well as the community college student transfer; although, there is considerably less information on the latter. Using both scholarly works, reports and government information, the student profile can be developed. The ways in which this profile differs from the four-year student will also be discussed.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) publishes reports annually on the profile of the undergraduate student and how undergraduates are comprised across the United States. In addition to the student overall, this organization previously produced reports on community college student outcomes. However, the NCES stopped reporting on community college student outcomes in 2011; therefore, the most recent data available comes from the NCES’ 2011 comprehensive report. This further illustrates the need for greater data and tracking for community college transfer students. Data from the 2011 report is presented here and illustrates the girth of the community college sector of higher education; over 41% of the students in higher education are attending two year schools, and 57% of students attending a public institution are attending two year schools (NCES, 2011).

The number of underrepresented groups attending community colleges is significant: 46% of Black and Hispanic students in college attend two year schools, compared to 41% of students that attend two year schools on average (NCES, 2011). The same report found that low-income students are more likely to attend community colleges
(NCES, 2011). Of those attending community colleges, 44% are low socioeconomic status (SES, household income less than $25,000), whereas only 15% of high SES choose a community college (NCES, 2011). Similar to the NCES findings on underrepresented groups, a report by Phillippe (2015) found using Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data that only 50% of all community college students are white, 21% are Hispanic, 14% are black, and 15% are other ethnicities (Phillippe, 2015, p.1). Quick, Lehmann, and Deniston (2003) also found that there are more students with disabilities at community colleges than four-year institutions.

More recent data than the NCES 2011 report illustrates an increase in the number of community college students. Phillippe (2015) reported community colleges are comprised of 46% of all United States undergraduates, 41% of first-time freshman, 53% of first-generation students, 56% of single parents, 48% of veterans, and 51% of students with disabilities (Phillippe, 2015). Since the 2011 NCES reported only 41% of students were attending community colleges, the AACC 2015 data by Phillippe indicated an increase to 46% is significant. One of the most staggering statistics about community college students illustrated in the AACC’s (2015) report by Phillippe, is the number of single parents attending community colleges; 56% of single parents in college are at community colleges. These students are also more likely be older than those that attend four-year institutions. According to the NCES (2011) 59% of students attending public community colleges are over the age of 23 years.

A policy brief published in October, 2011, by the AACC detailed the trends in degree attainment from community college students. This brief indicates that, overall, students are obtaining more degrees, particularly non-white students. However, the brief
also clearly depicts the problems with capturing data on transfer students (AACC, 2011). Figure 2.1 was created using Mullin’s model (2011) and illustrates the different kinds of institutions that would need to communicate to capture accurate transfer data.

Figure 2.1
*The Pathways Needed to Track Student Transfer*

There is existing data, but it is complex and self-reported, leaving it deeply flawed. The policy brief provides an example where IPEDS and NCES measure the same variable (the numbers of students that begin community college and later transfer to a four-year college), but report very different findings (AACC, 2011). During the same year, 2003, IPEDS captured and later reported only 15.7% of community college students
transferring to four-year schools, whereas NCES reported almost double that with 29.9%. This further illustrates the problem with the available data on transfer students.

According to recent studies, community college students are motivated to obtain a baccalaureate degree. Marling and Handel (2013) found that over half of community college students begin attending because they intend to earn a baccalaureate degree and that more community college students are enrolling full-time than ever before in an attempt to move toward transferring and obtaining a baccalaureate degree.

Part of the problem is that once they do transfer they are not always as successful as their native counterparts. Using national longitudinal transcript data and propensity-score methods, Monaghan and Attewell (2015) studied community college students transferring to a four-year institution and how they compared to the traditional freshman student at the four-year college. The community college transfer six-year graduate rate was 25% compared to the traditional student rate of 46%. However, using demographic background, high school preparation, and other metrics proven to influence graduation rates, they predicted that students starting at a community college are 17% less likely to graduate just based on these predictive statistics, independent of where they started their academic careers. Considering this metric and the fact that the burden of transfer often extends the graduation rate anyway, the disparity in graduation rates between community college transfers and traditional students is far smaller than prior research suggested. This study also was limited by looking at only the six-year graduation rates. Considering community college students often take longer to graduate, it does not tell us how many actually graduate.
To complete the profile of the community college student, a view from the media can be helpful. The community college and its students are portrayed in many ways though media. Researchers Bourke, Major, and Harris (2009) sought to capture these portrayals in the following kinds of media: television, movies, novels, and short stories. After reviewing hundreds of works, the researchers found themes. The community college student is depicted as having a full-time job while in school, as well as coming from diverse backgrounds and are often low SES. The picture of a community college is one of a stepping stone, a catalyst to a better life. Overall, the students are shown as hardworking and motivated. In this case, “fiction does reflect fact” (Bourke et. al, 2009, p. 67).

One of the under-researched areas of community college transfer students is the for-profit sector. However, there is one recent study that used data from the largest community college system in the U.S. Ommeren (2001) characterized students from community colleges that chose to transfer to for-profit four-year institutions over public universities. Using regression analysis on system-wide data, Ommeren found that “transfer students who are African American, female, and over the age of 25 are the most likely to enroll at for-profit institutions” (2001, p. 1). This study developed two predictors for attending a for-profit private vs. public: the use of financial aid while at community college, and academic background. The stronger the GPA and the less financial aid was used, the more likely the student is to attend a public college.

The literature on the community college transfer student profile at a small private university is not easily found, if it exists at all. This absence of research could be attributed to many things, one of which being the private college as an unexpected route
for many students. Unfortunately, due to the difficulties in tracking students between sectors in higher education, as indicated by Mullin (2011), we do not have a profile of what these students might look like. There are general data on the overall transfer, but those traveling between sectors is more difficult to characterize.

The community college transfer is difficult to capture using available data, but what is known is the general community college student is diverse, motivated, busy outside of school (single parent, working), older, and less likely to be financially stable. With an increased focus from the media, federal and state governments, community college continues to be an obvious, cost effective option for baccalaureate degree attainment. For these reasons and others, an increased focus on this population is warranted, particularly as it pertains to research.

The Faculty Profile

The faculty working within different institutional contexts (e.g. private, for-profit, community college, etc.) can often have different characteristics and are given different kinds of job expectations. The following section is a discussion of some of these differences, with a specific focus on the private, masters-level university faculty member, as well as faculty teaching at community colleges. These two kinds of institutional contexts are of importance because of their connections to my study. Using a qualitative design I seek to understand the four-year private college faculty perception of community colleges and community college transfer students. This being the case, the two kinds of institutional contexts involved are both community colleges and private universities. Therefore, for the purpose of this study, it is important to provide an overview of these two kinds of faculty. There are interesting differences between these faculty profiles, which are explored in this section.
According to Townsend and Twombly (2007), 43% of both full-time and part-time faculty in postsecondary education are teaching at community colleges. Community college faculty are seen as teachers and should be revered as “experts in student learning” (Levin, Kater and Wagoner, 2006, p. 142). However, Townsend and Twombly (2007) echo sentiment expressed in Levin, Kater and Wagoner’s (2006) book expressing concern for community college faculty being undervalued; both works provide examples of how community college faculty are presented as lesser than four-year institution faculty. This is partly due to the greater conversation around the value of scholarship vs. teaching. In general, the more scholarship the faculty member is involved in, the more associated prestige (Eagan et. al., 2014); this is similarly true for institutions; meaning community colleges are viewed as “lesser.” This is not only evident in college rankings, such as US News and World Report, but also in salary disparities, showing the connection to the institutional type, scholarship activity and salary which is discussed in detail later in this section.

One study in particular attempted to capture the connections between salary and scholarly activity using the 2013–14 HERI Faculty Survey. The survey captured 16,112 faculty surveys across 269 institutions (Eagan, et.al, 2014, p. 9). The faculty participants each came from four-year institutions and reported a great deal of information, such as the type and rank of their position, scholarly and service activities, whether or not they teach online and job satisfaction (Eagan et. al., 2014). The institutions were classified in a number of ways, such as selectivity and public vs. private. Eagan et. al. (2014) reported faculty working at institutions with high selectivity were more likely to have higher scholarly activity and higher salaries. Specifically, the researchers found that the more
high level, peer-reviewed scholarship a faculty member produced, the higher his/her salary. “Institution type correlates with scholarly productivity; universities tend to reward scholarship over teaching” (Eagan et. al, 2014, p. 9).

Some researchers have found faculty salary to be one of the biggest differences for faculty among institutional types. “The gap between average faculty salaries at public and private institutions has been growing wider over the past 40 years” (Rippner & Toutkoushian, 2015, p. 103). These researchers did not consider community colleges, but did find differences between public and private colleges. Using IPEDS data 2001-2011, Rippner and Toutkoushian (2015) found specific discrepancies between nine month faculty salaries at public and private institutions using Carnegie classifications and geographic location to differentiate the types of institutions. Faculty at private institutions were getting paid less than faculty at public institutions by an average of $5,607 annually (Rippner & Toutkoushian, 2015). However, this was not true for private, high research institutions. On average, a faculty member employed at a high research, private institution makes an average of 28% more than a faculty member at the high research public institution (Rippner & Toutkoushian, 2015).

When looking at Carnegie classification C, or in other words, private, masters-level universities, there are similar differences in salaries between private and public, indicating public institutions pay faculty more. It is important to highlight this classification considering this is the type of institution where my study will take place. On average, a faculty member teaching at a private masters-level institution makes an average of $68,185 annually, whereas at a public institution he/she would earn $71,665 (Rippner & Toutkoushian, 2015). Community college faculty salaries look somewhat
different. According to the American Association of University Professor’s (AAUP) survey data analyzed by Barnshaw and Dunietz, (2015), community colleges pay an average annual salary of $61,888, significantly less than the other institutional categories.

This salary difference between community colleges and masters-level institutions is complicated to interpret due to the differences in responsibilities between faculty at four-year and two-year institutions. Using survey data produced by Townsend and Rosser (2007) provide a picture of the average faculty workload and the differences between institutional types; however, their analysis was restricted to exclusively public institutions, they did disaggregate the data into three institutional types: community colleges, liberal arts, and comprehensive universities. The data was self-reported by the faculty, but there was also a large sample size, over 18,000 participants. The researchers found that community college faculty were teaching on average one more class per semester than those teaching at liberal arts universities and on average two more than comprehensive universities. They also found that community college faculty were not producing the same number of peer-reviewed articles, book chapters, and books than the other two categories, showing they teach more, yet engage in less scholarship. The researchers also found how workload overall has changed in recent years. “Faculty workload, defined simply as the reported weekly number of hours worked by faculty, significantly increased in the aggregate between 1993 and 2004” (Townsend & Rosser, 2007, p.6). Townsend and Rosser’s (2007) show the clear difference between both teaching and scholarly expectations between institutional types and increasing demands on faculty across institutional types.
One of the most obvious differences between institutional types is the presence of part-time vs. full-time status of the faculty. For example, according to the AAUP 2014 report, the Employment Status of Instructional Staff Members in Higher Education, over 70% of the faculty teaching at community colleges are part-time faculty. Whereas just over 50% of masters level universities, both public and private, are taught by part-time faculty. This often means that some of the data presented on these faculty is not always an accurate picture because often the faculty researched are exclusively full-time which, considering the prevalence of part-time faculty, is limiting.

Certain demographics are over and underrepresented at community colleges. In general, more women are teaching at community colleges and, according to Townsend and Twombly (2007), are receiving attention within the scholarly literature. After reviewing a number of sources, Townsend and Twombly (2007) found that women make up between 29-52% of the faculty at community colleges, a number that has grown over the past few years. This is not true for faculty of color at community colleges. Ethnically, community college faculty are white. Less than 20% of community college faculty, both part-time and full-time, are non-white (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Findings on full-time faculty race are as follows: 80% white, 6.9% African American, and 5.9% Hispanic. They also found that both women and faculty of color, were less likely to hold the rank of full professor, although the significance of the discrepancy depended on the study reported (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Using multiple studies to describe the average age of a community college faculty member, the researchers, in general, reported the average age of a faculty member at a community college, both full-
time and part-time to be around middle to late 40’s; the second largest group was middle 50’s to early 60’s (Townsend & Twombly, 2007).

From a boarder perspective, only 25% of all African American faculty in higher education teach at community colleges (Townsend & Twombly, 2007). This is disheartening considering student minority representation at community colleges is relatively high: 46% of African American students in higher education are attending community colleges (NCES, 2011). It is interesting that the number of African American students is so high, yet the representation of African American faculty found teaching at these institutions is so dissimilar.

With an average SAT score of 1055 (combined verbal and math) the site used for my study would be classified by Eagan et. al. (2014) as having a medium level of selectivity. Therefore, using Eagan et. al. (2014) findings, the college can be considered as having a medium level of faculty scholarly productivity, course load and salary. Although the average salary at the institution is unknown, the faculty work load for a nine month faculty member is six, four hour courses per year, which according to Townsend and Rosser (2007), is typical for a liberal arts college and is about one course less per term than the average public community college.

The HERI survey (Eagan et. al, 2014) reported some overall differences in gender across all types of institutions. Eagan et. al. (2014) found that women were not only holding lower ranks, such as assistant professor vs. associate or full professor, but women were less likely than men to be doing a high level of scholarship. As stated previously, scholarship is rewarded over teaching and even more so over service to the university (Eagan et. al, 2014). Women were more likely to spend their time advising students and
helping students with personal issues at all institutional types, a form of service to the university. The idea that women are more likely to spend their time on service and teaching than scholarship touches on a concerning issue considering universities value scholarship over service for tenure and promotion across all institutional types (Eagan et al., 2014).

To better understand the differences between community college faculty positions and private institutions I conducted an observation of faculty search advertisements posted between December and March 2016 on the Chronicle of Higher Education website. I randomly selected ten advertisements, five from each of the two institutional categories, community colleges and small (less than 3,000 students) private four-year colleges. The advertisements were posted from across the United States and were gathered to provide a quick observation of the similarities and differences between the two institutional categories. The disciplines represented were the following: Art, Art History, Exercise Science, Filmmaking, Health and PE, History, and English. These are most likely not representative of the most frequent advertisements for either category since they were randomly selected. I was not trying to capture differences within disciplines, but institutional types, so I attempted to find similar disciplines within the two categories.

As one might expect, many of the components of the advertisements were the same, making the comparison easy, for example they all indicated the length the position would be posted, whether or not the position was tenured, or tenure track, and the degree requirements of the position. The majority of the postings were listed as being “open until filled” and did not list a salary, but stated “commensurate with experience.”
Interestingly, of those I observed, there were two tenured or tenure-track positions in each category, and three non-tenure track positions in each category. It was interesting to see equal representation of tenured/tenure-track positions in each category. Another interesting observation were missing course loads. Only one advertisement from either category mentioned the number of courses the person would be required to teach upon being hired. It was a community college that required ten courses annually. According to Townsend and Rosser (2007), ten classes per year is similar to other community college faculty loads. None of the private universities listed salary either, whereas two of the community colleges did, ranging from $41,000-$57,000, a bit lower than the average community college faculty member salary reported by Barnshaw and Dunietz in 2015, just over $61,000.

Some of the differences between the institutions are surprising, for example, all but one of the advertisements pulled for the community college were longer than those from private colleges. On average, the community college advertisements were two-three pages, whereas the private universities were one-two. The community colleges were giving much greater detail on their position descriptions, including detailed office hours, job expectations, and information about the institutions themselves. Curriculum development, either experience, or as a job responsibility, was mentioned three out of five times in the community college advertisements. None of the private university advertisements made any mention of curriculum development. Another clear difference between institutions was the mention of course modality. None of the private colleges mentioned modality, whereas again, three of the five community college advertisements mentioned needing to teach in more than one modality.
There were items and requirements listed in the private college advertisements that were not in the community college advertisements. The most obvious was the requirement of research for tenure. Of the four advertisements leading to tenure, the two from private universities required publications and/or presentations, whereas the community college advertisements did not mention research at all. None of the non-tenure track advertisements had research requirements from either institution. The other clear difference was the required degree. All the advertisements from the private universities required a PhD or the applicant to be ABD (all but dissertation). All the community college advertisements were either bachelors or masters required, none required or even preferred a candidate with a PhD. However, this could be because within many of the disciplines observed, a MFA is a terminal degree in the field.

Overall, the profile of the faculty at a small private college is somewhat different than that of a community college faculty member. When compared to community college faculty, faculty teaching at a private, masters-level university have higher scholarship expectations (Eagan et. al., 2014) with lower teaching loads (Townsend & Rosser, 2007). They often make higher salaries (Rippner & Toutkoushian, 2015; Barnshaw & Dunietz, 2015) and are more likely to be full-time (AAUP, 2014). The classes private university faculty teach are also likely to have far fewer students (Townsend & Rosser, 2007).

**Student Transfer Pathways**

The community college student transfer pathway is not always linear. In 2005 the United States Department of Education published a report on transfer students using a longitudinal student survey from 1995-2001. Students from all sectors of higher education were surveyed. In this report titled *The Road Less Traveled?* the authors shed
light on what many in higher education had speculated: the number of students in higher education transferring between institutions is growing. In 1995-1996, 40% of students had transferred at least once, by 2001 this percentage had jumped to 60% of students. There was also a clear connection between the number of institutions attended and degree attainment. In other words, the more institutions a student attended, the less likely he/she was to graduate, including students that co-enrolled.

Johnson and Muse (2013) studied the student swirl phenomena, where students were transferring to and from a large research institution. The researchers conducted a single site study with 7,768 student participants. Using institutional data and the National Student Clearinghouse, Johnson and Muse tracked students for up to eleven semesters. They found that students choosing to enroll at more than one institution within a term had a negative impact on the students’ persistence at their home institution; however, the number of students that fall into this category is small, less than 0.5% of students in a given term. Students involved in Greek life were less likely than the rest of the population to transfer or dual enroll; however, when they did leave their home institution they were more likely to drop out. There were specific demographics represented in those choosing not to transfer; the following students were less likely to transfer, stop enrollment, or dual enroll than other populations: females, Caucasians, and those with higher high school GPA or ACT scores (Johnson & Muse, 2013). Once a student leaves his/her home institution certain students are more likely to transfer than stop attending altogether: out-of-state students and those with higher GPAs at the home institution. Those with low GPAs, men, and non-whites have a lower chance of successfully transferring, they often stop attending altogether once they leave the home institution.
Not surprisingly, the longer the student stays at an institution the less likely it is he/she will transfer (Johnson & Muse, 2013).

Bahr (2012) researched the lateral transfer between community colleges using data from the University of California system and the National Student Clearinghouse. Bahr (2012) identified transfer information on 120,188 students over a period of seven years; however, the data did not capture those that only attended one institution for one semester, limiting the actual number of students tracked to 89,057. Using these data Bahr (2012) reported the following findings: 27% of the students transferred between community colleges and the longer the student was in the system the more likely he/she was to transfer between community colleges. The student was less likely to laterally transfer if he/she had been academically successful at the home institution and took a high number of credits. However, this study provides a limited scope, particularly since students going to a four-year school were not captured, nor were reentry students at the home school. One of the more descriptive statistics within the study was that 48% of those transferring between community colleges did so through dual enrollment, meaning they were enrolled at more than one school in a particular term (Bahr, 2012).

De Los Santos and Sutton (2012) studied the transfer relationship between Maricopa Community Colleges (MCC, ten institutions in total) and Arizona State University. This study was limited to these institutions and observed the transfer and matriculation patterns of over 53,000 students. Using institutional data De Los Santos and Sutton (2012) found only 7.19% of the students were dually enrolled in a given term, and in most cases were doing so during their first year after transferring. The researchers found high success rates of those transferring from community colleges. Specifically,
one-year persistence/retention of those transferring from local community colleges were at a rate of 77% and 88% for lower and upper division students respectively. This was equal to or higher than the persistence of the university’s freshman population, and higher than those that transferred from other institutions persisted at 73% and 76%. De Los Santos and Sutton (2012) assert that, at least at Arizona State, those transferring from a community college were as likely as or more likely to persist than any other student at the university. The same was true for graduation rates. The freshman class at Arizona State had an average graduation rate of 56%. The local community college transfer students graduated at rates of 61% and 76%, lower and upper division transfers respectively. These graduation rates suggest that students at Arizona State had a higher chance of successfully transferring from the community college than those starting as freshman (De Los Santos & Sutton, 2012).

Friedel and Wilson (2015) describe the reverse transfer as a student that transfers from a two-year college to a four-year college, then successfully completes the requirements for an associates degree; the student is then awarded an associates degree from the community college while enrolled at the four-year institution. This method is utilized by state systems to increase community college completion rates. This kind of degree completion takes a great deal of coordination between the two and four-year schools. Using an extensive literature review and qualitative analysis of documents Friedel and Wilson (2015) offer a synopsis of all 50 states, reporting whether or not a particular state systems is using the reverse transfer to confer and deliver degrees. They found that 18 states did not participate, 11 showed a growing interest in developing such
a program and 21 states currently use a form of reverse transfer to award degrees (Friedel & Wilson, 2015).

Using National Student Clearinghouse data tracking over 700,000 students across the United States, Jenkins and Fink (2016) studied community college transfer patterns, as well as institutional characteristics as predictors for student success. The student participants first attended community college in 2007 and were tracked for over six years (Jenkins & Fink, 2016). The researchers not only studied where the community college students transferred (if they transferred), but their completion rates after transfer, as well as the influences of demographic factors such as the student’s geographic location, race and SES.

Jenkins and Fink (2016) reported the following results: 73% of community college students transferred to a public institution, 19% to a private nonprofit, and 9% to a for-profit. In addition to tracking where the students transferred, the researchers also studied baccalaureate completion rates over a six year period. The findings most applicable to my study were those tracking students who transferred to small private nonprofit colleges. The following was found by the researchers:

While outcomes varied substantially among individual four-year institutions, on average, the type of four-year institution that students transferred to was more important than the type of community college they transferred from. Average bachelor’s completion rates were more than 10 percentage points higher for students who transferred to public four-year institutions than for those who transferred to private nonprofit four-year institutions (Jenkins & Fink 2016, p. 38).
This finding is surprising considering other research on small private universities reported the opposite. Rios (2010) found that the environment at a small private college can have benefits, such as small class size, for community college transfer students. Overall, private nonprofit universities have higher three-year persistence and six-year graduation rates than any other sector of higher education (NCES, 2016). If retention and completion is higher overall for students at private, nonprofit schools, but significantly lower for community college students this presents an interesting tension around community college transfer students at private, nonprofit schools. These data depict a need for more research on community college transfer students within the private nonprofit institutional context.

In summary, there are many ways for a student to be defined a community college transfer. Many students captured in transfer data do not always fit the traditional, linear model of attending a community college and transferring to a four-year school. It is important during this study, as well as any study interested in community college transfer research, to understand the many pathways community college students can transfer within higher education. Overall there is also conflicting literature on the community college student transfer pathway and student success (persistence/graduation) within the context of a private nonprofit four-year institution. These tensions illustrate a need for more research within the private nonprofit sector, a sector with relatively little existing research on community college transfer students.

**Pathways to the Baccalaureate**

Recently, there has been increased attention on the community college pathway to obtaining a baccalaureate degree. In July, 2015, the following statement could be found on the white house website, “The President has placed a strong emphasis on making
America’s community colleges stronger, ensuring that they are gateways to economic prosperity and educational opportunities for millions of Americans each year.” This illustrates the nation’s focus on the community college as a path to the baccalaureate. Not only has the federal government focused its attention on community colleges, so have the states. According to front page of *Inside Higher Ed* on Feb. 6, 2014, “making community college free has become a hot idea” when multiple states, such as Tennessee and Mississippi have proposed or passed bills to fund a free associates degrees for all graduating high school students. Many politicians from both parties have advocated for a cost effective way to educate and graduate more post-secondary students.

Part of the driving force behind these topics gaining traction are two growing problems: the growth in student loan debt and the degree completion deficit. A policy alert published by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education in June, 2011 addressed the problem of the national degree completion deficit and suggests the most obvious way to address the problem is to invest in transfer programs and for state governments to increase their financial support for the community college sector. Student debt has grown due to the cost of tuition rising well beyond inflation (Baum & Ma, 2013). This rise in sticker price if often the result of spending cuts by state governments. Community colleges have been hurt by this more than any other sector, due to the fact that four-year institutions have more diversified revenue streams; for example, four-year institutions have the option to raise funds through donations and grants, these luxuries are not available in the same way for community colleges.

Therefore, according to the Desrochers, Hurlburt, and Steven (2014), “Community colleges continued to show the greatest financial strain across higher
education (even amid slower enrollment growth), with declines in revenue per student accompanied by widespread spending cuts” (p. 1). Although subsidies continue to be cut, community colleges have been able to keep tuition low, better than any other sector. Using IPEDS data, the report captures the following average annual net tuition rates: Community Colleges, $3,424; public research, $9,194, public masters, $6,681, private research, $21,151; private masters, $15,680. This shows a student choosing to attend a community college for two years prior to attending a private, masters-level university will save an average of $24,512 (assuming the student completes in 4 years) (Desrochers, Hurlburt, & Steven, 2014).

The 2014 report by Desrochers and Hurlburt illustrates college spending per full-time equivalent (FTE) by institution type. This report’s data depicts the cost efficiency of community colleges; for example, in 2011, the community college sector spent three fourths their overall budget on education related expenses, whereas the research institution sector spent less than half (Desrochers & Hurlburt, 2014). Overall, the budget of a community college serving approximately the same number of students is also less than half that of a research institution (Desrochers & Hurlburt, 2014). Attending a community college is a way for students to save tuition cost before attending a four-year institution.

By using government and policy reports, such as the National Student Clearinghouse data, IPEDS, statements from the Department of Education, and recent scholarly studies, Marling and Handel (2013) make four overarching assertions about the current community college climate. The first is how the “community colleges share of the undergraduate population is likely to increase”(p.10). The second is the number of high
school graduates is dropping, therefore the student profile will most likely continue to change. Next the researchers assert that “community colleges attract students from underserved populations in significant numbers” (p.11). Finally, the fourth is how community colleges cost less than four-year schools. All of these findings support the continued and growing investment in the community college sector of higher education, particularly as a gateway to the four-year degree.

Overall, community colleges have seen huge financial cuts, but have managed to keep their sticker price low; therefore, community colleges are seen as the most cost efficient way to invest in higher education. For this reason, along with the student profile, community colleges are gaining attention from governments both national and state as the most cost efficient pathway to a baccalaureate degree.

Community College Transfer Student Programs and Practices

Due to the growing attention on community colleges as the pathway to the baccalaureate degree, the literature on community college transfers has also grown. The following is a synthesis of ideas and practices that colleges, both two-year and four-year, are using to help students transition between the community college to the four-year school. Both the connection between the colleges, such as articulation agreements, and a model for orientation and acclimation are discussed.

A study by the Research and Planning Group for California Colleges in 2008 was designed to capture best practices among community colleges with high transfer rates to four-year schools. This study allows the reader to understand some of the things that worked well for these particular community colleges to cultivate high transfer success rates (Mery & Schiorryng, 2008). Community Colleges selected for the study had over
35% of their student population successfully transfer one or more courses to a four-year school. The researchers made a two day site visit to each of the seven community colleges, meeting with students, faculty, staff and administrators during their visits. The research team found themes: a positive “transfer culture,” a “student-focused environment, a high level of commitment to the institution,” “strong relationships with high schools, strong relationships with four-year colleges, and effective support services” (Mery, et.al. 2008, p. 5).

Another report in 2008 provides broad information on transfer issues and recommendations for universities and colleges on how to create a culture of transfer student success. Ideas such as “creating a transfer culture” and “strategies to enhance the transfer student experience” were presented as best practices for making the transfer student experience more successful (Serban, Kozeracki, Boroch, Malmgren, & Smith, 2008, p.3). Like Mery, et.al. (2008), this report was conducted in the California state system. It is not surprising to see so many works come from this area of the United States; California has the largest community college system in the country.

Zinser and Hanssen, (2006) published a report illustrating the importance of affiliation agreements, and their ability to increase the number of students that successfully transfer from two-year schools to four-year schools. Specifically, the researchers studied the success of programs designed to develop articulation agreements between two-year and four-year schools (Zinser & Hanssen, 2006). Zinser and Hanssen (2006) found programs were not only successful in creating more agreements, but once they were utilized they increased the numbers of students that successfully transferred to a four-year school. Using institutional data on the number of student transfers and
surveys completed by the administrators at both schools, the programs were described as a success, “promoting the democratization of the baccalaureate” (Zinser, & Hanssen, 2006, p. 8). These data show the importance of affiliation agreements and how they can play an important role in student transfer success to a four-year school.

Clemetsen and Balzer (2008) provide insights to a program that goes beyond articulation. Their article describes a partnership between Linn-Benton Community College and Oregon State University (OSU). In short, they eliminated the transfer part of the student experience, with one application and combined recruitment materials, as well as coordinated advising, concurrent enrollment, and access to cocurricular experiences at both campuses (Clemetsen & Balzer, 2008). This is one model that certainly eliminates the transfer challenges, but the impact on the greater OSU campus was unmentioned. Many campuses might be resistant to this model due to the impact across campuses.

The research presented in this section provides evidence that four-year institutions are paying attention to community college transfers and in many cases are seeking to improve the transfer experience. From strong articulation agreements, to developing a transfer culture, universities want their transfer students to succeed. These practices and studies also suggest community college students deserve attention in the literature, and have specific needs for positioning them for success.

The Community College Transfer Experience: A Student Perspective

Considering Tinto’s (1975, 1993) attrition theory, discussed in a later section of this chapter, the bridge between community colleges and four-year institutions is important for student success. The following is a synthesis of scholarly works, both qualitative and quantitative, each using student participants. Overall, the researchers present both barriers to the transfer process, as well as success stories. This section
captures the wealth of literature on student perspectives, and further asserts the need for research on the faculty perspectives.

Chrystal, Gansemer-Topf, and Laanan, (2013) used a single site case study to explore the transfer experience of a community college student at a large, public institution through the eyes of the student transfer at Iowa State University. Specifically, the researchers interviewed 22 second semester traditional aged undergraduate students. Students named a host of reasons for attending community college prior to Iowa State: “ambiguous future goals, lack of academic preparation, desire to save money, and a hesitance to leave home” (Chrystal et. al. 2013, p 6). One succinct consistency among all the participants was their work outside of the classroom; all 22 participants worked a minimum of 25 hours a week while attending college. This finding supports the data from the NECS (2011) reporting that most community college students hold full-time jobs, it is interesting to see this translate at the four-year for these same students. All participants had a consistent expectation that Iowa State courses would be more rigorous than community college, after their first term the expectation was validated, students reported the classes were harder (Chrys
tal et. al. 2013).

Chrystal, Gansemer-Topf and Laanan’s (2013) participants not only found the environment more rigorous, but also intimidating; the campus was bigger and so was the student body. Participants shared an overall frustration with the process of transferring, two of these issues being, credits not transferring and not getting help from their advisor. Most of the students reported a drop in GPA during their first term after transfer, often referred to as transfer shock. Hills (1965) defines transfer shock as “a severe drop in performance upon transfer” (p. 202).
Although participants felt prepared for the new academic challenges, they did not expect to be socially stressed; many reported a lack of belonging to the campus community, particularly those that lived off-campus (Chrystal et. al. 2013). The students described feeling lost, due to large classes and not having access to faculty. The researchers indicated these student experiences would not translate at a small, private college because these challenges, such as large class size would be less prevalent (Chrystal et. al. 2013). They call for more research at small private universities to better understand the student transfer experience and influence of campus culture (Chrystal et. al. 2013, p 6).

Owens (2010) used e-journaling from 57 participants from various institutions, all of which successfully transferred from a local community college to a four-year, large, public university. Like Chrystal et. al. (2013), Owens found students lacked a sense of belonging to the four-year campus and felt disconnected from the rest of the student body. Almost all of her participants reported higher academic rigor at the four-year school compared to their community college courses and feelings of intimidation by the campus climate (Owens, 2010).

Owens study (2010) addressed the students varying experiences with navigating the institutional systems and the students reporting the importance of correctly aligning their transfer credits toward a degree. Like Chrystal et. al. (2013), Owens (2010) also presents an absence of small private colleges being included in research on community college transfer students.

Wilson (2014) conducted a study focusing on community college transfers at a large public institution in Texas. This study was focused on a more specialized
population of community college students than Chrystal et. al. (2013) or Owens (2010); Wilson (2014) interviewed 18 African American students just after graduation. These students described their experiences at community college as “a great stepping stone” to a four-year degree, allowing for personal and academic growth (Wilson, 2014, p. 77). Possibly due to the timing of the interviews (immediately following graduation), the participants had overwhelmingly positive things to say about both college experiences, offering little critical feedback. The only criticism the participants offered was the lack of support through the transfer process (Wilson, 2014).

Harrison (1999) interviewed 12 students and two administrators to develop an understanding of the transfer experience from Piedmont Community College to the University of Virginia, a large research institution. The students reported feeling disconnected from their peers and the campus, having difficulty connecting academically and socially. Participants overwhelming reported difficulties in navigating the systems and transitional issues, as well as losing transfer credits (Harrison, 1999).

Ellis (2013) used a focus group method to investigate the community college transfer experience within the University of Texas System. Eight focus groups were used, one at each campus, 6-12 students each, within the Texas system. The study’s participants transferred from a Texas community college and were identified as making reasonable progress toward a four-year degree. These students reported specific issues with the transfer process, one of the top concerns being the loss of transfer credits; however, the number one reported reason for the loss could not be controlled by the institutions, the students had changed majors. The second two reasons were: taking courses outside of their degree program and the four-year institution not having an
equivalent course to the community course. The students overwhelmingly reported problems with community college advising and university advising, frequently reporting having received misinformation about the transfer process (Ellis, 2013).

Ellis (2013) also asked the students if they felt the community college experience academically prepared them for success after transferring. There was a strong and direct connection between the community college the student attended and their own feelings of academic readiness. Because of this connection, it appeared some community colleges were better than others at academically preparing students for upper division college work, at least from the students’ perspectives (Ellis, 2013).

Socially, the students reported little difference between the institutions, in both settings the students felt disconnected from their peers socially, yet undisturbed by the disconnect (Ellis, 2013). This is interesting due to the fact that other studies at four-year institutions showed their participants being socially disconnected (Chrystal, Gansemer-Topf, & Laanan, 2013; Owens, 2010; Harrison, 1999).

To investigate the student experience Schmitigal (2010) interviewed 20 students from three community colleges. The participants successfully transferred to four-year public institutions and were interviewed their first year following transfer. Four themes were identified: “the perceived differences in courses and faculty expectations between community colleges and universities, the changes in academic strategies these completion students employed, the students' transfer shock experiences, and the lack of academic resources used by students” (Schmitigal, 2010, p. vi). In short, the students found the work at the four-year campus harder with higher academic expectations, they had to
adapt to studying more frequently with more depth, and were not using campus resources (Schmitigal, 2010).

Gerhardt and Ackerman (2014) conducted a study at a university in Southern Ontario observing student reflections on the transfer experience. Eleven focus groups of three students each were interviewed. The researchers sought to identify what challenges these students faced through the transfer process. The participants consistently articulated the following problems with the transfer process: online materials were difficult to find/navigate and a loss of course credits during transfer (Gerhardt & Ackerman, 2014).

A theme between Gerhardt and Ackerman’s (2014) focus groups was the students’ perceived differences between community college and the university, “to be successful, university academics required a greater level of self-determination, self-motivation and self-confidence” (Gerhardt, & Ackerman, 2014, p. 8). Although students reported needing autonomy to be successful, they also overwhelming reported course work being easier than expected and manageable, unlike other studies suggesting the opposite (Chrystal et. al. 2013; Schmitigal, 2010). Students made comments about how they were warned by faculty at both the community college and the university that course would be more difficult; however, the students did not find it to be true (Gerhardt, & Ackerman, 2014).

Rios (2010) was the only study found though this literature review focusing on community college students transferring to a small private college. Her study focused on the student’s perception of the transfer experience to a private college in northern
California. Nine students attending a private four-year institution were interviewed during their second year; students were asked to reflect back on the transfer experience.

Chrystal et. al. (2013) suggested through their research that community college transfers might benefit from attending a smaller, private college. Rios’ (2010) study illustrated just what Chrystal et. al. (2013) speculated: a small private college can impact student transfer persistence. Students in Rios’ (2010) study reported choosing to attend the private university for the following reasons: “location, small class size, personal attention, strong academic programs, support services, and caring professors and staff” (p. 78). The students attributed their persistence and success to some of these same things. Overall, the following factors were presented as the most prevalent to the participants’ success at the private university: faculty relationships, academic support, and being engaged with peers (Rios, 2010).

The most researched topic among these studies was the barrier to student success. The challenge described by students most frequently was the difficulty navigating between the two institutional systems (Owens, 2010; Wilson, 2014; Harrison, 1999; Ellis, 2013; Schmitigal, 2010; Gerhardt & Ackerman, 2014). Another quite common barrier described by students in many of the studies was the reported loss of credits after transfer (Owens, 2010; Ellis, 2013; Gerhardt & Ackerman, 2014; Harrison, 1999). This is particularly disturbing considering Doyle (2006) found that if a student successfully transfers all their credits from a community college to a four-year school, he/she is 40% more likely to obtain a degree within six years. Other studies reported the following barriers: feeling disconnected from the campus and student body (Chrystal et. al 2013; Owens, 2010; Harrison, 1999), a drop in GPA during their first term, i.e. transfer shock
(Chrystal et al. 2013; Schmitigal, 2010), and difficulty making connections and building relationships with faculty (Townsend & Wilson, 2009; D’Amico, Dike, Elling, Algozzine, & Ginn, 2014). The comparison of academic rigor at the four-year school compared to the community college was observed by three studies, but yielded mixed reports. Owens (2010) Chrystal et al. (2013) and Schmitigal, (2010) reported their students finding the four-year school being more academically rigorous, whereas Gerhard, and Ackerman, (2014) found their student participants reported the same level of academic rigor at both institutions.

Many studies were conducted because of evidence that community college transfer students were not performing at the same rate as native students (Monaghan & Attewell, 2015); therefore, researchers often looked to identify barriers and challenges these students had to overcome. However, many of these studies also reported strengths and benefits of the community college transfer experience. For example, Wilson’s (2014) participants described their experience coming from a community college as one that helped them personally and academically grow. Rios’ (2010) participants felt the small class size and personal attention at the small private college helped them succeed.

Although the student perspective is well researched, there are two underrepresented areas: the private and for-profit sectors of higher education. Only one study was found throughout this literature review that discusses the community college transfer student perspective at a private university (Rios, 2010). The for-profit sector is also missing; only one study was found within this sector from the student perspective (Van Ommeren, 2001).
Community College Student Transfer: A Faculty Perspective

There is little known research on the faculty perception of community college transfer students; however, one study does address the faculty perception. Castellio (2014) conducted a study at a mid-sized public institution. Castellio’s (2014) research gives a glimpse of the faculty perspective, as well as begins to show how the faculty perception might influence student success.

In Castellino’s (2014) mixed methods study, six full-time faculty were interviewed using a structured interview protocol. The researcher also used quantitative data to review student performance. Student transcript data from 150 native students and 150 transfer students were tracked over a five year period using a matched pair analysis.

Using the interview data, Castellio (2014) identified the following faculty perceptions as salient across interviews: frustration with articulation, lower academic quality at community colleges, differences between community college faculty and four-year faculty, student’s challenged with adjusting to a four-year school and characteristics of community college transfers.

Castellino (2014) found that her participants held strong opinions about community college transfer students, while having little known exposure to them. Considering the interviews found the faculty perception of students to be more often negative, Castellino (2104) suggests these assumptions are not based on experiences, but rather stereotypes or biases. Castellino’s (2014) findings supports further study on the faculty perceptions of community college transfers, particularly since her structured interview protocol kept her from being able to ask her faculty for examples and to further discuss the reason behind why they expressed the feelings they described. Castellino’s
(2014) study provides a sound foundation for future research providing a deeper and more detailed description from the faculty perception.

Castellino’s (2014) illustrates through her research how faculty can have a rather negative perspective of community college transfer students. For example, when Castellino (2014) asked faculty how they discovered a student came from a community college they shared the following kinds of examples: “…that information [transferring from a community college] is followed by ‘I am not sure if I can handle this’ almost as if this student is telling me they are going to fail my course” (p. 101) and “I think they are uncomfortable getting into the swing of things here. I think telling me where they came from is a way for them to let me know they might need some help” (p. 101). Other examples such as needing help getting into a course late or needing help getting acclimated to the university are also given by the faculty. All of these examples show how faculty perceive these students as needing help. Faculty consistently described students as having an academic deficit; according to her participants, successful students were able to succeed because of using their determination and motivation to overcome a lack of skills (Castellino, 2014).

When Castellino (2014) asked her participants why students chose to attend a community college prior to the university, they overwhelmingly reported the students were unqualified for four-year institutions without remediation, the community college was the option that met their abilities; however, a small minority of faculty did report finances as a reason for first attending community college (Castellino, 2014). This again illustrates an expectation that these students are underqualified for academic work compared to their native counterparts.
When faculty were asked about community college transfers’ academic
preparedness they provided mixed reports. Castellino (2014) classifies their responses
into three categories: those that view students as well prepared, those viewing them as
somewhat prepared, and those that view them as not prepared at all. The faculty
perception of academic preparedness closely aligned with the faculty members
experiences with community colleges and their students. For example, if the faculty
member had previously worked at a community college or had a family member that
attended community college they were more likely to report the students as well
prepared. On the other end of the spectrum the same was true, the less connection the
faculty member reported to a community college the more like he/she was to report the
students as underprepared (Castellino, 2014).

When comparing the results of the two methods of inquiry, faculty interviews and
transcript data, Castellino (2014) found interesting discrepancies as well as parallels. For
example, the faculty reported native students were stronger students overall, as well as
within the major, this was true when statistical analysis was run for the student body
overall, but not statistically significant within majors. Community college transfers and
native students within the same major were performing with equal success, only at the
institutional level did native students perform with more success (Castellino, 2014). This
meant that community college students were enrolling at higher rates into
underperforming majors, whereas native students dominated enrollment within higher
preforming majors.

Another discrepancy was found within Castellino’s (2014) results between the
faculty perceptions of knowledge level and course level outcomes. The interview
responses overwhelmingly suggested that students had general education and overall fundamentals well covered, but that students lacked the skills for upper-level coursework such as higher order critical thinking skills. These perceptions were not supported by the quantitative findings; the difference in native student and transfer student performance was statistically significant at the lower level, but was not significant at the upper level, showing that community college transfers were performing the same as their native peers in upper level courses, but receiving lower GPAs in lower-level or developmental coursework than native students. However, it is notable that community college students were enrolling in lower-level courses at a much higher rate. This too was not how the faculty perceived the student enrollment. The faculty assumed the students were transferring in with a great deal of lower-level courses and most community college transfers would be taking upper level courses, not lower level.

Castellino’s (2014) study further supports a need for more information on the faculty perception of community college students. Her study was conducted at a public, midsized school using structured interview protocol. Castellino (2014) calls for a deeper understanding of the faculty perception, particularly using other kinds of qualitative design and in other institutional contexts, such as a private university.

Faculty Perceptions and Student/Faculty Relationships

Although there is only one source of information on the faculty perception of community college transfers (Castellino, 2014), there is a wealth of information on the importance of student/faculty interactions and how faculty perceptions can influence student success. The following is a synthesis of such works.

Mesa (2012) presents the idea that a student’s achievement orientation is linked to a student’s self-efficacy and therefore, his/her academic success. Achievement
orientation is defined as a student’s level of motivation to master or perform a particular skill (Mesa, 2012). The link between achievement orientation and self-efficacy was supported by the author’s study. Over 850 students in remedial or introductory math courses at a community college were survived to identify the students’ achievement orientation within the context of the class. The specific class sections were selected due to having a history of high failure rates. Fifteen faculty teaching two of these classes were interviewed on the motivations of their students and the achievement orientations of the class overall (Mesa, 2012). Specifically, the faculty were asked to predict their classes’ overall achievement orientations, as well as the other classes’ survey data; they were then shown the actual student data and asked to react. The faculty predicted students within the remedial classes were not as motivated as those in the introductory classes (Mesa, 2012). Contrary to the faculty perception, the students in the remedial math classes reported higher levels of motivation than those within the introductory classes. Overall, the faculty predicted their students having poor confidence and gave examples of how their students described themselves as just not being good at math, whereas the student survey data indicated the opposite (Mesa, 2012). All of the students reported a much higher self-concept than the faculty predicted. Overall, the faculty were Underestimating their students (Mesa, 2012). Considering the classes were selected for the study because of their high failure rates, Mesa (2012) suggests a concern that faculty perceptions of their students influenced student performance.

Complementary to Mesa’s (2012) study, researchers Rattan, Good and Dweck (2012) found similar results using quantitative methods. Using supported works, entity theory was used to describe the idea of accepting that a person is not innately ‘good’ at a
particular subject, i.e. ‘he/she is just not good at math’. To the contrary, incremental theory is the understanding that all skills are innately malleable and are the product of hard work. Rattan et al. (2012) studied faculty and student behavior operating within these two theories. To do so, they surveyed three groups: 41 undergraduates at a private university, 95 undergraduates at a large public, and 41 graduate students teaching undergraduates at a private university. The survey asked each participant questions to identify which theory they most closely identified with, they were then asked questions about a case study, placing them in a teaching role and how they might treat a struggling student (Rattan et al., 2012).

Rattan, Good and Dweck (2012) found that in all three groups, “those holding a more entity (versus incremental) theory of intelligence are more likely to diagnose a student as having low ability based upon a single test score, more likely to opt to comfort students for their (presumed) low ability, and more likely to use teaching strategies that are less conducive to students' continued engagement with the field” (p. 734). Both this study (Rattan et al., 2012) and Mesa’s (2012) support how perceptions of academic ability, particularly within STEM fields, can influence a student’s success. A faculty member with preconceived notions about a student’s ability can inadvertently influence student success.

In 2010 Blanchard surveyed full-time faculty at a community college about the under-preparedness of their students. Focus groups were also used to further develop an understanding of the topic. All of the faculty Blanchard (2010) surveyed reported witnessing students in their classrooms that were underprepared for college work and the number of students challenged with this issue was growing. This was not surprising
considering the open access enrollment practices at most community colleges, including
the one studied here. What was surprising in Blanchard’s (2010) study was how the
faculty overwhelmingly blamed the students, specifically, a lack of student motivation.
Blanchard (2010) found that faculty attributed their under preparedness to a lack of
student motivation.

Students and faculty can often misunderstand one another, particularly as it
pertains to expectations. Collier and Morgan (2008) looked at faculty expectations and
how they align with what the students believe they are expected to do in the classroom.
By comparing interview data from students and faculty the researchers found an
interesting disconnect. Overall there was a difference in what the faculty member
thought was being communicated and what the student understood. This was true for
course material, syllabus guidelines and general subject knowledge covered within the
course. The overall disconnect between expectations was the greatest for first generation
students. This is concerning and relevant to my study because 53% of all first-generation
students attend community colleges (NCES, 2011).

Equally concerning is the nontraditional student population and their reported
disengagement with faculty. In 2000, Rosenthal, et. al. found that nontraditional students
were less likely to have interactions with their faculty than their traditional aged
counterparts. Considering community college transfers are more likely to be
nontraditional (NCES, 2011), this may suggested a disconnection with faculty for them as
well.

Cotton and Wilson (2006) explored faculty-student interactions using student
focus groups with a total of 96 participants. They found that students (both traditional
and nontraditional) were often timid about approaching faculty because they 1) did not think they would benefit from doing so and 2) did not think the faculty member would be receptive and welcome their ideas (Cotten & Wilson, 2006). The students in the study were not approaching their faculty, only when the faculty member reached out them were students connecting with faculty (Cotten & Wilson, 2006).

Shepherd and Shin (2014) studied the effect of student/faculty interactions on student outcomes for nontraditional students. Using Likert Scale survey, Shepherd and Shin (2014) asked students about informal interactions with faculty at their four-year institution, as well as the students’ perceived level of academic success. They found that both informal interactions with faculty had a positive effect on the student’s plans to continue at the university, as well as their perceived level of academic success. “The results indicate that informal faculty-student interaction has a positive effect on academic integration and persistence” (Shepherd & Shin, 2014, p. 1).

Kim and Sax’s illustrated in their study (2014) that meaningful experiences matter when it comes to student/faculty interaction and student self-concept. Using a student survey, they saw benefits for students having out of class experiences with faculty, like a faculty member having students in their home, but saw greater gains if the student felt the faculty member was accessible and had already developed a relationship with him/her. Merely having the interaction does not equal student self-concept gains, it needed to be meaningful for the student (Kim & Sax, 2014).

The quality of interactions between students and faculty continue to be prevalent in the literature. Hong, Shull, and Haefner (2012) studied the students’ perceptions of faculty-student interactions and its perceived influences on their success at a public four-
year institution. The students in the study reported a deep and high regard for their faculty and the faculty member’s opinions of them. Student’s showed higher self-efficacy and success when they reported having meaningful experiences and positive relationships with their faculty (Hong, Shull, & Haefner, 2012). According to Hong, Shull, and Haefner, “a validated relationship [with a faculty member] enables them [students] to define who they are, what they want, and how to achieve their goals” (2012, p. 302). This research shows the importance of interactions between faculty and students and the implications to student success. It also further asserts the need to research the faculty perception, considering how well researched the student perspective is presented in the literature (Hong et. al., 2012).

One study in particular focused on the faculty perception of students using Bensimon’s cognitive frames (2005) to inform their research. Presented as a paper at the Association for the Study of Higher Education in Nov. 2015, DeAngelo and Mason interviewed 98 faculty within the California State University system. Specifically, DeAngelo and Mason (2015) “sought to understand the ways the cognitive frames faculty use for students with different social, cultural, economic, and academic backgrounds impact their decisions whether to promote graduate study and develop mentoring relationships with students.” (p. 9). Using a directed content analysis approach, the researchers found that many faculty were describing students, and their interactions with students, using a deficit lens. Their participants often described students they deemed ready for graduate study based on ‘innate qualities’ that could not be taught. This is important because of how these perceptions might hurt students. According to DeAngelo and Mason (2015), “These findings are important in the context of this study, because if
faculty are not working to initiate relationships or are doing so only with a particular profile of students, some students could be at a disadvantage.” (p. 7).

This study is fascinatingly applicable to the study of faculty perceptions. According to Bensimon (2005), students are perceived by faculty in one of these three ways: diversity, deficit, and equity. DeAngelo and Mason (2015) used Bensimon’s theoretical framework (2005) to code for these three ways a faculty member perceives students. Although Bensimon’s (2005) theory focuses on minority students, the researchers in this study used her model to code for how a faculty member might perceive a student’s abilities to be successful in graduate school, independent from race. The researchers found that faculty were often perceiving students using a deficit lens. The deficit lens is one that Bensimon (2005) describes as being the most harmful to students. When adopting a deficit lens, the faculty member believes students’ abilities exist because of one or more of the following, “cultural stereotypes, inadequate socialization, or lack of motivation and initiative on the part of the students” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 102). When this model is adopted by a faculty member, he/she becomes passive and expects the student to fail, believing the student cannot be successful due to circumstances outside of the faculty member’s and the student’s control.

In summary, the literature compelling illustrates that building relationships with faculty at a four-year institution is not only important for student success (Hong, Shull, & Haefner, 2012; Kim and Sax, 2014; Shepherd and Shin, 2014), but difficult for community college transfer students (Townsend & Wilson, 2009; D’Amico, Dike, Elling, Algozzine, & Ginn, 2014); therefore, it is not surprising that other studies show that community college students are less likely to develop relationships with their faculty
(Rosenthal, et. al. 2000; Cotten & Wilson, 2006). As developed further in the next section, positive student/faculty interactions are important for community college transfer student success. What goes unanswered in the literature is why are faculty being perceived as difficult to get to know, and why are community college students’ not developing relationships with their faculty?

Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1975, 1993) and Predictors of Academic Success for Community College Transfer Students

Vincent Tinto is the leading authority on student attrition and retention theory. His works (1975, 1993) on why students leave college has provided a foundation for the continued study of student success. His book, Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition (1993) discusses the importance of certain student experiences and their impact on persistence. Tinto’s (1993) longitudinal model of institutional departure depicts how students bring to college certain attributes: family background, skills and abilities, as well as prior education. According to Tinto (1993), after entering college the student is exposed to institutional experiences within two systems: the academic system and the social system. Within these two systems student experiences can influence student success. One of these being faculty interaction. Tinto (1993) describes the importance of student/faculty interaction as a predictor of student attrition and success. Specifically, there are two institutional experiences within the academic system, one formal and one informal (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) describes the formal component of the system as the student’s academic performance, typically defined in numerical values, such as grades or GPA. Whereas the informal component, faculty/staff interaction, is more elusive (Tinto, 1993). Tinto (1993) strongly asserts that these two experiences, academic performance and faculty/staff interaction, can directly
influence a student’s decision to stay at a particular institution, or continue in higher education at all.

In his earlier work using a meta-analysis literature review, Tinto (1975) describes the benefits of faculty-student interaction to capture both of the social and academic systems: "interaction with faculty not only increases social integration and therefore institutional commitment but also increases the individual's academic integration" (p. 109). This is validated by more recent study where student self-efficacy and self-concept are influenced by faculty-student interaction (Mesa, 2010).

Tinto’s attrition theory (1993; 1975) was designed to be applied to the traditional student; therefore, until recently it was unknown how his constructs might apply differently for a community college transfer. D’Amico et. al. (2014) and Townsend and Wilson (2009) provided a reimagined focus for Tinto’s (1975, 1993) attrition theory and its implications for the community college transfer student. In short, these researchers found Tinto’s (1993) social system is not as influential as the academic system for community college transfer student attrition. Both Townsend and Wilson (2009) and D’Amico et. al. (2014) found that social integration is not a predictor of persistence or higher graduation rates for community college transfer students. This new research suggests a focus on the academic system and its components, supporting the call for greater research on academic influences and Tinto’s (1993) two components within the academic system: faculty/staff-student interaction and academic performance. For the community college transfer, these two areas are greater predictors of student success (Townsend & Wilson, 2009; D’Amico et. al. 2014).
Townsend and Wilson (2009) conducted a mixed methods study that provided a new perspective on successful community college transfer students. The researchers sought to find out how community college transfers’ social and academic integration impacted their success. Using Tinto’s (1993) constructs and attrition theory, Townsend and Wilson developed a single site case study; 12 students were interviewed twice. The students were first interviewed about their transfer experience during their first semester in 2004 and again in 2008 just prior to graduation. The researchers used the two sets of interviews and transcript data for triangulation. It was important to the researchers to follow students all the way to graduation to better understand what it was that made them successful.

The students in Townsend and Wilson’s (2009) study overwhelmingly reported not being connected socially to the campus community, this was not only true for when they first enrolled, but throughout their academic career. Considering these students’ successes in persisting to graduation one might expect that, according to Tinto’s (1993) model, the students would have reported stronger social connections to the campus community and to their social development. Townsend and Wilson (2009) found that their participants were not interested in campus social activities. Townsend and Wilson (2009) suggested, “social integration, as measured by participation in co-curricular activities, may not be an important factor in the persistence of most community college transfer students” (p. 418). Also using Tinto’s attrition theory, others researchers found that community college students were not connected socially to campus (Chrystal, Gansemer-Topf, & Laanan, 2013; Owens, 2010; Harrison, 1999); however, each of these researchers asserted the lack of social connection as a problem. Unlike others, Townsend
and Wilson’s (2009) study tested Tinto’s Theory against student outcomes (persistence and graduation) and others have followed suit.

Like Townsend and Wilson (2009), D’Amico, et. al. (2014) sought to explore Tinto’s attrition theory (1993) and how it might apply to student outcomes for community college transfer students at a four-year, public institution. In doing so, they aimed to “construct predictive models for multiple indicators of student success" specific to community college transfer students’ academic and social integration (D’Amico et. al., 2014, p. 376). Although studying the same topic as Townsend and Wilson (2009), they used exclusively quantitative methods, analyzing student survey data and transcript records. The authors studied an urban Southeastern United States university. Data was collected annually over a three year period, 2008-2010. In total, there were 968 participants that each took the survey six weeks after the start of their first term.

Overall, the highest predictor for student success (both GPA and persistence) was the student perceived academic fit. Academic fit was defined by how students responded to the following statement using a Likert scale: “I feel that this institution is a good fit for me academically” (p. 382). The same was not true for social fit or any of the other 20 variables examined using regression models. Like Townsend and Wilson (2009), the researchers found that social fit did not appear to have any connection to academic success (GPA or persistence), supporting a transfer orientation focus on academics, not socialization. D'Amico et.al. (2014) strongly support a focus on academic integration, “it is in the classroom where community college transfers make their connection; thus, it is the academic connections that are associated with positive community college transfer outcomes” (p. 392).
D’Amico et. al. (2014) call for a more in-depth understanding of student interactions on campuses and qualitative inquiry, specific to academic integration, “qualitative data collection may also contribute to the understanding of what it means for community college transfer students to feel integrated” (D’Amico et. al., 2014, p. 396). Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1993) asserts the importance of a student’s background and the knowledge he/she brings to the university plays a role in student persistence and graduation. For community college students this can often mean having a strong GPA prior to transfer, which using Tinto’s attrition theory (1993) has been used as a predictor for transfer student success. D’Amico et. al.’s (2014) study only partially supported this notion. The researchers found that a strong GPA upon transferring was more likely to predict a higher GPA; however, the community college GPA was not a predictor of persistence. Of the 22 variables considered in the data, the only variable that statically predicted both persistence and academic success was the student’s perceived academic fit (D’Amico et. al., 2014).

Tinto’s attrition theory (1993; 1975) has been used for decades to provide a foundation for how those in higher education understand and influence student success. Tinto’s longitudinal model for student departure (1993) continues to be used today to understand college performance (Flores & Simonsson, 2012). Recently, researchers have taken Tinto’s (1993) model and used it to understand attrition as it pertains to community college transfer students (D’Amico et. al. 2014; Townsend & Wilson, 2009). These researchers have illustrated a pronounced focus on the academic system for community transfers. Overall advocating that, compared to social experiences, community college students will benefit (persist/graduate) most from positive academic connections and
experiences (D’Amico et. al. 2014; Townsend & Wilson, 2009). These experiences are defined by Tinto (1993) as both academic performance and faculty/staff interactions. This evidence strongly supports a call for research on the community college students’ interactions with faculty and the faculty-student relationship and how it might influence student success.

Conclusion

Illustrating the complexities of the community college transfer student is challenging. These reports, studies, and policy briefs, provide individual aspects that communicate the significance of the following topics as they relate to my research questions: the community college student profile, the faculty profile at both small private universities and community colleges, the community college pathway to the baccalaureate degree, forms of transfer pathways, Tinto’s attrition theory (1993; 1975), supporting programs and practices designed for community college transfers, the student perspective on the transfer experience, a one-study perspective on the faculty view and predictors of student success.

As explained in a later section, the community college student transfer profile is often layered; these students are often single parents, minorities, veterans, older, or students with disabilities; these students are often viewed as at a disadvantage before they ever walk on a four-year campus. These perceptions are not always accurate, as seen in Castellino’s (2014) study; however, whether or not they exist at a private institution has yet to be explored.

Tinto provides a foundational model for predicting student attrition and success (1993; 1975). Using this model, recent research shows a deeper focus on the academic system vs. the social system for community college students is warranted (Townsend and
According to Tinto (1993), there are two influencing forces within the academic system: academic performance and faculty/staff relationships. These connections support research that investigates these factors and the forces that influence them, such as faculty perceptions.

Although not exclusively limited to community college transfers, an overview of the importance of faculty perceptions in general, as well as the overall benefits of faculty-student relationships for postsecondary education was discussed in a previous section. In addition to the general research supporting faculty-student relationships for all postsecondary students, a convincing case is made in a later section of this chapter for its even greater importance for community college transfer students (Townsend & Wilson, 2009; D’Amico, Dike, Elling, Algozzine, & Ginn, 2014).

The literature presents perplexing problems for community college transfer students. Specifically, community college transfer students have greater difficulty building meaningful relationships with their faculty than their native counterparts (Townsend & Wilson, 2009). This is complicated further by the institutional context, where particularly within the private nonprofit institutions, these students are achieving at lower rates than within public institutions (Jenkins et al., 2016).

These complex problems directed my research focus and support qualitative inquiry centered on how faculty perceive community college transfer students at a small private nonprofit institution. Specifically, the literature illustrates the absence of the faculty perception, and support for why it is important to understand. Chapter Three will further define the research questions and fully develop the methodological design and
data analysis. All of these methods are specifically designed to capture the faculty perception of community college transfer students at a private university.
CHAPTER THREE:

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of my study, as identified in Chapter One, was to understand the faculty perception of community college transfers students at a small, private, nonprofit university in the Southeastern United States. In Chapter Two, I provided further support for this study by discussing an overview of the literature on community college transfer students, explaining both the significance of the faculty-student relationship for community college student success, and illustrating the gaps within the literature. Also in Chapter Two, Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1993, 1975) was discussed as a conceptual framework that informed this study. Using these foundations, in the following chapter I discuss the methodical components of this study: methodological design, research questions, choosing a study design, epistemic orientation and positionality statements, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, research site and participant selection, data collection, unit of analysis and instrument, validity, reliability and trustworthiness, data analysis and coding, research ethics, limitations, pilot study, and finally a summary.

Methodological Design

The theoretical basis of this research situated participants and their experiences at the center of inquiry. This focus made it appropriate to conduct the investigation using qualitative methods, and more specifically, an ethnographic interview study design (Roulston, 2010). This design was appropriate due to the nature of the research
questions and the unit of analysis: full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit university. More specifically, this study was ethnographic due to the focus on culture and interpretation of lived experiences. The methodological approach of an ethnography is not appropriate for this study, whereas the lens of culture that an ethnographic work provides a richer description of lived experiences. A true ethnography would require more in-depth and extended fieldwork, which would go beyond the scope of this study’s research questions, which were limited to the faculty’s perception of the community college transfer student. This study is ethnographic in nature, using a cultural lens to interpret interview data. Therefore, this study is an ethnographic interview study, similar to ethnography, used to “explore the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language” (Roulston, 2010, p. 19). This design allowed for the findings to fully and deeply answer the following research questions.

**Research Questions**

1. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe their interactions and experiences with community college transfer students?

2. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States perceive community college transfer students’ academic preparedness?

3. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe the community college transfer students’ overall academic success?
4. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the southeastern United States describe the institutions from which community college transfer students transferred?

**Choosing the Study Design**

In its broadest sense, my research topic is centered on the relationship between faculty and community college transfer students at a private, four-year institution. There are many ways this topic can be researched, even when developed into “how” questions and limited to the qualitative lens. The following section explains specifically why the theoretical, methodological, and even the unit of measurement were selected for this study, as well as explores other frameworks that were considered and why they were rejected.

Other units of measurement and methodological designs were sincerely considered. As previously stated, there is a great deal of research from the student perspective; with this in mind, I could have created a case study approach and triangulate data from student interviews, faculty interviews and document analysis. This approach was not selected because it would limit the degree to which the faculty perspective could first be explored. There is little research (one dissertation study found though my extensive literature review) on the faculty perception of community college students. This absence of research calls first for a deeper analysis before then making connections to other forms of data. Once a deep analysis was conducted from the faculty perspective the next step was to make generalizations back to existing literature, which is explained in Chapter Five. These connections to literature and the applications to the study site have informed future forms of research such as case study, which are also discussed in Chapter Five. However, performing a case study analysis without first deeply analyzing
and understanding the faculty perception would be premature and ill-informed due to the lack of information on the faculty perception.

As stated at the beginning of this section, a full ethnography was also considered as a methodical approach to more deeply explore the culture, as well as student and faculty experiences at the study site. However, like case study, this would not best answer the research questions adopted that limit the study’s focus to the faculty perception of the community college transfer students. However, borrowing from the anthropological foundations of an ethnography, this phenomena (the faculty perceptive) is best explored using an ethnographic interview study design as described by Roulston (2010); which uses a rigorous analytic process and culture as a lens to explore interpretations derived from interview data.

Other theoretical frameworks were also considered for this study. Often researchers interested in lived experiences use phenomenology for their work. However this framework is traditionally used to describe the lived experiences of those closest to the phenomena being considered. Conceptually, I was interested in student success. If I were asking students to describe how they experience success, my approach would be phenomenological. However, I am asking faculty to interpret their interactions with students and discuss how their interpretations of faculty-student relationships then apply to student success. This level of interpretation and distance from the central concept, made a hermeneutic lens, which adopted both a lens of interpretation and lived experiences, more appropriate (Roulston, 2010).

There are distinct advantages to selecting an ethnographic interview study design. As previously stated, an ethnographic interview study is used to “understand how people
use language and make meaning of events and objects in specific cultural settings” (Roulston, 2010, p. 20). This approach allows the researcher to use traditional anthropological field work similar to completing an ethnography; but, using exclusively in-depth and lengthy interview data (Roulston, 2010). Considering the limits of using a single data source, it was important that I employed numerous means of transparency, validity, trustworthiness and reliability, which will be explained later in this chapter. The study’s ethnographic focus required extensive field work using interview data and centered the focus of the protocol and analysis on the faculty’s cultural interpretation of their experiences with community college transfer students. An interview study design helps me best answer my overarching research question: how do faculty perceive community college transfer students and the institutions from which they transferred?

**Epistemic Orientation**

Before explaining how to investigate social phenomena, I first wish to articulate my ontological and epistemological perspectives. As researcher of qualitative methods, my perspective and understanding of knowledge can impact my work; therefore, it is important to articulate them. As an individual, I have certain experiences, interactions, and foundational beliefs that help me construct what my reality is (ontology) and how I come to know it (epistemology) (Grix, 2002).

Knowledge and therefore reality is constructed through interactions with one another and our own interpretations of these interactions within a particular context. Social interactions and the forces within these interactions develop what is valued as knowledge. The nature of social reality is co-constructed through interactions and is ever evolving and changing. We construct reality with cultural and personal lenses. Often wrought with biases and ignorance, we use cultural norms to define our units of
measurement, allowing us to categorize and interpret the world around us. Since culture and society are inconstant so are the ways we define reality and develop knowledge. The best way to identify social phenomena is to converse with those experiencing the phenomena within the particular context.

**Positionality Statement**

I personally conducted all 12 of the 60-90 minute interviews with my participants; therefore, I, along with my interview questions and protocol, am the primary instrument for data collection. It is important I explain my positionality and connections to the research site, participants and topic. I am by all means an insider. Not only do I teach at the site where my data was collected, but I am also an administrator at the university. Specifically, I am the assistant dean of the Blair College of Health and an instructor in the Department of Kinesiology. It is due to the closeness to my site, students and participants, I first became interested in the topic of study. As an administrator I have become acutely aware of the growing number of community college students in our classes. I became interested in researching the faculty perspective because I suspected there might have been assumptions and perceptions influencing how faculty interact with community college transfer students that could have implications for student success.

There were benefits as well as limitations to my role as an insider, for example, I know all of my participants prior to my study; therefore, in most cases they were comfortable with me and share their unguarded thoughts on the topic. My status as an administrator could also influence how faculty reply. Due to my status as an administrator, it was important that I made many efforts to have as many tenured faculty in my study as possible. Of the 12 faculty interviewed, eight of the 12 faculty interviewed were tenured. Being tenured made it more likely the faculty were unguarded
in their responses, regardless of the interviewer. This allowed me to gain more authentic and rich interview data. However, because of the closeness I have to my topic, and my role as an insider, it is important that I am reflexive and intentional to avoid researcher bias. The specific measures I plan to take to avoid researcher bias are detailed in a later in this chapter.

**Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks**

Through rigorous qualitative study design, I sought to make meaning of the lived experiences of faculty at a small, private, nonprofit university. Specifically, my study describes how faculty at Queens University of Charlotte perceive community college transfer students. My study was guided by two frameworks, one conceptual, another methodological. I used Tinto’s attrition theory (1993, 1975) as my conceptual framework. This framework informed the content of interview questions which were built on the importance of student success. I used a constructivist perspective to inform my methodological approach and interview design.

As a framework and guide, a constructivist perspective fits my research for many reasons. Routed in the value of understanding thought, interactions and discussion, constructivist theory not only fit the phenomena I explored, but it aligned nicely with my own ontological and epistemological beliefs. According to Schwandt (2007), “the constructivist seeks to explain how human beings interpret or construct some X [knowledge on the topic of inquiry] in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts” (p.39). It was due to my interest in how faculty construct meaning from their relationships and interactions with community college transfers at a small, private, nonprofit college that lent itself to be informed by a constructivist theoretical model.
Schwandt (2007), later goes on to state, “a constructivist believes that meaning does not have an independent existence; meaning is not ‘objective’ in this sense, or simply ‘out there’ awaiting discovery. Rather, meaning comes into existence only through the engagement of knowers with the world” (p. 257). As articulated in my statements on epistemology and ontology, this not only aligns with my own interpretation of reality, but was appropriate for the study’s topic and design. Using a constructivist approach, I explain how faculty perceive community college students, these perceptions were created through social construction. For me, the ‘knowers’ are my faculty participants, which I engaged through interviews and the co-creation of knowledge by understanding their perspectives and interactions with students.

One of the main connections of constructivist theory was the nature of my study. As previously articulated in Chapter One, I sought to understand the community college transfer experience through the voices and experiences of my faculty participants. I developed a narrative that explored their experiences with students and shed light on the faculty’s perspective of community college transfer students. The cognitive understanding developed through my study’s findings were socially constructed, and was informed by constructivist theory (Schwandt 2007).

Although prior to conducting my study I saw the potential to discover biases or negative perceptions of community colleges transfer students, I did not claim this as a testable hypothesis. I merely investigated my participants’ perceptions, placing them at the center of my research. Because I did not claim any testable hypothesis, grand narrative, or accepted truth, and my participants’ perspectives were at the center of my research, it was emic. Guided by constructionist theory, I believe the best way to
understand the faculty perception was to engage in dialog with those closest to the phenomena, the faculty themselves.

When using constructivist theory the researcher adopts an ontological belief that reality is co-created and subjective (Schwandt 2007). This allows for an interpretive field of thought and research, meaning I can co-create knowledge with the participants throughout the research process. My study explored faculty perception and described interaction with students; therefore, the constructivist model selected was appropriate.

Although my methods were mostly informed by a constructivist lens, the content of my analysis was informed by the conceptual framework described in detail in Chapter Two, Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1993, 1975). As previously explained, Tinto’s theory asserts that the faculty-student relationship, and therefore faculty perceptions of students, can influence student success. Using Tinto’s (1993, 1975) framework I carefully crafted my interview questions to discuss student achievement and the faculty members perceptions of community college transfer student success; as well as how these faculty define both social and academic success for all of their students. These kinds of questions directly related to my research questions, and proved to be important in understanding why community college transfer students find it difficult to build relationships faculty at four-year institutions (Townsend & Wilson 2009) and how these described interactions influence student success. The results of my study, detailed in Chapter Five, illuminate not only challenges to the faculty-student relationship, but institutionalized Isolation that can also influence the community college transfer student’s ability to develop relationships with faculty.
Tinto’s theory (1993, 1997) also bears significance on the ways I interpreted the analysis of my data. Because of my emic approach, I did not code for specific connections to Tinto’s theory, but themes did emerge around student success; therefore, I used Tinto’s theory to guide my interpretation of the study’s findings presented in Chapter Five.

**Research Site Selection**

It was important that I used a site that allowed me access to information rich data. For example, faculty would not be able to tell me about how they make meaning from their relationships with students if they are not having interactions with them. This was difficult because small, private colleges are not known for having high numbers of transfer students.

To ensure I selected a site with information rich data, I used purposeful and convenience sampling to identify my research site. Queens University of Charlotte was chosen using Patton’s (2015) description of purposeful sampling. Patton (2015) describes purposeful sampling as a method that allows the researcher to identify cases that are saturated with information that closely applies to the research questions. This method of identifying a site for my study was appropriate because of my focus on the faculty’s perception of community college students. To best understand the faculty perception I first needed to confirm the faculty interviewed are currently in an environment where they have interactions with community college transfer students. Therefore, my site was selected not only for convenience, and classification (small, private, nonprofit), but for having a higher than average rate of community college transfer students.
In addition to purposeful sampling, convenience sampling was also used. As outlined in my positionality statement in Chapter Three, I am an employee of the institution, therefore I had a great deal of easy access to my study site, making it convenient to select Queens University. This method of site selection, in addition to purposeful sampling, allowed ease of access to participants and institutional knowledge; however, this also presents limitations explained in Chapter Three.

Aggregate data on students transferring to private schools is sparse; however, recent literature does give a glimpse of the prevalence of community college transfers attending four-year private universities. Using National Student Clearinghouse data tracking a cohort of over 700,000 students for over a six year period, Jenkins, Fink and Columbia University (2016) found that 73% of students transferred to a public institutions, 19% to a private nonprofit, and 9% to a for-profit. Similar to Jenkins et. al. (2016), Romano and Wisniewski (2005), found within their research, students in the state of New York were transferring to private schools at a similar rate. Just over 18% of community college students in the state of New York were selecting to attend private nonprofit colleges. These two groups of researchers found that roughly 18%-19% of community college transfer students are attending private non-profit schools. Unfortunately, data on the percentage of community college transfer students attending private non-profit schools does not appear to exist.

Queens University of Charlotte was selected as the site for this study due to its high number of community college transfer students. According to the university’s office of institutional research, over 40% of the student body are transfer students and over half 50.7% of the transfers come from community colleges. These data were gathered over
email using an informant in the office of institutional research. The informant used 2012-2013, 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 academic year data to develop these percentages. Only students with a minimum of three transfer credits were included. Dual-enrolled students (those who attended a community college while in high school) were not included in the data. As previously stated, two separate studies have reported only 18% (Romano et. al. 2005) or 19% (Jenkins et. al. 2016) of all community college transfers choose to attend private nonprofit schools. The site selected, Queens University of Charlotte, has over 21% of its overall student body comprised of community college transfers. Although these percentage data are quantifying different units of measurement, they are all that is available, and do suggest Queens University is likely to be a site with access to the phenomena I wished to study, which is the intent of purposeful sampling (Patton, 2015).

Jenkins and Fink (2016) also reported that 36% of community college transfer students attend a moderately selective institution (the highest percentage of any classification), and over half the students attended universities located in an urban setting (Jenkins et. al. 2016). Queens University of Charlotte is both a moderately selective institution and located in an urban setting. This too supports that community college transfer student might be more likely to attend Queens University than other kinds of transfer receiving institutions.

**Participant Selection**

To help ensure the faculty selected for this study had a healthy amount of experience teaching community college students at Queens University of Charlotte, two sampling models were employed: criterion sampling and snowball sampling. Faculty selected for my study had a significant amount of experience at the institution, as well as experience teaching community college transfer students at the institution.
Criterion sampling uses a predetermined criteria set by the researcher to select participants with the most knowledge on the topic being studied (Patton, 2015). For this study, the criteria used to select the faculty participants was full-time status, a minimum of five or more years of experience at the university and teaching within a program that was reported to enroll a higher number of transfer students. A detailed description of the specific participants selected for my study is described in Chapter Four.

The criteria of five or more years’ experience was selected using the findings from Antoniou’s study conducted in 2013. Antoniou (2013) found that a teacher’s effectiveness plateaus after the first five years, indicating the faculty member has grown past the challenge of acclimating to a new position or environment. This finding supported the use of five or more years’ experience as an appropriate criteria for my participants. The criteria of full-time status and five or more years of experience not only increased the chances of the faculty having more experience with the student population, but it also assured the faculty member had developed past the learning curve of a new faculty member (Antoniou, 2013). For example, a newer faculty member might be more likely to describe the community college student in general or from prior institutional experiences, whereas the aim of this ethnographic interview study was to develop the perceptions of these students at Queens University of Charlotte. Part-time faculty would have limited experience with community college transfers at Queens University of Charlotte when compared to full-time faculty, therefore full-time status was included as a criteria. Although not a criteria, I also sought to have as many tenured faculty as possible participate in the study. Eight of the 12 faculty interviewed were tenured.
The office of institutional research provided the following list of programs with a higher than average number of transfer students. The following majors were identified as having high transfer student enrollment in 2014-2015: nursing, human service studies, communication, language, psychology, math, kinesiology and business. These were specifically selected because they enroll greater than the overall university average of transfers, greater than 40%. Faculty with experience teaching in these programs were more likely to have experience with community college transfers and therefore the criteria of teaching in one of these programs was used to select faculty participants. A minimum of one faculty member from each of these programs was interviewed for the study.

Faculty selected for this study needed to meet all of these criteria; however there were still many faculty that could have been selected that met these qualifications. To further select faculty with experience teaching community college transfer students, a snowball sample selection was also employed. Snowball sampling is: “when the researcher accesses informants through contact information that is provided by other informants.” (Noy, 2008, p. 330). Noy (2008), asserts that when using a hermeneutic research lens, snowball sampling “can generate a unique type of social knowledge—knowledge which is emergent, political and interactional.”(p. 327). Snowball sampling also employs existing social knowledge which can create a more meaningful participant section (Noy, 2008). At the closure of each interview I asked each participant to recommend faculty colleagues they believed had experience teaching community college students. Many faculty were mentioned, including those that did not meet the criteria.
However, four of the 12 faculty interviewed were recommended by another faculty member in an earlier interview using the snowball sampling method (Noy, 2008).

**Data Collection**

Based on an interview study design, 12 faculty were individually interviewed for a scheduled time of 90 minutes. All the interviews other than those conducted during the pilot study were conducted over the course of the summer 2016 academic term. The two interviews conducted during the pilot were interviewed in fall of 2015. Interviews were recorded, transcribed and coded. Participants were then given the transcriptions for review. Each of these steps will be discussed further in this section.

Due to the emic nature of my study, it was appropriate to use a semi-structured, yet open interview protocol. According to Ralston (2010), semi-structured protocol begins with an interview guide, or list of open-ended guiding questions, being semi-structured allows the researcher to probe, asking follow-up questions and at times letting the participant lead the discussion. Semi-structured interviewing has a list of topics or open-ended questions, but is not bound to asking each participant all the exact same questions, unlike structured interview protocol. The hermeneutic design of my study called for my participants to describe their own experiences and how they derive meaning from these experiences. This level of interpretation was gathered using a semi-structured design allowing the participants to share what they believed was important.

Prior to interview, the faculty member was emailed the interview protocol and a request to participate in the study (appendix B) as well as a request to complete an informed consent form (appendix C). I had thirteen faculty accept the invitation by email, however, one of the faculty whom accepted then later cancelled due to personal circumstances. I did not interview her, but for all of the other 12, a 90 minute interview
was scheduled and conducted. Eleven of the interviews occurred in the faculty member’s offices, whereas one interview as conducted in my office. Prior to recording the interview, the faculty member was asked to complete the informed consent form (appendix C). All 12 participants signed the consent form in person before beginning the interview, which was recorded and later transcribed.

The participants accepted very minimal risk by choosing to participate in my study. As described by Glesne (2011), participant anonymity is best used to decrease this risk. Therefore, the faculty participants in this study were given pseudonyms. Identifiers, such as the faculty member’s discipline was not shared unless the anonymity could confidently be sustained. Queens University of Charlotte is a small university; according to an informant in the office of institutional research, there were a total of 127 full-time faculty employed at the university in 2016. There are academic departments with only two or three full-time faculty. For this reason, the disciplines or other identifiers were not connected to specific interviews, unless I was confident the faculty member’s identity was kept anonymous.

During each interview the same questions (appendix A) were used; however, due to the semi-structured design, I did probe the participants with follow-up questions and often diverged from asking the questions in the same order for each interview. Once the interview was concluded, the interview was transcribed. Member checking was also used in order to help develop trustworthiness, the transcripts were then be sent back to the individual participants by email asking if they would like to provide clarification and to verify the accuracy of the narratives. During this process, I had two of my participants reply with requests. One provided further details as to her definition of student success,
and the other asked me to remove specific information in the transcript that the individual felt might allow him to be identified. A deeper explanation of how I achieved validity, reliability and trustworthiness is explained in a later section of this chapter.

**Unit of Analysis and Instrument**

The unit of analysis was full-time faculty at a small private, masters-level university. I aimed to understand the faculty member’s perceptions, assumptions, and experiences with community colleges students as well as the institutions these student have previously attended. With the study design in mind, individual interview questions and protocol were utilized (appendix A). The interview questions were carefully crafted to incorporate the conceptual framework that informs my research, Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1975, 1993). Using a constructivist lens, the questions were designed and asked as open-ended, allowing the participant to answer the questions freely without many restrictions, and for the co-creation of knowledge and understanding. A semi-structured interview protocol was employed to best guide the participant in discussing the topic, but it also allowed for the participant to at times lead the conversation and share what he/she deemed important on the topic.

It was important my interview questions connected directly back to the research questions. An illustration of how the interview questions and protocol directly relate to the research questions is presented in Table 3.1. Although not every question directly relates to every research question, there are three-five open-ended questions that directly relate to each of the research questions, detailed in Table 3.1. This able illustrates the connections between my interview questions and the research questions. What is also indicated is the questions that were altered based on the findings from the pilot study conducted in Fall 2015.
Table 3.1

Interview Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To the best of your knowledge, how would you describe community college transfer</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students at Queens?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you please describe your interactions with community college transfers?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*How do you define academic success?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How successful are community college transfers at Queens?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you perceive the community college sector or higher education in general?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Would you please describe your personal experiences with or connections to the</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community college sector?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How would a professor, such as yourself, know if he/she has had a community</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college transfers in his/her class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Do you come in contact with many community college transfer students?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Do community college transfer students differ from other kinds of students?</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*How would you describe a student that transfers to Queens who is academically</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prepared?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Describe the level of academic preparedness of the community college transfers at</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queens.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Describe the level of academic support you believe Queens provides for community</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>college students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: *These questions were altered or added as the result of the pilot study findings.

Validity, Reliability and Trustworthiness

Most qualitative researchers seek to provide transparency as a means to gain the trust of the reader, fully accepting there is subjectivity within the research process and
findings. However, positivist quantitative researchers seek to find a single objective truth through rigorous means of measurable inquiry, such as statistical analysis. These associations to validity present epistemological tensions, specifically, the difference of what can be known by the researcher. In my research, I have developed rigorous methods and means of inquiry to achieve transparency and therefore, trustworthiness and validity.

Validity is often used to justify one’s choices and actions as a researcher. Often researchers adopt established methodological techniques as a means to “prove” validity, and the use of said technique as a way for the scholarly community to measure whether or not to trust the researchers’ findings and assertions. This is true for both quantitative and qualitative research; however, these techniques and use of methods are not only fundamentally different between the two, they achieve different assertions in regards to validity and reliability.

Qualitative validity can take many forms, but simply put it is, “when the researcher checks for accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures” (Creswell, 2009, p. 109). Validity was achieved by employing the following tested practices in qualitative research: analytic memos (Creswell, 2009; Saldaña, 2013), reflexivity (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011), field notes (Saldaña, 2013), and member checking (Creswell, 2009; Lather, 1986).

Qualitative reliability is defined by Creswell (2009, p. 190) as, “an approach that is consistent across researchers and projects.” Reliability is not as applicable to my study as other research studies because I am the single researcher conducting one kind of project; however, I have adopted the following methods to ensure reliability across
interviews and analysis: analytic memos (Creswell, 2009; Saldaña, 2013), a codebook (Saldaña, 2013), a thematic analysis to analyze data (Glesne, 2011; Saldaña, 2013), and checking transcripts for inaccuracies during transcription (Glesne, 2011).

My research questions and topic were complicated and layered. The research questions and interview protocol asked my participants to interpret meaning from their experiences with a particular group of students. This level of meaning-making was what made my study hermeneutic, but it also means that faculty used their experiences and social interactions to inform how they described community college transfer students. It was within the faculty members’ responses and my own reflection documented in analytic memos that I captured these layers. Specifically, I used a continually reflective data collection and analytic process.

Lather (1986), suggested that qualitative researchers “construct research designs that push us toward becoming vigorously self-aware.” (p. 66), as a means to develop trustworthiness and validity in our work. One of the ways I did this was through the use of reflexivity. Reflexivity is defined as, “the process of reflecting critically on the self as researcher” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 124). I documented reflexivity through the use of analytic memos, as well as a well-defined and transparent coding process.

Analytic memos were used to strengthen the trustworthiness, validity, reliability and credibility of the data (Saldaña, 2013). To employ this practice, I used analytic memos throughout the coding and analysis of my data. These memos documented my reflections and interpretations of the data throughout the coding process. For example, on July 20, 2016, I documented community college students not speaking up in class using an analytic memo. The following is an excerpt from that memo:
The topic of ‘courage to question’ (L7) [faculty pseudonym code] keeps coming up. Multiple faculty have mentioned that CCTS’ [community college transfer students] are not as likely, to not only speak up in class, but challenge the instructor. R1 [faculty pseudonym code] mentions this frequently as well. I should continue to look for this as a topic within interviews.

This particular topic further developed into examples within future interviews of students not communicating with faculty, which then developed into part of my first theme, Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance. This was an example of how I used analytic memos to document my interpretations which led to the development of my themes.

In addition to reflective narrative, illustrations such as tables were used in my analytic memos. In these tables organized the in vivo and descriptive data so that I could reasonably document, understand and recall where my categories, and later themes came from. This was key to building transparency and the thematic process. Once categories are proven salient across interviews, memos were used similarly to discuss and describe themes. Table 3.2 is an example of part of an analytic memo table I created on June 5, 2016. These short, descriptive, and in-vivo phrases from the interview help validate the development of academic rigor as a category within the interview. This was later developed into a theme across interviews titled, A Second Class Institution: Community College as a Stepping Stone. Exerts such as provided in Table 3.2 also help illustrate reliability of my codes and categories because they were reviewed by both my faculty and fellow students throughout the pilot study. Along with the use of a code book, this review helped provide consistency of the terms, codes and categories.
Table 3.2
Analytic Memo Excerpt

Difference in academic rigor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>M2 [faculty pseudonym]</th>
<th>- “rigor of a university”</th>
<th>- CCs [community colleges] not as rigorous “the rigor was not there”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“under estimate the rigorousness”</td>
<td>- Queens is “much, much tougher”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Higher “level” of learning at Queens</td>
<td>- CCTs [community college transfer student] can manage higher course loads at CCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CC [community college] classes are less time consuming</td>
<td>- Students suffer due to the difference in rigor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- CCs [community colleges] are not rigorous enough to prepare students for Queens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although subjectivity is inevitable in research, researcher bias should be avoided at all costs. Particularly given my own positionality and connections to the site and my participants, it was important I employed sound methods that reduced researcher bias. Lather (1986) described ways a researcher can reduce bias and the following were used within the context of this study: 1) systematized reflexivity, as previously explained, 2) face validity, through member checking, and 3) catalytic validity, or “the degree to which the research process re-orient, focusses, and energizes participants” (p. 67).

Face validity, as defined by Lather (1986), can be accomplished through the use of member checking. The goal of member checking is to ensure the participants story and description of events are accurately recorded by the researcher. Member checking also allows the researcher the opportunity to gain more depth and clarification from the participant. To achieve this, I shared the transcriptions with my participants, asking them to elaborate, clarify and finally confirm that the transcription accurately represented their thoughts and opinions. This was accomplished for all 12 of the interviews, resulting in
two of the transcriptions being altered. One provided a more detailed definition of academic success, whereas the other asked that I remove information in the transcript and data that might compromise the individual’s anonymity.

Catalytic validity (Lather, 1986) was achieved throughout the research process. It was specifically accomplished through the interview process and protocol. Because the protocol was semi-structured, it allowed me to probe my participants to share additional information they thought was important. It allowed the participants to lead me through information they thought was meaningful, which meant I could observe a richer description of the faculty perception. Because my research design was emic, my protocol was nimble and allowed my participants to develop their own meaning and interpretations of the topic. An emic approach creates an analysis that can also be nimble in the kinds of categories, data and information that are developed. These practices both “re-orient and focus” (Lather, 1986, p. 67) the process on the participants creating catalytic validity.

Data Analysis and Coding

I used thematic analysis to interpret my interview transcription data. According to Glesne (2016), thematic analysis is the process of “searching for themes and patterns” (p. 184); “an important aspect of thematic analysis is segregating data into categories or codes” (p. 184). I did this throughout the interview process. For example, once an interview was complete, I then completed the coding process on that entire interview as soon as I could so what developed from the codes could inform the next interview. This helped further develop catalytic validity (Lather, 1986). All of my data was collected and coded from an emic perspective, first using descriptive, in vivo, and versus codes (Saldaña, 2013).
There were many rounds of coding prior to the development of themes, as well as the use of analytic memos. As explained in another section of the chapter, analytic memos were used to assert trustworthiness and to provide transparency as to how and why the data are coded in a particular way. Once the interviews are transcribed the first round of coding was completed using descriptive coding, defined by Saldaña (2013) as summarizing data in short phrases using mostly nouns. At times, the best way to code data is to quote the participant instead of describing the phrase; in these cases I used in vivo coding instead of descriptive coding. In vivo coding, also referred to as, “literal coding,” “verbatim coding,” “inductive coding, “indigenous coding,” and “emic coding” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91) “refers to a word or short phrase from the actual language found in the qualitative data record” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 91). In vivo coding is particularly relevant given my constructivist orientation and lens (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Once the data was captured using both descriptive and in vivo codes I then returned to the transcriptions for other forms of coding. I often used other forms of appropriate coding, such as values, versus, or emotional coding (Saldaña, 2013). For example, while coding my fourth interview I noted sympathy from the faculty member for community college transfer students, specifically when she discussed the student not having the appropriate expectations upon arrival. I then returned to the first interviews to look for emotion when the faculty discussed students not meeting academic expectations, a category that was already present in the first three interviews. By revisiting the first three interviews I found mixed emotions from the other faculty, which later developed into “mixed judgments or lack of knowledge” a subsidiary
theme to the theme, A Second Class Institution: Community College as a Stepping Stone. By employing multiple rounds of coding using different approaches, I was able to fully develop the faculty’s perception. However, not all kinds of thematic coding were used, only those appropriate for an emic approach. For example, hypothesis coding was not appropriate for an emic approach, and was not used.

Once I was satisfied with the detail of my initial rounds of coding, I went through the data again with a focus on developing categories called pattern coding. Pattern coding “pulls together a lot of material into a more meaningful and parsimonious unit of analysis...a sort of meta-code...” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 210). This “meta-code” is called a category (Saldaña, 2013, p. 210). Once categories and subcategories were developed I explained and documented them using analytic memos and tables; the descriptive and in vivo codes were pulled and organized to illustrate how salient the category was throughout the interview. It is important to explain that this process was not always linear. Often categories would develop across interviews before the next interview even took place.

In addition to analytic memos I also employed a number of other tactics to help organize my data and coding process. I used a codebook as defined by Saldaña (2013), “a compilation of the codes, their content descriptions, and a brief data example for reference” (p. 25). This helped me organize and shorthand a great deal of the coding process. I used Microsoft Excel to generate my codebooks. I used books for both my categories and my themes.

After all the interviews were coded for categories and subcategories, I then used thematic analysis to identify themes across multiple interviews (Glesne, 2011;
Saldaña, 2013). However, all of these steps and stages are fluid and did not occur in lock-step order. For example, in the second interview, a new category emerged titled “institutional expectations.” I had missed it in the first interview and had not coded for it. Once I realized it, I went back and coded the first interview for a similar category. I went through my codes using many rounds of coding to ensure validity and saliency to each of my categories and themes.

I did the codebook, the categories, and the theme coding using a lengthy, reflective, and complicated process. Instead of using a traditional qualitative research software, I elected to use Microsoft Excel and Word to help organize my codes. I selected to employ these programs because they forced a connection and constant contact to the data that would be avoided using more convenient qualitative software. This gave me more control and continuous access to the data. It also forced me to use consistent, documented codes using my codebooks. I first developed a codebook that listed all of the categories pulled from the transcript codes captured in the comments I created in Word. These data produced just under 200 categories and just under 900 coded data excerpts. The vast majority of the coded data, and most of the categories did not develop into themes, but were documented and saved should they be needed for other kinds of research with different research questions.

The categories were then reviewed using pattern coding (Saldaña, 2013) to create themes. This required that I return frequently to the transcriptions and analytic memos for deeper understanding, reflection and authentic interpretation. As explained earlier, these steps were critical for both validity and reliability. Gradually, the categories began to develop into seventeen meta-categories, or subsidiary themes.
These subsidiary themes then developed into the final themes: 1) Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-Way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance, 2) A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations, 3) A Second Class Institution: The Community College as a Stepping Stone, and 4) Isolation: A Community College Transfer Experience. These themes, as well as the subsidiary themes, are fully described and connected to the research questions and existing literature in Chapters Four and Five.

**Research Ethics**

As an ethical researcher, I employed a number of safeguards to ensure not only the integrity of my study but to protect my participants. Although my participants will not undergo any physiological or physical risk, I did assign pseudonyms in place of faculty names to reduce the minimal risk that might exist. At times I withheld identifiers, such as faculty discipline or gender, that might connected specific interviews to individuals; I did this to ensure participant anonymity. Sharing these identifiers might inadvertently indicate a faculty member’s identity.

To support the integrity of my data I asked my participants to ‘fact check’ the interview transcriptions (e.g. member checking) and to provide clarity or additional information to the transcription data. Not only did this ensure the accuracy of my data, but it allowed my participants to further develop statements that needed clarification.

Due to being both a faculty member and administrator at the institution where I completed my study, I am also an ‘insider’ and was seen by my participants as someone who understands the university’s culture and language. Where this status helped me in the interview process, it brought with it a potential conflict of interest and the potential for bias. Lather (1986) describes ways a researcher can reduce bias, the following was
used within the context of my study: systematized reflexivity, face validity and catalytic validity. Although researcher bias might exist, I see my insider status as a position that allowed me to gain stronger and more meaningful data than if it had been collected by an outsider.

Many ethical standards are met thought the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process. Because I was able to present my pilot study findings as a scholarly paper at the Council for the Study of Community Colleges, I submitted a full IRB application to the review board at Queens University of Charlotte and later submitted an application for approval by the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board for approval of the full study. Through the application processes I answered many questions regarding the risks to my participants, as well as other ethical considerations. Queens University of Charlotte IRB approved my study on March 21, 2016 (appendix D). I received approval from the University of South Carolina IRB for my study on May 9, 2016 (appendix E).

**Limitations**

Using an ethnographic interview study design provided depth to the perceptions of the faculty I interviewed, as well as clearly addressed the research questions, however, there were limitations. With any research study design there are limitations to what the researcher can accomplish. The following are limitations of this study: the scope, the inability to be generalizable and my positionality.

Firstly, the scope of this study was intentionally limited. As articulated previously, the scope of the study’s design was intentionally limited to the faculty perception, and does not account for how the students or others at my site perceive their relationships with faculty. As stated the first section of this chapter, I first investigated
the faculty perception of community college student transfers and suggest in Chapter Five that more research using other units of measurement are used in future research.

By only interviewing faculty at one institution the data is not generalizable, other than to the literature. Generalizations and connections to existing literature are presented in Chapter Five. The scope of this study was to fully and deeply research a single institutional context; however, this limits how my findings can apply to other institutions. The aim of my study was not to provide knowledge that can be generalized to other institutions, but to inform four-year private university faculty and staff, as well as community college scholars, of what kinds of perceptions that could be evident and to spark conversation on campuses about faculty perceptions.

Finally, as stated in both my positionality statement and in the ethics section, not only am I an insider, but I come with my own assumptions about how faculty might perceive community college students at Queens University of Charlotte. I was acutely aware of these feelings and made every attempt to reduce research bias; however, this too was a limitation.

**Pilot Study**

Glesne (2016), describes the aim of doing a pilot study as the following, “the idea is not to get data per se but to learn about the research process, interview questions, observation techniques, and yourself [the researcher]” (p. 61). In hopes to learn from initial data collection and inform the interview protocol of my full study, I conducted a pilot study in the fall 2015. In November, 2015 two faculty were identified to participate in the pilot study using the criterion sampling explained in another section of this chapter. I interviewed each faculty member for a scheduled time of 90 minutes in their offices. I later transcribed the interviews and shared the transcriptions with the participants to
ensure accuracy (e.g. member checking). The members replied without any requested edits.

As previously described, a thematic analytic process was also used to analyze my data. As defined by Glesne (2016), thematic analysis is the process of “searching for themes and patterns” (p. 184). Due to the limited data, themes and true saturation were unable to be achieved; whereas patterns and categories were identified within and between the interviews.

The interpretations of my data informed the larger study conducted in summer 2016, as well as helped me learn and practice as a novice qualitative researcher. To assert trustworthiness, I used analytic memos to describe the coding process, reflexivity, and categories (Saldaña, 2013); the reflective feedback was incorporated into the analysis and categories were revisited as well as re-coded throughout the analytic process. To assert reliability of both the pilot and the larger study, over 30 Masters and PhD students at the University of South Carolina reviewed excerpts from my transcript data, analytic memos, coding and categories as part of an upper-level qualitative interviewing class. This review included not only notes from the instructor and students, but an in-class discussion of how my coding and thematic process could be improved. From the feedback provided, I learned how not to over generalize my descriptive coding, as well as how to look for coding processes that I might not have learned to employ otherwise.

Although not true in the full study, it was discovered though the feedback from the class, that versus coding was meaningful during the pilot study coding process. Versus coding is defined by Saldaña (2013) as “phrases that capture actual and conceptual conflicts” (p. 61). For example, the first participant described the students as
underprepared and lacking the skills to be successful, but later would discuss the life experiences the students had that benefited them in their classes. I did not consider versus coding important when I began the pilot study; however, after seeing the data I altered my analysis to include coding circles to intentionally capture these tensions for the rest of the interview coding. I did not find this paradox to be true in interviews coded during the full study; however, other topics did emerge using versus coding, and it was a coding process that I developed an ability to observe.

Although very few faculty were interviewed, I was able to develop categories and patterns within and between the two interviews that helped inform the larger study. Although patterns were salient for these first two interviews, they could not be asserted as themes at the completion of the pilot due to the small sample size. These initial findings were developed using the feedback provided by those reviewing my thematic process, and were used to inform the full study conducted in summer 2016.

The following are categories and subcategories I observed between interviews during the pilot study. I also note how these categories later connected to the larger study’s four themes.

1. When asked to describe the community college student the faculty provided certain student characteristics. Specifically, they perceived community college transfer students as being older in age, working, and with personal or “lived/life experiences.” This category later informed the study’s theme, Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-Way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance.

2. Faculty described community college students as being disinterested or lacking the time for campus socialization outside of the classroom, they “go to class and
Although salient at the time of the pilot, this did not develop as part of the study’s themes.

3. Faculty perceived community college students as academically underprepared for their courses, “they are not prepared to work this hard.” Although true for the first two faculty interviewed, this was not a category that developed in future interviews, and was therefore not used as part of the four final themes.

4. Faculty described the students as having mismatched expectations. They “underestimate the rigorousness.” This developed into the following theme, A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations.

5. Faculty felt the students had developed particular “habits” or past experiences from the community college that influenced current behavior. This category shadowed a pattern within future interviews that developed into the theme, A Second Class Institution: The Community College as a Stepping Stone.

A pilot study’s nature is to inform a larger research study to be conducted in the future (Glesne, 2016). Therefore, the pilot study’s significance was not only to gather information on particular lived experiences, but to inform and shape the larger interview study protocol conducted in summer 2016. Using the information synthesized in the initial data analysis of the pilot study, the instrument and interview protocol used in the larger study was altered and revised in the following ways:

1. During the interviews I was not asking one direct question, but often many questions without allowing the participant adequate time to respond to each question individually, which sometimes misdirected the participant or did not allow him/her to address each question. The interview protocol was altered to
more directly ask one question at a time, allowing the participant time to reply, then using the other questions as either follow up questions or probing questions.

2. Through analyzing the data from the pilot study it was discovered the participants have different definitions of academic success and were using the term “academic success” differently. Considering how the faculty member describes academic success may have connections and implications for other data within the interview, the interview protocol was altered to specifically ask the participant to define academic success before being asked how it can be applied.

3. It was identified through the pilot study that faculty were describing student motivation and skills. The interview portal was altered to probe faculty to further discuss student motivation. If faculty describe students as underprepared, a follow up question was added to the protocol to ask how they describe students cope with being underprepared to better answer my research questions.

Both the pilot and the full study’s findings inform what we know about faculty relationships with community college transfer students, as well as help create a deeper understanding of how faculty create meaning from their interactions with community college transfers. The use of the pilot study was able to help shape and develop a rigorous interview protocol that more directly addresses the research questions. Specifically, the interview questions altered based on the pilot study’s findings are indicated on Table 3.1.

**Summary**

Through rigorous qualitative research, I used an ethnographic interview study design for my study. I chose an ethnographic methodology because of attention on the faculty member’s perceptions of community college students within a cultural context
and the value placed on the lived experiences and how they have come to understand their perceptions of students. I used an ethnographic interview study to “explore the meanings that people ascribe to actions and events in their cultural worlds, expressed in their own language” (Roulston, 2010, p. 19). This precisely addresses the overarching research question: how do faculty perceive community college transfer students and the universities from which they transferred?

After considering other forms of qualitative design, I decided that an ethnographic interview study was the most appropriate due to the need for a deep understanding of the faculty perception and culture. The level of interpretation the faculty are asked to provide through a semi-structured interview protocol made this a hermeneutic study.

Two primary theoretical frameworks are used to inform this study. Methodologically, a constructivist frame was used to co-construct meaning and interpretation of lived experiences alongside the faculty participants. The conceptual framework used was Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1975, 1993) which specifically informed the content of interview questions and strongly supported the study’s focus on the connections between the faculty perceptions of community college students and student success.

The site, Queens University of Charlotte, was selected using Patton’s (2015) description of purposeful sampling. Participants were selected using a two process, snowball sampling (Noy, 2008), and criterion sampling (Patton, 2015). Where possible, each participant, apart from the first two interviewees from the pilot study, were selected using these two processes and participants were tenured faculty.
Due to the emic nature of my study, it was appropriate to use a semi-structured interview protocol, which also lent itself to allowing me to probe and lead a conversation that encouraged participant oriented discussion and therefore, catalytic validity (Lather, 1986). Other forms of methods were also employed to ensure validity and trustworthiness, such as member checking and the use of systematized reflexivity in the form of analytic memos (Saldaña, 2013).

A thematic analysis, as described by Glesne (2016) and Saldaña (2013), was used to analyze the data. Data was first coded using descriptive, in vivo, and other forms of coding appropriate for an emic design, such as versus or emotion coding. Once saliency was developed subcategories were developed into categories and categories into themes (Glesne, 2016; Saldaña, 2013).

The pilot study conducted in November, 2015 allowed me to test my interview protocol and learn as a researcher. Being fairly new to qualitative research, conducting a pilot study allowed me to spend time practicing my interviewing techniques, such as taking field notes and using probing questions. It also afforded me the opportunity to work with an instructor and fellow graduate students at the University of South Carolina to ensure the reliability of my coding process. The interview questions were altered after testing the protocol and reviewing the initial findings from the pilot, the changes to the interview questions are indicated in Table 3.1.

The detailed and rigorous methodological design positioned this study’s findings to contribute both a scholarly significance as well as practical application for Queens University of Charlotte and other small, private universities.
CHAPTER FOUR:

FINDINGS

Identified in Chapter One is the purpose of the study: to understand the faculty perception of community college transfer students at a small, private, nonprofit university in the Southeastern United States. Chapter Two discussed an overview of the literature on community college transfer students, explaining both the significance of the faculty-student relationship for community college students, as well as illustrating the gaps within the literature. Also in Chapter Two, Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1993; 1975) was discussed as the conceptual framework that informs this study and supports the importance of the study and its influences on community college transfer student success. Chapter Three provided a description of the methodological components of this study, not limited to the methodological design, positionality, data collection and analysis, validity and the pilot study. Using these foundations, the following chapter will reveal the study’s results and findings. This chapter is comprised of the following sections: 1) description of the study site, 2) students at Queens University including student types and descriptive data, 3) faculty at Queens University and a description of the 12 faculty interviewed, 4) the results, 5) the four themes and subsidiary themes, 6) interpretation of the study’s results by the researcher, and 7) a brief summary.

The findings presented in this chapter were developed thematically from the interviews of 12 full-time faculty at Queens University. In compliance with the
Institutional Review Board approval (appendices D and E), the participants will be granted strict anonymity. Therefore, the participant’s identity will be protected not only through the use of pseudonyms for their names, but no faculty member will be directly connected to a particular department. The site is a relatively small institution and by divulging a faculty member’s gender and discipline, for example, it would in some cases identify him or her.

**Description of the Study Site**

As provided in Chapter Three, Queens University was selected using purposeful sampling (Patton 2015) as well as convenience sampling. The university has a higher than expected number of transfer students. According to the university’s office of institutional research, over 40% of the student body are transfer students and over half 50.7% of the transfers come from community colleges. Although more specific data on transfer students at Queens University is not available, there is a great deal of information on the student body and the institution in general, which is presented in this section, as well as the faculty profile at Queens University. The faculty profile is important considering the participants in the study are full-time faculty. This section is broken into the following three parts: 1) a site overview, 2) the site location and character, and 3) a summary.

**Overview**

Queens serves approximately 2,300 graduate and undergraduate students and employs 132 full-time faculty (Fact Book, 2016). Located in the center of Charlotte, North Carolina, the state’s largest city, Queens’ was founded in 1857 as an all-female seminary (2015-2016 Catalog, 2016). In 1912, the institution changed, renaming it Queens College and adopting the current institutional motto: “not to be served, but to
serve” (2015-2016 Catalog, 2016, p.5). After World War II, the college began admitting men for the first time transitioning the college into a co-educational institution in 1948 (2015-2016 Catalog, 2016). According to the university’s Fact Book (2016), Queens is approximately 74% female and 26% male across all undergraduate and graduate programs. The traditional undergraduates, about 52% of the university’s population, are required to live in on-campus housing for three years. Queens’ catalog provides the following description of the university:

A student-centered, comprehensive, private university affiliated with the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). With a foundation in the liberal arts and a commitment to excellence in education, the university serves the needs of a diverse co-educational student body with a variety of undergraduate and graduate programs (2015-2016 Catalog, 2016, p.1)

The university awards both bachelors and master’s degrees in a variety of professional and liberal arts disciplines. The campus is made up of four colleges and schools: the Blair College Health (BCH), the Presbyterian School of Nursing (which is a part of the BCH), the College of the Arts and Sciences (CAS), the Cato School of Education (which is a part of the CAS), McColl School of Business, and the Knight School of Communication. Within these colleges and schools, the university offers a comprehensive curriculum with 43 undergraduate majors, 62 minors and 15 graduate degrees, as well as certificates (Fact Book, 2016). The university offers four fully online degrees, one undergraduate degree, a Bachelors in Science in Nursing for currently licensed nurses, as well as three online graduate programs including the Master of Arts in
Communication, the Master of Science in Nursing, and the Master of Arts in Educational Leadership.

**Location and Character**

I observed Queens’ specific location in Charlotte, NC to be quite desirable and elite. The university is found in one of the oldest and wealthiest areas of Charlotte called Myers Park. The area is known for Myers Park Country Club and its wealthy and influential inhabitance. According to zillow.com, the average home in Myers Park costs $834,300. Queens University admissions webpages boast of residing in “a park-like setting only a moments’ drive from center city.” I observed this to be true. The campus is charming and lovely, filled with large trees, columns, beautiful landscaping, art, and brick buildings and walkways winding throughout campus.

The Queens’ website illustrates a pride in being located in a metropolitan, southern style city, boasting that Charlotte is both a hub for banking, as well as other kinds of industry. I believe this to be true, and part of the appeal for the students whom choose to attend Queens. In 2016, US News and World Report ranked Charlotte in the top 15 best places to live in the US. This is not only appealing to students, but it probably means there are great opportunities for internships and many opportunities for life off-campus. Queens is a short bus or light rail (the city’s subway system) from the center of the city. Making it possible for many students to live on-campus without a vehicle.

**Summary**

Queens mission is as follows, “Queens provides transformative educational experiences that nurture intellectual curiosity, promote global understanding, encourage
ethical living and prepare individuals for purposeful and fulfilling lives” (2015-2016 Catalog, 2016, p.1). From intentional programing and curriculum, to building relationships with students, the faculty and staff are committed to making Queens a transformational experience. Global understanding is also a pillar of the Queens experience. According to an email I received from the Queens’ Director of the Myrta Pulliam Center for International Education, 78% of traditional undergraduate students travel abroad. She also stated that currently Queens University is ranked seventh by US News and World Report in the ‘Most Students Studying Abroad’ category (U.S. News and World Report, 2016).

In summary, Queens University has liberal arts and Presbyterian roots, but today is a comprehensive, progressive, small, private university nestled in the heart of Charlotte, NC. The surprisingly diverse student body benefits from small class sizes with an average size of about 12 students, as well as a park-like campus in beautiful Myers Park. The university is accredited by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) (2015-2016 Catalog, 2016). Many individual disciplines at Queens also hold specialized accreditations, such as those provided by business, nursing, education, and music therapy organizations. In addition to a comprehensive curriculum, the student body is diverse, not only in age, race and gender, but also in academic background, with far more four year and community college transfer students than might be expected for the institutional type, this is explained in the next section, titled students at Queens University.

Students at Queens University

Considering the study is built on the importance of student success, it is necessary to describe the student body at the study site and the kinds of student types at Queens
University. This section is broken into two parts. The first section describes the overall student body at Queens University. The second section details a type of student at Queens University called the “Hayworth” student. Queens University has a significant number of post/nontraditional students. The campus calls these students “Hayworth students” named for the college that provides services for them, the Hayworth College. In 2015-2016, Hayworth students made up 28% of the overall student body (Fact Book, 2016). This is important because participants of the study describe community college transfer students as being predominantly Hayworth students.

**Student Body**

Queens enrolled 2,286 undergraduate and graduate students in 2015, 1,641 undergraduates and 645 graduate students (Fact Book, 2016, p.1). The preceding section focuses on undergraduate students, and where it is not mentioned, the data provided captures only undergraduates. By in large, the students come from the Southeastern part of the United States. In 2015, 72.2% of the student body were from the southeast, and 49.3% came from North Carolina, the university’s home state (Fact Book, 2016, p. 12). Not unlike most campuses in the United States, there are more females than males, 65.1% to 34.9%, in 2015 (Fact Book, 2016, p. 12). The university classifies students as both traditional and adult students, these adult students are called Hayworth students. In 2015, 28.0% of the undergraduate student body was classified as adult students (Fact Book, 2016, p. 1). These adult students have an average age of 33 years in 2015 (Fact Book, 2016, p. 16).

For the institutional type, Queens has a diverse student body. Queens is categorized by the federal government as a Title III school. According to the university’s
Fact Book, in the fall of 2015, Queens University’s students where represented demographically in the following percentages: Hispanic 6.4%, African American 18.7%, Asian 2.4%, white 55.5%, two or more races 2.4%, international 6.1%, and unknown 8.9%. Although these metrics do illustrate the population as dominantly white, they also show a significant representation of minorities. Based on these representations, the university was classified as a Title III school for its Carnegie classification by the federal government and in 2015 received a Title III grant to support student services.

The study presented is built conceptually on student success, therefore it is important to provide the student outcomes data available. The data only captures traditional student cohorts and is detailed in Tables 4.1 and 4.2. These data show both retention and six year graduation rates. For example, in 2010 graduation rates for African American students was much lower than whites, 44.9% and 51.5% respectfully. Recent retention rates in 2015 illustrated the same discrepancy, but showed promise for a strong future graduation rate, where African Americans are being retained 64.0%, compared to whites, which were being retained at 79.9%. These data suggested projected graduation rates for future cohorts might yield more promising outcomes. Table 4.1 shows the university’s retention rates from 2011-2015.

Table 4.1

*Student Cohort Persistence and Success*

| TRADITIONAL FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME STUDENT COHORT PERSISTENCE & SUCCESS | Percent Retained of Original Cohort |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| First-time, Full-time Student Enrollment | 356 | 356 | 315 | 287 | 281 | | | | |
| Excluded from Retention * | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Cohort count to measure persistence | 356 | 356 | 314 | 287 | 281 | | | | |
Queens University’s six year graduation rates were captured in the university’s factbook. As illustrated in Table 4, the university’s graduation rates have remained 51%-61% between 2005-2010. Both the retention data and the graduation rates suggested a relatively consistent student outcome environment considering these metrics have not changed significantly in recent years.

Table 4.2
Student Cohort Graduation Rates
In addition to race, socioeconomic status can be an important factor when considering a campus’ student body. This information is provided for Queens University by the number of students receiving the Pell Grant, a federally funded grant for students with a low household income. In 2016, 25.1% of all undergraduates at Queens University received the Pell Grant, 86.1% of those receiving Pell were enrolled full-time (Fact Book, 2016, p.5). Interestingly, the majority of these students were traditional-aged undergraduates, not what the university classifies as “adult” or Hayworth students. This is particularly applicable to the study because the faculty perception is that most community college transfers are adult students, and according to the factbook, these students are less likely to be receiving the Pell Grant. There are also subpopulations to consider. For example, significantly more females than males, and whites than any other race received the Pell Grant in 2016 (Fact Book, 2016, p.5). The overall picture of those receiving Pell at Queens University is provided in Table 4.3. The data present quite a bit of data, showing not only gender, but race, as well as five years’ worth of institutional data.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race and Ethnicity</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
<td>72.0%</td>
<td>78.6%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>30.2%</td>
<td>36.7%</td>
<td>42.2%</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minority</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
<td>75.0%</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>53.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>58.6%</td>
<td>56.0%</td>
<td>63.2%</td>
<td>53.7%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>100.0%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race and Ethnicity Unreported</td>
<td>43.8%</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>63.6%</td>
<td>51.6%</td>
<td>58.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>56.5%</td>
<td>57.1%</td>
<td>62.6%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
<td>55.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>40.3%</td>
<td>41.3%</td>
<td>60.2%</td>
<td>50.6%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Pell Recipients</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>45.2%</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Subsidized Loan -No Pell</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>43.9%</td>
<td>60.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Federal Aid</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>59.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fact Book, 2016, p. 15)
Table 4.3
Pell Grant Recipients

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PELL RECIPIENTS - FALL ENROLLMENT</th>
<th>Percent of Total Pell Recipients</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Undergraduate</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Undergraduates</td>
<td>244</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Term Pell Headcount</td>
<td>612</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent fall degree seeking Undergraduates to receive Pell during academic year</td>
<td>33.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent fall degree seeking Undergraduates having received Pell current or previous years</td>
<td>40.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time Pell Students</td>
<td>461</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part-time Pell Students</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PELL RECIPIENT SUBPOPULATIONS

| Females                          | 476  | 415  | 393  | 321  | 285  | 77.8%| 77.9%| 73.7%| 72.5%| 74.6%|
| Males                            | 136  | 118  | 140  | 122  | 97   | 22.2%| 22.1%| 26.3%| 27.5%| 25.4%|
| Hispanic                         | 39   | 45   | 47   | 53   | 43   | 6.4% | 8.4% | 8.8% | 12.0%| 11.3%|
| Black/African American           | 216  | 187  | 180  | 144  | 120  | 35.3%| 35.1%| 33.8%| 32.5%| 31.4%|
| Other Minorities                 | 25   | 25   | 17   | 20   | 13   | 4.1% | 4.7% | 3.2% | 4.5% | 3.4% |
| White                            | 259  | 219  | 228  | 172  | 168  | 42.3%| 41.1%| 42.8%| 38.8%| 44.0%|
| Two or More Races                | 2    | 14   | 11   | 15   | 14   | 0.3% | 2.6% | 2.1% | 3.4% | 3.7% |
| Race and Ethnicity Unreported    | 71   | 43   | 50   | 39   | 24   | 11.6%| 8.1% | 9.4% | 8.8% | 6.3% |

(Fact Book, 2016, p. 5)

The Queens community is small, diverse and local. As a federally classified Title III school, the campus serves more minorities than other institutions of similar classification. Students often come from the Southeast and are successful at Queens. Student academic success is relatively high, with a freshman to sophomore retention rate of 74.2% in 2014, and a six year graduation rate of the 2009 cohort of 52.9% (Fact Book, 2016). The financial background of the students is fairly strong, with only 33.1% receiving the Pell Grant. Of the 1,614 undergraduates, just under a third of them are classified by the university as adult or “Hayworth” students.
**Hayworth Students**

The interviewees within this study overwhelmingly describe community college transfer students as older and use the institutional term ‘Hayworth’ to differentiate them from traditionally aged students. Queens uses age to develop two congruent student bodies, those over the age of 23 are called Hayworth students and those younger are traditional students. These two groups of students take the same classes with the same professors, but in almost all other aspects of their academic career interact with the university very differently. Currently, the university distinguishes these two groups exclusively by age.

According to the 2015-2016 university Catalog found on the institution’s website, a student can be admitted to the university as a Hayworth student and served by the Hayworth College is if the individual is 23yrs. or older: “Non-traditional age prospective students (age 23 or older) are served by the Hayworth School Program.” Specifically what this means is the student’s admissions, tuition, and all other processes/procedures fall within the Hayworth College regardless of the students’ program of study. This also means Hayworth students are intentionally both included and excluded from different opportunities at the university.

The primary reason for these Isolations is because of the tuition differences. According to the 2015-2016 university Catalog, traditional aged students pay $31,360, plus a minimum of $970 in fees, for one year of full-time enrollment (between 24-36 credit hours); whereas Hayworth students pay $464 per credit hour, plus $150-$410 in fees annually depending on the number of classes the student takes. This means that depending on the number of courses a student takes, a Hayworth student pays between
$476-$1078 per credit hour, whereas a traditional aged student pays $899-$1347. Hayworth students pay between $423-$279 less than traditional students per credit hour. These numbers do not account for the differences in whether or not a student is in campus housing or for individual course fees, payment plans, or late fees which can make a difference in the overall cost to the student.

There are many ways Hayworth students are given the same student experience as a traditional aged student. For example, both types of students can select the same kinds of majors and take all the same classes. This is intended to allow them to the same classroom and academic experiences. Both types of students work with the same office of student financial aid and billing. The office of student success, which provides tutoring and writing services for students also works with both types of students. The alumni and advancement and internships and career offices also work closely with both student groups. Marketing and community relations too is charged with representing both kinds of students in their work. There are many other areas as well that do not distinguish their services between student groups, such as: campus dining, police, housekeeping, and the bookstore.

There are many areas of campus where each of these student groups have parallel experiences, meaning the services or experiences are offered to both groups, only though different pathways. The following services and offices are available to both students but are separate from one another: admissions, student life, academic advising and orientation. There are also areas on campus that only serve traditional students which are not available to Hayworth students.
Student life and health and wellness are areas of campus only serving traditionally aged students and their services are not available to students 23 years and older. Student life provides the following services not available to Hayworth students: residence life, clubs and organizations, and student government. It is also noteworthy, that in addition to these areas, the office of diversity and inclusion also resides within student life; it is unclear if or how this office services both student populations. The center for health and wellness includes on-campus counseling services, as well as a fully staffed nurse’s clinic.

It is important to explicitly state that not all community college transfer students are Hayworth students. Whether or not a student is a Hayworth student is defined by the student’s age, therefore a community college transfer that is 22 years or younger, would not be classified as Hayworth. The percentage of Hayworth students who are community college transfers is not available. After speaking with informants in both the Office of Institutional Research and an upper-level administrator in the Hayworth College, it was discovered this data is unknown; however it was reported by both of these individuals there are more Hayworth students than traditional aged students whom transfer from another school, but the institutional type (four-year vs. community college) is not captured. This absence of data is concerning as is further discussed in the interpretations and recommendations sections within Chapter Five.

The student type and the distinction between Hayworth and traditional students is particularly important because of the ways this was discussed by the interviewees in this study. All of those interviewed either explicitly defined community college transfers are more likely to be Hayworth students, or they used age as a way to characterize community college transfers as older than other students in their classes. For the majority
of the faculty interviewed, ten out of the 12, one of the ways community college transfer students have isolated experiences from other students are because they are more likely to be Hayworth students.

During the interviews the discussion of student type came up in one way or another in every interview and for some, quite often throughout. Often during the interviews I would need to ask follow-up or clarifying questions to figure out if the faculty member was talking about community college transfers, or Hayworth students. For many of the faculty, the distinction was unnecessary because community college transfer students were, in their opinion, Hayworth students. On one occasion I had to correct the interviewee, letting her know that if a community college transfer student was under the age of 23, he/she would be classified as a traditional student, not a Hayworth student.

The student type discussed often became a point of confusion for me as the interviewer. For example, when a faculty member would start talking about Hayworth students I would have to stop and ask them why this was important in relation to community college students. Many assumed all community college transfers were Hayworth students, whereas others would explain that most of them are Hayworth. They all described community college transfer students as older, and most (ten of the 12 interviewed) believed community college transfer students are more likely to be a Hayworth student than a traditional aged student.

These student types, Hayworth and traditional, are important to understand and define because of the way these differences were discussed by the interviewees. Within the description of themes, the next section, discusses, in part, how faculty view the
community college student experiencing Queens University as an isolated, and at times disadvantaged, experience compared to other students. This is largely due to the services and processes being separate for post/non-traditional students.

**Faculty at Queens University**

The preceding section, provided a description of not only the student body at the study site, but defined the Hayworth student subpopulation. In addition to describing the student body, it is important a description of the faculty also be provided. The following section first provides an overview of the faculty at the study site using available institutional data. Secondly, the specific participants of the study will be described individually in detail, as well as the overarching picture and data of the faculty interviewed.

Queens University faculty are much less diverse than its students. There are 132 full-time faculty at Queens University. These faculty are predominantly white, 86.8% identify as white, whereas as the following percentages represent faculty minorities: 4.7% African American, 3.9% Hispanic, 2.3 other, and 2.3% unknown (Fact Book, 2016). Other minorities, such as American Indian or two or more races, are not represented on the faculty at Queens University (Fact Book, 2016). These representations provide a stark contrast to the student representation in regard to race. Less is true for gender, 62.0% of the faculty are female (Fact Book, 2016). When only considering the number of people employed, there are far more adjunct faculty, 58% (Fact Book, 2016). There are also more tenure or tenure-track full-time faculty than there are nontenure or nontenure-track faculty, 68.2% and 31.8% respectfully (Fact Book, 2016). Over half of the faculty, both full-time and part-time hold a terminal degree within their field (Fact Book, 2016).
The data available on the faculty at Queens University is limited to the following two tables, Table 4.4 and Table 4.5. At minimum, these data provide a demographic overview as well as a breakdown of both part-time and full-time categories. The first table, Table 4.4, provides rank, demographics, and the academic credentials held by all the faculty including part-time and administrators with faculty status.

Table 4.4
*All Faculty: Rank, Demographics, and Credentials*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Tenure/Tenure-Track Faculty *</th>
<th>68.2%</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>80</th>
<th>62.0%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>Males</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>38.0%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>28.7%</td>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>Other Minorities</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Non-Tenure Track Faculty</th>
<th>41</th>
<th>31.8%</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>112</th>
<th>86.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>Two or More</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10.1%</td>
<td>Race/Ethnicity Unreported</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Fact Book, 2016, p. 23)

Table 4.5 provides rank, demographics, and the academic credentials held by only full-time tenure and non-tenure track faculty excluding part-time faculty and administrators at Queens University. These data illustrate the prominence of tenured faculty, females, as well as those teaching full-time at the institution that hold terminal degrees. Considering
the prominence of women employed at the university, it would be interesting to see the breakdown of rank and gender; however, this data is not currently available.

Table 4.5
*Teaching Faculty: Rank, Demographics, and Credentials*

**TEACHING FACULTY FALL 2016 – 17**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank *</th>
<th>Tenure/Tenure-Track Faculty</th>
<th>Non-Tenure Track Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure/Tenure-Track</td>
<td>83 28.4%</td>
<td>41 14.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>27 9.2%</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>34 11.6%</td>
<td>2 - 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>20 6.8%</td>
<td>2 - 0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>2 0.7%</td>
<td>19 6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>7 2.4%</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjunct Faculty</td>
<td>168 57.5%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Demographics**

*TEACHING FACULTY TOTAL 292 100.0%*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank *</th>
<th>Demographics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>184 63.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>108 37.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8 2.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black/African American</td>
<td>22 7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Minorities</td>
<td>6 2.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>219 75.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More</td>
<td>1 0.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>- -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race/Ethnicity Unreported</td>
<td>36 12.3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**2016-17 TEACHING FACULTY BY HIGHEST DEGREE EARNED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Highest Degree Earned</th>
<th>Tenure/Tenure Track</th>
<th>Non-Tenure Track</th>
<th>Adjunct Faculty</th>
<th>TOTALS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate - Research</td>
<td>74 16 31 25 2</td>
<td>9 45</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate - Professional</td>
<td>3 2 1 1</td>
<td>1 7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Terminal Degree</td>
<td>5 1 3 1</td>
<td>5 13</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree (not terminal)</td>
<td>1 1</td>
<td>24 81</td>
<td>106</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2 1</td>
<td>2 22</td>
<td>24</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEACHING FACULTY TOTAL</td>
<td>83 20 34 27 2</td>
<td>41 168</td>
<td>292</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(Fact Book, 2016, p. 24)*

Unique to Queens University is how faculty meetings and the division of power between the faculty and administration. For example, at Queens University, all of the faculty university-wide attend university faculty meetings twice a term, in addition to unit and/or department meetings. Faculty meetings are led by the faculty president. The
faculty are organized in a faculty council, which is an elected group of faculty. The faculty president also sits on the President’s Cabinet along with the vice presidents, as well as meets with the Board of Trustees twice annually.

**Description of Participants**

In this section I describe the 12 specific interview participants in this study. As described in Chapter Three, participants were selected using both criterion sampling (Patton, 2015) and snowball sampling (Noy, 2008). Both the information provided by the faculty themselves during interview and my personal observations during the interview are presented. All of the interviews took place at Queens University, one in my office, and the rest occurred in the faculty offices. The faculty were asked to pick a comfortable, quiet location. All but one of them asked that I meet them in their offices. The day and time were also scheduled based on the preference and availability of the interviewee, therefore the order of the interviews was random depending on how difficult the interview was to schedule.

As described in Chapter Three, anonymity of my participants was important. Queens University is a small university. For example, one of my participants is one of two full-time faculty within her department. For this reason, I assured my participants the faculty members’ departments would not be connected to the faculty member’s comments or other forms of identity. I provide an overview of the academic disciplines represented by participants, but did not connect any individual to a department or program, doing so may inadvertently compromise my participants’ anonymity. I provided the overall academic areas in which the departments fall, these areas do not
reflect organizational structures at Queens University, but are designed to help the reader better understand the faculty’s background and the overall disciplinary areas represented.

Specifically, I interviewed 12 faculty from eight departments. As you can see from Figure 4.1 there are three departments where I interviewed more than one faculty member. There were a few reasons for these overlaps. All of them stem from my participant selection methods described in Chapter Three. These three departments were departments where there were high numbers of transfer students, and using my snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007), these faculty were suggested by their colleagues as faculty with lots of experience teaching community college transfer students. Generally speaking, these department happen to be much larger than the others as well. As you can see from Figure 3 the majority of my participants are Caucasian, but considering 76.8% of the faculty at Queens University are white, this was unavoidable and a fair representation of the faculty at Queens University (Fact Book, 2016). In addition to racial representation, my participants’ gender was also representative of the Queens University faculty. Four of my participants are male, or 30% of those interviewed. The Queens University faculty is 34% male (Fact Book, 2016).

![Number of Faculty Interviewed Per Program](image)

**Figure 4.1**

*Number of Faculty Interviewed Per Program*
The following section is an individualized description of the 12 participants. These descriptions were developed from the interviews themselves, as well as my field notes and analytic memos. Using both reported data, such as the faculty discipline and the number of years a particular faculty member had taught for Queens University, as well as my own observations, such as the description of the faculty’s office, or the faculty’s manner or gestures used, are all used to develop a participant description. Table 4.6 provides as much descriptive data as possible without jeopardizing the anonymity of the participants.

Table 4.6
Descriptive of the Faculty Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Pseudonym</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Program Area</th>
<th>Yrs. Teaching at the University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emma</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noah</td>
<td>Caucasian</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Professional</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amelia</td>
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<td>F</td>
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Emma has been a faculty member at Queens for over six years. Before coming to Queens she worked in both the community college system in another state, as well as a public four year school. Emma’s experiences working at a community college allowed her to discuss the system and its benefits with depth and a knowledge base that others interviewed did not discuss. As a faculty member in a professionally accredited field, she spoke in great deal about the kinds of expectations she has of her students within her field. He office was very well organized and she spoke candid and pointedly. Both passion for student success and empathy for student struggles were present throughout the interview. At length she described examples of helping students after and outside of class, as well as beyond office hours. Her manner was very collected and thoughtful. She did not veer from the topic asked.

In contrast to Emma, Noah easily drifted off topic. I spent a great deal of time trying to reorient the interview with him. He is a very strong, confident, older white male with much to say both jokingly and seriously. He has taught for the university for over ten years. Unlike Emma, he did not empathize with struggling students as much as the others interviewed. In particular, he made multiple comments about how faculty needed to focus on the class, describing the “other stuff,” such as life issues, as “someone else’s problem.” He spoke very specifically about how he helped high achieving students connect with internships and how he valued teaching students about professionalism, as a faculty member also teaching in a professional field, he boasted how students in his major, unlike those in the arts and humanities, were able to find higher paying jobs upon graduation.
Liam has taught for Queens University for six years and describes his passion for his students and his professional field. He has not always been an academic, he worked within his professional field for the bulk of his career before coming to teach and work at Queens University. He sees this experience as one that helps him prepare students for what he has found to be a “competitive professional field.” He has recently decided to return to graduate school himself. He spoke very fast and often appeared to rabble, although his comments were tailored to the questions asked. He too is a white male, but is quite a bit younger and did not convey the same amount of confidence that Noah did. He asked a lot of follow up questions and seemed passionate about wanting to help those disadvantaged.

According to many of those I first interviewed, Olivia has the most experience of anyone at Queens University teaching community college transfer students. Using the snowball sampling, she was mentioned by three of her faculty colleagues as having a great deal of experience with community college transfer students. For most of her 12 years at Queens University she taught within a professional field that admitted almost exclusively community college transfer students. Her manner was gentle and she spoke slowly. I had difficulty making sure we were both discussing the same topic or question. I was unsure throughout my interview I was accurately understanding her point of view and needed to ask her lots follow up questions such as, “I understand you to be saying….is this correct?.” Although the interview, as well as the coding process, took much longer than others, spending the extra time allowed me to better understand her point of view. Olivia is very proud of the profession she represents. She is a confident
teacher, this was evident in her voice when she spoke about methods she used in her classes and working with students.

Ava is one of the Hispanic women I interviewed. She has taught at the university for six years and did not seem to have as much experience teaching community college students as some of the other faculty. Ava was the only faculty member I interviewed that did not believe she had very many community college transfer students in her classes. However, this did not mean she was unable to describe them. She gave many examples of relationships she had with community college transfers. Castello (2013) found her faculty participants also provided descriptions of community college transfer students even though they also stated having little to no access to them. This, like Ava’s experience, illustrated that perceptions existed of community college students regardless of the faculty’s access to the student population.

Most of the faculty I spoke with presented themselves very academically, speaking professionally giving great thought to their responses. Ava did not seem as concerned with using just the right words as with other faculty interviewed, but she also did not provide as much depth. Her replies were sometimes funny or even a bit off-topic, and always quite short. Ava teaches in the humanities and spoke quite a bit off topic about the value of a liberal arts education.

A social science professor, Sophia has taught for Queens University for eleven years and has moved between departments during her time at the university. She was one of the faculty interviewed as part of the pilot study, therefore I spent a great deal of time gathering more information in follow up questions to be certain I captured her answers to the revised interview protocol. In both instances she described having a great deal of
experience teaching community college students. She spent an unusual amount of time during the interview talking about students with disabilities, students struggling with English as a second language, and psychological disorders. These were not always in relation to the community college transfer, but were students she deeply cared about helping. She spent a great deal of time talking about how the social sciences, and particularly her department were closely tied to the local community colleges though both articulation agreements, and adjunct faculty that teach for both institutions.

Isabella is an international, social science faculty member, living most of her life outside of the United States. She has taught for Queens University for 12 years and is proud to be recently tenured. Isabella was the other faculty member I interviewed as part of the pilot study. More than any other faculty member interviewed Isabella viewed community college students as underprepared, disillusioned and struggling. She openly expressed her dislike for teaching community college transfer students because of their difficulties. She said, “just give me traditional students.” All of the others interviewed were somewhat mixed, or presented a complex view of the community college transfer, not Isabella, she saw these students as problematic, both for the students themselves due to their failures, and for the university. Her view of the Community College was very similar, “basically, it is education, but we are comparing two levels. Is it as good as a college, private liberal arts university? I don’t think it is as good, but far better than not going to any higher education institution.” Like others, she describes spending hours outside of class helping students, but more so than others, expresses her frustration in having to do so for community college transfer students.
Isabella was both candid and unguarded throughout the interview, which she explained was in part due to being recently tenured. Speaking very professionally and pointedly, she described her perspectives, often giving student examples to support her ideas. Her office was neat and uncluttered. She was very careful of time, often looking at her watch throughout the interview. As a social scientist, she sometimes used theory or principles within her field to describe the student behavior she observed.

Mia, a faculty member in the humanities, has taught for Queens University for 27 years. She is Hispanic and as a Hispanic faculty member spoke about how she connected with Hispanic students, including community college transfer students. In relation to her experience with these students, she discussed at length Queens University’s location (Myers Park) and the perceived campus elitism that exists for Hispanic students; however, this did not come up in other interviews so it did not develop into a theme. Mia’s manner was soft yet quick, and at times I had difficulty keeping up with my field notes because of the ever changing direction of her comments. Her eyes are warm and inviting. She described an experience teaching at another institution where she was told she spent too much time helping students. She finds Queens University’s student-centered priory aligns with her own preferences in how she spends her time.

Ethan is an African American male teaching in a professional field. Having taught at Queens University for only six years, he has the least amount of experience of any faculty member interviewed. Ethan is very tall, appears athletic and portrays passion when talking about students. He uses a lot of gestures, facial expression and metaphors to illustrate his ideas. His office is a bit disheveled, filled with papers, knick-knacks, pictures and awards, but little hanging on the walls. The interview with Ethan was often
off-topic and went well beyond the scheduled time. He spent a great deal of time wanting to talk about his profession, the importance of student internships, and making sure his students were set up to be employed upon graduation. Like Isabella, Ethan view of the community college transfer student was far less optimistic, he too felt these students came to Queens University ill prepared and struggling.

Amelia teaches in the social sciences and self identifies as a “four-year college girl.” She did not have much of a perspective of the community college sector of higher education. Where she explained having a great deal of experience teaching community college transfers, she fully admitted to knowing very little about community colleges. She is an African American faculty member and has taught for Queens University for six years. Although small in stature, she portrays confidence with great posture and control. She confidently describes what she believes her students need and how to best educate them. Threaded throughout her comments is a lack of student agency. She appears to know better what it is they need than they do.

Harper has been a full-time faculty member in the sciences at Queens University for 12 years. Before becoming full-time she taught at Queens University as an adjunct. She teaches courses that often serve as a general education requirement, so she teaches many students that are not in her department. She described having a great deal of experiences with community college transfer students both generally, as well as providing many student examples. Harper came to my office for the interview and appeared uncomfortable in the chair, hunched over and holding her bag in her lap for much of the interview. Her voice was a bit raspy as if she was getting over a cold. Despite some of her body language, her comments seemed open and authentic. She
described in detail both positive and difficult relationships and interactions with community college transfer students.

Mason, a young white male with seven years of experience teaching within a professional field at Queens University, described students thoughtfully and in rich detail. His responses appeared overly calculated and extremely thoughtful. Quite often he seemed to be considering my motive for asking the question before articulating a response. I believe his method made him more reserved in his responses compared to other interviews, which led me to believe his responses were less open than those whom shared the first things that came to mind. For example, within my field notes during the interview I wrote “holding back?” In part, because of the long pauses he would take after I asked him a question. It felt more like interviewing someone for a job or a media interview, unlike the other interviews which developed more like a conversation about community college transfer students. However, Mason did share in detail his specific answers and perceptions.

The faculty interviewed in this study provided a story of the community college transfer student experience. Those interviewed accurately represented faculty with the most experiences at Queens University with community college transfer students. The preceding participant descriptions describe both the way my faculty participants described themselves, as well as my own observations as the researcher through the use of field notes and analytic memos.

Results

In the preceding sections, I described the site for the study, the participants, and the types of students at Queens. These topics have provided the context for the following, which is a section dedicated to presenting the findings of this research study.
Chapter Three provided a description of my thematic analysis, where through multiple rounds of coding I developed categories. Once categories were developed and all 12 interviews were fully coded, I then found themes and subsidiary themes across interviews. Finally, these themes were more deeply interpreted, often by returning to the original transcripts, and meaning developed. Using this process, the following themes were developed: 1) Student/Faculty Relationship: A two-way street of hesitation and reluctance, which describes how both community college transfer students, and the faculty that teach them, are both hesitant and reluctant to work with one another. 2) A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations, expresses that what a faculty member expects of a student and what a student perceives to be expected of them should align if the student is going to be successful. This theme describes how the faculty perceive faculty-students expectations not being aligned when a community college transfer student begins at Queens University. 3) A Second Class Institution: The Community College as a Stepping Stone, this theme provides rich description of how faculty perceived attending a community college as a stepping stone towards achieving the higher and more prestigious goal of attending Queens University of Charlotte. 4) Isolation: A Community College Transfer Experience, this theme is a description of the ways community college transfer students are perceived as intentionally and unintentionally given a separate experience at Queens University from other students, and how being isolated disadvantages these students.

Each of these themes are discussed in this section and are represented organizationally in Table 4.7. Each, in different ways help fully answer the overarching
research question, how do faculty perceive community college transfer students and the institutions from which they transferred?

Table 4.7
Themes and Subsidiary Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Subsidiary Themes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Factors Influencing Faculty/Student</td>
<td>· Students perceived as complicated</td>
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<td>Relationships</td>
<td>· Students not asking for help</td>
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<tr>
<td>Misaligned Expectations &amp; Student Success</td>
<td>· Faculty expectations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>· Failing then succeeding</td>
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<td>· Community college as education: academic hierarchy</td>
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<td>· Systematically disadvantaged experience</td>
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<td>· Faculty and students being unaware</td>
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Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-Way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance

The first theme that emerged from the thematic analysis outlines the connections and disconnections between faculty at the study site and community college transfer students. Community college transfer students and the faculty that teach them, are both hesitant and reluctant to work with one another. The following theme describes both the faculty descriptions of these hesitations, as well as any motives by the faculty and students for being resistant. In particular, faculty were hesitant because they viewed working with community college students as more time consuming and difficult than
teaching other kinds of students. The students were described as reluctant to ask for help or come to office hours because of a lack of understanding or for unknown reasons. In both cases, this created a barrier to the faculty-student relationship for community college transfer students.

As discussed in Chapter Two, Tinto’s attrition theory (1993; 1975), the conceptual framework used in this study, asserts the importance of the faculty-student relationship and its applications to student success. Using examples from teaching community college transfer students, all of the faculty interviewed described factors that influenced their relationships with these students. This theme details these factors and how the factors influenced the faculty-student relationship. Within this theme the following two subsidiary themes emerged: the complexity of a community college transfer student and community college transfer students’ resistance to reach out to faculty for academic help. This first theme is not only deeply connected to the theoretical framework, Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1993; 1975), but highlights the importance of faculty-student relationships at Queens.

**Students perceived as complicated.**

Community college transfer students were viewed by the faculty participants as complex. In other words, community college transfer students are considered “layered,” “messy” and therefore time consuming. The following subsidiary theme described how community college transfer students are viewed as having busy lives, which can make classes one of many priorities for them, unlike other types of students. This makes them more difficult to teach, advise, and mentor. They are described as older, hold full-time jobs, having financial challenges, and providing for families. These priorities can
influence a student’s academics and make them more difficult or time consuming to teach and advise. Not only the students themselves, but the pathway for them is also more complicated. The faculty and the students struggle to find the correct classes, understand transfer credits as well as articulation. These are additional layers that other student types do not encounter. Unlike other types of students, community college transfer students bring with them unique backgrounds and experiences to Queens University. Faculty participants described their view of these experiences in the theme described in the following section.

One of the ways faculty viewed community college students as complex, was how they described these students to be older than other students. The presence of age, both as an influencing factor to the faculty-student relationship was present in many of the interviews. For example, Sophia described her fellow faculty at Queens University not knowing their students if they are older, “I don't know that everybody gets to know the students, you know if they're older.” Another faculty member described fellow faculty outright avoiding older students, “I have had faculty members tell me I will not teach at night, I will not teach [older] students, they’ll say, I don’t want to deal with them.”

Only one of the faculty participants themselves described displeasure with teaching community college transfer students. Emma stated the opposite, “I love them [community college transfer students], yeah. Not everybody does, not everybody likes that experience.” Almost all of the faculty interviewed described community college transfer students as being more complicated or complex than other kinds of students. These complexities were sometimes described specifically, whereas others stated their observations more generally. Some of the specific examples provided reflected the
amount of time it took to work with and help community college transfer students. This was often in relation to the commitments the students have outside of academics. Faculty provided examples of students missing class to care for a sick child, or balancing the responsibilities of working and taking classes. They also described helping students with transfer credits, or navigating the policies of systems at Queens.

In contrast, the faculty did not see having to spend the same amount of time working with other kinds of transfer students or native students. The community college transfer student was consistently viewed as difficult, specifically being described as “chaotic,” “messy,” “challenging” and “complicated” to “deal with.” However, these descriptions were often conveyed with empathy for the student. The students were pitied or admired, depending on the faculty member, for having to overcome their challenges. Mason describes community college students as having a deeper appreciation for faculty relationships due to their complicated life experiences:

I hate stereotyping but they [community college transfer students] tend to very much appreciate when they do find a match with a faculty member, like some of my more rewarding advising experiences, because they just feel like it’s a little bit different than they have experienced before. And if I have had them in a class and advising and then to see them to graduation seems, to me it’s quite rewarding and almost not more rewarding but because of their appreciation component.

When the interviewer asked why the students were so appreciative Mason shared,

Yeah I can think of someone whose life experience, you know whose father died and went to community college then came back here and you know that’s why I go back there, life experience. I’m not saying all people go to community
colleges have… but I do think they probably have different life experiences as in I imagine the research tells you socially economically and otherwise it’s a different experience but like I think in certain circumstances they see an ally and they can appreciate like you know thank you for helping me accomplish a goal that’s important to me. I get this different kind of appreciation from someone who went continuously.

Overall, faculty accounts supported not only that community college transfer students had more complex experiences, but often saw these complexities as barriers to faculty making positive connections and relationships with these students. Some faculty, like Mason, saw their complexities as benefits to the student, but all of the faculty interviewed, except one, described these students as layered, time consuming or challenging.

**Students not asking for help.**

The next subsidiary theme was the faculty member’s perception of students asking faculty for help. This subsidiary theme details how faculty perceive community college transfer students as reluctant to ask faculty for help, or come to office hours. They are perceived as not approaching their faculty as often as other types of students. Those interviewed highly revered the faculty-student relationship as something all students benefit from, and something that is incredibly important to the student experience at Queens. However, overall, faculty accounts provided information that illustrates community college transfer students do not approach their faculty. Over half of the faculty participants in one way or another described community college transfer students having difficulty approaching their faculty. For many this means reaching out to the students individually. Isabella stated:
Currently I have a student in my night class who did not so well on the first quiz, so, just like anybody else I say, come and sit down we go over your notes, we will go over your study habits, we will go over the potential exam material, so to prepare you. She tells me that she is not used to going to any professors’ offices or even knowing where the professor’s office is. I said, but you are not doing well, and that is what we have to do, haven’t you ever done that, she said, no, I said where did you go to school? She said, this is my first semester here, I went to a community college. So, I guess, some of the community college faculty, I don’t know, they may not have offices, or whatever, so, she was quite resistant, but she did come and she at least got a “C” for the midterm. But she felt like, this the way it is why should I go to a professor’s office. But a Queens student? [Said in a strong tone:] It is their right! But she thought that it’s not the way it is done…

This statement is powerful because, like many others interviewed, it illustrates how community college students are resistant to approach their faculty, particularly in contrast to the native student. It is also worth noting that she describe the native student as a “Queens student,” almost to suggest that the transfer is by comparison not a Queens student, but a community college student, even though the student is currently enrolled at Queens. There are other subtle, and not so subtle, ways faculty describe the traditional, native student being privileged over the community college transfer student. This is further developed in theme four, the isolated experience.

Other faculty participants describe the reluctance of a community college transfer student approaching faculty more generally. Liam stated, “It takes a little while to get them [community college transfer students] to come talk to you” and Olivia explained
that traditional students were more likely to come ask for help because community college transfer students had “other commitments and all kind of stuff” that kept them from engaging with faculty outside of class. Through the saturation of codes, categories, and themes, it is clear that the faculty interviewed view community college transfer students as multifarious, layered and complex. In some cases this was described as a strength, a way for students to bring experiences that allow them to provide insight to class discussions, although, most of those interviewed viewed the students complexities as an undesirable trait. For example, Emma shared the following view:

I just think it’s a matter of perspective and I think it’s a matter of experience, they’re [community college transfer students] time consuming. Because they’re not ready when they get here, so they’re time consuming and they’re difficult and it’s easier to teach traditional students, they don’t have jobs, they don’t have families all that you have to work with is the maturity issue many times. You’ve just to have the talk with them about; it’s time to grow up, okay, and that is a life experience that all of us had and you can relate to. But the Community College student’s experience I think it’s very different, again being a product of that’s different and not everybody can relate to that and it’s complicated and it’s messy and not everybody wants to deal with that. You know, just give me traditional students.

Emma’s closing comment expresses the desire to teach students with less complex lives. Most of the faculty, like Emma, feel community college students were more difficult to teach, not necessary for their lack of knowledge or understanding, but because of the time required to help the students navigate their various life commitments and challenges.
The way faculty engaged this issue was diverse. Some of those interviewed described helping community college students in great detail and helping these students as their duty. Whereas another faculty member chose to disengage altogether, describing the student’s family issues as “somebody else’s problem” and suggesting that his fellow faculty direct their focus on teaching, and not the “other stuff.” However, all of those interviewed saw working with these complexities as a part of their relationships with community college transfer students. Most of them also described this as a difficulty, and one that they themselves did not want, or that other faculty shied away from.

**A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations**

The next theme developed through my thematic analysis was centered on expectations. The topic of expectations was threaded throughout all of the interviews. Expectations are set by the institutions, the faculty and the students themselves. An expectation, or the understanding that something will or will not occur, can have large implications to student relationships and success. What a faculty member expects of a student and what a student perceives to be expected of them should align if the student is going to be successful.

This theme describes how the faculty perceive these expectations are not aligned when a community college transfer student begins at Queens. This then becomes a balancing act for both the faculty and the students. Upon arrival at Queens, community college transfer students have low expectations of academic rigor, the amount of agency required of them, and the faculty-student relationship. This theme has an underpinned focus on where expectations align or misalign, which too can impact relationships and success. Within this theme the following subthemes emerged through thematic analysis: 1) faculty expectations of how community college transfer students meet, fall short, or
exceed what is expected 2) the student failing then succeeding, 3) the misalignment of what Queens and community colleges expect of their students, as well as how Queens expects more from their students than community colleges and 4) student expectations, or how the student perceives what is expected of them by the faculty. Within each of these themes there are topics that emerge, such as class attendance, and academic rigor however the way these things most clearly emerged through, codes, categories, subcategories and finally themes was the agent described as setting the expectation, such as the institution, faculty or student.

**Faculty expectations.**

The first subsidiary theme discussed is the faculty expectations. Faculty participants each described their own expectations as well as other faculty expectations of community college transfer students, specifically how they expected them to perform in the classroom. This subsidiary theme is defined as the faculty’s perception of how community college transfer students meet, fall short, or exceed what is expected of them by the faculty in the academic setting. The faculty felt that upon arrival at Queens University community college transfer students fell short of what was expected. Whether or not the students were academically prepared, or if they later learned and succeed were reported as mixed, depending on the faculty member interviewed.

The faculty interviewed were mixed in their descriptions of preparedness and whether or not a community college transfer is academically successful; however, the one common concept through my analysis was the misalignment of faculty and student expectations upon the community college student’s arrival. The ways in which they were misaligned were diverse, however, Isabella captures the key topics in the following
quote, “I think the common denominator is not only the attendance polices are more rigorous [at Queens], the amount of effort going into classes is more rigorous, the depth of knowledge, and creative thinking and all that.” Academic rigor was an ever-present topic, for example, Amelia stated, “they [community college transfers students] had expectations that were more process oriented in the classroom, and the rigor was not there.” Although ‘rigor’ was a common term used by many of the faculty, others described students not expecting the work load and writing expectations not being to the level they needed from community college transfers students. This is further explained in the section on academic rigor, a subsidiary theme found within the theme titled, A Second Class Institution: Community College as a Stepping Stone. In short, the faculty did not believe that the Community Colleges are providing the academic rigor needed to set high academic expectations, like proper paraphrasing in writing assignments, strict attendance policies, and engaging in small group discussions that require a great deal of application and critical thinking.

How these misaligned expectations were discovered and impacted the student were viewed as mixed by the faculty participants. For example, some indicated that community college student would then be unsuccessful and fail out, whereas others saw it as an initial barrier that students overcame. Some saw this as a continuing problem for this population where some succeeded and others did not. However, the faculty overall saw students not expecting the high level of academic rigor at Queens University as a challenge for community college students because there is value in the student having a clear understanding of academic expectations. Emma described “understanding the level
of expectation” set by the faculty member as key to a student being prepared and successful.

**Students failing then succeeding.**

The following subsidiary theme describes how faculty perceive community college students as not successful their first term, and at times their second term at Queens University; however, this was often followed by a description of student success in the subsequent terms. Therefore, faculty saw students as struggling when they first arrive, but then going on to be successful.

The subsidiary theme is complicated because of the ways it emerged in the coding process. For example, a few faculty would say things like Emma did, “they struggle when the first get here, but somehow the figure it out,” or another faculty member who described community college transfer students failing and then “playing catch up big time” and later “being okay.”

The theme emerged in other interview data as student examples described by the faculty member. Sophia gives the example of a community college student whom failed all of his first writing assignments, but then by the end of his classes she suggested he submit a paper to a journal because his writing was so strong. Others too gave specific examples of community college transfer students that struggled, often at writing, and later were successful. Amelia described needing to report a student for plagiarism her first term, but then how the student later excelled in the writing intensive class required for her major. Many of the faculty saw potential and even the appropriate skill set in community college transfer students, but the faculty described them as struggling during their first term or year. This was mentioned by all of those interviewed, but depending on the
interview, it was either observed in descriptions of student interactions or in ways the faculty described community college transfer students failing and then later being successful.

The faculty saw community college transfers struggle when they first arrived at Queens University. Two of those interviewed described the ‘failing’ as “transfer shock,” a term defined in the literature review presented in Chapter Two. Faculty overwhelmingly attribute this not to the student’s abilities, or even academic preparedness, but the student’s lack of understanding academic expectations. Two faculty, Ethan and Isabella gave specific examples of meeting with community college transfers one-on-one to discuss expectations after the student was unsuccessful. Faculty like Ethan discussed this issue attributed it to the misunderstanding of expectations. He states, “they don’t get it initially, they get it towards the end and typically they’ll get it because they come here and they fail.” Later in the interview he goes on to describe meeting one-one-one with a community college student to explain academic expectations, attendance and participation in class discussions.

Expectations not only set standards of evaluation, but understanding expectations can set up a student for success, whereas misalignment can cause challenges and missteps along the way for the student. The faculty attributed the students’ failure and later success to students not understanding academic expectations.

**Misalignment of queens and community college student expectations.**

The second subsidiary theme was the misalignment of what Queens University sets as student expectations and the student expectations at the community college, as discussed by the faculty. This subsidiary theme explains how the faculty perceive
Queens University as having higher academic standards than the community college and therefore, their expectations of students are misaligned. There are three main topics provided by the faculty that will be discussed: 1) Queens University attendance policies require students to regularly attend class, 2) Queens University classes require more writing and critical thinking, and 3) community college transfer students cannot take as many classes at Queens University and be successful. Those interviewed clearly saw a misalignment of expectations between what the institutions expected of their students.

One example of how some faculty viewed a discrepancy was in regard to attendance. Although not all of those interviewed, many faculty saw Queens University having clearer and more rigid attendance policy expectations. Ethan described this difference in policy as a way he keeps his students accountable. He sees community colleges, like some large public four-year schools, as viewing students as “a number” and leaving it up to the student to show up for class or not. He sees greater agency on the faculty member and thinks attendance policies can be used as a way to keep students accountable by making sure they show up and attend class. Something he does not think happens at the community college, but is an expectation at Queens University.

When comparing community college expectations to Queens University, the other major category was time and the number of courses taken at the institutions. Many faculty described community college students wanting to take many classes, as they did at a community college, but not be able to do so at Queens University. For example, Noah states, “the competition is a little higher [at Queens University] it happens a lot, where a student is an honors student at a community college with fifteen credit hours, but
a C student at Queens…an honors student at a community college is a 2.3, 2.5 [GPA] student here.” Harper explains similar feelings:

I think sometimes they don't necessarily have the same kinds of expectations. I've seen many students come in and expect that they're going to be able to take 12 credit hours a semester while working full time. And they'll say well I did that over at the community college and maybe not realized that it's a little different here. So I think sometimes they have that expectation and I've had a situation or two that I can think of where students expected that if my class was giving them more work than they could do then they said how do you expect me to be able to take four classes a semester? My reply is always, you can’t!

In addition to the expectations being misaligned, faculty expressed concern that the difference in expectations between institutions was not being communicated to the transfer students upon arrival or at all by the faculty. Faculty describe students being “shocked” and not given the proper orientation that discusses the differences between the institutions, particularly in regard to expectations. Isabella states, “when they are admitted into the university, or when they enquire about it, somebody should tell them [that the expectation at Queens University is different]. This is not the same thing, it’s just they aren’t thinking.” Liam states, “I don’t think the expectations or even the knowledge of what they’re getting into is fully explained. That could be, I will say that’s my fault but I don’t think we do a lot in the front to really capture and let them know, academically, this is what is expected.”

Overall, the faculty see misalignment between what the institution expects of their students, particularly in the classroom. Most of those interviewed believe Queens
University has higher expectations, and this then causes problems for community college students taking too many classes or not being successful their first term, as described in the previous subsidiary theme, titled students failing then succeeding. These areas helped me answer the overarching research question, how to faculty perceive community college transfer students and the institutions the students previously attended?

**Student expectations.**

The final subsidiary theme I observed, in relation to expectations, was the students’ expectations. This subsidiary theme is defined as the faculty perception of what the student perceives as expected of them at Queens University. This describes not only the student’s expectations of the faculty/student relationship, but also what they believe to be expected of them in the classroom. In short, the faculty provided a description of how the students expect others to do things for them and having low academic expectations upon arrival at Queens University.

Faculty described students as lacking agency, students exhibited signs of expecting others to do things for them, such as faculty providing study guides, needing very particular step-by-step directions, or wanting the faculty member to tell them the answer so they can memorize it, vs. being willing to discover the answer on their own. This reiterates how some faculty see these students struggling with critical thinking and higher order thinking skills. There was also a presence of surprise by the students. The students were shocked, or surprised by having more difficult expectations in the classroom. Overall, the students were described as having “misconstrued expectations” and needing to adapt.
There are many ways students are described as shocked or surprised, one of which is the financial burden of the university. Many faculty suggested these students were promised a certain kind or amount of financial aid, but are surprised to find out later it was less than what they were expecting. It was not just financial shock that was described. Noah also described the “shock” of having a higher level of academic expectations at Queens University. Others described students being surprised by the amount of faculty involvement and how much a faculty member knows/cares about them as a student.

In many instances, the student’s misconception is in relation to academic rigor. Emma sees these students as confused, “I don’t think that the community college student is prepared for the expectation, once they get here, to the university.” Another stated, “they [community college transfer students] under estimate the rigorousness, the time it takes and the level they are going to be tested.” These comments and others illustrate an observation of not only a higher level academic rigor at Queens University compared to the community college, but the faculty’s perception of how this impacts student perception and expectation. Harper sees this hurting community college students because unless the community college student “wants it badly” they might not overcome the challenge of “low expectations.” She sees community college students, like most if the faculty interviewed as determined and hardworking, but facing challenges other students do not need to overcome.

The comparison of expectations in general are perceived by the faculty as misaligned, and overall lower than what the student needs to be aligned with the expectations of Queens University and the faculty. These misalignments have
implications to student success, however, faculty viewed the students levels’ of success very differently, some describing overwhelming student success, whereas others saw their situation as almost hopeless.

Summary.

In the preceding section the faculty’s detailed accounts of expectations were explained, with an underpinned focus on ways expectations were misaligned between the faculty member and the community college students. Overall, expectations play an important part in student success, the central concept of this study. Students cannot be successful without understanding how to meet both institutional and academic expectations. When there is misalignment, this creates a challenge for the student, one the faculty interviewed feel is a barrier for community college transfer students at Queens University.

The common thread among this misalignment was the challenge for both the students and the faculty to find balance. Faculty struggled with observing students not understanding their expectations, as well as how the faculty found difficulty in communicating expectations to confused students. The students were described as equally struggling to understand what was expected of them by the faculty and the institution. The alignment of expectations between the faculty and community college student is a continual balancing act, one neither the faculty nor the student seemed to level.

A Second Class Institution: Community College as a Stepping Stone

The third theme that emerged from the data explained how faculty perceived the community college sector of higher education, particularly its comparison to Queens University. This theme provides a rich description of how faculty perceive the
community college as less than, or beneath Queens University. Faculty see enrolling at
Queens University as a higher achievement than attending a community college, and
therefore, view attending a community college as a stepping stone towards achieving the
good of attending Queens University. However, this theme describes more than merely a
procedural step in student’s academic career. Faculty also view Queens University
superior to community college in many ways, which are detailed in the subsidiary
themes. To validate the development of this theme, the following subsidiary themes are
presented: 1) academic rigor, or how Queens University is more academically rigorous
than community colleges, 2) the out-of-class campus agent interaction with students, or
how student services are perceived as lacking at the community college, 3) supportive
and engaged faculty: a comparative lens between institutions, 4) mixed judgments or the
lack of knowledge of both students and faculty, which explains how both the faculty and
students feel helpless to address the challenges the students face, 5) community college as
education and a perception of academic hierarchy, and 6) the student choice to attend a
community college.

This theme specifically applies to the research question, how do faculty describe
the institutions where community college transfer students previously attended? This
theme also describes a potential, not only bias against this sector, but an absence of
understanding, particularly for those interviewed with the least access and connection to
the community college sector of higher education. Connections to the research question
are outlined Chapter Five.
Academic rigor.

As noted in the previous theme, where expectations were discussed, faculty described students not expecting the level of academic rigor at Queens University; therefore it is not surprising that faculty also then perceive the community college to not be offer programs and courses with the same level of academic rigor as Queens University. The academic rigor of a course is defined by its depth and difficulty. This subsidiary theme describes how faculty perceived the classes offered at Queens University as more difficult, covering material at a more advanced level and requiring more advanced skills, such as critical thinking, than the community college. This was not the only perception represented by the faculty, for example, Ava, a faculty member who has taught at a community college, believes community colleges offer classes and programs at the same level as Queens University, but was not the majority of those interviewed. For example, Olivia says, Queens University has “higher rigor and standards than the community college,” and Isabella agrees stating,

Community college is not at the level of rigor of a university or college, the university goes deeper, maybe there are some community colleges somewhere in the U.S. that are more rigorous than that, but that’s not my experience.

Liam shares similar concerns, “the rigor is just not at that community college to truly prepare the student to get to the four-year degree especially in a science field.”

Noah gives the example of many students at Queens University “flocking” the community colleges in the summer to take difficult classes because it is easier. Others see the lack of rigor presenting a challenge for students once they reach Queens University. Because they did not get the level of academic challenge at the community
college, particularly in science courses, the students are not prepared for upper-level coursework. He also goes on to describe the “competition is a little higher [at Queens University], it happens a lot, a student is an honors student at a community college, but a C, C-, student at Queens.” The faculty overall described the community college offering courses with less academic rigor than compared to Queens University.

**Out of class campus agent interaction with students.**

The next subsidiary theme describes how the campus beyond the classroom interacts with community college transfer students. A category of campus agents and different kinds of support services provided to student and the comparison between the institutions was present within each of the interview observations. Faculty perceive the student services at community colleges as not as strong as those at Queens University. This subsidiary theme explains how faculty perceived the services provided outside of the classroom at community colleges as either missing or not robust enough to help students. It is the faculty perception that students at community colleges are “a number” and left to “fend for themselves” at community colleges. Although not always the same kinds of services, faculty certainly described both parallels and discrepancies between the types of out of class and classroom engagement students received within the two institutional contexts. The topic of out of class campus agents and the comparison was ever-present, however, there are stark differences and conflicting views of how these agents and services interact with students at community colleges.

Some of the faculty interviewed describe community college students getting additional help outside of class, and see community college staff as “always mindful of their students’ needs”; however, these more positive perceptions often describe the
motives of those working within community colleges, none state that students actually receive strong or positive support services at community colleges.

Other faculty interviewed have either a negative perception of student services at community colleges, or see community college students being left to “fend for themselves.” Although he had never worked at a community college or even been to a campus, Ethan had the following comment to share in relation to the student services at community colleges, “the support systems I believe in JCs [junior colleges] just aren’t there, if you get taken care of a JC that’s a pop the Champaign moment.” Other faculty perceived students at community colleges struggling with being able to navigate the systems and policies, which they discussed as a barrier to student success and transfer.

Supportive and engaged faculty: a comparative lens between institutions.

Within the conversation about the sector of community colleges, faculty often compared the teaching and faculty between the two institutions, the next of my subsidiary themes. This subsidiary theme is a description of how the faculty perceive community college faculty as not a qualified as Queens University faculty and are unavailable to students. They are more likely to be part-time, have fewer credentials, and are overwhelmed by a high number of classes and students. These challenges make it unlikely for a community college student to develop relationships with their faculty or understand what a “proper” faculty/student relationship should look like. In particular, this subsidiary theme presents how faculty discussed both differences between the faculty/student relationship, the faculty themselves, and the teaching.

In my first theme I explained how faculty saw community college students are reluctant to come to office hours and reach out to a faculty member for help. It is not
surprising then to also observe the faculty/student relationship perceived differently by
the faculty, and less connected at the community college. The faculty interviewed
overwhelming described Queens University faculty as having more interaction with
students and placing a higher value on the faculty/student relationship at Queens
University. In part, this was explained through smaller class size and capstone and
discussion based courses. Mason described the faculty/student relationship as not only
different between institutional contexts, but a transition for community college transfers,
I think it takes a kind of the on boarding of the transitional experience from the
community colleges. They don’t know about these relationships [faculty/student]
or how it should work. It’s different in kind that it was, how faculty relationships
might work here or for them to understand the sharing and willingness to want to
work with them.
Those interviewed perceived community college faculty as unavailable to students for
many reasons. Some viewed community college faculty as more likely to be part-time
and not having office hours, others explained community college faculty as too busy
because of high teaching loads and classes sizes. Many reasons were provided, but the
salient perception was that community college faculty could not provide students the
same kind of relationship.

The perception of Queens University’s faculty having a more engaged
relationship with students is salient across interviews; however, the assumption that this
relationship is superior to a less connected relationship was not always present. Most
faculty interviewed describe the Queens University relationship as a benefit to student
success, however, Mia thought it might not always be a good thing, she described Queens
University having a “nursery school atmosphere” and did not think being so constantly connected to students was a good thing. She is concerned it could possibly be stifling student autonomy, self-discovery and individual student growth.

In addition to the description of the relationship, some of the faculty also provided a comparison of faculty between the institutional types. Noah describes the faculty at community colleges as “highly qualified non-academics.” This term is interesting because of how he goes on to define an academic as someone with a terminal degree and teaching high quality courses. These connections implied that either faculty teaching at community colleges do not hold terminal degrees, and/or a lower quality of teaching by the faculty at community colleges.

Noah is not alone in his perception of terminal degree held by the faculty and the quality of teaching. Many faculty interviewed not only perceive the faculty at community colleges as unlikely to hold terminal degrees, but less likely than faculty at Queens University to provide high quality teaching. Harper’s husband has taught for community colleges for years. She told me while he was teaching at a community college her husband was asked to grade on “completeness, not quality.” She provided this as an example of why the teaching quality is lower at a community college. “It’s not the faculty” she said, she believes that the colleges themselves set lower standards to meet the students’ abilities.

Other faculty interviewed provided similar judgments, but with little understanding or explanation. For example, both Olivia and Ethan feel very strongly about the teaching quality at community colleges. In addition to other pointed comments about poor teaching, Ethan had the following to share, “people will say that JC
[junior/community college], their teaching is terrible, they are...if they [community college transfers] get out it’s a miracle because the teaching is awful.” Olivia, as well as others interviewed, provided similar sediments describing the faculty as not as strong and the students “not being held at a very high standard” by the faculty.

**Mixed judgments or lack of knowledge.**

Not all of the opinions of community colleges were as harsh, which leads into the next subsidiary theme, mixed judgments or a lack of knowledge. This subsidiary theme details how each of the faculty felt they either did not have knowledge of the community college sector or that they appeared mixed or confused in their assumptions. All of the faculty interviewed made judgments of the community college sector; however, it was not always clear or explicitly shared. They often openly stated they have little knowledge of the sector in general. This was coded as a lack of knowledge or having mixed interpretations of the community college sector. There were many comments about the community college having “a place” in higher education, as well as comments about level and type of education provided, again at times this was celebratory, whereas others dismissed it as something to be belittled or disregarded. Many also stated they are ignorant to the sector or had difficulty answering questions about how or why they have come to their conclusions. Those with these difficulties often portrayed community colleges more negatively. These assumptions are important both to my research questions “how do faculty perceive community colleges” but can also have connections to how faculty then interact with the students whom attended these institutions.

It is important to explain that throughout my interviews most of my interviewees had a difficult time discussing the community college sector. When asked about their
thoughts of community colleges I noted multiple times long breaks while they thought about the question, as well as notations of discomfort from many of those interviewed. However, there did appear to be a connection to the amount of experience the faculty member had with the sector, for example, if the faculty member themselves had taught at a community college, than he/she appeared more prepared to answer the question, and had more positive comments to make explaining the contributions and value of the community college. Others with less connections were more likely to be caught off guard or have less to comment.

Having taught at a community college for many years, Emma was the most articulate in her ability to describe not only the benefits of a students attending a community college, but the ways community colleges have it “ten times over us” in being able to provide a quality, cost efficient degree. The rest of the interviewees described community colleges with more mixed feelings and value.

The benefits of attending a community college were described, but often with implied judgments. Isabella said attending a community college is, "far better than not going to any higher education institution." She later goes on the say that community colleges are not “as good” as Queens and stated that “it has its place.” Having “a place” in higher education was a statement threaded throughout many of the interviews, it was often used by those with vague responses. Overall, the faculty consistently were unable to specifically what they know about how the community college serves students and the community. One of the best quotes from my research sums up many of the faculty’s feelings nicely, Amelia stated, “I am a four year college girl, I truly believe, [long pause]
I think that everything has its place.” The faculty saw community colleges serving a purpose, just not one they concerned themselves with understanding.

Two of the faculty stated specifically that community colleges have value, but the faculty do not understand what it is. Mason said, “community colleges are overlooked, there’s a whole world going on over there that no one knows about.” Emma believes that to flourish, Queens needs to recognize the importance of community colleges, “I think schools like Queens, if they want to flourish in the future, need to start to understand the value of community colleges.”

How a faculty member perceives the community college sector can then influence how the individual sees the background of a student whom attend the institution. For example, if a faculty member believes an institution to have low standards and poor teaching, then they will in turn expect the student to bring this kind of experience with them, possibly presenting a challenge for the student which may or may not actually exist. It is also noted in this section that faculty have mixed judgments, as well as exhibiting signs or stating they know very little about the community college sector. These are interesting because they show both a need of education and a call for deeper understanding so faculty might have more informed experiences with their community college transfer students.

**Community college as education: academic hierarchy.**

In addition to having mixed feelings, the faculty feel community college is education, but similar to the way they described the faculty and teaching, the used comments that apply privilege to Queens University. The following subsidiary theme provides an explanation of the presence of academic hierarchy and how the faculty
perceive Queens University’s education as superior to that of the community college. How an academic hierarchy existed within the interview discussions and the faculty’s perception of how the four-year institutions, particularly Queens University, is not only preferred and privileged over the community college, but is superior to the community college. This subsidiary theme also developed the faculty description of community college as education. The term ‘education’ is developed in this section through how faculty define it differently at the community college compared to the four-year university and the hierarchical presence within this description. Through the use of phrases and salient categories observed, I will provide how the faculty describe community college as education, often in comparison to a Queens University’s education.

As described in the previous subsidiary theme, the faculty found difficulty in describing the value of the community college experience. It is not surprising to then observe the faculty also negatively describe the kind of education a community college provides. The stories provided by the faculty illustrate a rhetoric that devalues community college education. Comments such as: “it’s still a kind of education” or “community colleges provide basic education,” were the types of comments that accurately exemplify the views of the faculty. Ethan stated, “I just think the only good thing about a junior college right now is that if a student goes and they don’t graduate their not too deeply in debt.”

A quote that best illustrates how the faculty feel about community college was shared by Amelia, “I am a four year college girl [pause] I truly believe [pause] I think that everything has its place.” Her comment not only shares a preference for the four-year institution, but also illustrates the presence of an academic hierarchy.
A further description of the faculty’s perception of the community college is presented in Chapter Five, where direct connections are made to the research question, how do faculty perceive the community college?

**The student choice to attend a community college.**

The final subsidiary theme I found within the theme of community college perceptions is the faculty’s views of college choice. This subsidiary theme describes the faculty perception of why a student chose to attend a community college before transferring to Queens University. The faculty overwhelming described a student’s choice to attend a community college as one of two reasons: a financial decision or the student was unable to be admitted anywhere else. Although in different ways, all of those interviewed brought up the fact that attending a community college cost less than attending Queens University, some of the faculty viewed this as a reason for student to choose a community college; however, most saw those attending as unable to be admitted anywhere else – or a lack of choice influencing their attendance. This is important to how the faculty might then interact with these students, due to viewing these students as underprivileged.

Noah feels strongly that “top performing students” do not attend community colleges, “they can get scholarships.” He, as well as many others interviewed, think the only students who choose to attend community colleges are those whose grades aren’t good enough for scholarships, or those who could get in, but can’t afford the tuition at a four year school. Mia sees the choice to attend a community college as a value to those otherwise unable to attend college, “it gives kids an option to go to college that wouldn’t have a choice otherwise.” Isabella agrees, and sees attending a community college as
“far better than not going to any higher education.” Ava describes attending a community college as a “good deal” for those that cannot get into a four year institution. Mason observed the same decision for students but interprets it differently,

If you go to a community college somewhere along the line there was some frustration, some frustration of expectation that whether if they wanted to save money, whether they wanted to stay closer to home, whether they didn’t get into the schools they wanted originally.

Where most of the faculty see the open doors of the community college as a benefit, particularly in regard to giving people a choice, others see it as a complicated issue. Sophia feels that the open doors creates a classroom experiences were the majority of the students do not take their studies seriously enough, and this then in turn can negatively affect those whom are committed to be less successful. She viewed the open doors and low cost creates a culture of students who 1) aren’t ready for college level work and 2) aren’t motivated enough to be successful, which in turn negatively effects those who are motivated and leads to low retention overall. Retention was a topic that came up with most the participants, all noting the low retention at community colleges, often as a problem related to open doors.

**Conclusion.**

The theme, A Second Class Institution: The Community College as a Stepping Stone, is a description of privilege. Developed through the subsidiary themes, the faculty described Queens University as more academically rigorous, more likely to engage its students inside and outside of class, and having more access to faculty and staff. There was also a presence of academic hierarchy in the faculty descriptions, as well as an
assumption that both faculty and student prefer Queens University over the community college. This was most apparent in the faculty’s descriptions of the student’s choice to attend community college as a forced decision. Overall, those interviewed saw the community college as second class, and merely a step that could be taken to get to what they perceive as a better education at Queens University.

**Isolation: An Isolated Community College Experience**

The final theme that emerged explains the Isolation of processes, experiences, and procedures at Queens University for community college transfer students. This theme fully develops the specific ways community college transfer students are perceived as being intentionally and unintentionally given a separate experience at Queens University, and how being isolated disadvantages community college transfer students.

As detailed at the beginning of this chapter, faculty view community college students as older, adult students. Queens University chooses to create a separate experiences and processed for post/non-traditional students. This Isolation came up as a salient topic in the interviews; however this was not the only way faculty viewed community college transfers as isolated from other kinds of students. Detailed in this section are the ways in which community college transfers are isolated from the rest of the student body overall, as described by the faculty. The following subsidiary themes emerged that reflect and explain key elements of this theme: 1) academic advising and how being advised by professional staff disadvantages the student, 2) isolated out-of-class experiences, or in other words, the ways community college students are given a isolated/separate out-of-class experience 3) the heart and soul of the university: traditional undergraduates, 4) a systematically disadvantaged experience, which describes how the systems, culture, and procedures advantage traditional undergraduate students,
and 5) faculty and students being unaware or frustrated with the student’s disadvantage and helpless to address it.

**Academic advising.**

In many ways the community college transfer student is perceived as disadvantaged by university’s processes and procedures. The most frequently discussed of these Isolations is the process of academic advising, the first of my five subsidiary themes. This subsidiary theme describes how faculty perceive community college transfer students receiving a disadvantaged and isolated advising experience at Queens University. Specifically, they see the experience disadvantaged because these students are assigned professional advisors instead of faculty advisors. In the faculty’s view, this not only limits these students’ access to faculty, but also creates room for advising error.

The main issue faculty perceive is the lack of connection to faculty. According to those interviewed, community college transfer students do not have an assigned faculty advisor, in contrast to a traditional undergraduate. Specifically, faculty often made comments like, “they don't have an advisor that's a faculty member and that concerns them [the student]” or “they [the student] don't get a good advising” which “leads down to feeling disconnected from the university.” Faculty stated that post/non-traditional students are assigned a staff advisor for the duration of their enrollment. Faculty see this as a way community college students are disconnected from faculty. As described in the first theme, students are viewed as being reluctant to approach faculty, and this is an institutionalized way the university has created distance, and students are withheld an opportunity to build a relationship with the faculty in his/her discipline.
Harper views this as a concern not only for the student’s time at the university, but beyond graduation, “as they get into their major they really need somebody in their major [advising them]. Because not only do they need advising for what classes to take but that’s one way that those conversations happen about career goals.” Others echoed the value of the faculty/student relationship beyond the classroom, noting connections to the discipline that can best be provided by a faculty member within the department, such as honors society opportunities, civic engagement within the field, building relationships for reference letters, or even student research projects. These opportunities were all described by the faculty as often coming from meeting one-on-one with a faculty member within the student’s major.

In addition to the missed opportunity of building faculty/student relationships, the faculty also viewed the staff advisor as inadequate in their ability to accurately advise. Staff advisors are asked to advise many, many different kinds of disciplines. For example, the same staff member might be advising students in various colleges and departments. Due to the staff advisors having so many disciplines they are required to advise, the faculty perceived there were many mistakes. Faculty describe not only mistakes, but that they do not get “good advising” or the are much more likely to be “misadvised” than other students.

Three faculty provided examples of how the students come to them for advising anyway. Amelia, Ethan and Noah, faculty representing three different departments, describe frustration because so many community college students come to them for advising help even though the students are not their advisees. Their frustrations are not with the students, but either the staff advisors or the faculty’s inability to access the
students’ files and transcripts to help the student. Amelia describes the following experience:

Well, they don't feel that people care about them as much. Okay, they don't feel like they get the advising that are TUGs [traditional undergraduates] get. They don't have an advisor that's a faculty member and that concerns them and I always say you know ‘Come in, anytime we'll talk about this’. They do... but they are so much more likely to be misadvised, that's a huge issue and then I'm either left to deal with somebody who's not had the pre-reqs [prerequisite courses] for the class and they don't know what I'm talking about or you know I don't know, that's the biggest... or they're like, ‘why can't I take this?’ and you know nobody's advised them in the order of the classes which is, you know if you can only take up night classes that can get pretty, you know tight.

Her statement nicely summarizes what others mention throughout their advising experience with community college transfer students.

**Isolated out of class experiences.**

The experiences a student has out of class can help shape their success and how they develop their academic career. The next subsidiary theme discussed is the Isolation of student services and the out of class experience for a community college transfer student. In addition to advising, faculty perceive other ways community college students are given an isolated out of class experiences. This subsidiary theme details the ways in which faculty perceive these experiences as isolated and disadvantaging the community college student. The faculty described all kinds of different services; however, there were three specifically that continued to be mentioned, tutoring services, the John Belk
International Program and the orientation process for new students. These, along with other kinds of services are discussed.

Although each did not present themselves as individual subsidiary themes, many student services were mentioned as a disadvantaged or isolated experience for a community college transfers. One example was student’s inability to schedule a tutor after 5:00pm. According to the faculty, community college transfer students often work during the day, and need access to a tutor after work hours, which is not currently an option through the sign-up system. Another area mentioned was financial aid services, the faculty reported student frustration and being promised certain kinds of aid, only to find later they were not eligible or received lower amounts than they initially were promised.

One area of services that was consistently mentioned by the faculty interviewed was a lack of access to study abroad opportunities for community college transfer students. Due to being isolated, the faculty viewed the students’ as having an unequal opportunity to study abroad due to the following: 1) not having the program built into tuition, 2) the timing of trip signups, 3) the lack of university funding, and 4) programs not being marketed to transfer students.

The majority of traditional students at Queens University study abroad. As mentioned in the description of the Hayworth student at Queens University, students that come in as post/non-traditional pay a lower tuition rate and as part of this reduced rate, they do not have funds available to study abroad provided through the university. Traditional students have a study abroad trip built into their tuition, meaning that, according to the Director of International Education at the study site they are very likely
to study abroad, unlike the post/non-traditional student. On Nov. 11, 2016 she stated to me in an email, “our most recent stats are that 78% of our traditional undergraduates are studying abroad before they graduate. We are currently ranked 7th by US News and World Report in the ‘Most Students Studying Abroad’ category.” This is a wonderful thing for Queens University, and particularly traditional students, but leaves community college transfer students isolated and disadvantaged.

If students would like to study abroad, students must apply more than a year in advance, otherwise they are not eligible. This means if a student transfers his/her junior year, the only opportunity to travel abroad is their last semester or the summer after graduation, an unlikely time for a student to travel.

The other campus services area most frequently mentioned by those interviewed was orientation for new students. Transfer students have a completely separate orientation process from those coming directly from high school. The faculty recognized this at times appropriate, considering there are things that make these processes unique for students, but they also overwhelming saw them not only separate, but unequal.

Mason said,

they often times talk about feeling a little bit different than the other students because of orientation sessions in the past that were different or not knowing about opportunities or not necessarily being filled in on what’s available, how to utilize the resources.

Others described similar concerns, particularly in regard to the amount of funding and attention each of the orientations receive. For example, the transfer student orientation is a full day at the most, depending on the semester, whereas the traditional undergraduate
orientation last three to four days minimum. Faculty then feel as though this leads to a disconnect for them at the very beginning, Noah stated, not having deeper orientation is “making it much harder for them to feel part of the campus.”

**The heart and soul of the university: traditional undergraduates.**

The fourth subsidiary theme describes how the faculty perceive traditional undergraduates as both generally and specifically advantaged at Queens University over other kinds of students, particularly community college transfer students. There are many ways faculty see the campus privileging traditional students, some described generally, others more explicitly stated traditional student privilege. Emma describes why she believes Queens University is not as motivated to focus on transfer students in general, “they [Queens University administration] are really not as interested in retaining transfer students, what they want to retain are first year students, because we get four years of tuition out of them.” Others have similar feelings that Queens University is set up to serve traditional students, community college transfer students are often an afterthought.

Sophia shared concern that not only the university as a whole, but her fellow faculty are more focused on traditional students, she said, “I heard in faculty meeting a faculty member say, ‘well, the heart and soul of this institution is our TUGs [traditional undergraduates] – I wanted to say, ‘there's a lot of heart and soul with the transfer students too.’”

In general, community college transfer students were perceived has having a more difficult path than any other student type. As an example, Mason stated, “it’s [being a community college transfer student] usually seen as a challenge, there's always an
impediment to something, for example there’s a course I wanted to transfer and it doesn’t work.”

Another issue described was the absence of the community college student from the website, admissions and marketing materials. One faculty member believed the marketing team specifically targets eighteen year old white females. A few faculty mentioned the absence of adult students on the website. It was also mentioned that the process of how to transfer from a community college, as well as articulation agreements were absent. For example, according to Ava, you cannot access the articulation agreements without contacting the registrar’s office and even then much of information is nowhere to be found depending on where you transfer from; however the process of how to transfer college credits earned while in high school is very clearly outlined on the website, an example from the faculty of how the website is designed for the traditional student.

**Systematically disadvantaged experience.**

The examples of the privileged traditional undergraduate, lead to the next subsidiary theme, how faculty describe community college transfer students as disadvantaged through systemically isolated experiences. This subsidiary theme explains how the faculty perceive the systems, culture, and procedures advantaging traditional undergraduate students, therefore disadvantaging community college transfer students. The ways in which the faculty describe the students being disadvantaged ranged, but all of those interviewed saw these students with obstacles to overcome that other students did not face. This section details these faculty descriptions.
The university has recently transitioned all courses from three credit hours to four credit hours. Due to both the new four credit hour curriculum, as well as losing transfer credits, Emma feels that it takes community college transfer students longer to graduate due to loss of transfer credits; they take more classes than a traditional student who earns the same degree. Mia states that spring transfers are particularly disadvantaged, “elected positions are complete, teams are fielded, and play auditions are over, spring transfers miss a lot.”

Another unintended consequence of transferring to Queens University is the lack of GPA at Queens University when a student transfers they lose their GPA, the classes transfer, but not the grades. Noah described how it is harder for a community college transfer student to get a good internship because not only are they lacking connections with faculty, but they do not have established GPAs, which can hurt a strong student’s chances at getting a competitive internship. Noah says, even if they have a strong GPA, employers want to see more than one or two semesters, so employers are more likely to select students with longer academic history at Queens University – this is an unfair consequence of the transfer process.

Many of the faculty’s concerns center on not having more time at Queens University. They believe merely by having a limited amount of time at the university community college transfer students miss opportunities afforded to those with more time. Mason states,

Because they are here such a short amount of time, they get to senior year and have regrets, ‘I wish I would have known that’ or ‘I wish I would have been told
that’ or ‘I wish I would have been able, I wish someone would have pushed me to do that.

Similar to the study abroad opportunities previously discussed, faculty see other areas where these students are excluded. For example, applying to the critical thought symposium (a student research program) or applying for leadership opportunities. Faculty note that community college transfer students are not only less likely to participate in these kinds of experiences, but they are less likely to be aware they exist.

**Faculty and students being unaware.**

The students themselves and faculty being unaware of support, opportunities and ways to help community college transfer students is the final subsidiary theme for the larger theme of Isolation. Much of the following subsidiary theme developed through emotions coding. The faculty were frustrated. This subsidiary theme explains the faculty’s frustration with not being able to help community college students, as well as the student’s themselves be unaware of opportunities given to them. Due to their own lack of knowledge, faculty as well as the students, did not know how to provide community college transfer students the same opportunities at Queens University as other students. They both saw a problem with being disadvantaged, but felt helpless. Students and faculty, in different ways, were aware of disadvantage, however, confused or ignorant to how the issue could be fixed or addressed. Unlike traditional students, community college transfer students are also described as incredibly unaware of opportunities even when they are provided an equal opportunity to access them.

Community college transfer students in many ways are afforded the same opportunities as any other student; however, not only did the faculty report these students
participating at lower rates, but they perceived them as less likely to be aware of the academic opportunities given to them. Some examples of the areas the faculty discussed were: honor societies, service projects, leadership roles, or student research projects. This is concerning considering the importance of these kinds of out of class experiences for any student.

The process of transfer from a community college is difficult. There are a lot of policies and process that students must be careful to follow, and as previously stated, they are not clearly shared to the student. Faculty not only described this challenge for students, but also their own frustration with trying to help them. Faculty are unaware of all the intricacies of transfer policy and how to best help community college students navigate the process. Mia shared both her concern with not being able to help, and the student’s confusion, she was describing how community college students are often told they must take a course at Queens University and cannot transfer it from a community college after they enroll,

You can bring it [the course a student wishes to transfer], but in other programs if you haven’t taken it before you get here, too bad, you have to take with us and there is stuff like that. Learning the system [is frustrating for students] because every time you start a new system you have to learn the system. But, the ones that don’t do well are not asking…I think that’s been difficult for someone coming in new regardless of where they are. They don’t know what to ask…we [faculty] don’t always have the answers
Mason described how his own ignorance is a barrier to being able to understand and help community college transfer students, as well as how he observed a gap between the two kinds of student experiences, but helpless to address it,

I think I would acknowledge that my own limited understanding is a great barrier, not of what they may have experienced in community college but of what they’re experiencing here, it’s limited. I don’t know that, why don’t I know that? I mean, I want to know why. I don’t know the process there is for them. I don’t know, I know there is, but I don’t know it. I hear a lot about traditional kinds of students and they are kind of situated differently so I would imagine I am not alone in that in terms of there’s a gap, but I should know how to help them so I can speak to it.

Others shared similar sediment, observing disadvantage, but felt helpless to address it.

Conclusion.

The theme, Isolation: A Community College Transfer Experience, was by far the most predominant within the interviews of those I observed. It too could be the most important for how it is interconnected with the other three themes. This theme is a description of isolation. It illuminates how at Queens University, community college transfer students are disadvantaged by being given an intentionally and unintentionally separate experiences.

This theme is connected to the first theme, the Student/Faculty Relationship: A Two-Way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance, because of how the faculty feel this Isolation influences the student’s access to faculty. By having less interactions with faculty, the student have less opportunity to build relationships with faculty, which according to Tinto (1975, 1993) has a direct influence on student success.
There are connections between the theme of Isolation and the second theme, A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations. It is plausible that due to these students having separate experiences at the institution, such as orientation, the students might not be getting the same level of communication as it pertains to academic expectations, as well as having less access to faculty whom best understand expectations.

Finally, there was also a connection between the third theme, A Second Class Institution: The Community College as a Stepping Stone, and the theme of Isolation. These two themes both show how either the faculty or the institution views community college students as less than, or second class. Isolating those whom come from what the faculty view as a lesser educational institution is an interesting connection and warrants a deeper understanding within other institutional contexts. Together, these four themes develop the faculty’s description of the community college transfer student, the faculty/student relationship and the institutions these students previously attended.

**Interpretation**

The following section is a discussion of my own interpretations of the study’s findings and the parts of the study that I believe have the most significance. This discussion of interpretation is broken into two sections. The first section titled, traveling the difficult road, presents a metaphor that highlights the significance of the study’s findings. In the second section, a discussion of interpretations, I present what I find most meaningful from the study’s findings.

**Traveling the difficult road.**

Imagine a new graduate driving to her first job interview. She’s not sure where to go or how to get there. She’s given a poorly drawn map with a few confusing directions. She drives herself to the interview using back roads with detours and potholes at every
turn. She stops to ask for directions, arriving late and frustrated to the interview. Now imagine a different candidate driving to the same first job interview, but a member of the search committee meets him at the hotel and rides with him, telling him where he needs to go. The ride is smooth, comforting, and he arrives early enough to review his notes.

Like these candidates traveling to the interview, students often receive different pathways to graduation. The candidate traveling through potholes, delays, and poor directions is like the community college transfer student, having a more challenging path than the traditional, native student. The search committee member is like the faculty member, helping the student learn and navigate to their destination.

In these scenarios not only the pathway taken, but having the proper directions, and having a guide mattered. Each of these things had nothing to do with how qualified the candidate was for the job, but influenced how quickly they got to the interview, and how prepared they felt when they arrived. The same is true for students navigating a university system. The path, having the proper directions, and getting the proper help or guidance can make a difference. These factors have nothing to do with the student’s academic skills or ability to be successful in the classroom.

In these scenarios, the first candidate is like the community college transfer student a Queens University. While trying to earn a degree they are given a pathway to graduation, but it is very different path than a traditional undergraduate student. Through my research I have come to believe that without proper access to faculty, student support services, or other opportunities at the university, the community college transfer student is unfairly disadvantaged. Students should be given the same academic opportunities no matter the student’s background or tuition rate.
In both of the scenarios the candidates made it to the interview, but the candidate in the second scenario arrived more quickly. The same is also true for community college transfer students. My research explains a pathway for the community college transfer student that is often longer, and wrought with bumps in the road, bumps like losing transfer credits, poor advising, lack of understanding, or not having access to a faculty for help.

The help from the search committee member in the second scenario was also symbolic. For the community college transfer student, this represents the faculty member. The search committee member not only guided the candidate to the interview, but could answer questions about the job, and help the candidate be more prepared for the interview. This is also true of the faculty/student relationship. Faculty help students with classes, find internships, get involved in honor societies, can later become a reference for the student, or help the student find a job. Community college transfer students at Queens University are not afforded this opportunity because of being advised by themselves or a staff member.

A discussion of interpretations.

There are many deeply important interpretations I have from my research. The first I wish to discuss is how the overall faculty perception of the community college student and the community college sector might influence the faculty’s relationship with their students. When faculty so clearly perceive the traditional undergraduate and Queens University both as privileged, this in turn can have influence on the way faculty choose to interact, or not, with community college transfer students.
Understanding student success is complicated and nonlinear. As Tinto’s theory of attrition (1975; 1993) explained, there are many factors that can influence whether or not a student is successful and/or decides to stay at a particular institution. As explained in Chapter Two, Tinto (1975; 1993) asserts the importance of the faculty/student relationship. Many of the facets of the themes developed allow for a deeper understanding of the relationship between a faculty member and a community college transfer student at a small private university.

As explained in Chapter Two, community college transfer students find it difficult to develop relationships with faculty (Townsend & Wilson, 2009). The themes developed through the thematic analysis provide a glimpse as to why students might find these relationships difficult. Faculty interviewed not only echo Townsend and Wilson’s (2009) findings, they provide descriptions as to why students might find these relations difficult. The influencing factors developed through the research are the following: 1) reduced interaction with faculty due to isolated experiences and the decreased amount of time a student has with the institution, 2) faculty not wanting to work with community college students, 3) students not understanding the importance of the faculty/student relationship or how to approach faculty, 4) the lack of intuitional knowledge the students seem to possess, and 5) faculty not understanding how to help or work with community college students. Each of these presented themselves in different themes, but illustrate an interconnected description and application to why students find faculty relationships challenging.

In particular, there was an obvious absence of understanding from the faculty as well as the students. The faculty described not knowing how to help these students, as
well as the students not understanding institutional processes. This is like the job
candidate in the scenario described earlier. Like the job candidate, students are given a
“map” but the community college transfer student does not know how to read the map,
unlike the traditional student who not only is given a map, but someone to help them read
it. This should be addressed by the university to help community college transfer students
succeed and build relationships with faculty. This is more fully explained as a
recommendation in Chapter Five.

There are other key findings within this study that not only relate to the central
concept of student success, but one another. The misalignment of expectations between
the faculty at Queens University and community college transfer students connects to the
description of the community college sector. Faculty perceive community colleges as
having very different support systems, faculty/student relationships and even lower
institutional expectations. This aligns with how the faculty perceive community college
students as having very different expectations of institutional systems, coursework, and
academic rigor upon arrival at Queens University. These connections present challenges
for these students that other students do not need to overcome, ones that could be
understood and addressed through institutional practices recommended in Chapter Five.

Finally, another area I wish to discuss is the absence of data from the university
for the community college transfer students and the post/nontraditional student at the
university. At the time the study was conducted, academic outcomes data was not
available for these student populations. Considering the university’s choice to segregate
these populations it would be important to document their outcomes in relation to the
greater student body. The findings from my study suggest students might not be getting
equal opportunities to an academic experience at the university, and it is currently
unknown how this might be influencing student outcomes for the isolated populations.
The university offers these students a reduced tuition rate with the promise that they can
earn the same degree, but without things they do not need; however, my findings
suggested this is inadvertently influencing not only things they do not need, but their
academic experience, in particular their access to faculty and an ability to build
relationships with faculty.

The faculty overwhelmingly perceive community college students as both
need to overcome various barriers and having difficulty developing relationships. As
stated in the preceding paragraphs, the themes developed throughout the study’s analysis
also provide a glimpse as to why community college students find building relationships
with faculty difficult. This has great implications for Queens University and other
institutions like Queens University to seek out ways to help faculty build meaningful
relationships with community college transfer students, as well as better understand and
remove barriers to student success.

These interpretations further illustrate how the community college transfer student
is like the job candidate without a search committee member to guide them, and having to
face a road full of potholes and detours. For many reasons, be it lack of good data on
community college transfer students, or not having as much access to a faculty member,
community college transfers students are given a difficult path.

Summary

Presented in this chapter were the findings of the ethnographic interview study
designed to investigate the faculty perception of community college transfers students
and the institutions from which those students transferred. Also discussed in this were: 1)
the institutional site where the data was collected was first described, 2) the student body at Queens University with a particular focus on community college transfer students, other student types and student outcomes data, 3) a description of the faculty in general at Queens University, as well as the twelve specific interview participants in this study using information provided by the faculty themselves during interview and my personal observations during the interviews, 4) the study’s results and the four themes that were developed through the thematic analysis, and 5) a personal interpretation of the study’s results.

Each of the sections within the chapter build upon one another to illustrate the faculty’s interpretation of community college transfer students. The first sections provided context as well as student and faculty descriptions. Once these were established, the overall purpose of this chapter is presented through the section titled Results. The following four themes were discussed: 1) Student/Faculty Relationship: A two-way Street of Hesitation and Reluctance, 2) A Balancing Act: Aligning Faculty and Student Expectations, 3) A Second Class Institution: Community College as a Stepping Stone, and 4) Isolation: A Community College Transfer Experience. Each of these themes connect to the study’s research questions, these specific connections are discussed in Chapter Five, “Discussion and Implications.”

As presented throughout the themes and discussion, the community college transfer student’s path is more difficult than other student types. Like the job candidates trying to make their way to an interview, students need a path that’s clear and often someone to help them reach their destination (graduation and employment). The study’s findings illustrate a path for community college transfer students that not only covered in
potholes with detours, but needing more access to someone that can best help them get to their destination.
CHAPTER FIVE:
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The preceding chapters have laid the foundations for the final chapter, “Discussion and Implications.” Chapter One, Introduction, explained the purpose of the study and provided the background and significance of the study. Chapter Two, Literature Review: The community college transfer, presented a breadth of existing knowledge that pertains to the study’s research questions. Chapter Three described the methods by which the study was developed and executed. Chapter Four, Findings, is a detailed account of the researcher’s interpretations from the thematic analysis, as well as information about the study site and participants. Building upon these foundations, Chapter Five, Discussion and Implications, will first present how the study’s findings specifically connect to each of the four research questions. Then a description of the implications to both practice and future research are presented. A summary of the connections between the study’s findings and existing literature is then presented. Finally, Chapter Five will close with a discussion of final thoughts and brief summary.

This descriptive ethnographic interview study describes how a group of faculty at one small, private, comprehensive university perceive, describe and characterize community college transfer students and the institutions the students previously attended. The research questions specifically address the student relationship with the faculty member, academic preparedness, academic success, and the perception of the community college. The aims of this research were to develop a rich description of how faculty
perceive these students and their relationships with them, as well as to develop an understanding of how the faculty perceive the community college sector in general. This previously undiscovered story is significant because of how the findings relate to student success and the implications for practitioners and faculty at institutions like the study site.

**Research Questions and Findings**

This section will address each research question individually, drawing on the themes that emerged from the thematic analysis. Each of the following research questions will be connected to the study’s findings:

1. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe their interactions and experiences with community college transfer students?

2. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States perceive community college transfer students’ academic preparedness?

3. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe the community college transfer students’ overall academic success?

4. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the southeastern United States describe the institutions from which community college transfer students transferred?
Subsidiary Research Question One: How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe their interactions and experiences with community college transfer students?

The faculty interviewed for this study described their interactions and experiences with community college transfer students in many different ways. Interactions took place both inside and outside of the classroom and both are explained in this section. First, the faculty relationship, which emerged in the first theme described in Chapter Four, will be used to explain the faculty’s interactions and experiences. Secondly, faculty interactions and experiences with community college students are described in relation to misaligned expectations. Finally, due to the perceived isolated experiences of the community college student, the faculty description of unique or limited interactions with community college transfer students is presented. Each of these are discussed with an underpinned focus on how faculty perceive community college transfer students.

As explained in Chapter Four, faculty perceive community college transfer students as difficult. Community college transfer students were consistently viewed as “chaotic,” “messy,” “challenging” and “complicated to deal with.” This influenced the faculty’s interactions and experiences. The stories of working with community college transfer students were often examples of trying to help a student with multiple challenges and barriers, both academic and personal.

The faculty perceived the relationship in two very different ways. The first approached the student with empathy, feeling sorry for the student for having such an unfair burden and admiring him/her for overcoming the challenge of being a community college transfer student. The second approach was taken with frustration, blaming the
student for having a more complex life. In both cases the faculty saw community college transfer students as more complicated and time consuming both inside and outside the classroom to work with than other kinds of students, which influenced their interactions and experiences with them.

Some of the specific examples provided reflected the amount of time it took to help community college transfer students. This was often in relation to the commitments the students have outside of academics. Faculty provided examples of students missing class to care for a sick child, or balancing the responsibilities of working full time and taking classes. They also described helping students with transfer credits, or navigating the policies and systems.

The complexity of working with a community college transfer student influenced the faculty’s desire to teach and work with them. Many of the faculty admitted that they prefer to teach traditional undergraduates. Many others shared, while they themselves like teaching community college transfer students, their faculty colleagues prefer to teach traditional undergraduates.

The faculty also described their interactions with these students within the context of the classroom. Students were described as having “misconstrued expectations” and needing to adapt in the classroom. Detailed accounts of giving community college students exceptions for personal circumstances, counseling them on writing skills, and needing accommodations for misunderstanding expectations were given by the faculty. They also described students as lacking agency: expecting the faculty member or other students to do things for them, such as faculty providing study guides, needing very
particular step-by-step directions, or wanting the faculty member to tell them the answer so they can memorize it versus being willing to discover the answer on their own.

The faculty also reported community college transfer students not approaching faculty. Faculty saw community college students as reluctant to come to office hours and reach out to a faculty member for help. This then kept faculty from being able to develop a relationship with many community college transfer students.

Finally, the presence of an isolated experience, as described in theme four in Chapter Four, also influenced the experiences faculty had with community college transfer students. At times, the faculty described their interactions with the students as frustrating for both the student and the faculty member. This was consistently the case when it came to advising. Due to the isolated experience in relation to advising, the faculty needed to help community college transfer students that were misadvised, lacking prerequisite courses, taking courses they do not need/want, or feeling like no one knew how to help them. This was described as frustrating for both the students and the faculty trying to help them.

Subsidiary Research Question Two: How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States perceive community college transfer students’ academic preparedness?

The faculty interviewed were mixed in their descriptions of the academic preparedness of community college transfer students. Some faculty viewed students as well prepared, whereas others saw them as ill prepared; however, the one common concept through the analysis was the misalignment of faculty and student expectations. Upon the community college student’s arrival they were described as not having accurate
expectations for themselves academically. The second topic associated with this research question was the faculty’s background and its connections to the faculty’s perception of the students’ academic preparedness. Each of these will be presented in the following section.

As described in theme two and presented in Chapter Four, the faculty were quite divided on how they described the students being academically prepared for coursework. For example, Isabella viewed community college transfer students as having underprepared critical thinking skills, lacking academic ability and being disillusioned. However, others described the students as possessing the needed skills and abilities for the coursework and prepared to complete quality work and participation in class.

What developed through the thematic analysis was an inconsistency in how the faculty defined academic preparedness. Some defined it merely as the students’ abilities and skills to complete quality work. Those who described community college transfer students as academically prepared more often used this type of definition. Meaning that if the faculty defined academic preparedness has having the right abilities and skills, the faculty member was more likely to describe community college transfer students as academically prepared. However, for those whom did not view community college students as prepared, they were more likely to discuss expectations as part of their definition of academic preparedness. For example, Emma described “understanding the level of expectation” set by the faculty member as key to a student being academically prepared and then went on to describe community college transfer student as ill prepared for her classes. Although the faculty’s descriptions of skills and abilities varied, the faculty overwhelming saw the students not having accurate academic expectations.
Therefore, to more concisely describe the faculty’s perception, they overall felt community college transfer students have misaligned academic expectations, but observed mixed levels of student skill and ability. Whether or not the faculty member stated they believed the students were academically prepared often connected to how they used these terms to define academic preparedness.

The faculty member’s definition of academic preparedness had a great deal to do with whether or not the individual generalized community college transfer students as prepared for their coursework. There was another parallel factor related to how the faculty described the students’ academic preparedness, how much contact they had with the community college sector of higher education. The faculty were asked what kinds of experiences they had with community colleges. Their replies varied from having no experience, to having worked at a community college for many years. Interestingly, the faculty members’ background often aligned with his/her perception of the students’ skills and abilities. For example, all those who worked at a community college previously described the students as having the skills and abilities needed for their classes at Queens University, whereas those with the least experience with a community college described the students lacking the proper skills or abilities to be successful. This was less true for those with some experience with the community college, like having a close family member attend, or spouse work there, but their backgrounds did align with their descriptions of students for those with the most and least amounts of experience at a community college. **Subsidiary Research Question Three: How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe the community college transfer students’ overall academic success?**
Overall, when asked specifically about how academically successful community college transfer students are, the faculty were mixed in how they described a community college student success. Some viewed them as very successful, whereas others saw them as consistently failing out and being unsuccessful. However, across interviews there was a presence of a challenge these students needed to overcome that other students did not have. The type of challenges varied and will be discussed as factors that influence student success. Barriers to the faculty/student relationship and having a systematically disadvantaged experiences will be presented in the section as factors influencing community college transfer student success.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the central concept of this study was student success, specifically using Tinto’s attrition theory (1993; 1975). Tinto asserts that when a student is able to build a positive relationship with a faculty member he/she is more likely to be retained and graduate (Tinto, 1993;1975). Unfortunately, based on the study’s findings, community college transfer students are not as likely to approach their faculty, understand the faculty/student relationship, or have as many institutionalized opportunities to work with faculty outside the classroom as other students. The faculty described the benefits of the faculty/student relationship going well beyond the classroom, noting connections for the student that could best be provided by someone within the discipline, such as honors society opportunities, civic engagement within the field, building relationships for reference letters, or even student research projects. Therefore, the experiences a student has out of class can help shape their success and how they develop their academic career.
In many ways community college transfer students are perceived as disadvantaged by Queens University’s processes and procedures, the faculty described this as having great influence on student success. The faculty perceived the advising model as having great influence on their interactions with community college transfer students. Due to these students not being assigned a faculty advisor, this is an institutionalized way the university has distanced these students from faculty; therefore potentially influencing student success by limiting their ability to develop relationships with faculty.

These findings lead into the next area influencing student success, community college transfer students receiving a systematically disadvantaged experience. Out of class experiences can encompass many kinds of campus engagement and student success benefits. Like the faculty relationship, some out of class opportunities and experiences were described as withheld from community college transfer students. For example, community college transfer students may have less opportunities to participate in the study abroad. According to the faculty, a traditional student has a study abroad trip built into their tuition, whereas transfer and adult students do not. All students can apply for study abroad, however, the faculty believe the opportunities are targeted and marketed to traditional students. Other out of class experiences were perceived as unequal to the traditional students are, the student’s orientation to the university and the access to tutoring. There are very few evening and weekend tutoring services, times when the faculty feel community college transfer students need the most access.

During an interview a faculty member quoted a colleague who said, “the heart and soul of the university are the TUGs [traditional undergraduates].” This best illustrates
how, by contrast, the community college transfer student is sidelined and systematically disadvantaged. There are many ways the faculty discussed how the university privileged traditional students over community college transfer students, which then may not only have an impact on the student experience, but student success.

One of the ways faculty described community college transfer students as disadvantaged was community college transfer students completing far more courses for the same degree. Due to many reasons, such as the loss of transfer credits or poor academic advising, the faculty believe that transfers, and in some cases community college transfer students specifically, must complete far more classes to receive the same degree as a traditional student. The other systemic way a community college transfer student was described as disadvantaged, was by the absence of how to transfer from a community college. This information is not only missing from the website, but, according to the faculty, also very difficult to find through admissions offices or elsewhere. The faculty describe this as both lacking admissions efforts and marketing materials for community college transfer students.

There are other ways the faculty see community college transfers disadvantaged that may have more direct connections to student success. Many of the faculty not only mentioned missed study abroad opportunities, but also internships, elected roles, plays, and athletics. This leads to these students missing out and feeling as if they are not getting a full experience. Mason summarized the student’s feelings well through the eyes of a senior reflecting on their experience,

Because they are here such a short amount of time, they get to senior year and have regrets, ‘I wish I would have known that’ or ‘I wish I would have been told
that’ or ‘I wish I would have been able, I wish someone would have pushed me to do that.

The faculty overwhelming feel that due to being isolated in many ways, the community college transfer student is disadvantaged, and this has implications for student success. Even though the faculty see this as a problem, unfortunately, they also feel helpless to do anything about it. Both students and faculty, in different ways, were described as aware of disadvantage, however, confused or ignorant to how the issue could be fixed or addressed.

Subsidiary Research Question Four: How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the Southeastern United States describe the institutions where community college transfer students previously attended?

In addition to the faculty descriptions of the faculty/student relationship, student preparedness and success, the faculty were also asked a number of open-ended questions that directly related to their perceptions of the community college sector of higher education in general. Developed thematically through the faculty responses were many areas where the faculty described Queens University and the community college different from one another. The following topic areas will be discussed in this section that directly relate to the research question, how faculty describe community colleges: policies, teaching, faculty, and the faculty/student relationship, as well as the presence of an academic hierarchy.

Many perceptions of community college policies and approaches to teaching were presented by the faculty. In particular, teaching was described as having lower quality because of the higher number of students, high teaching loads for faculty, and needing to
meet the students where they are, considering community college is open access. In regard to policy and teaching, the topic of attendance came up quite frequently, with the assumption that classes at the community college do not have attendance policies. Ethan described this difference in policy as a way Queens University’s faculty hold students accountable. He sees community colleges, like some large public four-year schools, as viewing students as “a number” and leaving it up to the student to show up for class or not. A greater agency was assumed by the faculty at Queens University. They reach out to students when they miss class or assignments and know each student by name. Those interviewed did not believe this kind of agency was expected of the faculty at community colleges.

There were also generalizations placed on the descriptions of the faculty that teach at community colleges. Noah describes the faculty at community colleges as “highly qualified non-academics.” They do not hold terminal degrees, and provide a lower quality of teaching at community colleges. Community college faculty were seen as having high teaching loads and low salaries. They were also seen as more likely to be part-time or adjunct faculty and therefore less available to students outside of class. Many of the faculty expressed pity for those having to teach at community colleges. There was also an assumption that teaching at a community college was not a choice, but for those who were unable to teach or do research at four-year schools – similar rhetoric to the student choice to attend a community college described in Chapter Four.

In addition to the faculty themselves, the faculty/student relationship was also described. This connected too many of the topics already discussed, because of the lack of connection perceived by the faculty. If those teaching at community colleges are less
available, teaching large classes without the expectation to get to know the students individually, there was also an assumption that students were unable to build relationships with their faculty. The faculty also used this as a rationale for why they see so many community college transfer students that do not approach faculty or understand the faculty/student relationship at Queens University.

Faculty often provided descriptions of the community college that illustrated academic hierarchy. There was often a rhetoric that devalued community college education. Comments such as: “it’s still a kind of education” or “the education at a four years is better,” “community colleges provide basic education,” or it being a “13th grade” for those who cannot go to a four year college, were common types of comments that accurately exemplify the views of the faculty overall. However, these comments were mixed within a paradox; for even though faculty were belittling, these same faculty would also make comments where they stated, “I have great respect for community colleges” or “[community college] fits very nicely as a good place to start as affordable and manageable degree.” Comments like these can illustrate both a condescending and hierarchical approach to community college education.

Having “a place” in higher education was a statement threaded throughout many of the interviews. Amelia stated, “I am a four year college girl, I truly believe, [long pause] I think that everything has its place.” The faculty saw community colleges serving a purpose, just not one they necessarily concerned themselves with understanding. Mason said, “there’s a whole world going on over there that no one knows about.” Amelia’s statement of being a “four year college girl” is one that rings true for the faculty interviewed. This comes with pride for Queens University and the
value faculty believe their institution provides students. However, this also illustrates a
devaluing of community colleges that then could have influence over the ways in which
the faculty engage with community college transfer students.

Summary

The aim of this study was to answer the overarching research question: how do
faculty at a small, private university perceive community college transfer students and the
institutions they previously attended? Four subsidiary research questions were discussed
in the precious section to fully develop an answer to this overarching research question.

The first of the research questions addressed how faculty perceive their
interactions and experiences with community college students. In summary, the faculty
describe students as complicated and having a difficult time building faculty/student
relationships. Along with these findings, the themes that described misaligned
expectations as well as the perceived isolated experiences of the students were also used
to answer the research question.

The second research question asks for how faculty perceive the academic
preparedness of community college students. Faculty view these students as having
mixed levels of preparedness. How both the misalignment of faculty and student
expectations as well as the faculty’s background connect to the faculty member’s
perception of the students’ preparedness is also discussed.

The third research question asks how faculty perceive the academic success of
community college transfer students. Again, the faculty perceived success levels
differently; however, the challenges, such as the barriers to the faculty/student
relationship, were presented as connections to understanding the faculty perception of academic success and the students’ ability to be successful.

Finally, the fourth research question seeks to understand how the faculty perceive community colleges. Overall, the institutions were viewed as part of an academic hierarchy, where community colleges are seen as a stepping stone to the more prestigious four-year institution.

Discussion

Chapter Four presented the four themes that emerged from the thematic analysis developed using coded data from 12 faculty interviews. The final interpretation of the study’s findings was presented in the themes and subsidiary illustrated in Figure 5.1 and were discussed in Chapter Four. The connections to the overarching and subsidiary research questions are synthesized and presented in the preceding section. The final portions of Chapter Five provide recommendations to practice and research, relevance to the literate, and a synthesis of my final thoughts.

The themes that emerged from my research developed an interconnected story of the faculty perception. Each of the four themes pieced together helped me understand the faculty perception of community college transfer students. However, as Figure 5.1 illustrates, this is not the full picture, there are still missing pieces. Therefore, in this chapter I provide recommendations for both practice and research that may continue to help complete the puzzle.
Figure 5.1
Themes: Answering the Overarching Question
How do faculty perceive community college transfer students and the institutions the students previously attended?

The first of the four themes was student/faculty relationship: a two-way street of hesitation and reluctance. Two subsidiary themes were also developed that illustrated potential barriers to students having difficulty building relationships with faculty, students being perceived as complicated and students not asking for help. This theme presents the faculty’s perception of the student as a barrier to building a relationship with community college transfer students. Faculty view them as complex, complicated, and time consuming, often outright preferring to work with other kinds of students. It was not surprising to also see the faculty report these students were reluctant and less likely to approach faculty during or after class or drop in during office hours.
The second of the four themes was, a balancing act: aligning faculty and student expectations. The subsidiary themes within this area were 1) faculty expectations 2) students failing and then succeeding and 3) misalignment of Queens University and community college expectations. The faculty reported mixed perceptions of academic ability, but clearly agree that community college students do not accurately understand expectations, both institutional and within the classroom. Students expect classes to have lower requirements. The faculty feel this has an impact on student success, and therefore often see community college student first fail, and then succeed. Many of the faculty attribute this to Queens University and community colleges having very different expectations, which then sets up the student to being surprised upon attending Queens University.

A second class institution: community college as a stepping stone, was the third theme developed from the thematic analysis, with the following four subsidiary themes: 1) student expectations 2) academic rigor 3) the out of class campus agent interaction with students 4) a comparative discussion between faculty at the two kinds of institutions and 5) the faculty's mixed judgments and lack of knowledge. The perception of the community college is that it is quite different from Queens University. Due to the constrains placed on the faculty at community colleges, such as high teaching loads, and large class sizes, the faculty interviewed view the student experience at community colleges as inferior to the experience a student would receive at Queens University, particularly in relation to the faculty/student relationship, level of academic rigor provided in the classroom, and the support the student would receive outside of the classroom.
The final theme that emerged was, Isolation, A Community College Transfer Student Experience. There were seven subsidiary themes within the topic of Isolation: 1) the community college as education and a discussion of academic hierarchy, 2) the student choice to attend a community college, 3) academic advising, 4) isolated out of class experiences, 5) traditional undergraduates seen as the heart and soul of the university, 6) systematically disadvantaged experiences for community college transfer students, 7) faculty and students being unaware of how to address the issues. What is interesting about this theme in particular was the ways in which the university intentionally and unintentionally isolated and, in the faculty’s opinion, disadvantaged the community college transfer student. The university was founded on supporting full-time traditional aged students. The overall perception was that these students are still privileged and that the university has developed systemic policies that disadvantage community college transfer students.

Together, these themes describe a perception of the community college student from the lens of the faculty member. As the researcher, I found some of these connections between themes and overarching concepts surprising and critical for understanding community college student transfer success. Specifically, I was surprised that even though the faculty saw the community college sector as second class, and the student transfer student as disadvantaged by the university system, they did not, across interviews, perceive the students themselves as underprepared, incapable, or underqualified. Almost half of the faculty perceived the students as diligent, persistent, and resilient. I stated in my positionality statement in Chapter Three that I somewhat expected the faculty to describe the students as underqualified or underprepared for
Queens University than their native counterparts, which I was pleased not to find within my interview data across the board.

Each of these themes are interconnected. Theme four, which discusses Isolation, is deeply informed by the other three themes. For example, having a relationship that is described as hesitant and difficult to develop with faculty, described in the first theme, is a possible outcome of not having a faculty advisor, a prominent example of Isolation in theme four. The first theme describes how faculty/student relationships are difficult; therefore, it is not surprising to see students not understanding faculty expectations, as described in the second theme, if they are not connecting with faculty. In theme three, the faculty are unaware of the processes for community college transfer students to navigate between systems. This connects to the interpretations of theme four where the website, and other available information on the transfer process for students and faculty is described as absent. As well as the connections described here, the discussion of each of the themes in Chapter Four has an underpinned connection to the other three themes.

What is particularly uplifting about my findings are the ways in which these results can impact practice and research. For Queens University, now that we better understand how these students might be disadvantaged, the administration and faculty can address how their experience can be improved. These descriptions of the faculty perception at Queens University can inform how others might observe or address similar issues. This study also opens the door for new research. The next section is a discussion of my recommendations for practice and research and how more pieces of the puzzle can be added to our knowledge on the topic.
Recommendations for Practice and Research

The purpose of this study was to both add to an existing body of literate on the community college transfer student experience through the lens of the faculty member, as well as to inform four-year campuses about how faculty might perceive community college transfer students. This study’s findings are important for four-year campuses, particularly private campuses, because it can help faculty and administrators have informed conversations about community college transfer students and how these students might be perceived by the faculty. The study’s implications to practice and research will be presented in the following section. Specifically, three implications are discussed. First, the findings from this study present a focus for the study site to improve the faculty/student relationship and the community college transfer student experience at the institution. Second, the study’s findings provide insight for practitioners at four-year campuses to how faculty at one small, private university perceive community college transfer students. The third and final implication presented is how the study’s findings have developed areas for future research on the community college transfer student experience.

Recommendations for Practice

Due to being a single site study, one of the greatest implications to the study’s findings is the importance and application to the student experience at the study site. However, these findings are also valuable for practitioners and faculty on campuses similar to the study site. The following are ways the study’s finding can be applied by practitioners and faculty both at the study site, and on other campuses.

1. *Discussions with faculty should be facilitated at the study site and on other campuses on how faculty perceive community college transfer students as time*
consuming and difficult, and the importance of the faculty/student relationship for community college transfers. Using terms such as “complicated,” “layered” and “time consuming” faculty clearly see community college transfers as a group of students that require more time and investment than other kinds of students. This perception can influence their desire to teach and advise these students. As was stated by an interviewee who said, “just give me TUGS [traditional students].” As an example of how this could be implemented, department chairs should be given information and guidelines for how to lead a discussion on student/faculty relationships and using these materials lead a discussion on how to improve faculty/student relationship between community college transfer students and faculty within the individual department.

2. **Campuses need to develop and fund programs that are designed to connect community college transfer students and faculty.** My research describes how community college transfer students have barriers to overcome that prevent them from developing relationships with their faculty. Not only are community college students described as not approaching their faculty on their own, but the students have fewer opportunities than other students to have intentional connections outside of class with faculty. Therefore, campuses need to make a concerted effort to address this issue by connecting faculty and community college transfer students. At Queens University, the easiest way to implement this recommendation would be to assign each community college student a faculty advisor and/or mentor, requiring the students meet with him/her at least twice within their first semester.
3. *Campuses should have orientation programs for community college transfer students that include, but are not limited to, faculty and university expectations.* Community college transfer students are perceived as having misaligned academic expectations. Faculty believe community college transfer students come to Queens University expecting a similar academic experience to what they received at the community college. Because this is not an accurate level of expectation, the students then find themselves needing to catch up or failing. The recommendation was often made by the faculty that students should be made aware of the expectations upon arrival and the orientation they are given should include more discussion around academic expectations, such as attendance policies and what to expect from the faculty/student relationship. This can be difficult to implement depending on the type of orientation program that currently exists for community college students. However, it could be as simple as adding an orientation session for each major led by the student’s department chair, or having focus group discussions facilitated by a faculty member in the student’s major to discuss academic expectations.

4. *Faculty should be trained and given regular information on how to help community college transfer students be successful and navigate the transfer process.* Faculty do not know how to help community college transfer students and the information is not easy available. Community college transfer students have unique needs, such as navigating the transfer process and acclimating to a new campus. Not only do the faculty not know how to help these students, but according to the faculty, many of the processes and the steps a community college
transfer would need to take to be successful are not clearly articulated on the
website or in other ways for the student to use. This lack of knowledge by the
faculty, as well as the absence of information for the student could negatively
impact the student’s experience as well as his/her career and pathway to
graduation; therefore, it is recommended that campuses communicate this
information regularly not only to students, but also the faculty. There are many
ways this could be implemented; however, ideally it would be more developed
than merely emailing the faculty information. Ideally, during the week before
classes each semester, the faculty should attend a workshop on how to help
community college transfer students navigate the transition between institutions
and given resources they can use to help students throughout the term.

5. *Campus culture, policies, and procedures need to be reviewed and changed to
ensure all students are receiving an equal academic experience. This should include access to faculty, and academic advising.* The campus studied was
designed for a traditional undergraduate, not the community college transfer
student. The study’s findings clearly illustrate a privileged experience for the
traditional undergraduate. The faculty perceive both intentional and unintentional
ways the university systematically disadvantages the community college transfer
student. Some examples of ways this is described by the faculty are study abroad
and internship opportunities, the website’s focus and assumption that students are
traditional aged, having separate advising and student services, and ways
traditional students are afforded more access to interaction with faculty. Each of
these areas of campus should be reviewed and changes should be made to ensure
an equitable academic experience. One simple way this could be adopted is through tracking institutional and departmental student outcomes data, as well as survey data on community college transfer students. However, this would only be the first step, if data suggested that students were not performing, or not receiving adequate services and/or experiences the university would then need to address them individually.

**Recommendations for Research**

The following section provides researchers implications for how the study’s findings can develop areas for future research on the community college transfer student experience. Studies, such as those described, further the knowledge of community college transfer student experience and could assist campuses in their efforts to improve retention and attrition for community college transfer students at four year universities. Although there is a healthy body of research on the community college transfer student experience, this literature is limited to the large public institution and using mostly student data, the following recommendation suggest new possibilities for data, as well as a focus on the small private university and the faculty perception. Areas further research are recommended:

1. **Qualitative studies are recommended to further develop the faculty perception of the community college transfer student at other small, private universities.** The understanding of the faculty perception of the community college transfer student at a small, private university is limited to the results of this study; therefore, further investigating the faculty perception within this institutional type is recommended. Using this framework as a guide, a case study design could now
be developed not only looking at faculty interview data, but document analysis and administrator interview data.

2. *Studies using qualitative design are recommended to understand the student perception of the transfer experience at small private universities.* Due to investigating the faculty perception, this study’s findings illuminates perceptions that are unexplored from the student’s lens. Using this study’s findings, qualitative research is recommended to understand how these findings compare to the student perception at a small private university. Using this study’s findings to guide a framework, students could be interviewed using questions guided by the four themes that emerged through this study’s analysis.

3. *A directed qualitative analysis of institutional materials and policies is recommended to investigate structural bias against community college transfer students.* This study found that faculty consistently described isolated experiences for community college transfer students that would be prevalent in institutional materials such as admissions materials and academic policy. These perceptions should be used to conduct document analysis to investigate the potential for structural bias against community college transfer students or isolated experiences at various institutional types. Documents such as university websites, catalogs, admissions information for community college transfers and other policies could be researched using a directed analysis.

4. *Mixed methods studies are recommended to be used to further develop connections between student outcome data and the faculty perceptions.* Student outcomes data such as GPA, and retention or graduation rates could be used to
compare community college transfer student success at a small, private university to the faculty perceptions. For example, a directed analysis could be used to interview faculty to see if the faculty were bias against community college transfer students. The outcomes data for the students these faculty taught could be compared to the faculty perception using a mixed method analysis.

5. **Quantitative research using survey data is recommended to investigate if other campuses have isolated advising, student services, or admissions practices for community college transfer students.** This study’s findings describes an isolated experience for community college transfer students. The faculty described these experiences as disadvantaging the community college transfer student. It is currently unknown if similar isolated processes exist on other campuses. It is recommended survey data be collected from administrators and staff to investigate if other universities are creating a similar experiences for community college transfer students. An example of how this could be conducted would be sending an electronic survey to as many admissions offices as possible to report whether or not the university employs a separate admissions process for community college transfer students.

6. **Mixed methods research using student outcomes data and faculty interviews is recommended to investigate connections to disciplinary differences within faculty subgroups within the private university setting.** This study found that faculty described community college transfer students very differently, particularly in relation to student success. Considering Castellino’s (2014) findings at a public institution, which illustrate a difference between disciplinary subgroups, further
research within the private sector is recommended. Specifically, student outcomes
data such as student GPA, and faculty interview data could be compared to
investigate connections between the faculty descriptions and student GPA based
on the discipline of the faculty and student.

Relevance to the Literature

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, there has been little research on the
faculty perception of the community college transfer student and what was conducted
occurred at a mid-sized public institution. The findings of my study have developed new
information with interesting parallels to existing literature. This section is a presentation
of these parallels and the study’s relevance to existing research. The following areas of
research will be discussed: 1) the overall profile of the community college transfer
student, 2) the community college faculty profile 3) higher academic expectations at the
four-year university, 4) the faculty/student relationship, 5) barriers to community college
transfer student success, and 6) relevance to Castellio’s study (2014).

Overall the findings of my study are validated by the existing literature on the
profile of the community college transfer student. The faculty interviewed described
community college transfer students as being more complicated and layered. The faculty
explained this through the following kinds of student experiences: financial stress,
working full-time, age and the busy home life the students maintained. These
assumptions are support by the existing literature.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reports that low-income
students are more likely to attend community colleges (NCES, 2011). Of those attending
community colleges, 44% are low SES (household income less than $2,000), whereas
only 15% of high SES choose a community college (NCES, 2011). Community college
students are also more likely be older than those that attend four-year institutions and the majority of them hold full-time jobs (NCES, 2011). According to the NCES (2011), 59% of students attending public community colleges are over the age of 23 years. Single parents are also far more likely to attend community colleges than four-year institutions (AACC, 2015).

In addition to the student profile, there were also parallels between the literature and how the interviewees described the community college faculty profile. In particular, teaching was described as having lower quality because of the higher number of students, high teaching loads, and not being available to students because they were more likely to be part-time. Overall, these descriptions were supported by the literature. Townsend and Rosser (2007) found that community college faculty were teaching on average one more class per semester than those teaching at liberal arts universities. According to the AAUP 2014 report, the Employment Status of Instructional Staff Members in Higher Education, over 70% of the faculty teaching at community colleges are part-time faculty. Whereas just over 50% of masters level universities, both public and private, are taught by part-time faculty.

The faculty in this study described Queens University, and four-year institutions in general, having higher academic expectations. This too was supported by existing research. Though student interview data, Schmitigal (2010) found that community college transfer students described four year faculty required higher academic expectations than the community college and they had to adapt to studying more frequently with more depth. Schmitigal (2010) also attributed this to influencing the student’s ability to be successful at the four year institution.
The faculty/student relationship is a common topic throughout this study. In particular, the study’s findings illustrate areas where there are not only barriers to building relationships with faculty, but the faculty themselves stress the importance of students having meaningful connections and interactions with faculty. There is a great deal of literature to support the relevance of these findings and their significance to community college transfer student success.

The literature compelling illustrates that building relationships with faculty at a four-year institution is not only important for community college transfer student success (Hong, Shull, & Haefner, 2012; Kim & Sax, 2014; Shepherd & Shin, 2014), but community college transfer students can find it difficult (Townsend & Wilson, 2009). Other studies also show that community college students are less likely to develop relationships with their faculty (Rosenthal, et al. 2000; Cotten & Wilson, 2006).

Researchers found that informal interactions with faculty had a positive effect on both the post/non-traditional student’s plans to continue at the university, as well as their perceived level of academic success, defined as successful integration and persistence (Shepherd & Shin, 2014). Hong, Shull, and Haefner (2012) found that transfer students showed higher self-efficacy and success when they reported having meaningful experiences and positive relationships with their faculty. These findings not only echo the stories provided by the faculty interview data, but illustrate the importance of the faculty/student relationship.

Although there is very little research on the community college transfer to a private university, one qualitative study reported student interview data that found the following areas were of the upmost importance for community college transfer student
success: faculty relationships, academic support, and being engaged with peers (Rios, 2010). There are both parallels and misalignment between Rios’ (2010) findings and the results of this study. As previously stated, the faculty relationship and academic support are both areas the faculty viewed as influencing student success in this study; however, the areas of being engaged with peers was not a topic that developed. Rios’ (2010) study is particularly applicable because the participants were community college transfer students at a small, private university.

Common topics with the current literature on community college transfer students are the barriers to community college transfer student success. The challenge described by students most frequently was the difficulty navigating between the two institutional systems (Owens, 2010; Wilson, 2014; Harrison, 1999; Ellis, 2013; Schmitigal, 2010; Gerhardt and Ackerman, 2014). Another quite common barrier described by students in many of the studies was the reported loss of credits after transfer (Owens, 2010; Ellis, 2013; Gerhardt and Ackerman, 2014; Harrison, 1999). These were both topics of concern for the faculty interviewed. In particular, the faculty felt ill-equipped to help the students through an unclear and confusing transition, as well as concerns that the students were losing credits due to both a confusing transition and poor advising.

Finally, the relevance of this study’s findings can be connected to Castellio’s study (2014). Castellino (2014) interviewed faculty at a mid-sized public institution and using a structured interview protocol identified the following faculty perceptions of community college transfer students as salient across interviews: frustration with articulation, lower academic quality at community colleges, differences between
community college faculty and four-year faculty, student’s challenged with adjusting to a four-year school and the characteristics of community college transfers.

In many ways, this study accounted for similar findings, each of the themes Castellino (2014) found were also prevalent within this study; however, there were also places where her findings deviated from my own. For example, articulation agreements did come up in interviews, however, it did not develop as a salient topic through my coding analysis as it did for Castellino (2014). Whereas forms of lower academic quality at community colleges and the differences between faculty types were topics that developed within the themes, as well as student struggling with the transition to the four-year university and the characteristics of the community college transfer students. Another clear deviation was the topic of Isolation and disadvantage. These were both very salient and important findings within my study that were absent from Castellino’s (2014) findings.

There is one other notable parallel between Castellino’s (2014) findings and this study. Castellino (2014) found the faculty’s perception of academic preparedness closely aligned with the faculty members experiences with community colleges. As described in Chapter Four, this was also observed in this study. The more experience the faculty member had with a community college, such as working there themselves, they were more likely to view the students as having the skills and abilities to be successful.

The available literature on the community college transfer student at a public institution is deep and wide. However, the students’ experiences through the faculty members lens is quite limited, and until this study was conducted unknown within the small, private context. The findings of this study were connected to existing literature
further asserting the relevance and significance of this study. These connections are particularly important to both practitioners at four year universities and those researching community college transfer student success.

**Summary and Final Thoughts**

This ethnographic interview study illustrates how faculty perceive community college transfer students at a small, private university; specifically, the faculty’s perception of the students’ academic preparedness and success and the faculty’s interactions with these students was described, as well as the faculty’s perception of the community college. Four themes were developed: 1) factors influencing faculty/student relationships, 2) misaligned expectations and student success, 3) perceptions of the community college and academic hierarchy, and 4) the isolated experience of a community college transfer student.

As synthesized in the preceding chapter, these four themes illustrate how one, small private university’s faculty described their interactions and perceptions of community college transfer students. Tinto’s Attrition Theory (1993; 1975) as well as more recent studies on community college students (D’Amico et. al., 2014; Townsend & Wilson, 2009) framed the significance of this study to be the relevance of the relationship between the community college student and the faculty member.

The findings of this study not only show a disconnect between the faculty and community college students, but also underlying and systemic barriers to allowing students both access to faculty/student interaction and faculty perceptions that might prevent a community college transfer student from building relationships with faculty, or understanding the benefits of the faculty/student relationship. These are areas that
warrant further study as described in the earlier section as recommendations for future research.

The study's findings not only build upon a limited body of knowledge from the faculty perception but also developed a theme that has not emerged in other similar studies. This new area of research could have implications for community college transfer student success. The overarching theme of a disadvantaged and isolated community college experience is disturbing, and not previously found in other literature. This could be an anomaly, and unique to the study site, but considering its potential implications to student success, the topic warrants both discussion with the study site, and further research within other institutional contexts.

The generalization of this study’s findings is limited to existing literature due to the study’s data being collected at a single site. Therefore, the results from this study cannot be applied to other universities or students; however, the story this study tells illustrates the significance of the faculty/student relationship and the importance of the faculty perception. Although the perceptions and descriptions presented here are merely those of 12 faculty at one institution, their stories have illuminated topics that can have immense impact on the future success of community college transfer students at the study site, as well as provide information for other faculty, researchers and practitioners to use to benefit community college transfers across campuses.
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APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

The interview protocol is based on the following research questions:

1. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university describe their interactions and experiences with community college transfer students?

2. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university perceive community college transfer students’ academic preparedness?

3. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university describe the community college transfer students’ overall academic success?

4. How do full-time faculty at a small, private, nonprofit, masters-level university in the southeastern United States describe the institutions from which community college transfer students transferred?

Person Interviewed (Pseudonym):

Position:

Date:

Interview Location:

*Introduction:* “Thank you for agreeing to help me with my research. As part of my study, I am interviewing faculty about their experiences and perceptions of community college transfer students. Specifically, I’m interested in better understanding how you interact and perceive these students.”
The participant will then be given the informed consent form. If the participant agrees and signs the consent form state: “since you have agreed to be audio taped, I will now turn on the audio recorder.”

If the interview participant did not agree to audio recording, but is willing to participate, written notes will be taken and it will be indicated on the consent form. I will have a paper and pen at the interview location in case there is an audio recording malfunction or in case a participant wishes not to be recorded.

Start the interview:

Guided by an emic approach, the following open-ended questions will be asked. The sub questions under the numbered questions may or may not be asked.

1. How long have you been teaching at Queens?

2. What kinds of courses do you normally teach?
   a. What discipline and level?

3. What is your identifiable race and gender?

4. Do you come in contact with many community college transfer students?
   a. If so, how? Do you advise them? Are they in your classes?

5. How would a professor, such as yourself, know if he/she had a community college transfers in his/her class?

6. To the best of your knowledge, how would you describe community college transfer students at Queens?

7. Do the community college transfer students differ from other kinds of students?
   a. If so, how?

8. Would you please describe your interactions with community college transfers?
   a. Describe experiences both inside or outside the classroom.

9. How do you define academic success in your classroom?
   a. What does academic success look like?
10. How academically successful are community college transfers at Queens?
   a. Describe both social and academic successes.

11. How would you describe a student that transfers to Queens who is academically prepared?
    a. If the participant describes students as underprepared, ask how these students cope with being underprepared.

12. Describe the level of academic preparedness of the community college transfers at Queens.

13. Describe the level of academic support you believe Queens provides for community college students.

14. How do you perceive the community college sector or higher education in general?
    a. How might the classroom environment, faculty, or other factors be different from Queens?

15. Would you please describe your personal experiences with or connections to the community college sector?
    a. Have you attended yourself? family member attended? worked there previously?
    b. What do you perceive as the purpose of this sector of higher education?

16. Is there anything that you expected me to ask that I did not ask you? Or anything else you think might be helpful for me to know about our topic today?

17. Do you know of any other faculty at Queens that may have a lot of contact with community college students?
APPENDIX B: INVITATION LETTER

Community College Transfers: A Private University Faculty Perspective

Date

Dear ____,

My name is Sally Hyatt, I am a faculty member in the Kinesiology Department at Queens University of Charlotte and PhD Candidate at the University of South Carolina. I would like to invite you to participate in a study involving your experiences with community college students at Queens University.

The aim of this study is to examine how faculty make meaning of their interactions with community college transfer students at a small, private university and seeks to understand how these students are perceived by faculty; specifically, the faculty’s perception of the students’ academic preparedness and success.

The meeting will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 60 minutes. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. The recordings will only be reviewed, transcribed and analyzed. They will then be destroyed.

You may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. You do not have to answer any questions that you do not wish to. Although you probably won’t benefit directly from participating in this study, I hope that others in the community/society in general will benefit by providing a better understanding of community college transfers interactions with faculty as well as the faculty members perception of community college transfer students.

Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at Queens University of Charlotte. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed. Pseudonyms for all persons mentioned in all papers, presentations, and discussions will be used to ensure participant confidentiality.

Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any
question you are not comfortable answering. Participation, non-participation or withdrawal are options.

I will be happy to answer any questions you have about the study. You may contact me at (704)337-2554 hyatts@queens.edu if you have study related questions or problems. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for Queens University of Charlotte, irb@queens.edu, 704-337-2295.

Thank you for your consideration. If you would like to participate, please contact me at the e-mail or number listed below to further discuss participating. If I do not receive a response within the next week, I will call you to see whether you are willing to participate.

With kind regards,

Sally E. Hyatt
Assistant Dean
Instructor of Kinesiology
Blair College of Health
Queens University of Charlotte
704-337-2554 (direct)
hyatts@queens.edu

PhD Candidate
Educational Administration
University of South Carolina
APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT

I. **Title:** Community College Transfers: A Private College Faculty Perspective

II. **Purpose:** The aim of this study is to examine how faculty make meaning of their interactions with community college transfer students at a small, private university and seeks to understand how these students are perceived by faculty; specifically, the faculty’s perception of the students’ academic preparedness and success.

III. **Investigator:** The primary investigator for this study is Sally Hyatt, a faculty member in the Department of Kinesiology at Queens University of Charlotte and PhD Candidate at the University of South Carolina.

IV. **Interview:** The meeting for the interview will take place at a mutually agreed upon time and place, and should last about 60 minutes. The interview will be audio taped so that I can accurately reflect on what is discussed. After being transcribed, the recordings will then be destroyed. The transcriptions will be kept in a locked cabinet in my office at Queens University of Charlotte.

There is no known risk involved in participating in this study; however, the participant may feel uncomfortable answering some of the questions. Participants do not have to answer any questions they do not wish to. Although participates probably will not benefit directly from participating in this study, I hope others in the community/society in general will benefit by providing a better understanding of community college transfers interactions with faculty.

V. **Confidentiality:** Participation is confidential. Study information will be kept in a secure location at Queens University of Charlotte. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but participant identities will not be revealed. Pseudonyms for all persons mentioned in all papers, presentations, and discussions will be used to ensure participant confidentiality.

VI. **Voluntary Participation:** Taking part in the study is your decision. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. You may also quit being in the study at any time or decide not to answer any question you are not comfortable answering. Participation, non-participation or withdrawal are options. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for Queens University of Charlotte, irb@queens.edu, 704-337-2295.

VII. **Informed Consent:** By signing below I verify the following to be true:
1. I am over the age of 18 years of age;
2. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction;
3. I agree to participate in this research study;
4. I agree to be auto recorded during interviews.

____________________ ______________________  
Participant Name  Participant Signature  DATE  
(PLEASE PRINT)
March 21, 2016

Sally Hyatt
Blair College of Health

RESEARCH PROTOCOL APPROVAL, IRB FILE # 3-16-BCOH-00233

The Institutional Review Board reviewed your research request:

*Community college transfers: A private university faculty perspective*

Your protocol (3-16-2016); Informed consent form, Focus group questions, Questionnaire; and Recruitment materials were approved for use within the facilities of Queens University of Charlotte. The Board determined your study poses minimal risk to subjects and meets the criteria for an expedited application. If you plan to use the protocol outside of Queens University of Charlotte, you may need to submit it to the IRB at that institution for approval.

**This approval expires one year minus one day from date above.** Before your study expires, you must submit a notice of completion or a request for extension. You are required to report any changes to the research study to the IRB for approval prior to implementation. This form can be found on the IRB site on MyQueens and should be sent to irb@queens.edu.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact us. Please use the IRB file number when referencing your case.

Sincerely,

Laree Schoolmeesters
Laree Schoolmeesters, PhD, RN, CNL
Chair, IRB
This is to certify that the research proposal: Pro00055543

Entitled: Community College Transfer Students: A Private University Faculty Perspective

Submitted by:

Principal Investigator: Sally Hyatt

College/Department: Education
Education Leadership & Policies / Educational Administration
Wardlaw
Columbia, SC 29208

was reviewed in accordance with 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2), the referenced study received an exemption from Human Research Subject Regulations on 5/9/2016. No further action or Institutional Review Board (IRB) oversight is required, as long as the project remains the same. However, the Principal Investigator must inform the Office of Research Compliance of any changes in procedures involving human subjects. Changes to the
current research protocol could result in a reclassification of the study and further review by the IRB.

Because this project was determined to be exempt from further IRB oversight, consent document(s), if applicable, are not stamped with an expiration date.

Research related records should be retained for a minimum of three (3) years after termination of the study.

The Office of Research Compliance is an administrative office that supports the University of South Carolina Institutional Review Board (USC IRB). If you have questions, contact Arlene McWhorter at arlenem@sc.edu or (803) 777-7095.

Sincerely,

Lisa M. Johnson
IRB Manager