Faculty Perceptions of Adult Learner Experiences in the Classroom: A National Comparison Between Part-Time and Full-Time Faculty at Community Colleges

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Faculty Perceptions of Adult Learner Experiences in the Classroom: A National Comparison Between Part-Time and Full-Time Faculty at Community Colleges

Abstract
The purpose of this quantitative study was to compare full and part-time community college faculty perceptions to a question set forth in the 2012 national Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) study of the degree to which adult student life experiences contribute to (a) learning effectively on their own and (b) understanding themselves. Higher education institutions are facing challenging times due to education budgets being slashed, increasing diverse student populations, more part-time faculty being hired and reduced resources for professional development. The qualities of effective educational practices including teaching styles within community colleges are a critical component of learning campaigns. Educational institutions across the country are seeking alternatives to improving teaching styles of faculty to meet the growing needs of a diverse student population. The results of the study suggest that both full and part-time faculty at community colleges would benefit from exposure to effective educational practices such as learner-centered instructional practices. The real story that emerges from the research was the need for increased professional development for all faculty groups at community colleges.

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Faculty Perceptions of Adult Learner Experiences in the Classroom:

A National Comparison Between

Part-Time and Full-Time Faculty at Community Colleges

By

Sterling Jasper

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree
Ed.D. in Executive Leadership

Supervised by
Dr. Janice Kelly

Committee Member
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Biographical Sketch

Mr. Sterling Jasper Jr. attended Virginia State University from 1988 to 1992 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science in 1992. He attended Troy State University from 1996 to 1998 and graduated with a Masters of Business Administration in 1998. He came to St. John Fisher College in the summer of 2010 and began doctoral studies in the Ed.D. Program in Executive Leadership. Mr. Jasper pursued his research in faculty perceptions of adult learner experiences and learning outcomes under the direction of Dr. Janice Kelly and received the Ed.D. degree in 2012.
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The results of the study suggest that both full and part-time faculty at community colleges would benefit from exposure to effective educational practices such as learner-centered instructional practices. The real story that emerges from the research was the need for increased professional development for all faculty groups at community colleges.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The Changing Community College

Historically, community colleges have been referred to as teaching institutions rather than research institutions. In addition to teaching, faculties at four-year colleges and universities have been required to share knowledge obtained in their research by writing for publication. While this is an expectation of faculty at four-year colleges, the primary responsibility of most community college faculty has been teaching. The year 2001 marked the 100th anniversary of the opening of the first public junior college—now commonly known as a community college—in the United States (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000).

Community colleges have offered a variety of degree programs including one- and two-year vocational, six-month vocational diplomas, pre-professional and technical certificates, and, in the areas of liberal and general education, two-year programs leading to an associate degree (Brint & Karabel, 1989). Confusion over the name and mission of community colleges has been fueled by the multiple forces that have guided the institutions’ development. The terms technical college, junior college, community college and technical institute encompass a wide assortment of institutions.

Two-year colleges traditionally referred to institutions where the highest degree awarded is an Associate Degree, which is a two-year degree, focused in the arts, science or general studies. Commonly, community colleges are comprehensive institutions with curriculums offering (a) vocational and career education, (b) liberal and general
education and (c) adult and continuing education. However, an institution may not be considered a community college if it does not offer a comprehensive curriculum (Brint & Karabel, 1989). The primary mission of the junior college has been to offer education in the general and liberal studies and in applied sciences and adult education programs, which would lead to the transfer and completion of a bachelor’s degree (Zwerling, 1976). Applied science and adult/continuing education programs have also been provided at junior colleges.

Community colleges have faced continued diversification of their student population. During the 20th century, the functions of the community college have evolved in response to changing demographics and social and economic pressures. This has been especially true of programs for adult learners who collectively comprise a new, multigenerational student body of diverse life experiences (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2000). Adults re-entering education have represented a wide scope of ages, socio-economic backgrounds, educational goals, family and work responsibilities, and levels of academic readiness (Szelenyi, 2001).

Educational attainment, accountability and retention of students are current challenges facing community colleges. The most important challenge is the increased calls for accountability (Terenzini, 1989). Accountability includes state-level policies, accreditation standards, and the increasing cost of college that has held institutions of higher education increasingly responsible for student learning. Four-year universities as well as community and junior colleges have been called upon to be more accountable for education practices as well as to reform areas of affordability, access, and quality (Morris, 2007; U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Calls for increased accountability
have been accompanied by a steady decline in state support for higher education. This challenge has been compounded by waning federal funding of higher education and ballooning tuition rates, especially at community colleges where “attracting and retaining high-quality faculty… surely influences the quality of what is going on in public higher education” (Ehrenberg, 2004, p. 2).

**Adult Student Learners**

The challenges of teaching diverse adult learners at community colleges are formidable. Historically, the majority of community college students attend part-time, hold jobs, are older than their university colleagues, are first-generation college attendees, and are often under prepared for college-level courses (O’Banion, 1997).

The United States has enrolled a considerable amount of people from the older population since the mid-1970s. The number of adult students above the age of twenty-two at their entrance into college equaled the number of “traditional” students who were between the ages of eighteen and twenty-two during this recruitment time (Lenz & Shaevitz, 1977). This inflow of older students was provoked by demographic, economic, and technological developments. For example, the definition of “adult” student is relatively subjective and differs both within and across national systems of higher education contributing to the influx of documented students (Merriam & Caffarella, 1991).

When compared to younger students, adult students are different in their expectations, experiences, motivations and needs of higher education (Baxter, 1994; Hore, 1992). Adult students are often confronted with the challenge of balancing career and family responsibilities (Thacker & Novak, 1991). There are key variances among
adult students at various phases of life (Britton & Baxter, 1994; Thacker & Novak, 1991). The environments and needs for adult students and the opportunities these settings provide for enhanced learning has led to an increased amount of empirical research (e.g., engagement, inclusive activities etc). More research and data analysis is needed to understand the adjustment of adult learners after their return to the academy. Adult students are often confronted with the challenge of balancing career and family responsibilities (Thacker & Novak, 1991).

Adult students have confronted unique issues while attempting to adjust to traditional academic settings. The difference in learning techniques between pre-adults and adults has been described in many literary works (Beder & Darkenwald, 1982; Knowles, 1980). According to Knowles (1980) adult learners learn the best when they participate in guiding their individual learning and tend to learn best when they are engaged, when learning is problem focused, and when they are able to pull from their own experiences. The research in this dissertation builds on Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) theories that adult learners are “independent and self-directed… capable of assisting in the planning, execution of their own learning activities” (p. 99). The question remains as to what extent faculty have used the experiences of returning adult learners in the traditional classroom setting to aid the learning process.

**Faculty Profiles at Community College**

Over the past decades, higher education institutions have utilized varying types of faculty including lecturers and visiting part-time instructors to meet increasing classroom demands (Baldwin & Chronister, 2001). Teaching in an institution’s general education program has been a central role of part-time faculty members (Gappa & Leslie, 1993).
The profiles of faculty members teaching returning adult learners have continued to evolve. As higher education changes, the new landscape demands flexibility from the institutions that serve the nation's returning adult learners. Over the past 50 years, the percentage of part-time faculty in community colleges has risen from 38% to 64%. This move from full-time instructors to part-time instructors has not declined since the trend began (Entin, 2005). In fact, the employment of part-time faculty in higher education has been widespread. Research of part-time/full-time faculty trends noted that both the number and percentage of part-time faculty have increased steadily for all providers of postsecondary education (Banachowski, 1997; McCollin, 2000; Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995). German (1996) explained that before the mid-1960s, part-time faculty members were appointed to “enhance regular teaching by providing specialized and expert instruction from professionals in other fields” (p. 231). Part-time instructors were hired as experts in a special course topic or in the absence of full-time professors on sabbatical (Mcardle, 2002).

The changing economy contributed to the increased number of part-time faculty. “Because many educational institutions and programs are facing budget reductions, they are challenged with doing more with less. Hiring part-time instructors offered a solution to the problem of cost containment and staffing.” (Lankard, 1993, para. 1). Starting in the late 1970s, part-time instructors have been a major presence in the community college classroom.

As detailed in the 1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty: Instructional Faculty and Staff in Public two-year colleges (NCES, 2000), part-time instructor positions increased steadily from 1963 to 1974. Brewster (2000) stated that the
percentage of part-time instructors teaching in community colleges represented nearly 50% of instructors between 1970 and 1992. By 1993, the percentage of part-time instructors in community colleges reached 65% (Banachoski, 1997). According to the US Department of Education (2006), the number of post-secondary teachers is expected to increase an additional 23% by 2016.

Hiring adjunct faculty has allowed administrators flexibility in the delivery of curriculum to meet a variety of students needs. Most adjunct faculty is hired to teach for one term at a time. If demand for a course drops, part-time faculty is not rehired for subsequent semesters. Conversely, new subjects and additional course sections may be added as needed by hiring part-time faculty. Part-time faculty may be willing, and in some cases even prefer, teaching the evening and weekend courses desired by part-time students—timeslots full-time faculty may view as undesirable.

The increase in the amount of students attending community college between 1965 and 2007 required the hiring of adjunct faculty (American Association of State Colleges, 2007). However, the community college adjunct instructor’s capability to engage with students has been an enduring concern (Herzog, 2006). Jaeger and Eagan (2009) claimed that “initial evidence suggests that the part-time faculty are less accessible to students, have less frequent interactions with students, are most transient, brings less scholarly authority to their jobs, and are less likely to integrate student experience” (p. 168). Herzog (2006) asserted that a part-time instructor’s accessibility to interact with students, which was student engagement, was insufficient. He wrote; “providing opportunities for collaborative learning and interaction with faculty and classroom and the community college increases the chances for completion and successful outcomes of
community college students” (p. 3-4). Others posited that employing large numbers of part-time faculty negatively impact the integrity of community college teaching instruction in areas such as differentiated teaching services (Samuel, 1989; Thompson, 1992). However, there has been no consensus on how integrity is undermined. Research suggested that part-timers rely on traditional pedagogy. Therefore, part-time faculty tends not to integrate differentiated instructional activities in classrooms (Digranes & Digranes, 1995).

Contradictory to the belief that part- and full-time faculty use different teaching methods than part-time, data drawn from national studies of professional development programs for community college faculty revealed that part-timers who engage in professional development activities use the same activities for instruction as full-timers (Impara, Hoerner, Clowes, & Alkins, 1991; Kelly, 1992). Despite the historical role played by part-time instructors in community colleges, research on part-time faculty is relatively new. Thus, there is a need for further investigation into differentiated teaching styles among part-time instructors.

**Learner-Centered Instruction**

It is essential that current teaching practices be refined in order to aid in the implementation of better learner-centered teaching practices to increase student achievement. Faculty members who have embraced the assumption of adult learning behaviors have a “learner-centered” or collaborative teaching style. The phase “learner-centered” is now referenced in curriculum standards, documents, curriculum materials, and mission statements at most institutions of higher learning. McCombs and Whisler (1997) stated that a learner-centered approach to education is “the perspective that
couples a focus on individual learners with a focus on learning” (p. 9). According to McCombs and Whisler, these faculty members allowed students to have input on the learning process. In contrast, faculty who focused on providing information and meeting uniform objectives without student involvement had a “teacher-centered” style. Faculty focused on “learner-centered” approaches considers the experiences, perspectives, backgrounds, talents, interests, capabilities, and needs of individual learners. These teaching practices effectively promote motivation, learning, and achievement (McCombs & Whisler, 1997). Absent from the literature is empirical research that investigated to what extent student experiences in a selected course contribute to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in adult learning. This gap is addressed in this dissertation.

Many adult educators have believed the instructor to be a key element in classroom learning (Brookfield, 1986; Daloz, 1986). Knowles (1980) stated, “the behavior of the teacher probably influences the character of the learning climate more than any other single factor” (p. 47). A further investigation of learner-centered approaches and adult student learners is warranted.

**Statement of the Problem**

In a paper presented at the 2000 Annual Meeting of the Mid-South Educational Research Association McCollin stated, “There is a dearth of research comparing how traditional and nontraditional students are taught in a college or university setting” (p. 9). McCollin said that there is limited research that compares “perceptions of the teaching learning transaction from both the instructors’ and students’ points of views” (p. 9). Beder and Darkenwald (1982) and Gorham (1985) investigated differences in teaching adults and traditional students. Beder and Darkenwald found that teachers emphasized
learner-centered behaviors when teaching adults and downplayed controlling behaviors. Teachers taught differently due to their perceived differences as to learning-related characteristics of adults and pre-adults. Gorham’s observations produced little evidence of emphasis on student-centered approaches in teaching adults.

When instructors take adult students’ experiences and motivation into account and use a problem centered orientation to learning, student learning enhanced (Conti, 1989; Knowles, 1980). To what extent are faculties using adult experiences? The review of the literature conducted for this dissertation, indicated a lack of empirical research investigating full-time and part-time faculty knowledge of adult learning strategies. One of the best examples of current research at community colleges is the Community College Faculty Student Survey Engagement Report (CCFSSE). For example, the 2009 CCFSSE survey reported 63% of participating faculty members and 71% of surveyed students felt student experiences contributed to acquiring a broad general education. However, the study did not investigate academic employment status (full-time versus part-time). How community college faculty incorporates adult experiences into the learning process. Thus, according to Creswell (2002) a key contribution of this dissertation investigation is addressing a question currently not understood. Empirical research investigating the extent to which adult learner experiences, knowledge, and skills are considered in setting course curriculum among part-time and full-time faculty at community colleges is under-developed. Therefore there is the need for the present research.
Theoretical Rationale

The conceptual framework of this study is drawn from Knowles’ concept of andragogy theory (1968). Knowles, a universally known and significant professor in adult education, contributed much to the contemporary theoretical theories of adult education. Knowles defined andragogy as the art and science of helping adults learn and placed great significance on the adult learners’ life situations (Carlson, 1989). As an emerging field, “Knowles proposed new methods and new technologies of adult learning to distinguish it from other forms of education, and enable supports of adult education to have a way of separating themselves from other areas of education” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 272). For example, adult learners are initially presented with an overview of the class objectives. Students are informed as to what they are going to study and why they are learning specific functions. They are then given task-oriented instruction as well as real-life coursework to test their abilities in specific areas. The widespread range of backgrounds should be taken into account by the instructor. Different levels/types of previous experience should be reflected in the activities and learning materials. Faculty should take note of individual goals and levels. The faculty should act as an expert and facilitator and help the students if mistakes are made or if help is requested.

Largely based on the work of Knowles (1968), the development of andragogy began to be recognized in the second half of the 20th century when andragogical practice was distinguished from pedagogy (Klapan, 2002). Knowles’s (1968) andragogical process model identified phases in both program application and individual learning activities:
1. The establishment of a climate conducive to adult learning: a physical environment in which adults feel at ease; one which causes adults to feel accepted, respected, and supported.

2. The construction of an organizational structure for participative planning: a basic element of andragogy is the involvement of learners in the process of planning their own learning.

3. The diagnosis of needs for learning: an emphasis being placed on the participation of adult learners in a process of self-diagnosis of needs for learning.

4. The formulation of direction of learning: consistent with the adult’s self-concept of self-directivity, andragogical practice treats the learning-teaching transaction as the mutual responsibility of learners and teacher.

5. The development of a design of activities: classroom assignments and discussions.

6. The rediagnosis of needs for learning: a process of self-evaluation in which the teacher help adults collect data about progress made toward their educational goals.

Furthermore, Knowles (1968) argued that adults enter into any undertaking with a different background of experience from that of youth. Having lived longer, they have accumulated a greater volume of experience. Adults in large part define themselves from the gathering of their distinctive sets of experiences. Adults, therefore, have a profound investment in experience and its value.
Knowles’ (1968) work indicated that the variances in experience between children and adults have at least three consequences for learning: (a) adults have more to contribute to the learning of others, and they themselves are a rich source for learning; (b) adults have more abundant experiences to which they relate new experiences; and (c) adults have accumulated a higher number patterns of thought and fixed habits, and therefore, tend to be less open-minded. Knowles’s assumptions have been the subject of considerable debate among critics. For example, Davenport (1993) Jarvis (1977) Tennant (1996) argue that Knowles’s conception of andragogy is inconsistent and fails to set and interrogate the ideas within a coherent and consistent conceptual framework. Consequently, there is a need for more research given what Knowles posited concerning adult experience and general adult learning practices.

Implications for Practice

Two implications stemming from Knowles’s (1968) research support the need for further empirical research:

1. Emphasis on experimental learning techniques. More importance placed on methods that utilize the experience of adult learner because they are richer resources for learning than are the experiences of children. One such technique is adult curriculum design and instruction that engages diversity of thought around task completion and outcomes.

2. Emphasis on practical application. Skillful adult educators have always taken care to see that new concepts or broad generalizations are illustrated by life experiences drawn from the learners. However, recent studies on the transfer of learning and the maintenance of behavior change indicated the desirability
of going even further. The research suggested designing learning experiences that provide opportunities for learners to organize and practice how to apply acquiring knowledge to everyday life.

Merriam and Caffarella (1999) added to the andragogy knowledge base. They posited that adults were able to actively participate in diagnosing, planning and implementing their learning experiences and are able to evaluate the success or failure of those experiences. Drawing from Knowles (1984), Merriam and Caffarella (1999) indicated that andragogy has centered on five assumptions about the adult learner:

1. As a person matures he or she moves from a dependent personality toward one of a more self-directing human being.
2. An adult amasses a growing reservoir of experiences, which is a rich resource of learning.
3. The readiness of an adult to learn is closely related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role.
4. As people mature, there is a change in time perception. The learner moves from future application of knowledge to immediacy of application.
5. Internal factors rather than external ones motivate adults to learn.

**Purpose of the Study**

We do not know to what degree learner-centered instruction is being used in community college classrooms. Research in support of learner-centered educational practices is sparse; however data is available. Each year, The Center for Community College Student Engagement conducts a national survey of educational practices. Grounded in research about effective educational practice, the CCFSSE is a tool that
assesses how engaged students are with college faculty and staff, with their studies, and with other students. Building on the learner-centered data collected by the CCFSSE, the dissertation study further investigates faculty perceptions at community colleges of the degree to which adult experiences are being used in the classroom instruction. Moreover, are there any differences in these perceptions based on faculty status – part-time versus full-time?

Strong evidence exists that supports the implementation of adult experiences into learner-centered approaches instead of instructor-centered approaches. Knowledge of this research helps instructors meet the needs of the diverse student populations. The conclusive result of decades of research on knowledge base is that what a person already knows largely determines what new information he attends to, how he organizes and represents new information, and how he filters new experiences, and even what he determines to be important or relevant. (Alexander & Murphy, 2000) Even with this research, what is not readily known is the degree to which adult learner experiences are being used in community college classrooms by full and part-time faculty. For example, Central Community College (2009) investigated faculty perceptions of adult experience in the classroom. However the research did not specifically compare faculty academic status and learner-centered teaching styles that considered the impact of adult experiences.

Irrespective of the interest generated around adult education, research literature raised questions concerning the lack of “philosophical, theoretical and practical phenomenon of adult education in the concept of self directed learning in practicing adult
education” (Klapan, 2002, p.4). This lack of empirical evidence to support adult learning assumptions can be found at the core of the research questions of this investigation.

**Research Questions**

The research questions for this investigation were developed from the review of the literature, which demonstrated an absence of research in this area. The following research questions were explored:

1. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to student knowledge, skills, and personal development in learning effectively on their own?

2. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to understanding themselves?

**Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is multifaceted: It is important for enhancement of learning, for post-secondary faculty enhancement of their teaching, and for post-secondary institutions in their ability to serve their students to the best of their capability and retain those students through program completion. Community colleges, well-known for commitment to teaching a mixed student population, have been facing an increased number of demands. State and federal governments, governing boards, accrediting organizations, and the public have been looking beyond the enrollment numbers customarily expected of these open-admission institutions. They have instead demanded better performance, more accountability and higher quality. Community colleges must
comply by improving not only assessments but also instruction in order to improve student learning. To meet these higher expectations, community colleges have been relying on a large number of adjunct instructors.

A concern shared by many experienced community college adjunct faculty is the realization that there have been students who are not learning the desired material in spite of their best teaching efforts. The experience for these faculty members has been that their ability to teach does not necessarily result in student learning. One way for faculty to address this concern has been to shift the focus from knowing how to teach to knowing how to produce positive learning outcomes. The challenge of producing positive learning outcomes has in recent years moved to the forefront of American higher education (Cross, 2001). The concept of implementing an approach to learning focused on the needs of the learner in order to achieve learning outcomes has been supported by numerous studies conducted at educational institutions (Barrett, Bower, & Donovan, 2007; Chaves, 2006; Crick & McCombs, 2006; Weimer, 2002). Thus, it is important to use research to determine if faculties are implementing learner-centered practices particularly at community college.

Two key factors underlie the importance of the dissertation research. First, how and where to use part-time faculty members should be considered as their roles evolve in instructional institutions (Schibik & Harrington, 2000). As noted, the role of a part-time instructor has shifted from teacher to service provider and mentor. Keifer (1997) argued the role of community college faculty members has been made more complex by the information age. Chang (2005) also claimed that students not only wanted instructors to be more than conveyors of course materials but also capable of serving as advisors and
mentors. In addition, Garii and Peterson (2006) stated that instructors were expected to play a service role in higher education.

Secondly, debates about the role of adjunct faculty, such as those on the opinion page of the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, supported the need to learn and refine professional and teaching techniques through faculty development programs that take adult learners experiences into account. Although more faculty development programs have been offered on campuses, Boyle and Boice (1998) argued that higher education falls short in the areas of assessing the outcomes of adult learner programs. In many cases, part-time instructors new to the teaching profession arrived unprepared and uncertain as instructors (Boice, 1992). Novice instructors at community colleges exemplified the basic difficulties that continue into first professional appointments. Instructors worried about not knowing enough, about adult student engagement, or about balancing instruction with demographics, social, and economic pressures (Svinicki, 1994). For these reasons, debates continued to raise the need for faculty development that takes into account adult learners who make up a large portion of community college classrooms. Such professional development provides opportunities for instructors to learn and refine professional and teaching techniques.

**Definitions of Terms**

The closely related terms of learner-centered, learning, learning-centered, learning college, and learning outcomes have been used throughout this dissertation. Faculty perceptions as related to this study were also defined within Chapter 1. This section defines additional terms salient to the described research.
**Adjunct faculty.** Also referred to as part-time faculty. Those persons whose specific job assignment is to conduct classroom instruction. The term of employment is temporary (typically one-semester appointments) and compensation is based on classroom contact hours.

**Adult student.** A student who is “performing social roles typically assigned by our culture to those it considers to be adults” and/or “a person is an adult to the extent that the individual perceives herself or himself to be essentially responsible for her or his own life” (Knowles, 1980, p. 24).

**Andragogy.** A concept developed by Knowles (1970) concerning the teaching and learning of adults based on assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners, such as, self-directed learning, task orientation, and experience background.

**Community College.** Refers to a publicly controlled postsecondary institution that offers regionally and state accredited certificate or degree programs (Cohen & Brawer, 2003). For the purpose of this study, the terms institution, public 2-year college and/or community or technical college are used interchangeably. The Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) defined a postsecondary education institution as an organization whose sole or primary mission is to provide education or training beyond the high school level.

**Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCCSE).** Established in 2001 and is administered by the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin, the organization develops, validates and administers the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE), and the Survey of Entering Student
Engagement. CCCSE provides systematically collected data on experiences of community college students’ nationwide supplying college faculty and administrator’s with information about effective educational practice and student success measures (McClenney, 2007).

**Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE).**
Piloted in the fall of 2004 and administered nationally for the first time in the spring of 2005 by the Center for Community College Students Engagement (CCCSE), the survey provides systematically collected data on faculty practices in a specific selected course, as well as their perceptions of students’ experiences in the college more generally (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2005).

**Employment status.** An independent grouping variable with two values: full-time and part-time/adjunct.

**Full-time faculty (long term).** Persons whose specific job assignment is to conduct classroom instruction. They may also pursue academic research, curriculum development, or public service as a long-term principle activity.

**Part-time faculty.** For the purpose of this research, the terms part-time faculty and adjunct faculty (defined above) are used interchangeably.

**Instructional adaptations/modification.** Changes in teaching methods and course delivery strategies.

**Instructional practices.** Teaching methods and course delivery strategies.

**Learner-centered approach.** Also referred to as student-centered or collaborative style. A teaching style that refers to a “method of instruction in which
authority for curriculum formation is jointly shared by the learner and the practitioner” (Conti, 1989, p. 7).

**Non-traditional students (NTS).** A term with no universal definition but more often than not NTS are classified by situational, demographic, motivational, and personal factors like maturation levels, marital status, or age (Cross, 1981; Knowles, 1984; Merriam & Caffarella, 1991). The typical definition used for this study is a student who is married or a parent, 25 years old or above, and is returning to education after being out for a time.

**Pedagogy.** The general science and art of teaching, typically focusing on youth.

**Student engagement.** The capture of a student’s full academic attention, interest, and/or participation.

**Teacher status.** The designation assigned to professors of full-time or part-time course loads, regardless of tenure.

**Teaching Style.** Identifiable sets of classroom behaviors of an instructor that is consistent even with different content being taught.

**Chapter Summary**

This dissertation is presented in five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the introduction, statement of the problem, research questions, purpose of the study, the research questions to be tested, the significance of the study and definitions. The remaining chapters include a review of the literature, a description of the research methodology, the results, and a discussion of the results, implications, and recommendations for practice and further study.
Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction and Purpose

From an educational perspective, one major question being raised is does learner-centered instruction impact academic excellence? As an educator, what is the benefit of putting emphasis on the effectiveness and quality of education through the development of curriculum that address the diversity of students? What is the benefit of understanding differences between part-time and full-time faculty and gaining insights into the perception of members of the two faculties? This section responds to these questions by reviewing literature covering aspects of full-time versus part-time faculty perceptions of adult experiences. This section is divided into four distinct sections that dissect (a) faculty groups; (b) learner-centered teaching, (c) faculty and learner roles, (d) adult learning. A summary of the literature completes the chapter. The chapter begins with an examination of part-time/full-time faculty and adult learner trends related to learner-centered instruction, an important concept in adult education. Researchers agree that excellence in academic pursuit is reliant on the interaction a number of factors. Chapter 2 is a comprehensive review of theoretical and empirical literature that substantiates the fact that learning for adult students is a multidimensional phenomenon dependent on the interplay between factors.

Faculty Group Comparison

Since the 1980s, considerable research has been conducted on issues related to the use of part-time versus full-time faculty instruction at community colleges. Numerous
scholars contributed to the body of knowledge on teaching and learning (Candela, Dalley & Benzel-Lindsey, 2006; Carlson & Fleisher, 2002; Chickering & Gamson, 1999; McCombs, 1999, 2001; Menges & Weimer, 1996; Weimer, 2002). Research indicated positive learning outcomes when faculty members engage adult students in learning activities. Drawing from backgrounds in critical social theories in education, philosophy, and sociology, researchers constructed inclusive perspectives on adult learning guiding readers toward new ways of thinking about teaching and learning for adult students. However, the lack of data on group differences between part-time and full-time perceptions of college instructors is evident when examined from the perspective that faculty members constitute the most important source of information for adult learners.

**Full-time versus part-time faculty.** Many articles provided historical and modern perspectives of full-time and part-time faculty differences. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, 65% of faculty at community colleges was part-time in 1995 (as cited in Leslie & Gappa, 2002). Given the current growth of community college across the nation, it is useful to determine if there are significant differences between full- and part-time faculty with respect to classroom instruction, student engagement, and professional development needs. Such information may assist community college administrators in designing professional development programs and policies that meet the diverse needs of both full- and part-time faculty.

A review of data collected in a national study, *Community College Faculty: Characteristics, Practices, and Challenges* (New Directions for Community Colleges, Summer 2002), summarized research findings on the similarities and differences among
community college faculty groups of community college faculty. The report identified several shared characteristics between full-time and part-time faculties. Leslie and Gappa (2002) summarized these findings. They found that both part-time and full-time faculty members had similar patterns of instructional activities (e.g. lectures, class discussions), and both groups requested professional development opportunities over the next five years.

Another study on the trends and challenges of part-time faculty that draws the history and evolution of this method of curriculum delivery was contained in the journal *Part-time faculty: Identifying the trends and challenges* by German (1996). The article discussed the critical elements for successful content delivery under part-time faculty arrangement and analyzed both limits as well as trends identified in policy formulation. Descriptive analysis of the proposed sub-elements was used to justify relations to contemporary learning arrangements and challenges in part-time faculty. Data was generated through review of literature and case studies, where interviews and questionnaires were employed. The major finding was that there is the need for refinement/reinforcement of better adult learning approaches. This finding supports the need of the research described in this dissertation.

German’s (1996) work supports adult learning effective instruction as advocated in the dissertation research. The article provided detailed analysis of the developments and adjustments being advanced in the field of andragogy as the need to develop flexible instructional methods in learning take center stage.

Based on the understanding that adults view themselves as autonomous beings that are capable of self-direction, teacher engagement activities should be developed in a
manner that gives students greater control during the learning sessions. This is essential for two important areas in learning; it fortifies important skills in learning such as problem-solving and critical thinking. Next, it improves the likelihood of attaining high levels of student attention. A great deal of literature asserts that activities motivate student development through engagement. Student engagement is reinforced by directorial instruction from teachers and small group work. Active engagement enhances the ability of the students to explore and learn new facts on the subject through teacher support. The authors observed that demands on time and out-of-class requirements are critical determinants of effective learning process that cannot be guaranteed by part-time faculty.

According to German (1996), full-time faculties have little interest and little skill in working with students, while part-timers with previous teaching experience are especially effective in engaging students. Other beliefs noted in German’s research included the fact that despite the limitations of part-time faculty (e.g., lack of professional development), they demonstrated the ability to excel. However, part-time faculties were less enthusiastic about the application of the student-centered approach. As a group, “they professed far less discipline or knowledge-centered than full-time faculty and far more interested in helping students learn, grow, and develop almost universally, it was reported that part-time faculty with extensive backgrounds in business or professional practice were effective in working with adult students” (German, 1996, p. 224).

The dissertation research also sought to investigate the differences between part-time and full-time faculty members’ engagement of adult learners attending community colleges. Two research questions formed the basis of the study. The first question sought
to examine the underlying differences between two groups of faculty and their perceptions in the extent to which student experiences contributed to understanding themselves. The second question sought to examine the group differences between part-time and full-time instructors and their perception in the extent to which student experiences contributed to learning effectively on their own.

Despite past research attempts to examine this topic from varying perspectives (e.g., Leslie & Gappa, 1993; Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995) this study forms the first clear attempt to dissect faculty perception of adult experience and classroom instruction. Examining classroom instruction among part-time faculty in these two areas is crucial given the number of adult learners who collectively comprise a new, multigenerational student body with diverse life experiences. Defining a one-size fit all curriculum is impossible, and new professors and those unaccustomed to the larger time demands of adjusting to a diverse body of students face a decidedly increased level of difficulty of achieving student engagement and quality instruction as they attempt to adjust to changing needs of their students, fellow professors, and the campus.

**Learner-Centered Teaching Practices**

Researchers examined teaching and instructional methods aimed at making the learning process more engaging and meaningful to both the instructor and the students. In fact, a number of researchers have proposed and promoted non-traditional teaching methods as some of the best practices in post-secondary education (Angelo & Cross, 1993, 2006; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Candela, Dalley, & Benzel-Lindsey, 2006; McCombs, 2001; McCombs & Whistler, 1997; Menges & Weimer, 1996; Palmer, 1998; Weimer, 2002). For the most part, non-traditional teaching methods have been grouped together by
researchers, faculty, and administrators as learner-centered teaching methods. The literature regarding learner-centered teaching practices is extensive. Several prominent researchers have contributed significantly to the evidence regarding learner-centered teaching practices and their effectiveness (Angelo & Cross, 1993; Barr & Tagg, 1995; Candela, Dalley, & Benzel-Lindsey, 2006; Chickering & Gamson, 1987; McCombs, 2001; McCombs & Whistler, 1997; Menges & Weimer, 1996; Palmer, 1998; Weimer, 2002).

McCombs (1998) and McCombs and Whistler (1997) found that learner-centered systems improved learning and motivation. The benefits of student-centered approaches in curriculum delivery have been manifold. It has enabled instructors to attain high levels of communication with learners. The authors found that this teaching approach, centered on students, enabled maximum student-teacher interaction without limitation. Furthermore, the teaching approach was cognizant of classroom arrangements that enabled instructors to keep rule over the class and placed emphasis on the learning of subject matter.

According to McCombs (1998) and McCombs and Whistler (1997), this change occurred when students’ needs for belonging, control, and competence were fulfilled. Learning, motivation, and achievement were enhanced upon meeting the diverse needs of the students. The research gave evidence of the value of learner-centered principles and its application to the teaching-learning process for achieving successful learning outcomes. However, the research failed to investigate the affects of personal experience in the adult learning process. This gap generates the need to proceed with further inquiry.
into the perceptions of part time and full time faculties and their impact on adult learning experiences.

Understanding learner-centered development, particularly adult development, can help educators’ better serve adult learners. Adult learners' entrance into community college differs from that of an eighteen-year-old student (Beder & Darkenwald, 1982). Adults stereotypically enroll in a community college that is easily reached, essential to current life needs, affordable, flexible in course planning, and sympathetic to adult daily life commitments. However, success in the college for these students, as defined by the adjustment to college and excellence in academic performance, is dependent on how well a student makes positive personal, emotional and social adjustments. This is because college life presents an atmosphere that may cause anxiety and stress for the students. Conversely, how well the instructions are designed to accommodate external pressures of the students may well spell success or failure in the academic endeavors. This adjustability has been depicted as multi-determined by a number of contributing influences such as academic factors, personality variables, family characteristics, academic pressures and environmental factors.

Many adult students have educational experiences that consist of starts and restarts as well as multiple schools (Beder & Darkenwald, 1982). These experiences influence the adult learners’ perception of how successful they will be in college (Grunert, 1997). Past experiences provide adults with useful tools to manage their time and study techniques. Adults have the capability to monitor their work, learning, and personal life while adapting to the rigor of school (Merriam & Brockett, 1997). The literature suggested that the fundamental difference between adult and pre-adult learners
is “the experience that the two groups bring to their studies and the manner in which it (experience) has been derived” (Grunert, 1997, p. 455). Older learners have more experience (informed through living life), have different social roles, are able to make connections more readily between theoretical factors and their application in daily life, and are able to learn at an accelerated pace. For adults to be successful in the classroom, the community college must embrace the value and worth of adults as knowledgeable learners. The worth and value of adult life experiences should be incorporated into the curriculum (Grunert, 1997).

Ideas about how adults learn have been important to the development of the field of adult learning. Andragogy, which is the set of assumptions about adult learning, emphasizes the needs and characteristics of the adult learner. Knowles (1980) defined andragogy as “the art and science of how healthy adults learn” (p.43). He listed these three assumptions of andragogy:

1. Adults need to know why they need to learn something before undertaking to learn it.
2. Adults have a self-concept of being responsible for their own life. They develop a deep psychological need to be seen and treated by others as being capable of self-direction.
3. Adults come to an educational activity with both a greater volume and a different quality of experience than youths.

Although Knowles (1980) originally described pedagogy (teaching children) and andragogy (teaching adults) as containing two distinct sets of assumptions, he later viewed them as a continuum rather than two separate and unique concepts. Andragogy
has been represented by a variety of terms including collaborative learning and learner-centered instruction. Besides Knowles’ work in adult learning, Bloom’s and Kolb’s individual works also stand as important contributors to the overall knowledge base concerning adult learning. Dinmore (1997) noted, “Bloom’s taxonomy is helpful in moving students from lower to higher levels of knowledge” (p. 454), while Kolb’s learning model “indicates that experience is a basis for learning in a cycle that includes concrete experience, reflective observation, conceptualization, and active experimentation” (p. 454). In other words, adult learning promotes “active learning grounded in the past experience of the learner and in the application of the knowledge at a personal level” (Seidel, Perencevich, & Kett, 2005). Thus, these seminal authors agreed with the earlier conclusion that “adult education is the process through which learners become aware of significant experience; . . . recognition of that significance can lead to evaluation and ascription of meaning” (Dinmore, 1997, p. 454).

Furthermore, effective learning methods liberate adults from forced direction in their learning and with encouraging them to become preemptive, initiating individuals in restructuring their individual work, political and recreational lives. On the other hand, the facilitation process in adult learning has played a significant impact on the capacity to achieve the learning objectives. It offers the opportunity for adult learners to engage in collective questioning, exploration, and interpretation of the learned contents. Finally, statistically “older adults represent a growing constituency in many nations” (Ridley, 1991, p. 45). The challenge that educators face is grappling with the problem of understanding and supporting the unique learning needs of this group.
Huba and Freed (2000) clearly addressed the human related and organizational factors in the context learner-centered assessment on college campuses. According to Huba and Freed (2000), “the teacher's role is to facilitate growth by utilizing the interests and unique needs of students as a guide for meaningful instruction. Student-centered classrooms are by no means characterized by a free-for-all (p. 72). Adoption of these practices and the philosophies presented strategic approaches to curriculum delivery. The impact of changing roles of the instructor instructional methods, teaching culture, student diversity, and improvement in technology were some of the factors presented as learning institutions tried to adopt the student-centered principles in the changing face of adult education.

More detailed analyses of the student centered approach to learning was provided by Gibbs (1995). Based on an examination concepts of student centered approach to learning, Gibbs (1995) expounded on key decisions of learning which include “what is to be learned, how and when it is to be learned, with what outcome, what criteria and standards are to be used, how the judgments are made and by whom these judgments are made.” The study was aimed at drawing more insights into the broader definitions and concepts of student centered approach.

In a similar study, Light and Cox (2001) posited that student centered approaches encompass a wide range of principles that include the fact that “the learner has full responsibility for her/his learning, involvement and participation are necessary for learning, the relationship between learners is more equal, promoting growth, development and the teacher becomes a facilitator and resource person” (p. 3). Similar findings were identified by Brandes and Ginnis (1996) and Cobb (1999), who suggested
that implementing a student centered approach to learning demands a list of principles that creates ‘a synergy and makes a significant contribution to learning process’. These extension practices were aimed at flexible transfer of knowledge from the instructor to the student, which formed the driving force behind the adoption of student centered learning.

Many researchers suggested that the student centered learning should be applied as a whole system while adopting a holistic approach, rather than applying some tools and principles. For example, Donnelly and Fitzmaurice (2005) emphasized the need be cognizant of needs of students at the early development of student curriculum.

According to Hall and Saunders (1997), the entrenchment of student centered learning and principles across the entire learning process should be the differentiator for the best-in-class-performance. This is because this approach to learning played a key role and acts as a building block for successful curriculum implementation initiatives. According to O’Sullivan (2003), there are two chief benefits to be reaped by institutions adopting student centered learning. The first benefit is the attainment of better and faster implementation, and the second is having a chance to evaluate students’ learning capacity. The major setback facing institutions’ successful implementation of student centered learning is lack of lean knowledge

**Faculty and Learner Roles**

Learner-centeredness involves a complex interaction between the teacher and individual learners (McCombs, 2001). While teachers are not entirely learner-centered or fully non-learner-centered, there are beliefs or teaching practices that may be classified as more learner-centered than others (McCombs, 2001). Building relationships with learners
based on trust and mutual respect creates a community where learners are empowered to contribute and succeed. Faculty should focus not only on pedagogical techniques, but also on the social and emotional dynamics of the teacher-student relationship (Smith Lammers, 2008). A learner-focused self-directed approach to learning recognizes that instructors cannot teach but actually can only facilitate the acquisition of knowledge (Palloff & Pratt, 2003). Faculty should provide a learning environment of mutual respect and openness to diverse perspectives, serving as role models by demonstrating a willingness to learn and change with learners (Cranton, 1994).

McCombs (2001) identified the characteristics of teachers who developed practices based on an understanding of learner-centered principles:

- Involving learners in assessments about how and what they learn and how that learning is evaluated.
- Valuing each learner’s unique perspectives.
- Respecting and accommodating individual differences in learners’ backgrounds, interests, abilities, and experiences.
- Treating learners as co-creators and partners in the teaching and learning process.

Additionally, McCombs (1999) developed the Assessment of Learner-Centered Practices Survey (ALCP) to measure teacher beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of classroom practices (McCombs, 1999). The assessment was based on a comparison between students' perceptions of their teacher's learner-centered practices in four domains and the teacher's perception of his or her practices in the same domains (McCombs, 1999).
The results of McComb’s (1999) research involving the use of teacher and student surveys at the postsecondary level indicated that student perceptions of their teacher’s instructional practices were pointedly related to the student’s motivation, learning, and ultimate achievement in the course. The most important element in improving achievement and motivation among students was their perception of their relationships with teachers coupled with a positive learning environment (McCombs, 2001). Student achievement and motivation appeared unaffected by the teacher perception of institutional practices in this study.

The best facilitation occurs when the instructor contributes to the learning process and models how to build community and create knowledge (Brookfield, 1995). Furthermore, instructors need to be aware of individual differences among learners to provide opportunities to use learners’ preferred approaches to critical thinking and reflection (Cranton, 2000). Wilson (2002) explained that what is necessary is to develop a culture of active learning in which students talk and write about what they are learning, relate it to prior experiences, and apply it to their lives. Recognizing the importance of the andragogical approach for adult learners necessitated development and application of adult learning theory and further research. The process for preparation for learning should involve positive identification of the gaps between current performance and the desired outcomes, an assessment of the differences in the adult learners’ capacities to respond to learning outcomes, and evaluation of knowledge and skills required to achieve the desired performance.

Those interested in facilitating learning may need to develop new teaching techniques, including designing and implementing approaches that allow students to
produce their own understanding of the subject matter. Additionally, faculty will need to create intended learning results, questions to direct student dialogue of allotted readings, activities that enthusiastically involves students in their learning, and criteria describing the characteristics of excellent work to use in grading and developing assessments that promote enhanced learning (Huba & Freed, 2000). Teaching and learning approaches should be based on the circumstances and learning needs of the students in a particular course. Actualization of a learner-centered model has students actively involved with their learning. Huba and Freed (2000) recommended that faculty ask themselves the following questions to facilitate a learner-centered course:

- What should students know or be able to do when they complete the course?
- What instructional techniques can be used to enhance their learning?
- What can students do with what they have learned?
- When teaching is learner-centered, content is used, not covered, and it is used to establish a knowledge foundation. The coverage of content does not foster the development of learning skills necessary to function effectively on the job and in society. (Weimer, 2002)

Teachers should serve as guides and designers of the learning experience instead of providers of content. Content should be used as a vehicle to develop learning skills such as time management, communication, computational skills, and study skills. Content should also be used to promote self-directed learning and an awareness of how the individual best learns. Lastly, content should be used to promote active learning strategies.
At many institutions, faculty evaluation systems have measured the performance of faculty in teaching terms not learning terms (Barr & Tagg, 1995). This type of evaluation system has assessed faculty on whether they present an organized lecture, cover the appropriate material, show interest and understanding of subject matter, are prepared for class, and respect student questions and comments. These areas evaluate the instructor’s teaching performance, but do not answer the question of whether students are learning. A critical element in the shift from a teacher-centered environment to a learner-centered environment, according to Barrett, Bower, and Donovan (2007), is having a firm grasp of the components of instructors’ roles. Use of a faculty evaluation system that assesses student learning would assist faculty in making the transition to becoming learner-centered in their practice.

Mezirow (1995) explained that the learner shares the responsibility with the instructor for constructing learning. In a learner-centered environment, learners are involved in every aspect of the learning, including the content, the process, and the assessment, as control of the learning shifts from the instructor to the learner. Learning is enhanced when learners have helpful relationships, a sense of possession and control over the learning process, and can learn with and from each other in safe and trusting learning environments (McCombs, 2003). The best predictor of student motivation and achievement is the existence of a practice that produces positive relationships between students and teachers and a positive climate for learning (McCombs, 2001).

Community college instructors who challenge learners in their thinking and critical reflection have been shown to promote self-monitoring and self-improvements. Students should be responsible for their own learning process through setting their own
learning goals within a given framework. Research showed that learner-centeredness varies as a function of learner perceptions, which are the result of each learner’s prior experiences, self-beliefs, and attitudes about school and learning as well as their current interests, values, and goals (McCombs, 2001).

**Adult Learning**

As has been stated in the previous section, learning in adults has adopted a more self-directed approach. Adults have been shown to prefer having a larger control in their learning activities. It must be noted that the capacity to make right decisions regarding the facilitation process, instruction, critical thinking, developing learning activities, and experiential learning determined the levels to which faculty relate to facilitating adult learning.

The orientation aspect of the instructional design in adult learning has sought to take stock of learner’s prior knowledge and detect areas to build on in the course of training, gain high levels of attention, and enlighten the learner on the aims and expectations of the learning process. Additionally, the e-learning instructional design has been continuously preferred in adult education because it has been based on the instructional design principles that best support the outcomes of most learning processes.

Furthermore, the time schedule, classroom arrangement, instructional activities and the class routines must fit into classroom design. Adult learners have achieved high levels of teacher-student engagement by working in small groups. The arrangement of the classroom was shown to be best when it relates to instructional design because it accounts for the activities to be conducted, the number of students, and the age of the students. Furthermore, the classroom arrangement should create a supportive interaction and
enhance the capacity of the teacher to work together with and observe the students. For adult students, it would appear that the capacity to be successful in learning might not rest on whether one takes part-time or full-time classes. However, the experience and perception of teaching as a part-time or full-time faculty member is dependent on a number of factors and form key determinant in the achievement of curriculum objectives.

**Teaching Styles**

The American Council on Education reported in 1996 that 50% of all colleges have increased attention on the teaching and learning process in the decade preceding the report (El-Khawas & Knopp, 1996). To determine if an instructor’s teaching style makes any difference in the learning of students, Conti (as cited in McCollin, 2000) said that “teacher must first identify their teaching styles and then critically reflect upon the classroom actions related to that style” (p. 5). Many institutions of higher education have teacher centers and other faculty development that use instruments’ to identify teaching behaviors to use to improve student learning.

Changes in higher education teaching methods and course delivery strategies have incorporated many of the needs and characteristics of non-traditional students according to adult learning theories. Knowles moved the emphasis from teaching adults to helping adults learn. Mezirow’s (1991) ideas about transformational learning, Brookfield’s (1986) work on interactive learning, and Freire’s (1972) ideas for attaining social change are just some of the theories concerned with adult learning and the needs and characteristics of adult learners and non-traditional students.
Study Justification

Determining the teaching styles and faculty behaviors most important for teaching adult students can be enlightening and instructive as to how to improve the quality of teaching at community colleges. The perceptions of faculty members and different groups of students – traditional students and adult learners – should be meaningful in terms of reflective practice of instructors.

There is a growing need for sustained and in-depth research for validation of prior positions and theories of adult learning. Expansion of the knowledge about the distinctive characteristics of andragogy is necessary for higher education. A need exists for examination of andragogical theories and principles to determine which are not exclusive to the adult learners and may be applicable to any learner (Cyr, 1999).

Secondary education institutions are putting greater emphasis on teaching and learning issues. This fact is a result of two factors: (a) public demands for accountability in teaching, and (b) public criticism of the dominant research culture. The entire issue of student instruction and engagement has evolved because of the changing and diverse population returning to the classroom. Faculties in higher education at community colleges are being asked to assist diverse students with various backgrounds and experiences (Travis, 1995).

A study of business instructors and their students showed that in the business education field there has been no research that addresses matching teaching styles of instructors and learning styles of students. The study concluded that additional research is warranted to help instructors teach more effectively in educational programs (Tucker, Stewart, & Schmidt, 2003).
The dissertation study is justified and warranted because of the paucity of research concerning the learning issues of traditional and non-traditional students in higher education settings. Because of the vast numbers of adjunct faculty members and the number of non-traditional students returning to the classroom in the past five years, no research has been completed as to the differences in teaching and learning of adult learners and traditional students and adjunct professionals. This study will examine specifically the perceptions of traditional students and adult learners and full-time and part-time faculty instructors in regard to effective teaching practices in community colleges today.

The dissertation research is significant because of the lack of research about traditional students and adult learners concerning teaching behaviors effectiveness in higher education settings, particularly in community colleges. No known research about the traditional students and adult learners and faculty status has been found; yet, considerable attention has been given in public discussion about faculty status and teaching styles and quality teaching within community colleges. How better to maximize faculties than to investigate what the faculty perceived as effective teaching and effective student engagement and use the results to capitalize upon faculty teaching strengths and to strengthen areas of concern or weakness.

Chapter Summary

A review of the literature supported teaching styles that engage individual experiences especially among adult learners. Research suggested that such interactions are necessary and that nontraditional students welcome these interactions. The literature also revealed varying degrees of teaching behaviors among part-time community college
instructors. However, the literature indicated that full-time faculty teaching behaviors were no more engaging than part-time faculty members. To further exam perception differences among the groups, the study described in this dissertation used statistical methods to analyze the perceptions of full-time faculty members’ perceptions as compared to part-time faculty members in relation to adult experiences impacting classroom learning on community colleges campuses. This study seeks to determine whether employment status affects instructor perception.

A review of the current literature showed a gap, which supports the need for the described investigation and created a platform for the research questions. The literature review began with an examination of the tenets pertaining to the employment of part-time community college faculty. Data regarding group differences among faculty were cited. Questions about the effect of part-time faculty on the quality of education and instructional effectiveness were reviewed. The basics of learner-centered instruction in adult learning were outlined. The chapter closed with a description of learner-centered instruction in adult learning.
Chapter 3: Research Design Methodology

Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology used to collect and analyze the data relevant to comparing how part-time and full-time instructors have relied upon the experiences of the adult learners in their courses as an example of learner-centered best practices. This chapter also includes a description of the research design, sample selection, sample description, instruments, reliability, validity, and procedures included in the study. This study used descriptive empirical research designed to present the differences between part-time and full-time faculty members.

The research questions guiding this study were:

1. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time faculty in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to understanding themselves?

2. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time faculty in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to learning effectively on their own?

Description of the Research Design

A quantitative approach was used to collect and analyze the data. Quantitative research enables the researcher to compare what factors or variables influence an outcome (Creswell, 1994). Creswell (1994) defined quantitative research as “a type of educational research in which the researcher decides what to study, asks specific, narrow
questions, collects numbered data from participants, analyzes these numbers using
statistics, and conducts the inquire in an unbiased, objective manner” (p. 39).

This research was an empirical descriptive study using inferential statistics.
Therefore, by design, this study focused on group differences between part-time and full-
time faculty members. The data collection for this study consisted of the collection and
organization of instructor responses to questions that best reflected a learner-centered
approach.

Research Context

The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE)
archival survey data was obtained from the University of Texas at Austin to test the
proposed conceptual model of adult engagement based upon andragogical theory.
According to the CCSSE website

CCSSE was established in 2001 as a project of the Community College
Leadership Program at the University of Texas at Austin…Extensive
Research has identified good educational practices that are directly related
to retention and other desired student outcomes. The Community College
Faculty Survey of Student Report, CCFSSE’s survey instrument, builds on this
research and ask faculty about their perceptions – how they engage their students;
how they assess their relationships and interactions with students and so on.
(CCSSE, 2012, para. 8)

The mission of the Community College Leadership Program at the University of
Texas has been to provide information about effective educational practice in community
colleges and assist institutions and policymakers in using that information to promote
improvements in student learning, persistence, and attainment. Each year, the Center has conducted a collection of national surveys: the Community College Survey of Student Engagement, the Survey of Entering Student Engagement, the Community College Faculty of Student Engagement (CCFSE), and the Community College Institutional Survey.

**Research Participants & Sampling**

CCFSSE has utilized community colleges from 48 states and the District of Columbia, five Canadian provinces, plus Bermuda and the Mariana Islands. Over 300 hundred colleges were classified as small (< 4,000), medium (>4000 – 7000), large (8,000 – 15,000), and extra-large (>15,000) with credited students. One hundred forty-nine of the colleges were classified as urban-serving, 149 as suburban-serving, and 401 as rural-serving. The sampling process for the CCSSE and CCFSSE was different. For example, a random sample of students was surveyed using the CCSSE. The CCFSSE on the other hand invited all faculty members listed on the course master data file (CMDF) to complete the survey. Participation in the faculty survey is limited to colleges that participate in the student survey. Faculty members were invited to participate using an on-line survey via an email invitation sent by the CCSSE staff. Participating colleges were asked to provide accurate email addresses for all faculties (both part-time and full-time) who were teaching in the spring semester of the survey. Faculty email addresses were provided as part of the (CMDF). All faculties teaching credit courses that do not fall under the CCSSE exclusionary guidelines were invited to participate in the CCFSSE. If faculty members taught more than one course, CCSSE’s sampling process randomly selected one course upon which to base their CCFSSE responses.
In cases where computer technology problems exist, the designated college contact was responsible for contacting his or her technology support staff if it became evident that firewalls or spam-blocking software was interfering with CCSSE’s ability to contact faculty members via email. Once the problem was fixed, the college was responsible for requesting that the CCSSE staff resend participation invitations. The dissertation study relied on survey responses from archival data from the CCFSSE from community college faculty, teaching at least one-credit hour course during the 2010-2012 cohort in which data was collected.

**Instruments Used in Data Collection**

The primary instrument used in this investigation was an on-line survey called the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE). The purpose of the CCFSSE was to gather information from faculty about the ways they spend their professional time, both in and out of class, their teaching practices, and their perceptions regarding students’ educational experiences.

**Community college faculty survey of student engagement (CCFSSE).** The CCFSSE provided information on faculty perception of student engagement, a vital indicator of learning and thus measured the quality of a community college. The survey, administered to community college faculty, asked questions that assess institutional practices and faculty behaviors that are interconnected with student learning and student retention. The CCFSSE survey was a versatile, research-based tool suitable for numerous benchmarking instruments such as (a) establishing national norms on educational performance and practice by community and technical colleges, (b) a diagnostic tool used for pinpointing areas wherein a college can enhance students’ educational experiences.
and, (c) a monitoring device for documenting and improving prolonged institutional effectiveness. Where applicable, faculties were asked to reflect on a randomly selected course that they had taught when responding to survey items.

The original 29 question web-based Community College Survey of Student Engagement survey was established in 2001 by The University of Texas at Austin. Major grants from the Houston Endowment, the Lumina Foundation of Education, the MetLife Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts supported the work. CCSSE worked in partnership with the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE), a survey that focused on four year colleges and universities. Established in 1998, NSSE was directed by Alexander McCormick and headquartered at Indiana University in the Center for Postsecondary Research and Planning. The NSSE survey, administered to first year and senior students in four year institutions, arose in response to concerns about quality in American undergraduate education and about the lack of emphasis on student learning in the top ranked colleges in the United States. A need for a student engagement surveys specifically aimed at community and technical colleges was also noticed. Thus, CCSSE was launched in 2001, with the goal of creating new information about community college quality and performance that would offer guidance to institutions in their attempts to enhance student learning and retention while also providing policymakers and the public with additional ways to view the quality of undergraduate education.

The CCFSSE survey was a self-reported, 44-item, web-based questionnaire taking less than half an hour to complete. Included in the instrument were categories such as types of institutions, faculty demographics including gender and race/ethnicity, academic rank, teaching activities, and faculty perceptions about student engagement. The survey
contained questions that varied with regard to content, phraseology, and response format. When taking the survey, faculty members were directed to respond to questions by using a five point Likert-type scale. In the survey summary, responses were identified as to what extent a certain activity occurred and ranged from very much (5) to very little (1). Appendix A contains a description of these variables, survey questions, and references to the year of the survey and source of question number.

The CCFSSE 2012 data set provided 35,000 cases with over 164 variables, including participants from cohorts 2010, 2011 and 2012. The dissertation study used only the variables related to demographics and faculty-student interactions. The key independent variable in this study was faculty employment status: full-time or part-time. The dependent variable was faculty perception as measured by the CCFSSE. The two survey questions selected for the purpose of the dissertation study were: To what extent do students’ experience in your selected course section contribute to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas; (a) learning effectively on their own (b) understanding themselves? Responses to the survey, which gauged faculty group perceptions, ranged from 0 (don’t know) to 5 (very often). Higher scores represented higher faculty perceptions. This question was chosen due to the reference of student experiences and learning outcomes.

**Validity Evidence for CCFSSE**

The CCFSSE relied on self-reported outcomes. There were concerns about the validity and credibility of self reported feedback (Kuh, 2003). However, responses were likely to be valid under five conditions:

- The information requested is known to the respondents.
• The questions are phrased clearly and unambiguously.
• The respondents think the questions merit a serious and thoughtful response.
• The questions refer to recent activities.
• Answering the questions does not threaten, embarrass, or violate the privacy of the respondent or encourage the respondent to respond in socially undesirable ways. (Kuh, 2003, p.3)

Creswell (1994) defined validity as the “means by which researchers can draw meaningful and justifiable inferences from scores about a sample or population.” The CCFSSE was designed with the CCSSE portion that was administered as a part of the Community College Student report (CCSR). The two surveys emulate the content of each other as they are intended as a side-by-side comparison tool. The CCSR is based on sound psychometric principles (Marti, 2009) and is aimed at satisfying each condition. Factor analyses conducted on the student survey portion of the CCSR instrument established it as a reliable tool that can be used to advise choices linked to teaching practices, campus design, and community college institutional culture (Marti, 2009). Additionally, in order to ensure consequential validity, the University of Texas at Austin used a universal advisory board made up of college presidents, external third party organization, and state directors of education to judge the merits of the survey and whether or not it measured the valid indicators of faculty influence on student engagement. Validity studies on the CCFSSE solely have not been conducted.

Student engagement has been considered an important predictor of student achievement, but few researchers have successfully defined a valid and reliable measure of college student engagement. In two studies, the authors developed and explored the
validity of a measure of student engagement, the Student Course Engagement Questionnaire (SCEQ). The analysis revealed four dimensions of college student engagement that were distinct and reliable: skills engagement, participation/interaction engagement, emotional engagement, and performance engagement (Handelsman, Biggs, Sullivan, & Towler, 2005). The authors reported evidence of the convergent and discriminant validity of the measure. In particular, the authors found relationships between factors on the SCEQ and self-reported measures of engagement, endorsement of self-theories, goal preferences, and grades.

**Reliability Evidence for CCFSSE**

Creswell (1994) defined reliability as the degree to which findings are consistent and repeatable. Cohort one for the CCFSSE consisted of 39 community colleges across 20 states. Data from cohort one provided clarity and consistency of instructions and questions. By 2007, the number of participants in the CCFSSE had grown to 150 colleges across 30 states. Duplicate responses were reduced by the advisory board in attempts to guarantee a consistent level of reliability. The board achieved this by insisting instructors apply the survey to only one course. They also took other measures such as requiring one email address, which was checked by an email verification system.

**Procedures for Data Collections and Analysis**

Existing data collected by the Center for Community College Student Engagement was used for this study. The 2012 CCFSSE nationwide participants were made up of cohorts from 2010, 2011 and 2012.

Archival data collection plan. For authorization to use archival data, an “Item Use Agreement” form was submitted to Dr. Michael Bohlig, senior research associate at the
requesting permission. Once permission was granted, the data set containing records and variables of part-time and full-time faculty member responses was received along with a copy of the survey codebook (Appendix B) with codes for item numbers, variable names, and labels from the University of Texas at Austin Center for Community College Student Engagement.

Participants in the survey were volunteers. Community College faculty members, who elected to participate, received via emails an introductory letter, directions for survey completion, a computer access code for logging in, an informed consent form, and a form/request for a summary of research findings. Faculty instructions were delivered after student data was initially assessed and organized. The center offered each college four invitation dates to participate in the survey. Upon confirmation of a date, the selected campus coordinator was sent an invitation date selection email. Representatives from the center contacted the college contact and/or their designees at all participating colleges across the country within the target profile by telephone, e-mail, and U.S. mail to encourage participation in the survey.

In 2011, from September to December, the University of Texas at Austin Center coordinator emailed 760 surveys to participating colleges to be completed by full-time and part-time faculty currently teaching. Instructions given to the faculty emphasized honesty in completing the surveys. Instructions also cautioned against making any identifying marks on the survey form in order to preserve anonymity. Once the on-line surveys were completed, the participants submitted the surveys.
Data Analysis

Descriptive quantitative methods were used to analyze secondary data obtained from the Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE). Secondary data is data used by a researcher who did not collect that data (Gorard, 2001). The collected survey data was analyzed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for Windows (Version 18). General descriptive statistics were derived from the survey data. Demographic frequency distribution and mean scores were examined.

The following research questions were addressed for both questions in the present study:

1. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to student knowledge, skills, and personal development in learning effectively on their own?

2. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to understanding themselves?

The dependent variable in this study was perceptions as measured by Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE). Depending on the question being tested, the mean self-rating score was used for each item respectively. The key independent variable in the study was faculty employment status: full-time or part-time. Mean and standard deviations were used on dependent variables to assess the arithmetic average set of measures, to gauge data difference from the mean, as well as to determine patterns among each group. Independent sample t-test was used to analyze the mean
differences between self-reported response of part-time and full-time faculty. To
determine whether faculty responses were significantly above a neutral response, analysis
included a t-test on each item. The t-test examined whether the sample responses was
significantly different.

**Chapter Summary**

The purpose of this investigation was to determine the perceptions of faculty at
community colleges as to the extent adult experiences affect teaching activities. Teaching
perception results from the CCFSSE, a national study, were used to inform the discussion
of faculty. Faculty surveys were emailed to all instructors at participating campuses for
completion and return by email to the investigator. Data analysis identified any patterns
or trends in the comparison data. Generalization to the overall faculty population was
made when applicable.
Chapter 4: Results

Adult education literature found that adult learning is enhanced when teachers take into account adult student experiences, motivations, and choose a problem-centered approach to learning (Conti, 1989; Knowles, 1980). A review of the literature indicated a lack of empirical research investigating full-time and part-time faculty knowledge of adult learning strategies. This gap supported further investigation into the topic.

This chapter contains a description of the study participants and the findings from the investigation to test and analyze the two research questions.

Research Questions

This quantitative study was designed to investigate the differences between perceptions of community college faculty members. The archival quantitative study utilized a large (N = 16,945) national sample of faculty perception responses to support or disprove the following research:

1. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to student knowledge, skills, and personal development in learning effectively on their own?

2. Are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to understanding themselves?
Study Participants & Descriptive Statistics

The study used archival data from The Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE). The CCFSSE was an online survey that elicited information from faculty about their teaching practices; the ways they spend their professional time, both in and out of class; and their perceptions regarding students' educational experiences. CCFSSE was offered as a companion to the student survey, the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). These surveys were conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement at The University of Texas at Austin.

Ninety-nine colleges across the US participated in the 2012 survey. All faculties at participating colleges were invited to contribute their front-line perspectives on student engagement. Of the faculty participants who fully completed the survey (N = 34,275), this study represented 16,945 case studies. Data from all 34,275 respondents was requested from The University of Texas at Austin. However, access was denied. Instead, a random data set representing 16,945 cases was made available representing 49% of the master data. It is the protocol of The University of Texas at Austin that only a random selection of data sets is made available for evaluation.

The data analysis was a phase process. In phase-one, the data gathered from the CCFSSE were imported into SPSS 18.0 for analysis. In phase-two, the frequencies distribution of the responses were compared and analyzed. Responses were tracked using a chart to determine the most frequent responses.
Descriptive Statistics

Table 4.1 presents the demographic background variables of the random data set. The sample population of this study was 16,945. White faculty members represented 81% of the random sample. Black or African-American faculty members represented 7% of part-time faculty and 6% of full-time faculty. Hispanic, Latino and Spanish faculty members represented 5% in both part-time and full-time faculty. Analysis of the gender of the population showed that males made up almost 45% of full-time faculty versus 44% of part-time instructors.
Table 4.1

*Demographic Characteristics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-Time</th>
<th>All Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Native American</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian, Asian American, or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White, Non-Hispanic</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-24</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35-29</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40-49</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 or higher</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sample size (N = 16,945)
In terms of degrees held by participants, Table 4.2 presents the distribution of the highest degrees earned for community college faculty participants. Nearly seventy percent (67%) held a master’s degree. It is interesting to note that 3% of the participants held only an associate degree.

Table 4.2

*Highest Degree*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>All Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate degree</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s degree</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral degree (PhD., Ed.D.)</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First professional degree (M.D., D.D.S)</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 4.3 presents the distribution of the participants on academic rank. The data revealed that 72% of participants were considered instructors. This is consistent with a report that more faculty members are finding themselves categorized as "instructor" across community colleges (Inside Higher Ed., 2012). Percentages were smaller for lecturers for both groups, from 5% for part-time faculty to 1% for full-time faculty. Full professors were relatively rare at community colleges. Larger concentrations of full professors tend to be at large public institutions.
Table 4.3

*Academic Rank*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>All Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant Professor</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate Professor</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sample size (N = 16,945).

Table 4.4 presents the faculty tenure status. Faculty members were asked about the tenure status in terms of whether they were a part of the community college tenure system. Overall, the majority of the participants, 65% of part-time faculty participants and 9% of full-time faculty participants were not on tenure track, although the institution has a tenure system.

Table 4.5 presents the years of faculty teaching experience. Full-time faculty members who averaged more than 10 years in academia were more experienced than part-time instructors. Conversely, part-time faculties were actually more experienced in total teaching years than full-time faculty.
Table 4.4

*Tenure Status*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>All Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not on tenure track, institution does not have a tenure system</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not on tenure track, although institution has a tenure system</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On tenure track but not tenured</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenured</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sample size (N = 16,945). Tenure sometimes called career status provides job security for teachers who have successfully completed a probationary period. Adapted from the *American Association of University Professors.* 2001.

Table 4.5

*Years Teaching*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>All Faculty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>40 years or more</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 to 39 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 to 29 years</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 to 19 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 to 9 years</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 to 4 years</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First-year teacher</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Sample size (N = 16,945).
**Exploratory Testing**

In order to statistically evaluate the two research questions, a pair of independent group’s t-tests was conducted. An independent group’s t-test is a parametric statistical test which presumes that the dependent variable is an interval level measure. Because the two dependent variables in this study were ordinal level measures, some might prefer the Mann-Whitney test which is the nonparametric analog to the independent group’s t-test. For that reason, the two independent groups t-tests reported were repeated using the Mann-Whitney test.

As displayed in Table 4.6, and with respect to the first research question, the difference between the mean scores of the part-time faculties (mean = 3.11, sd = 0.76) and the full-time faculty members (mean = 3.13, sd = 0.76) was statistically significant (t = -2.46, df = 16943, p = .014). The mean outcome suggested both part-time and full-time faculty sometimes use adult experiences to engage the learner.

Table 4.6

Descriptive Means Std. Deviation and t-Test Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CCFSSE Question</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.D.</th>
<th>Std. E. Mean</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning Eff Own - PT</td>
<td>8219</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.755</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
<td>.014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Eff Own - FT</td>
<td>8726</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td>.757</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>-2.46</td>
<td>.014*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understnd Themselves – PT</td>
<td>8168</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.012</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understnd Themselves – FT</td>
<td>8686</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.025</td>
<td>.011</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on the mean scores in Table 4.6, both full-time and part-time faculty self-reported that they sometime use the student’s life experiences to contribute to student knowledge, skills, and personal development. Both faculties reported that they sometimes used student life experiences to contribute to student learning effectively on their own. Given that both means are very close together, a t-test was run to analyze statistical differences. Full-time faculty community college instructors self-reported slightly higher ratings than the part-time community college instructors on the degree to which they believed students experiences contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in learning effectively on their own in their classes.

In spite of these statistical significant findings, there was no practical difference or noteworthy correlation regarding the perceived degree student experiences contributed to learning between part-time and full-time faculties of adult learners in community colleges. It is important to note that large samples (such as N = 16,945) can sometime cause a trivial difference to appear as being statistically significant.

Similarly, and with respect to the second research question, the difference between the mean scores of the part-time (mean = 2.71, sd = 1.01) and the full-time faculty members (mean = 2.65, sd = 1.03) was also statistically significant (t = 3.73, df = 16811.38, p < .001). Part-time faculty community college instructors self-reported slightly higher ratings than the full-time community college instructors about the degree
to which they believed students’ experiences contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding themselves in the selected course. While there was a statistical difference, there was no practical difference to the degree that students’ experiences contributed to understanding themselves.

However, it should be pointed out that statistical significance tests are heavily influenced by the size of the samples on which they are based. Given that the study sample consisted of 16,945 faculty members, it is not surprising that even small mean differences registered as statistically significant despite the fact that visual inspection of the means in each comparison indicated they were quite similar. A more formal evaluation of this observation can be had by calculating Cohen’s d statistic, which is an “effect size” measure that calibrates the magnitude of the difference between two means without regard to the size of the samples on which they are based.

As outlined in Cohen (1988), d values of .20, .50 and .80 correspond to mean differences that can be characterized as “small”, “medium” and “large” effect sizes for mean differences. As revealed in Table 4.7, d value .04 and .06 are well below the .20 d value necessary for achieving a “small” effect size.

Table 4.7

*Cohen’s d Statistics*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VAR_NAME</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>DF</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PT V. FT: LEARNING</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>16943.00</td>
<td>16945.00</td>
<td>.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PT V. FT: UNDERSTANDING</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>16811.00</td>
<td>16854.00</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In conclusion, while both hypotheses were statistically significant, neither was practically significant. That is to say, the statistically significant differences notwithstanding, there was no “meaningful” difference between question one whether part-time instructors at community colleges self reported higher rating to the degree student experiences contribute to learning effectively and question two whether part-time community college faculty members perceived that student experiences contribute to understanding themselves. The findings of this research indicated that the findings lack practical significance despite the fact that the data produced statistically significant results.

**Summary of Results**

The purpose of this study was to examine to what extent part-time and full-time faculty report using adult student experiences as a tool that contributes to student learning outcomes. This study focused on the perceptions of community college faculties. This chapter presented the results of the investigation based on statistical analysis of archival data provided by The University of Texas at Austin. The demographics of the random sample (N = 16,945) were presented. The degree to which faculty reported using adult experiences was reported in mean scores and analyzed for group differences between part-time and full-time faculty. While some statistical differences were found, additional analyses revealed that there were no practical differences between full-time and part-time based on their responses to the two items focused on in the present study.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine faculty development practices at public community colleges. Since the 1970s, an increasing number of part-time instructors with less practical work experience have been hired to cut operational costs. Some research has indicated that these less-experienced faculty members arrive ill-equipped to provide an engaging experience for students, subsequently hindering learning outcomes (Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995). Additionally, Schibik and Harrington (2000) warn community colleges that the costs of decreased student satisfaction, loyalty, and retention outweigh the short-term gains of lower salaries. Community college issues associated with part-time faculty have been receiving more attention since the 1980s although the majority of studies examine full-time faculty and student engagement at four-year residential colleges.

The gap in the research highlights the shortage of studies concerning self-directed learning and teaching styles at community colleges. The focus of this study is to learn whether full and part-time community college instructors’ perceptions of life’s experience of the adult learners can be a powerful motivator and integrating influence in the classroom. The literature argues that student experiences influence student learning. The 2012 Community College Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (CCFSSE) provided 16,945 national responses of archival data for this research.
The results of this study, conducted at the community college level, indicate that both faculty groups reported that they sometimes used student life experiences to contribute to students learning effectively on their own. Analyzed more closely, part-time faculty community college instructors self-reported slightly higher mean score ratings than the full-time community college instructors about the degree to which they believed students’ experiences contributed to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in understanding themselves in the selected course. While there was a statistical difference between the perception of experiences and learning, there was not practical difference. Thus, data in the present study revealed that both full-time and part-time faculty tended to report more similarly rather than dissimilarly.

**Implication of Findings**

The findings of this research provide implications related to faculty perceptions, college administrators, and faculty professional development at community colleges. The implications for expanding this body of knowledge and application are discussed in this section. According to Leslie and Gappa (2002), there was no statistical difference between full-time and part-time faculty requesting professional development. These present findings support Leslie and Gappa’s assertion that “part-timers in community colleges look more like full-time faculty than is sometimes assured.” (p. 65). Leslie and Gappa (2002) cautioned against declaring part-time faculty as less competent than full-time faculty. They called for further research. The present study provides additional support that part-time faculty are actually more similar in their self-reporting relative to full-time faculty. Therefore, more research is necessary. Additionally, by participating in the CCFSSE, both full-time and part-time faculties were interested in development
programs that enhance their professional knowledge base and instructional effectiveness. The findings of the present study adds to the other studies (Gappa & Leslie, 1993; Gappa & Leslie, 1997; Roueche, Roueche, & Milliron, 1995) that focus on classroom instructional styles, faculty-student engagement and learning outcomes at community colleges.

**Expanding the body of knowledge.** Since the early 1980s, scholars have investigated issues relating to part-time and full-time instructors in higher education (Candela, Dalley, & Benzel, Lindsey, 2006), however little research exists on faculty perceptions and learning from adult life experiences. The finding from this research indicates no major perceptual differences to what extent a student experiences contribute to their personal development. Both group’s (part-time faculty and full-time faculty) report similar results. Findings of this study demonstrate that on average part-time faculty members are no more or less likely to engage a student experiences through teaching styles than full-time faculty instructors. Engaging adult experiences is a crucial component of the learning process, and college administrators are advised to use faculty development to help improve teacher-student experiential connections (McClenny, 2004). The findings from this study expand on McClenny’s call for professional development to improve teacher-student classroom engagement.

Just as community college students tend to be non-traditional learners, andragogical teaching practices and theories must consider the adult learners’ experiences. It is a common belief that because part-time instructors often lack access to the same professional development opportunities regularly available to full-time faculty members, they are less likely to use non-traditional teaching styles such as self-directed
learner-center instruction. In fact, this research gives evidence that full-time faculty instructors are no more inclined to use engaging teaching practices that reflect on life experiences to engage adult learners than part-time faculty. According to Knowles (1984), adults in all professions have an internal desire to become self-directed learners and are motivated to learn as they experience needs and interests.

**Faculty perceptions.** Studies conducted by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE) have examined faculty perceptions concerning student interaction and provide data on student engagement. The data reveal the extent and nature of engagement and the necessity of success for community college students. Examining and understanding the implications of this data on the student experience allow for more open communication between faculty members and community college administrators in order to provide professional development so that students’ needs are met within the classroom.

The five fundamental benchmarks set forth by the CCSSE encourage activities that promote active collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student faculty interaction, and support for learners. These benchmarks are reflective of the effective teaching principles promoted by Knowles (1968). Knowles’s andragogical process model identifies phases in both program application and individual learning activities. For the benchmarks and principles to be effective, administrators must provide faculty members with the professional training and resources to assist adult learners in the process of planning their own learning.

Knowles (2002) suggests that to promote adult student learning, faculty members establish a physical environment in which adults feel at ease and causes adults to feel
accepted, respected, and supported. Barr and Tagg (1995) suggest that to promote student learning, faculty members must be versed in various teaching methodologies that convey learning to a diversity of learners, and faculty members ought to insist students take some responsibility for their learning. College administrators should be concerned about professional development that addresses teaching styles in order to optimize student success on community colleges campuses.

**Teaching styles.** Even though part-time faculty members perceive themselves as being as effective as full-time faculty members, there is evidence that a teaching style that seeks to engage individual experiences seems to be lacking in teaching practices among part-time and full-time community college faculty members. It may be that full-time and part-time faculty members generally lack a heightened level of awareness of involving adult learners as partners in the inquiry process by engaging individual experiences as a fundamental component of an effective teaching style. This highlights the need for college administrators to offer professional development based on learner-centered models. Such professional development recognizes the necessity of viewing adult students’ tendency towards self-directed learning as the responsibility of learner and teacher.

**Limitations**

This section describes the limitations of the study that may impact the results and findings. This research uses a sample size of 16,950 out of a possible 35,000 participants. The University of Texas at Austin only permits a sample portion of the participants’ results to be released for evaluation. However, generalization may be inferred. A second limitation includes the anonymous, self-reported survey of perceptions, which is subject
to the slight inaccuracies of self-reporting methods. A final limitation was the use of only one question to measure faculty perceptions. However, the statistical measures used to analyze the findings and data identify the standard deviations of such findings, effectively negating the relatively small impact of the respondents.

**Recommendations**

The findings of this study and the review of literature lead to recommendations for future research, organizational practices, and professional development at community colleges.

**Recommendations for research.** Based on the results of the study, future studies should consider expanding the method of the data collection. Although this study conducted a quantitative analysis of the data, future research examining survey responses using qualitative research methods is recommended concerning faculty perceptions. Future research studies might also examine the selection of CCFSSE questions used to determine the extent a student experiences should be incorporated into teaching styles. For example, this approach might gather other themes among the two faculty groups and their perceived impact of transferring a student experiences into learning aides.

Based on the results from this study, future quantitative studies might consider incorporating other student engagement data responses from The Center for Community College Student Engagement to include Initiatives on Student Success and Student Success by the Numbers. The University of Texas at Austin provides important information about effective educational practice in community colleges that could expand the sparse body of learner-centered instruction.
Organizational practices. Watts and Hammons (2005) posit that faculty development can serve as the venue to address the needs of current diverse student population. From an organizational practice standpoint, if community colleges are to improve helping members develop knowledge and skills related to teaching and learning, college administrators must provide professional and teaching development opportunities for part-time and full-time faculty members. Additional learner center professional development would allow faculty groups opportunities to learn and to develop the skills needed to work with nontraditional students.

According to Outcalt (2002), "Administrators would do well to create professional development programs meant to bring faculty together in interaction with one another. These programs, particularly if they are oriented toward improving instructional abilities, would benefit not just the faculty but their students" (p. 113). A strategy for increasing learner-centered teaching styles at community college is to recognize the heterogeneity of community college faculty and create individualized programs tailored to the unique needs and interests of faculty. For example, an in-service opportunity on collaborative instructional strategies should be targeted toward part-time faculty who demonstrate a lower tendency to engage students using collaborative techniques in the classroom (Shuetz, 2002).

Findings from previous studies suggest that the traditional graduate school program curriculum does not adequately prepare faculty to respond to the teaching and learning challenges introduced by the open door policy and multiple mission of community colleges. Development opportunities should include workshops concerning faculty service resources available on campus. This training is particularly important with
the moderate self-reported views of respondents. Faculty members should be aware of available services in order to advance community college initiatives for teaching and learning.

The most important organizational development program goal for community college faculty is in the area of creating an environment for teaching and learning. Previous research findings indicate that the increased diversity of the student population at community colleges and the corresponding demands from non-traditional students require new and different instructional approaches in community college classrooms (Cox, 2009; McClenney, 2004; McFarth & Spear, 1991). In other words, the results from the present study demonstrate that there is a need for community college faculty to consider creating classroom environments that are self-directed learner-centered (Barr & Tagg 1995; Darling-Hammond, 1993).

In contrast to the apparent academic myth that faculty status (full-time, part-time) impact self-reported perceptions concerning learner perspective teaching styles, results of the dissertation study contradicts the idea that employment status affects perceptions. The findings further support the need for faculty developmental officers or deans to support more faculty development programs for learner-centered instruction at community colleges. These finding suggest that the big-picture significance of participative planning has not yet surfaced as an important organization development program goal at participating community colleges.

Research question one asked, “are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to student knowledge, skills, and personal development
and learning effectively on their own?” Despite calls for educational attainment and retention, many two-year colleges do not offer comprehensive curriculum to fulfill the learning needs of adult students. The generalized demographics of the past are often irrelevant to the realities of teaching at a modern college campus, especially as student demographics continue to shift toward older students who are advancing or changing careers or toward students whose primary language is not English. Faculty members should be assessed regularly to ensure teaching and learning with student engagement at the core is happening in the classroom.

Research question two asked, “are there group differences between part-time and full-time community college instructors in their perceptions of the degree to which student experiences contribute to understanding themselves?” Part-time instructors bring a vast amount of practical experiences and networking contacts into the classroom as do adult learners. Community college administrators should tap these resources to develop and design engaging learning activities. Administrators could work with part-time faculty members to network and develop internships, co-ops, and job opportunities for students with organizations in the community. Part-time instructors could also invite guest speakers into the classroom.

**Professional practice.** A variety of faculty development models have been proposed over the years (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Murray, 2002; Wach, 2007) More studies need to be conducted on faculty perceptions as related to adult learning experiences and classroom learning. It is imperative that the work of organizations like the University of Texas Community College Leadership Development program continue to assess the status of the field through such instruments as the Community College
Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE). The fact that the administrators of the community college survey of instruments were so cooperative in providing the data set critical to this research, speaks to the issue of potential use of research data to improve practice in community colleges.

This study demonstrates that part-time faculty members take as much pride as full-time faculty members in their teaching and perceive their teaching as effective. The CCSSE did display results that suggest that there are gaps in what has been established as effective teaching between full-time and part-time faculty members as evidenced by their classroom activities. In order to fill these gaps, it is imperative that community college leaders consider their part-time faculty members as more than an economic convenience. The contributions of part-time faculty members are integral to meeting the teaching mission of the community college.

Conclusion

An exploration of research data pertaining to national community college faculty demographics, perceptions, instructional practices, and professional development activities will assist in the creation of a more accurate understanding of the community college challenges and provide educators and administrators with the knowledge necessary to design programs and policies that facilitate the improvement of community college instruction and learning. One of the most dangerous beliefs concerning community college faculty is the perception that they are a homogenous group of individuals with similar backgrounds, teaching beliefs and professional development needs. A "one size-fits-all" approach to faculty development initiatives ignores the unique challenges, needs, and goals found among community college faculty. While the research
finds several common faculty characteristics, of greater importance is the teaching perceptions of part-time and full-time faculty at community college. Recognition of similarities and differences among faculty and the utilization of this information to inform faculty development programs is a critical step in the process of maximizing the educational potential of community colleges.

Community colleges are facing significant challenges due to diversity of students returning to campuses across the nation. This challenge creates a need for academic leaders to reconsider both resources and commitment to faculty professional development. The purpose of this research is to investigate faculty perceptions as to effective teaching practices as it relates to engaging adult learner experiences when considering teaching styles. This quantitative research uses archival data to analyze how part-time and full-time instructors perceive the effects of life’s experiences on self-directed learning.

The researcher’s interest in faculty development is grounded in a personal drive to develop skills in preparation for a second career as well as advance the scholarship of teaching and learning at the community college. This study demonstrated a need for a deep understanding of faculty perceptions at community colleges. Although the faculty development literature is not broad in scope as it relates to adult learners, it provides a vehicle for understanding the landscape of rapid development in higher education.

The research and findings of the dissertation study necessitate continued examination as existing research strengthens the arguments for more research on the topic of adult education practices in secondary education. The findings of the current research and future research may produce profound changes in the teaching practices and
expectations of professors at community colleges. However, the bias which produces these preexisting expectations is not likely to be overturned unless the research itself is brought to the attention of all faculty members and college administrators. Sharing this research will help improve the practice of adult facilitation and faculty development at the community colleges. CCSSE also provides a website that has a bibliography related to the survey questions (Appendix B). The source on the site provide insight to the issues facing today’s community colleges and should not be overlooked as a starting point for research.

The results of the inquiry demonstrate layers of entangled issues pertaining to the state of education at the community college level. Many part-time community college professors enter the field lacking what is perceived as the experience to effectively engage their students. Despite being ostensibly better trained to engage students, many full-time professors, much like their part-time counterparts, may not have a full appreciation for the shifting demographics, changing needs, and native skills that contemporary community college students bring to the classroom.

The findings and recommendations in this study provide knowledge, tools, and processes that may be helpful to academic administrators at community colleges. This research implies that more professional development with topics that focus on learner-centered instruction is necessary at community colleges across the nation. It is further suggested that board of trustees of community colleges encourage and be supportive of new external models of teaching styles and practices.

While part-time professors may not always receive the necessary training to work with their students as full-time professors, this does not have to be viewed as an
insurmountable handicap or the collective price borne by schools, professors, and students for hiring part-time faculty. Today’s typical community college students are not simply looking for lengthier lectures or more-detailed tests; he or she is seeking mentoring and self-directed based education. On the surface, this may seem like an even greater imposition on the overburdened schedules of community college professors. What this dissertation shows, however, is the case for understanding adult learners.

By recognizing that the majority of their students value self-directed and practical instruction, community colleges have an opportunity to turn what might seem like a handicap into an advantage. The dissertation research shows that both full-time and part-time professors do not always have a full appreciation of the bearing that students’ experiences have on potential outcomes in the classroom. While full-time professors may have an edge over part-time professors in terms of spending more individual or focused time with students, this edge does not go far enough (or, perhaps more accurately, it is simply too blunt an edge to be of significant value). The disconnect between how professors and students perceive their respective roles and those of each other in the educational process, while not insurmountable, is glaring.

Community colleges do not have to simply offer a collective shrug and resign themselves to the notion that part-time professors—and, for that matter, their full-time professors—are permanently cast in their roles. By embracing the skills and experiences that students bring to the classroom, professors and students can become partners in the educational process in new and exciting ways. By creating an organizational environment that places an emphasis on learner-centered education, community colleges can connect
professional development with the institutional mission of education to form a new paradigm to align with the students of today, and of tomorrow.
References


Mcardle, E. (2002). The adjunct explosion: IHEs rely heavily on part-timer professors, but is this—a economic necessity to changing the face of academe? *University Business, 25–29.*


Wilson, L. O. (2002). Newer views of learning- types of questions. Theories of learning index. University of Steven Point, School of Education,

Appendix A

The Survey Question (Sample)

INSTRUCTIONS: This survey takes about 20 to 25 minutes to complete. Your responses are saved each time you go to the next page. If you need to exit the survey before completing all the items, click on the “Save and Exit” button. You may log in to the site again using the username and password sent to you via e-mail to complete the survey. We strongly encourage your participation and greatly appreciate your commitment to complete the entire survey.

Research Question: To what extent do students’ experiences in your selected course section contribute to their knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? (I) and (J) only (Question 14)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Very much</th>
<th>Quite a bit</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Very little</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Acquiring a broad general education</td>
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<td>b. Acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills</td>
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<td>c. Writing clearly and effectively</td>
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<td>d. Speaking clearly and effectively</td>
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<td>e. Thinking critically and analytically</td>
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<td>f. Solving numerical problems</td>
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<td>g. Using computing and information technology</td>
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<td>h. Working effectively with others</td>
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<td>i. Learning effectively on your own</td>
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<td>j. Understanding yourself</td>
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<td>k. Understanding people of other racial or ethnic backgrounds</td>
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<td>l. Developing a personal code of values and ethics</td>
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<td>m. Contributing to the welfare of your community</td>
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<td>n. Developing clearer career goals</td>
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<td>o. Gaining information about career opportunities</td>
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Appendix B: CCSSE Bibliography

http://www.ccsse.org/aboutsurvey/biblio/page1.cfm