

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

Robert C. Mohrbacher for the degree of Doctor of Education in Education presented on August 20, 2015

Title: The Professional Identity of Community College Faculty Members.

Abstract approved: _____
Sam Stern

Background: Previous studies suggested that the professional identity of community college faculty is less than clearly articulated. Lack of clarity with regard to professional identity may have impacts in a number of areas, including recruitment, professional development, and the overall reputation of community colleges.

Purpose: To examine how community college faculty members articulate their professional identity and how the discourse around that professional identity affects the social reality of community college faculty members.

Setting: Interviews were conducted at “typical case” community colleges in Washington and Oregon: institutions with an annual full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of between 3,000 and 10,000 FTE, with a mission mix in which academic transfer students formed the largest percentage of annual enrollments, followed by career and technical education, and then pre-college programs.

Subjects: Fifteen faculty members were interviewed at three community colleges. Faculty members were full-time, tenured teaching faculty.

Research Design: Qualitative interviews using a semi-structured question matrix; the question matrix was designed to elicit responses related to elements of social identity theory.

Data Collection and Analysis: Face to face interviews were conducted on college campuses. Audio recordings were collected, transcribed, then coded using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software. Coded excerpts were grouped into prominent themes.

Findings: Five primary themes were identified from the interview data.

- Participants became community college faculty members through an accidental or unexpectedly changed career path.
- Teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty.
- Being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development.
- Autonomy, freedom, and flexibility were prominent values attached to the professional roles.
- Community college faculty articulated a strong sense of mission; however, that sense of mission tended to vary between three values—a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a social justice/student empowerment paradigm.

Conclusions: While teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty, most had little or no professional training for that role. In addition, the accidental career path that most faculty members experienced may contribute to a sense of luck or randomness that prohibits serious self-examination of the professional role. The strong value placed on autonomy and flexibility by community college faculty members may also inhibit examination of the

professional identity. The social identity constructed by the discourse of community college faculty seemed weakly defined from the perspective of social identity theory.

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The Professional Identity
of Community College Faculty Members

by
Robert C. Mohrbacher

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Robert C. Mohrbacher, Author

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Chapter One: Focus and Significance

How do community college faculty members think about their profession? What language do they use to describe their work and their work life? In many ways, the identity of the community college teacher or faculty member is described—especially by the general public, but to some extent by the faculty members themselves—only by comparison: community college faculty place more emphasis on teaching than university faculty; community college is an extension of the high school curriculum. There are any number of stereotypes about college professors—the tweed-wearing, pipe-smoking intellectual; the absent minded professor; the brilliant but socially inept theoretician; or the aging ‘60s radical—but it is never clear that any of these would apply to community college instructors. If they did, it would be as a pale reflection of the original image. Other professions have their share of stereotypes as well: the lawyer as shark or ambulance chaser; the doctor with bad handwriting and a preoccupation with golf. Most of these stereotypes are exaggerations; however, they do speak to the fact that these professions live in the popular imagination—they have their own professional mythology.

Not so the community college instructor. It would be difficult for most people outside of the profession to summon up a clear image of the typical community college teacher. In many ways, this may be good—no one really wants to be a stereotype. But in other ways, it speaks to the fact that community college faculty have not completely come of age as a profession. The career path for reaching the profession is not clearly defined and many reach this career unintentionally (Fugate & Amey, 2000). In order for community college faculty members to reach full maturity as a profession, they may need to more clearly articulate their own descriptions of their professional identity.

The issue of the professional identity of community college faculty takes on great significance when considered in the economic, educational, and social impact of community colleges today. Community colleges serve a very large proportion of public undergraduate students in the U.S. and community colleges are located in approximately one fourth of all counties in the U.S., making their impact very widely distributed (Rephann, 2007). As of 2011, public, two-year degree-granting institutions in the U.S. employed over 950,000 faculty members and enrolled 7.2 million students (Snyder & Dillow, 2013). According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014), job openings for postsecondary teachers are expected to grow by 19% between 2012 and 2022, which is 8% higher than expected overall job growth. These numbers indicate that community college faculty members will interact with and have an impact on a very large number of undergraduate students distributed across the U.S. In order for that impact to have the most positive effect, community college faculty members need to develop a more sharply focused image of their own professional identity. This professional identity should aid in the effectiveness of community college faculty in their work, as well as making it easier to recruit the best professionals into the field of community college teaching.

In order for an image of the community college teacher to come into sharp focus, community college faculty members will need to engage in clear and structured dialog about their profession (Cohen & Brawer, 1972; Levin, Kater & Wagoner, 2006). Those faculty members need to be able to articulate what is unique about their profession, what their work looks like, and what traits distinguish them as professionals. Professional identity is in many ways a group behavior or artifact: it is a subset of social identity, which is greater than the aggregate of the identities of individual group members (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Ellmers, Spears, & Doosje, 2002; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). So,

the individual faculty member accrues a professional identity through professional interactions with other faculty members, as well as students, administrators, and others.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine how community college faculty members articulated their professional identity and how the discourse around that professional identity affects the social reality of community college faculty members. A number of studies have suggested that the professional identity of community college faculty is less than clearly articulated (Cohen & Brawer, 1972; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). One likely source of a more clearly articulated identity for community college faculty is from the faculty members themselves; therefore, this study attempted to engage faculty members in discourse about their professional identity, the most salient role components of that identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Stetts & Burke, 2000) and formative experiences in the development of that professional identity.

This study applied the theoretical frameworks of social identity theory and critical discourse analysis to the issue of the professional identity of community college faculty. Social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Abrams, 1998) describes social identity as a psychological state represented by a shared or collective sense of identity. Professional identity is a highly salient subset of social identity, just as national identity might form a salient role identification. Being a member of the faculty of a community college both creates and expresses a social identity, through identification with other group members, ostracizing out-group members (such as secondary school faculty, university faculty or community college administrators), and by marking or “normalizing” formative experiences

within the professional experience. Much of the psychological state that comprises these categories is ideological, in that it tends to go unexamined, to be distributed among members of groups in non-critical ways (Hogg & Abrams, 1998). This made it an appropriate topic of inquiry through critical discourse analysis (CDA).

CDA postulates that language is both referential and constitutive in relationship to social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). That is, while language refers to, or points at, already existing identities within society, at the same time our use of language is one of the primary tools by which we construct and reconstruct our social reality.

Rationale and Significance

The rationale for this inquiry rests on two theoretical assumptions: first, that professional identity is a psychological state, as described by social identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001); and second, that discourse both produces and reproduces social identity and group norms (Gee, 2011; Johnstone, 2002; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2001; Wooffitt, 2005). Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the study of language in use in the world, or the use of language to construct meaning in everyday life (Gee, 2011). As Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) noted, “language is a ‘machine’ that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world. This also extends to the constitution of social identities and social relations” (p. 9). The social identity of community college faculty is created through social discourse and thus can be studied through CDA.

In many ways, the first golden era of community colleges has come to a close. In the 1990’s, we saw the beginning of a major shift away from the creation myth of community

colleges—the emphasis on open access to education—and a swing toward student achievement and accountability (Levin, 2005; O’Meara, Kaufman, & Kuntz, 2003; Van Ast, 1999). Part of the next evolution of the community college should involve a clear sense of identity, both for the institutions and the professionals who work in them. Community college faculty are more likely to be successful in the work of increasing success and completion for students that goal is articulated as a salient component of their professional identity.

In terms of the scholarly significance of this research, a number of studies have noted the relative lack of research specifically focused on community college faculty (Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). Research instituted at universities may be more likely to focus on university faculty for obvious reasons. The professional roles of community college faculty are often defined by comparison—more teaching and less research than university faculty; fewer Ph.Ds. than university faculty; less direct training for the teaching role than high school teachers—rather than as a profession with its own identity. And while research on community college faculty has certainly expanded in recent years, there are still repeated calls for additional research focused specifically on community college faculty. Some sources pointed to a lack of clarity with regard to the professional role and identity of the community college instructor (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Crawford, 2012; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). In order to bring a greater sense of clarity to this issue, it will likely require the direct involvement of greater numbers of community college faculty in order to fully articulate a professional identity and spread awareness.

Perhaps the seminal work on the identity of the community college instructor and the development of a professional persona is Cohen and Brawer (1972), *Confronting identity: The community college instructor*. This work examined the current state of knowledge of community

college faculty, examined the personality and job tasks of instructors, considered their relations with students and with extrinsic influences, and examined how the performance of community college faculty was and should be evaluated. It concluded that both the community college and its faculty had not yet reached full maturity as institutions, and suggested that the faculty had more control and autonomy at their disposal than they were effectively using. Cohen and Brawer (2008) have reiterated this opinion over the years, particularly in the various editions of *The American community college*. Other writers have echoed the assertion that community college faculty have not reached full professional maturity (Grubb, Worthen, Byrd, Webb, Badway, Case, Goto, & Villeneuve, 1999; Keim, 1989; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). This study was intended not only to further that conversation but to look directly at community college faculty as a discourse community to determine how their professional identity was shaped by discourse.

This study has potential to contribute to the scholarly understanding of social identity theory by applying that theoretical framework to a very specific professional group—the community college faculty. This theoretical framework has been applied repeatedly to categories such as national identity (Curley, 2009; Fevre & Thompson, 1999; Salazar, 1998), ethnic identity (Simon, Aufderheide, & Kampmeier, 2004), and political affiliation (Greene, 2004; Huddy, 2001); it has less often been applied to specific professions, such as community college faculty. The research can shed light on how community college faculty define in-groups—such as other members of their department or discipline, other college employees, or other community college professionals—as well as how they might define out-groups—as students, as administrators, as university faculty or high school teachers.

This research also shows potential for practical significance. As community colleges move into a new era marked by repeated calls for accountability and student achievement, the relationship between teaching and learning will continue to be at issue. If the trend continues that is seeing less focus on open access alone and more focus on success and completion (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006), teaching and teachers must naturally come under some scrutiny. In order to have some say in their own destiny, community college teachers will have a need to clearly articulate their own identity. Levin (2005) pointed to the growth of “managerialism” in the business of community colleges and implied a potential downturn in reputation and professional autonomy for community college teachers. In order to retain some agency in their professional roles, faculty will need to define those roles more explicitly.

Some studies have pointed to the potential for mid-career burnout for community college faculty, due to heavy teaching loads, lack of resources, and lack of variety in work assignments (Crawford, 2012; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). One potential way to address such career fatigue is with a more clearly focused sense of purpose. In addition to concerns for mid-career community college professionals, it is also true that large numbers of faculty are nearing retirement age, and there will be an ongoing need for effective recruitment efforts to replace them. Currently, many community college teachers reach their career paths unintentionally or accidentally (Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Washington, 2011). In order to have more effective recruiting policies for faculty, community colleges may need to control and promote their image more carefully.

Finally, critical discourse analysis suggests that the discourse practices of various social groups tend to distribute social power or status between groups and that this status tends to be distributed ideologically and unequally (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). In the

social hierarchy of higher education, community colleges tend to occupy a position of lower status compared to other colleges and universities (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). The traditional mission of the community college has been to extend educational access to broader segments of the population. While spreading educational opportunity is a move toward increased equality, if community colleges are defined as lower-status educational institutions, then in many ways they recreate inequitable power relationships within society. While community college faculty are, on average, White, middle-aged, and middle-class, community college students are more likely than university students to be economically disadvantaged, people of color, and first generation college students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). If community colleges occupy a lower status position within the hierarchy of higher education institutions, then students who receive a college education from a community college will be perceived to receive a lower status education. To the extent that these students are also more likely to be economically disadvantaged, people of color, and first generation college students, then the social status of community colleges may serve to recreate lower status identification for its students at the same time that the overt mission is to extend equality of opportunity. In this way, the professional identity of community college faculty impacts the social status of community colleges in general, which in turn has an impact on the social status of community college students, potentially reinforcing second-class status in spite of an intention to extend educational opportunities.

Research Questions

This study was designed to address the following two questions:

1. How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?

2. How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?

The following section will address the rationale for each of these questions.

1. How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?

Professional identity is a sub-set or category of social identity. Social identity theory suggests that social identity is highly dynamic and that beliefs about in-group and out-group members are often ideological (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). If professional identity is highly dynamic and also ideological in nature, then it follows that the first step in a critical examination is to expose for analysis those unexamined assumptions, which are articulated in the discourse of community college faculty members.

The discourse involving community college faculty creates and recreates a social reality, and that social reality is hierarchical and ideological (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Hogg & Abrams, 1998). Faculty members (like any other professional or social group) use a variety of discourse strategies to position themselves with regard to other groups. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, the professional identity of community college faculty both shapes and is shaped by the discursive practices in which faculty engage (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). In addition, faculty receive discourse patterns from the wider society, which help to shape the perception of their professional role. In order to become alert to these patterns, the analyst must observe actual language use and then see what is generally taken for granted as new and strange (Gee, 2011).

Observing the language that community college faculty use to describe their professional role not only allows us to see common themes in the discourse but also to see what is left unsaid,

or said only through innuendo or implication. As Gee (2011) has noted, “What we do in communication with each other is not always benign” (p. 22). A better understanding of the discourse surrounding community college faculty and their professional identity will allow us to see some of the assumptions that are taken for granted by faculty members. Discursive practices create power relationships between and among various social groups (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). In the case of community college faculty, there are a number of possible social groups to compare and contrast: community college faculty and university faculty; academic transfer and professional/technical faculty; faculty and students; faculty and administrators, to name just some. Observing what comparisons community college faculty make in their own discourse provides context for the description of their professional identity.

2. How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?

Discourse analysis allows the researcher to examine both the creation of social identities and the way those identities are used to further the interests of one group over another (Fairclough, 1995). Discourse analysis focused on the professional identity of community college faculty allows for the unearthing of a variety of power relationships. While there is an increasing body of scholarship with regard to the professional identity of community college faculty, there is very little work that considers these faculty as a distinct discourse community, or examines the ways in which that community might shape their own discourse in order to further their interests as a community. Thirolf (2012) used discourse analysis to examine the role of adjunct faculty in community colleges; that very limited study concluded that adjuncts articulated a strong sense of professional identity with regard to students, but exhibited a negative or undeveloped identity with regard to full-time faculty peers. Discourse analysis

shows promise as a methodology for examining how community college faculty do or can construct a strong professional identity.

CDA assumes that, in any ongoing discourse, power is unequally distributed among participants and that participants have unequal capacity to control how they are represented through discourse (Fairclough, 1995). The purpose of employing CDA as an analytical tool is to identify the discourse themes used by community college faculty in talking about their profession. Through analysis of discourse, the research sought to uncover language patterns used to describe career paths, professional identities, and the nature of faculty work; the aim was to uncover how community college faculty members position their discourse community in relation to other groups, such as students, administrators, or other professionals.

Definition of Key Terms

Certain key terms are fundamental to understanding the approach to this study. The most important of those terms are defined here, though they also receive further explanation elsewhere in this study.

Social identity: An individual's perception of belonging to a social group, as well as the significance or "salience" that the individual attaches to the group role (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Social identity is a psychological state; an individual employs multiple social roles at any given time, and categorizes certain roles as being more significant than others (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Social identity is often clarified by comparisons between in-group and out-group members.

Professional identity: A sub-set of social identity, professional identity is that social identity category achieved through association with a specific occupation, career, or profession. While more structuralist or functionalist definitions see professional identity as an accumulation of professional attributes—such as content knowledge, autonomy, and certification (Abbott,

1988; Bayer & Braxton, 1998; Macdonald, 1995)—social identity theory sees professional identity as a dynamic psychological state which is greater than the aggregate of individual traits (Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Abrams, 1998).

Social identity theory: This strand of social psychology has its roots in the work of Henri Tajfel (1978; 1982) and John Turner (1975) in the 1970s, and has received significant further development by Dominic Abrams and Michael A. Hogg (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, 2004b; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Abrams, 1998), among others. It is distinct from identity theory in that it is less rooted in sociology and has a more psychological focus. While identity theory tends to focus on the development of individual identity as a hierarchy of social roles, social identity theory sees group identity as a more powerful and dynamic social force (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995).

Discourse: While there are many competing and even overlapping definitions of the term, the primary working definition here will be consistent with critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). From this perspective, there are several important features of discourse: it refers to actual language use as it occurs in the world, as opposed to being an abstract or ideal system; it must be analyzed within a social context; it both creates and is shaped by a variety of social structures; and it functions ideologically, in that various power relationships among social groups are continually reproduced and reshaped through the practice of discourse (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002).

Critical discourse analysis: A broad set of critical theory assumptions focused on the ways in which language use in everyday life tends to create and recreate ideological beliefs and structures within society. In this study, while critical discourse analysis refers most closely to the work of Norman Fairclough (1992a, 1992b, 1995), it also draws on the work of several other scholars (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wodak & Chilton, 2005).

Faculty: While faculty generally refers to a broad spectrum of higher education professionals, including two-year and four-year faculty; tenured, tenure-track and adjunct faculty; as well as faculty members whose primary professional duties may be other than teaching, such as librarians or counselors, for the purpose of this study, the term faculty refers to full-time, tenured faculty whose primary assignment is teaching. This more circumscribed definition of faculty was taken as a “typical case” sample of faculty within the scope of this project.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of the study was to examine how community college faculty members articulated their professional identity. Employing the analytical frameworks of social identity theory and critical discourse analysis, the research examined discourse used by community college faculty members in describing their professional identity, the formation of that identity, and the salient features of that professional role.

There were two primary research questions underlying this study:

1. How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?
2. How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?

This study was significant in that it added to the scholarly literature focused specifically on community college faculty (as opposed to university faculty or higher education faculty in general). It responded to the contentions of a number of other studies suggesting that the professional identity of community college faculty is not clearly defined (Cohen & Brawer,

1972; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Outcalt, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000).

In addition, the social status of community college faculty may reflect on the status of community colleges in general, in turn reflecting on the social status of community college students. A more clearly articulated professional identity for community college faculty may further the mission of community colleges to provide broad access to educational opportunities by counteracting ideological assumptions that position community colleges and their students as less important or socially viable than other segments of higher education.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

What did the literature say with regard to the professional identity of community college faculty? First, there was repeated mention of the lack of full clarity with regard to community college teaching as a profession (Cohen & Brawer, 1972; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). Most existing definitions of the profession included some level of comparison to other professional groups, primarily high school teachers and university faculty. It was hard to identify a stand-alone definition that did not require some form of comparison to make its point. In some sense, this was understandable, as community colleges as institutions are younger than either universities or high schools. However, software engineers have existed for less time than community colleges, and software engineers not only have a clear professional identity, but exist vividly in the popular imagination—either as the ever-casual Silicon Valley underage millionaire, or the socially-challenged, brilliant computer geek. But even though community college instructors have existed longer than software engineers, their image is less vivid. According to Cohen and Brawer (2008), “Some commentators have reasoned that the community college is best served by a group of instructors with minimal allegiance to a profession” (p. 92). The suggestion was that community college faculty should be broad generalists, and also that allegiance to discipline might overshadow allegiance to the college and to teaching. But even this argument was made primarily as a comparison to university faculty, the idea being that as commitment to research and disciplinary concerns grows, commitment to teaching fades. However, this only thinks in terms of comparisons and does not account for what might result from a fully professionalized community college faculty articulating their own sphere of influence.

There were several key areas of focus identified in the literature with respect to the topic of this research. First, there was general literature establishing the demographic profile of community college faculty, including tracking trends over time and addressing gender and racial diversity among the faculty, as well as the predominance of adjunct faculty. Second, there was literature addressing the marginalization of community college faculty, or a perceived lack of status within an educational hierarchy. Third, there was literature addressing lack of clarity in the professional role of community college faculty, including a career path that is not well defined and credentialing processes that may not address the professional role adequately. This literature review looked more closely at the latter two categories—marginalization and lack of role clarity—than at the general demographic data, as those general data have been considered at length in other studies. Specifically, it focused on literature with the most relevance to the research questions, including defining the professional role of faculty, identifying the career path, and articulating job satisfaction criteria, such as professional autonomy.

The literature on marginalization or lack of status within higher education for community college faculty was particularly appropriate with regard to critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA assumes that discourse produces relative inequalities of power between social groups (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). The existing literature on marginalization provided a fitting contrast to the actual discourse of community college faculty, as examined in this study. Marginalization is by definition comparative—in order to have a margin, one must have a center. The themes on marginalization in the existing literature formed a basis for comparison with the themes identified within the discourse analysis of this research.

The literature on lack of role clarity for community college faculty was important with regard to both the theoretical framework of CDA, as well as from the point of view of social

identity theory (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Hogg, 2001; Hogg & Abrams, 1998). Some of the literature on professionalization focused on the sociology of the professions (Abbott, 1998; Macdonald, 1995). This approach looked largely at formal features of established professions, such as training and certification, codes of conduct and professional ethics, an organized body of theory in the discipline, and socialization within the discipline. However, this was a primarily structuralist approach that was, in many ways, incompatible with the post-structural views of critical discourse analysis. Social identity theory made a more dynamic and fluid approach to group identity that could be applied to professional identity. There was little existing literature that applied social identity theory to community college faculty, though some consideration was given here to literature describing the theoretical underpinnings of this view.

More focus was given, in this review, to literature specifically addressing community college faculty, as opposed to considerations of higher education faculty in general, since that was the focus of this research. In addition, while there was some literature that focused on professionalization within particular disciplines (for example, English or engineering), this literature review omitted those sources in favor of studies that looked more broadly across disciplines.

The literature review was conducted using Google Scholar, the 1 Search database tool at Oregon State University (OSU) Library, as well as Scholars Archive at OSU. Search terms included “community college faculty,” “community college faculty career paths,” “community college faculty identity,” “community college faculty life,” “community college faculty professionalization,” “community college teachers,” “professional identity,” “social identity,” and “discourse analysis.” Additionally, the reference lists for the sources found in these searches were consulted in order to identify additional relevant sources.

Demographic Profile of Community College Faculty

Many of the quantitative studies of community college faculty demographics came from analysis of existing databases, particularly the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF), which has been conducted four times since 1987 by the National Center for Education Statistics. This survey included both two-year and four-year institutions, and gathered information on “backgrounds, responsibilities, workloads, salaries, benefits, attitudes, and future plans of both full- and part-time faculty” (U.S. Department of Education, 2013, para. 5). While this survey afforded an opportunity to view trends over time, the survey instrument has changed in some respects over the course of four administrations, which limited trend comparisons on some topics. Table 1 summarizes some of the demographic findings from NSOPF 2004.

Table 1

Summary of Community College Faculty Demographics and Training

	Full-Time Faculty	Part-Time Faculty
Gender		
Male	50.7%	50.8%
Female	49.3%	49.2%
Race		
White	81.4%	83.8%
Black	7.2%	7.0%
Hispanic	5.5%	4.3%
Asian	4.3%	2.9%
American Indian	1.7%	1.9%
Degree		
Doctoral	17.9%	8.6%
Professional	1.5%	3.7%
Master’s	62.3%	51.4%
Bachelor’s	11.6%	21.9%
Less than Bachelor’s	6.7%	14.4%
Average Age	49.8 years	49.2 years

In general, the community college faculty is largely white and largely middle-aged, while the proportion of women has increased over time (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keim, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). While there have been efforts to increase the racial and ethnic diversity of the community college faculty, that number remains relatively low in comparison to the demographics of community college students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). There may be some connection between the failure of recruitment efforts and a perceived lack of status for community colleges (as described below), especially in a time when many universities have also increased efforts to recruit minority faculty.

A majority of community college faculty are middle-aged (Keim, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). This fact may be particularly relevant in terms of the need to recruit a new generation of community college faculty in the not-too-distant future. A more clearly defined identity and career path for community college faculty may influence the success of those efforts. As some studies have noted, many faculty members end up at community colleges through an unintentional path, having started out to work at a university, in K-12 education, or in some other profession (Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005). Thus they may start their career path later, and this may skew the average age of community college faculty upward.

In terms of academic preparation, the largest percentage of community college faculty hold a master's degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keim, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). In most cases, this was dictated by accreditation standards and state law, with the master's degree serving as the most common benchmark of community college faculty qualification. Most of those master's degrees focus on the subject matter discipline, and very few community college faculty members have taken course work to prepare them for teaching or to familiarize them with the history and mission of the community college (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keim, 1989). Over

time, fewer faculty reported previous work experience in primary or secondary education (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). Keim (1989) reported that the average years of teaching experience was over 14 years for academic transfer faculty and over 10 years for professional/technical faculty. This corresponds well with reports of overall job satisfaction of community college faculty: most faculty were satisfied with their jobs and intended to remain in their current positions (Keim, 1989; Rosser & Townsend, 2006).

So, the demographic portrait of community college faculty was largely white, close to balanced in terms of gender, more middle-aged than not, and with primary academic preparation at the master's level. This demographic sketch may give relevant perspective when discussing the professional identity of community college faculty. In relation to the concept of marginalization (as discussed below), the master's degree is not a terminal degree (with the exception of the Master of Fine Arts, which is considered terminal in some fields). This may contribute to the sense of marginalization with regard to university faculty who primarily hold doctoral degrees. It may also be relevant if male and female faculty members describe their professional role or their satisfaction with it differently. And finally, it is possible that younger faculty members may have different perceptions of professional role and that as the current generation retire, the perception of professional role or status may change.

Marginalization and Lack of Status

A number of authors have noted a perceived lack of status for community college faculty, especially as compared to faculty in four-year institutions. While some described a long, slow progress toward higher status for community college faculty, others saw signs that status was being eroded by current changes in the community college mission and external socio-economic factors.

Townsend and LaPaglia (2000) examined the perceptions of professional status among community college faculty. They used a survey instrument to collect responses to statements about attitudes toward the community college and its faculty; the survey was conducted at the City Colleges of Chicago in 1997. Respondents noted their perceptions that faculty at four-year colleges viewed community college “faculty as being on the margins of higher education” (p. 43). Those faculty members who had previously worked as full-time faculty at four-year institutions were statistically more likely to feel that faculty at the four-year schools viewed two-year faculty as marginalized. However, while the majority of respondents believed this to be the perception of faculty at four-year institutions, they did not share this opinion themselves: respondents did not feel that community colleges were in a marginalized position within higher education. This study did not extend to faculty in four-year institutions, and so could not directly shed light on whether the perceptions of community college faculty were borne out by the attitudes of four-year college faculty.

Lee (2002) used data derived from the 2000 Community College Faculty Survey to determine to what extent community college faculty identify university faculty as a reference group. The study found stronger identification with the university among faculty in the humanities, social sciences, fine arts, and natural sciences. Weaker identification was reported by faculty in math and computer science. In comparison to earlier studies, Lee found that part-time faculty now had no greater identification with university faculty than did full-time faculty; in fact, part-time faculty reported a growing identification with high school teachers for advice on teaching and less identification with university faculty. So while the overall study showed that university faculty were a strong reference group for community college faculty, there was some lessening of that attitude over time. Lee did not specifically look at whether identification

with university faculty contributed to a sense of marginalization; however, some bias toward this view may be present on the part of the author. Lee (2002) noted that, “For many community college faculty, university teaching continues to be an appealing future occupation” (p. 27). Within Lee’s report, identification with university faculty was presented as at least a neutral aspiration for community college faculty and the implication was that it may be a desirable identification. There was little sense from the conclusions here that a stronger sense of professional identity for community college faculty might fill some of the professional needs that Lee mentioned.

Hovekamp (2005) conducted an ethnographic case study of one community college and one university branch campus to compare perceptions of professional roles between university and community college faculty. The study identified 10 themes, many of which confirmed common wisdom, such as the greater importance of research at the university compared to the greater role of teaching in the community college setting. This study was a relatively narrow sample, and it is possible that the attitudes of faculty at a branch campus may differ significantly from those at the main campus. However, one finding in particular was germane to the study of community college faculty identity: Hovekamp (2005) noted that community college faculty were influenced by their graduate school experience in terms of both spoken and unspoken attitudes toward community colleges. First, some faculty noted having been actively discouraged in graduate school from pursuing a career in community college; they were told that a community college position would be a waste of their education. Second, several respondents reported a lack of commitment to teaching on the part of their own professors and some even felt exploited as graduate teaching assistants. Respondents also noted the difficulty in moving back and forth, in terms of career progression, between the university and the community

college, as there was a clearly stated prejudice against hiring someone at the university who had community college experience. This finding has clear relevance for the discourse analysis of community college faculty professional identity.

The discourse within graduate schools is clearly reproducing the predominant power differential between universities and community colleges. What we do not know from this study is how widespread this phenomenon is, or to what extent those constructing this discourse have any direct knowledge of community colleges. This highlights the importance of controlling the discourse with regard to one's own profession. Professional preparation for community colleges—in the form of graduate schools—is controlled by university faculty, who may have a vested interest in accruing social power toward the university and away from the community college.

Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006), as well as Levin (2005), examined how socioeconomic changes in the very late 20th and early 21st centuries were impacting the mission of community colleges and the nature of faculty work. They contended that faculty “have become captive to the corporate culture that relies upon neo-liberal practices” (p. 2). They traced an evolution from the comprehensive community college to what they term the “*nouveau* college”: an institution that is “part transfer institution, economic development engine, social welfare agency, entrepreneurial institute, and baccalaureate and post-baccalaureate college” (p. 134). They pointed to the growth of market-oriented behaviors, the growth of managerialism, and global competitiveness as factors influencing the nature of faculty work and professional identity. Their detailed analysis of the economic, social, and technological factors influencing faculty work led them to conclude that the community college mission in the early 21st century

had tilted away from open access and the education of citizens and toward job training and economic development.

Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) conducted a mixed methods study, which they described as a form of embedded case study. Their study was based on an analysis of the subjects of globalization, neo-liberalism, and community college faculty. They examined several existing quantitative data sets, including several data sets from the National Center for Educational Studies and the 1993 and 1999 versions of the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF). The quantitative analysis was primarily done in comparison to faculty at four-year institutions. This may presuppose certain assumptions with regard to the professional role of community college faculty, or of the community college mission: they emphasized repeatedly that higher education used to be more separate from the business sector and the economy, implying a sort of “golden age” of ivory tower exceptionalism. However, if this was true in some former era, it was more true of the university than of the community college. So, while they raised many valid concerns over the changing mission of the community college, they may have done so from a university-centric perspective. In addition to the quantitative analysis, they also conducted qualitative interviews from seven sites over a six-year period. The resulting study raised many intriguing questions with regard to the marginalization of community college faculty in the new global economy, as well for the community college mission. They identified a trend that they label “new managerialism,” with roots in the 1980s. This primarily involved the adoption of private sector values and practices, such as new technologies, new management practices, and entrepreneurialism, by the community college. They noted that the increasing dependence on fee-paying students as state support dwindles changed the relationship between the faculty member and the student, who has now taken on the role of customer. Another key

phenomenon examined in the study was the increasing dependence on technology within faculty work. This may have been one of the less-compelling points made in this study; while it is true that instructional technologies are changing rapidly, Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) did not make an especially compelling case that this is detrimental, though they described it as a domain in which “faculty professional status is challenged” (p. 140). This was also the area in which their study was already becoming dated, as their analysis of instructional technology use was largely limited to use of email and online delivery of instruction. Instructional technology is changing very rapidly, and this portion of the study did not have enough reach to be truly compelling.

While Levin, Kater, and Wagoner (2006) produced one of the most intriguing analyses of community college faculty roles in recent years, some of their conclusions seemed contradictory. In early chapters, they lamented the loss of the democratic mission of the community college, preparing citizens to engage in society. However, in the final chapter they insisted that the role of the faculty was to be the “gatekeepers of knowledge” (p. 141). This gatekeeper function seems strikingly at odds with the democratic, open-access mission of the traditional community college.

To summarize the theme of marginalization and lack of status for community college faculty, the literature pointed to the fact that many community college faculty members perceived that they occupied a lower rung of the higher education hierarchy than did university faculty (Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). In addition, role identification between community college and university faculty may have been stronger in some disciplines than in others and may have declined among adjunct faculty (Lee, 2002). Many graduate schools conveyed a negative attitude toward community colleges (Hovekamp, 2005), which may have undermined a sense of

professional identity, especially for newer faculty members, who are still closer to their graduate school experiences. It may also be the case that changing economic influences in the late 20th and early 21st centuries has influenced the professional role perceptions of community college faculty (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006).

Lack of Clarity in Professional Roles

A number of sources expressed some concern over the lack of role clarity for community college faculty, both within higher education and within the world of education more generally (Hovekamp, 2005; Lee, 2002; O'Meara, Kaufman & Kuntz, 2003; Outcault, 2002; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000; Twombly & Townsend, 2008; Van Ast, 1999). Part of this lack of clarity may be attributable to career paths and credentials. For K-12 teachers, the teaching certificate confers both legal status and identity. For university faculty, the Ph.D., along with promotion and tenure, confer identity and status. For community college faculty, the situation is less clear. A majority of them hold a master's degree (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keim, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). While that is in many ways an appropriate preparation for community college teaching, it is also not a terminal degree and usually comes with no direct training in how to teach. Professional status is largely attached to the hiring process, rather than credentialing, though the tenure process also plays a role.

Grubb, et al. (1999) presented a book-length study of community college teaching, titled *Honored but invisible: An inside look at teaching in community colleges*, focusing on a variety of different approaches to teaching—lecture, discussion, workshop—and the theoretical underpinnings of these approaches, including behaviorist and constructivist ideas as to the nature of learning. For this study, a number of researchers visited a variety of community colleges over several years and conducted interviews with faculty, as well as observations of classes, in order

to compare to what extent what happened in the classroom reflected the ways in which faculty talked about their teaching. While there are many conclusions and observations drawn throughout the course of the book, the overarching idea was that even though we tend to conceptualize community colleges as “teaching colleges,” there is little actual focus on the nature of teaching, on how faculty learn to teach, or on any systematic approach to improving teaching. Most of the teachers interviewed had little formal preparation for classroom teaching, other than their subject matter expertise. Most of the teachers in the study reported learning to teach by a trial and error method, with little theoretical knowledge about the nature of learning or the best practices employed by the most effective teachers. The authors called for more focus on teaching on the part of community colleges, including hiring practices, the tenure process, and systematic professional development activities.

While *Honored but invisible* was a fascinating and in-depth consideration of many aspects of teaching in community colleges, there was relatively little description of the actual research methods used. In observing classes, the researchers used “a protocol designed to capture as much as possible the composition of students, the physical arrangements, the dominant activities minute by minute, the nature of questions and responses (verbatim when possible), and all signs of engagement and disengagement” (p. 13). While this method produced many interesting examples of what happens in community college classrooms, there was not a lot of other description of methodology, aside from noting how many hours of classroom time were observed or how many faculty or administrators were interviewed. While the qualitative findings expressed in this study were highly useful in thinking about the nature of professional teaching in community colleges, it would have been helpful to have a somewhat fuller explanation of methods.

There has also been a question as to the level of professional autonomy experienced by community college faculty (Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2008; Levin, 2005; Linville, Antony, & Hayden, 2011). Since so much of the professional role of community college faculty consists of teaching, and since so many faculty teach the same introductory level course year after year, some faculty may feel little control over their professional life (Crawford, 2012; Fugate & Amey, 2000).

Professional autonomy is one measure of job satisfaction for community college faculty. Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel (2008) examined the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) to correlate faculty authority over instructional decision making with job satisfaction. They noted that the 2004 NSOPF had fewer survey items related to autonomy than the 1999 NSOPF, and that those autonomy indicators were limited to instructional issues rather than broader measures of the professional role. They compared the perceptions of full-time and part-time faculty, as well as making a comparison to university faculty. In examining the data, they adjusted for oversampling by using “relative weights that were adjusted from raw weights (by dividing the raw faculty weight by its mean in the sample) and that were then multiplied by the average design effect of NSOPF: 2004” (p. 164). This resulted in a sample of 4,664 community college faculty, with 34% being full-time and 66% being part-time. The dependent variable was satisfaction with autonomy to make decisions with regard to instructional content and methods. This satisfaction level was correlated with gender, race, employment status, hours per week spent on administrative committees, hours per week spent on general student advising, and the number of office hours per week, as well as number of years faculty members had held their current jobs, whether they belonged to a faculty union, and whether faculty members held a

doctoral degree. They also included attitudinal indicators, such as satisfaction with salary and benefits. Regression analysis was used to derive a satisfaction index for the variables.

Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel (2008) found that most faculty members, regardless of other variables, were satisfied with their instructional autonomy. They did find that four-year college faculty were slightly more satisfied with instructional autonomy, while two-year faculty were more satisfied with their jobs overall. They did not find significant differences between full-time and part-time faculty in terms of satisfaction with autonomy; however, they did find that, among full-time faculty, union membership was a negative predictor of satisfaction. While these were interesting findings with regard to one aspect of the professional role, the study was not able to effectively track trend data over time, as the survey instrument changed between NSOPF 1999 and 2004, with fewer indicators of autonomy in 2004.

Another aspect of this lack of role clarity was a lack of intentionality in the career paths of community college faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000). Many faculty members who ended up at community colleges started out with other intentions—to teach in K-12, work at a university, or work in another profession that eventually led to teaching. It was also the case that some community college instructors had to overcome attitudes of negativity toward community colleges, attitudes which they often experienced in graduate schools, where there may be a decided bias toward universities (Hovekamp, 2005; Washington, 2011). This lack of clarity in the career path, coupled with negative attitudes toward community colleges, could pose some serious impediments to recruiting future generations of community college professionals.

Kempner (1990) conducted a case study of a suburban community college in the Pacific Northwest in order to examine faculty and institutional culture. Social identity theory posits that

group membership is a key tool in identity formation; this being the case, then faculty and institutional culture are likely to influence identity formation, as the culture of the institution shapes group norms and interactions. Kempner's study (1990) focused on 16 "critical case" informants, including eight faculty members, three students, four administrators, and one counselor. The study considered four major themes: sense of purpose, faculty and institutional culture, facilitating learning, and hindering learning. Many of the faculty interviewed expressed the lack of a strong sense of institutional purpose, though they generally spoke to a personal sense of purpose and satisfaction with serving students. Several faculty informants focused on what they perceived as a general social justice mission for community colleges, in that the intention was to serve students who might not otherwise have access to a college education. However, they were also aware that their particular community college served a primarily white, suburban, and often middle-class student body. This seemed to contribute to some lack of certainty about the sense of institutional mission. So we can assume that if professional identity is largely a group phenomenon, then this lack of clarity in the institutional mission may contribute to a lack of clarity in the professional identity of community college faculty.

Other findings that emerged from Kempner's (1990) case study included a sense of conflict or controversy between faculty and administrators, and differences of opinion as to whether the faculty union played a positive or negative role in helping faculty deal with these conflicts. At the time of the study, the college had been through several years of declining enrollments and difficult budget decisions, which added to the sense of conflict. In spite of this, faculty expressed a passion for the teaching role and for their overall job satisfaction. These contrasting indicators may be consistent with Turner's (1975) notion of out-group comparison—

in other words, faculty may react to the lack of a strong sense of professional purpose by contrasting themselves with administrators in order to strengthen their own professional identity.

There was also the question of how to reach more clarity with regard to the professional roles of community college faculty. Surveys can tell us much about what current faculty think, but it may be difficult to establish what someone does not think or why they do not think it. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pointed to Dewey's definition of experience as the basis of learning; their concept of narrative inquiry was designed to deal with uncertainty and continually evolving research questions. Part of the question about professional identity is very straightforward: it involves questions of professional training, certification, and public relations (Outcault, 2002). Bayer and Braxton (1998) conducted a quantitative study designed to elicit normative structures of professional behavior for community college teaching. Using a survey sample of 265 community college faculty members, the study identified five factors for which respondents expressed general agreement in terms of inappropriate professional behavior: interpersonal disregard, restrictive accessibility, inadequate planning, particularistic grading, and moral turpitude. The authors concluded that these factors constituted a *de facto* code of conduct for community college faculty and point to the existence of these norms as a marker of professionalization. This analysis grew primarily out of the sociology of the professions (Abbott, 1998; Macdonald, 1995), which is a more structuralist and formal approach than social identity theory would suggest. These formal structures include, in addition to an established code of conduct, training and socialization, a systematic body of theory, and the formation of professional organizations (Bayer & Braxton, 1998). Another indicator of professional status is often the development of a set of ethical standards for the profession (Smith, 2013; Starratt, 2012). While these elements may provide some sense of structure for professional identity, they

are largely comparative—they consider how similar or dissimilar the profession of community college teaching may be to clearly established professions, such as medicine, accounting, or the law. However, there are also more obscure aspects to the question, such as why a clear image of community college faculty has failed to emerge.

Thirolf (2012) focused specifically on adjunct faculty and their sense of professional identity. This was a very limited study—a discourse analysis of only three adjunct faculty members. However, the conclusions were probably consistent with the experience in many colleges: the faculty interviewed expressed a strong positive identification with teaching and interacting with students. The strongest sense of professional identity came from working directly with students. However, there was very little positive role identification with their full-time faculty colleagues. There was some sense that adjunct faculty avoided direct association with their full-time peers due to negative perceptions of the role and competence of adjunct faculty.

Although this was a very limited study, Thirolf's (2012) work is relevant to this study due to its use of discourse analysis. Thirolf conducted two rounds of semi-structured interviews with three faculty informants. In analyzing the interview transcripts, Thirolf identified "I" statements (such as I want, I feel, etc.), as well as "positioning through pronoun usage; and patterns in syntax, tone, and metaphors" (pp. 178-9). And while this study did not directly address the professional identity of adjunct faculty, Thirolf's (2012) findings were certainly consistent with other literature on adjunct faculty in the community college (Charlier & Williams, 2011; McLaughlin, 2005; Wallin, 2004).

Alsop (2005) applied discourse analysis to the formation of professional identity for K-12 teachers. This study used a grounded theory approach in interviewing pre-service (or "student")

teachers as they engaged in their first experiences in classroom teaching. Alsup concluded that teacher identity formation was an essential step in teacher training, even though many teacher preparation programs did not directly address the topic. In order for teachers to help students engage meaningfully in their own education, teachers must critically examine their own education and training: “The preservice teacher who has engaged critically with her own education will be much more likely to successfully implement a critical pedagogy in her secondary school classroom and encourage critical thought on the part of her students” (p. 127). Aspiring teachers who do not question the master narratives of educational philosophy and dominant culture are likely only to reproduce those narratives, not to improve upon them.

While this study focused on K-12 teachers, many of the assumptions may still apply to community college teachers. Alsup (2005) spent quite a bit of time in this book considering the implications for teacher training and certification programs. These programs for community college teachers are largely non-existent. For many (or most) community college teachers, the master narratives of educational philosophy may never be explicitly stated, as so many community college instructors learn to teach on the job, through a process of trial and error (Grubb, et al. 1999). In this environment, it seems even less likely that assumptions about teaching and learning may be systematically questioned. And as the literature on social identity theory will show below, the impulse to adopt a social or group identity is a very strong tendency, which may lead to an exaggerated need for out-group ostracism.

So, to summarize the relevant themes with regard to the lack of clarity in the professional role of community college faculty, the literature suggested that community college faculty had a less clear system of training and credentialing than either K-12 teachers or university faculty; and while the workload for community college faculty consists primarily of teaching, their

professional training often contained little or no preparation for the teaching role (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Grubb, et al., 1999; Hovekamp, 2005; Keim, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). In spite of this, community college faculty overall were satisfied with their jobs and their instructional autonomy; however, union membership may be a negative predictor of satisfaction (Kim, Twombly & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). This may be relevant to the question of professional identity, considering that many well-established professions—for example, medicine, law, accounting—do not operate within a unionized paradigm, but rather rely on professional organizations.

There was also a lack of intentionality in the career paths of many community college faculty members. And while most community college faculty members professed a strong sense of identification with students, at least one study found significant conflict between faculty and administrators (Kempner, 1990). This professional conflict may be linked to Turner's (1975) concept of in-group identification and out-group ostracism.

Social Identity Theory and Professional Identity

Social identity theory is a branch of social psychology that recognizes the primacy of society and social roles over the individual (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry & White, 1995). Among the primary contentions is that group membership is a psychological state that confers social identity to group members. Social identity theory is largely rooted in the work of Tajfel (1978; 1982) and Turner (1975). Tajfel's theory of social identity is comprised of three main assumptions:

- Individuals define themselves in terms of their social groups, and thus those groups provide a social identity.

- Social identity is perceived as positive or negative according to the perceived status of groups that contribute to it.
- The prestige of social identity is a result of comparisons (overt or implicit) between the in-group and relevant out-groups (Turner & Brown, 1978).

Professional identity is a subset of social identity, just as national identity or ethnic identity might be another subset. The relevant out-groups for the professional identity of community college faculty may include students, administrators, university faculty, high school teachers, or faculty at other two-year colleges.

Turner (1975) emphasized the importance of categorization in social identity formation: any individual belongs to a variety of groups simultaneously. These groups may be overlapping in characteristics or membership; the individual attaches salience to the various groups in order to categorize social identity. Members tend toward in-group favoritism, even in situations where there is no direct competition between groups—no tangible reward for the favoritism (Deschamps & Devos, 1998). As applied to the professional identity of community college faculty, this means that faculty may always be inclined to distinguish between faculty and administrators, or between faculty and students. However, the salience applied to these roles may determine the level of favoritism. For example, if faculty strongly identify with the mission of the college, they may see groups outside of the college—say, legislators or university administrators—as a more salient out-group identification, while administrators at their college, who share the same sense of mission, may be viewed as closer to, or overlapping with, their own social identity.

Turner (1975) gave an example of an experiment by Tajfel, in which participants were divided into two task groups with minimal identification—group members have no interaction or

knowledge of each other's identity. When asked to assign monetary rewards to in-group or out-group members, participants consistently favored in-group members, even though there was no visible advantage in doing so. This illustrated how strong is the impulse to identify with a group. In-group bias is "the experimental analogue of ethnocentrism among groups in the real world" (Turner, 1978, p. 235). This in-group bias is more profound than the competitive impulse; it is a basic building block of identity formation (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1978). In order to understand the formation of a professional identity, it is essential to understand the role of social identity in the formation of personal identity.

Worchel and Coutant (2004) suggested a four component model of individual identity, consisting of *personal identity, group membership, intragroup identity, and group identity*. They demonstrated the ways in which all four components operate simultaneously, each with its own continuum of salience in any particular circumstance. For instance, they gave an example of a Japanese student studying at an American university. The student described the ways in which she was physically distinct from other students (personal identity); (a) she was Japanese (group membership); (b) she was from a wealthy Japanese family; (c) because of her status, she was expected to keep very high academic standards compared to other Japanese students (intragroup identity); and (d) at that particular time Japan was concerned with its image with regard to the rights of women (group identity). The student was always aware of all four identity components, but one or more became more dominant depending on whether she was interacting with other Japanese students, with American students, or with mixed groups. Worchel and Coutant (2004) contended that these four identity components function within a developmental model of group identity—that group members may seek varying levels of cooperation and competition with in-group members depending on whether the group is newly established or long-standing. In early

stages of group development, members seek more equality and uniformity. At later stages in the life of the group, members emphasized more intragroup competition in order to accentuate individual status within the group. In terms of community college faculty, this model of group identity begs the question of whether individual members emphasize cooperation or competition and how they specifically define their in-groups.

Bar-Tal (1998) explored the concept of group beliefs as expressions of group identity. He proposed a number of different types of group beliefs, including group norms, group values, group goals, and group ideology. The concept of group norms can be related to the findings of other studies suggesting a *de facto* code of conduct for community college faculty (Bayer & Braxton, 1998; Kempner, 1990). Similarly, the notion of group values can be related to literature pointing to current changes in focus for community colleges from the traditional values of open access to the current emphasis on accountability and completion (Levin, 2005; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). How community college faculty conceptualize their group goals is a question worth further exploration: is there more emphasis on open access to education, on the upholding of academic standards, or on preparation for the job market?

Páez, Martínez-Taboada, Arróspide, Insúa, and Ayestarán, (1998) suggested a differentiation in the utilization of in-group favoritism and out-group ostracism among lower status groups. They also described more intragroup differentiation among high-status groups than among lower-status groups. Their study noted that high-status groups were more likely to favor their in-group than lower-status groups. Members of lower-status groups were more likely to favor identification with higher-status groups, thus expressing an aspirational desire to be associated with the high-status group. With this perspective in mind, it would be interesting to ascertain whether community college faculty show strong in-group favoritism—suggesting a

favorable perception of the status of the in-group—or whether they show significant identification with potentially higher-status groups, such as university faculty. Strong in-group favoritism might indicate an implicit professional identity for community college faculty.

Chapter Summary

The literature on the professional identity of community college faculty shows a number of persistent themes. The literature reviewed here was considered under four relevant themes: the demographic profile of community college faculty; marginalization and lack of status for community college faculty; lack of clarity in the professional roles of community college faculty; and the connections between social identity theory and professional identity.

In terms of demographics, while change is occurring, community college faculty still tended to be more white, more male, and more middle-class than the students they serve (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keim, 1989; Townsend & Twombly, 2007). Community colleges tended to occupy a position of lower status within the hierarchy of higher education. And a lack of a strong professional identity for community college faculty has persisted over many decades (Cohen & Brawer, 1972; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1994; Twombly & Townsend, 2008).

The literature on marginalization and lack of status was somewhat equivocal: while community college faculty tended to perceive their status within the overall hierarchy of higher education as lower than faculty in other sectors, their overall job satisfaction was strong when compared to faculty in other sectors (Lee, 2002; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). Some community college faculty experienced negative stereotyping with regard to careers in community college teaching while they were enrolled in graduate programs at universities (Hovekamp, 2005; Washington, 2011). In addition, social and economic factors in the late 20th

and early 21st centuries may have contributed to changing working conditions and missions for community college faculty (Kempner, 1990; Levin, 2005; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006).

The lack of professional role clarity for community college faculty presented several factors in need of analysis. First, there was the fact that the training and credentialing process for community college faculty was less definitive than it was for K-12 teachers or university faculty (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Keim, 1994; Townsend & Twombly, 2007; Twombly & Townsend, 2008). Then there was the fact that, while the workload for community college faculty consisted mostly of teaching, the professional preparation of most community college faculty involved little or no training in how to teach (Grubb, et al., 1999). And while faculty professed a commitment to serving students and to the general social justice aspects of open access education (Bayer & Braxton, 1998; Kempner, 1990), there was also some lack of clarity expressed with regard to the focus of the institutional mission.

Social identity theory suggests a number of relevant avenues of inquiry with regard to professional identity. The impulse to draw on group identification as a tool of identity formation is strong, and the comparisons between in-groups and out-groups lead to ostracism in a variety of forms (Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1978). One particular area for further study would be the extent to which community college faculty identify college administrators, students, university faculty, or high school teachers as out-group members, thus subjecting them to unfavorable comparisons in the process of professional identity formation.

The topic of professional identity for community college faculty has many aspects. In some sense, it may be easier to predict how that identity can be more fully developed in the future than to fully identify why it has not emerged in the past. However, it is unlikely that those outside of the community college profession will develop a clear sense of the professional

identity of community college teachers until those same teachers define an identity for themselves. Critical discourse analysis is particularly well suited to an examination of professional roles and identity, because discourse analysis allows the researcher to examine both the creation of social identities and the way those identities are used to further the interests of one group over another (Fairclough, 1995). Discourse analysis focused on the professional identity of community college faculty allows for the unearthing of a variety of power relationships and may suggest ways to further support the professional development of current and future faculty.

Chapter 3: Methods

The purpose of this study was to examine how community college faculty members articulated their professional identity and how the discourse around that professional identity constructed the social reality of community college faculty members. The following section explains the design of the study and the rationale for the approach used. This includes discussion of the philosophical approach to the study, the theoretical perspective, data sources and collection methods, analytical procedures, and the inherent limitations of this study.

This study addresses the following questions:

- How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?
- How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?

The study employed the perspectives of social identity theory and critical discourse analysis to examine samples of discourse collected from community college faculty members in order to answer these questions.

Philosophical Approach

The philosophical assumptions that underlie the approach to this study come from a particular branch of social psychology: first, the notion that group or social identity is greater than an aggregate of individual identities; and second, the idea that language is both referential and constitutive in relationship to that social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). The following subsections describe social identity theory, critical discourse analysis, and the theoretical perspective for the present study.

Social identity theory. According to Hogg and Abrams (1998) much of social psychology is reductionist in that it seeks to explain social groups in terms of the traits or psychology of the individual. The most reductionist approaches follow the lead of Floyd Allport in declaring that all psychology takes place in the mind of the individual and that there is no group psychology apart from the aggregation of individuals (Hogg & Abrams, 1998). However, a different thread of social psychology tends to focus on the primacy of social influences on the individual and the formation of identity. This line of thought tends to view group or social identity as greater than the sum of individual parts. In particular, two different but overlapping theories tend to expound this view: identity theory and social identity theory (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). While the theories have some similarities, they have significant differences as well. While identity theory takes a largely sociological approach, social identity theory is rooted more in social psychology (Burke, Owens, Serpe, & Thoits, 2003; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Identity theory tends to view group membership as a series of roles that individuals take on—the more “salient” the specific role to the individual, the more commitment the individual gives to the role (Burke, Owens, Serpe, & Thoits, 2003). The roles may be expressed in terms of gender or race, or in terms of occupational groups or even hobbies (for example, one individual may assume multiple roles, as an Asian American man who is a Certified Public Accountant and a fan of the local NFL football team). This is a largely structural dynamic, with individual identity being constructed out of the building blocks of multiple social roles.

Social identity theory, on the other hand, recognizes the primacy of society and social roles over the individual (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Hogg and Abrams contend that

belonging to a group (of whatever size and distribution) is largely a *psychological* state which is quite distinct from that of being a unique and separate individual, and that it confers *social identity*, or a shared/collective representation of who one is and how one should behave (1998, p.17). [*Emphasis* in original].

These social identities have power and status relationships with other social identities. Much of the psychological state that comprises these categories is ideological, in that it tends to go unexamined, to be distributed among members of groups in non-critical ways. Social identity theory tends to focus on the ways in which groups and group identities are embedded in individuals, rather than on the ways in which individuals make up groups.

Social identity theory is particularly germane to the study of professional identity of community college faculty for a couple of reasons. First, as we have seen above in the review of the literature, community college faculty members have relatively high job satisfaction and a satisfactory perception of their own professional autonomy (Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000; Kim, Twombly, Wolf-Wendel, 2008). However, despite these positive indicators, the group or social identity of community college faculty remains vague (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1992). This suggests that there may be some barriers that have kept community college faculty from translating salient features of personal identity into a strong social identity. Second, the fact that the career path for community college faculty tends to be relatively unintentional and undifferentiated (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Kempner, 1990) may inhibit the ability of community college faculty members to translate the formative experiences in their career into normative markers of professional identity. If, as Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) have noted, “language is a ‘machine’ that generates, and as a result constitutes, the social world” (p. 9), the fact that there are relatively few forums in which community college faculty

members engage in discourse around their professional identity, then it may prove difficult to articulate community college faculty status into a salient social category.

So, this study was interested in the approach of social identity theory: if, as a number of studies have suggested (Cohen & Brawer, 1972; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000), the professional identity of community college faculty is less than fully formed, then community college faculty are engaged in ideological referencing of their social identity—they may internalize unfavorable comparisons between their own profession and that of university faculty or other professional groups. They may attempt to carve out a social identity by articulating favorable comparisons of in-group members (community college faculty) and by disparaging various out-group members—for example, faculty versus administrators, faculty versus students, community college faculty versus university or high school faculty (Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). And while this may, over time, increase in-group solidarity, it also reinforces ideological hierarchies within society.

Critical discourse analysis. The second philosophical underpinning to this study was the idea that language is both referential and constitutive in relationship to social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001). That is, while language refers to, or points at, already existing identities within society, at the same time our use of language is one of the primary tools by which we construct and reconstruct our social reality. Social identity is articulated through discourse—through language in use (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). This point of view takes shape as both theory and method in the form of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). CDA assumes that in any ongoing discourse, power is unequally

distributed among participants and that participants have unequal capacity to control how they are represented through discourse (Fairclough, 1995). By analyzing discourse artifacts (written or spoken “texts”), the researcher can point to the power relationships within the discourse and to the ideological assumptions produced and reproduced through language.

Gee (1999) uses the example of the debate over gay marriage to illustrate how language constructs social identity. Gay couples have less power than straight couples to define their relationships as marriages; terms like “civil union” may confer many of the same legal rights, but also reinforce an unequal power relationship within society, with gay couples in the lesser role. In many ways, it is impossible to distinguish the extent to which the term marriage points to a social role existing within society or constructs a social identity which is enacted through a body of laws. Even the laws themselves cannot exist outside of discourse, since the laws themselves are constructed of language. Even the fact that we append the modifier “gay” to the term “marriage” confirms a non-normative status for such relationships. If some marriages are “gay” while others are not, then an unequal status relationship exists even if the legal rights are equal.

The critical discourse analyst seeks to become alert to patterns of language which construct and reconstruct social identities, to see what is generally taken for granted as new and strange (Gee, 2011). This approach to the study of language in use attempts to identify discourse patterns that are uncritical—or ideological—and to expose them in terms of their implications for shaping social identity.

So, the philosophical perspective for this study of the professional identity of community college faculty was undertaken with two primary philosophical assumptions: that group or social identity is greater than an aggregate of individual identities and that language is both referential and constitutive in relationship to social identity.

Theoretical Perspective

The two theoretical perspectives described above inform the design of the research study in a number of important ways. First, social identity theory posits that agents are generally not conscious of many aspects of their own social identity (Costello, 2005). To ask community college faculty members to articulate their own perceptions of their professional identity is an appropriate means to uncover some of the ideological assumptions that faculty members recreate in their professional discourse. Many community college faculty may not have given much overt consideration to their professional identity. A number of studies have suggested that the professional identity of community college faculty is less than clearly articulated (Cohen & Brawer, 1972, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Outcault, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). In order to explore this professional identity, it is appropriate to engage community college faculty members in discourse in order to identify patterns that emerge.

The underlying research questions that give structure to this study focus on two areas:

1. *How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?*

Social identity theory contends that social identity is highly dynamic, that belonging to a group is a psychological state that influences the individual even outside the presence of the group, and that beliefs about in-group and out-group members are often ideological (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). Professional identity is a sub-set, or category, of social identity. If social identity is highly dynamic—i.e. fluid and susceptible to reacting with other identities—and if the professional identity of community college faculty is less than fully articulated in society, then it is likely that numerous ideological assumptions may be present in the discourse of community college faculty, in that the discourse around that professional identity has not been

critically examined. The first step in any critical examination is to expose for analysis those unexamined assumptions.

2. *How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?*

While many studies have asserted that the professional identity of community college faculty is less fully formed than other categories of social identity (say, university faculty for one example) (Cohen & Brawer, 1972, 2008; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hovekamp, 2005; Outcalt, 2002; Palmer, 1992; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000), it is also the case that this social identity does exist, even if it is less than clearly articulated. The discourse involving community college faculty creates and recreates a social reality, and that social reality is hierarchical and ideological (Fairclough, 1995; Gee, 1999; Hogg & Abrams, 1998). This has implications in several directions.

First, people derive identity largely from already existing social categories, but the specific combination of social categories to which any particular person belongs is essentially unique (Stets & Burke, 2000). So, the fact that the category of community college faculty member may be less than fully defined does not stop any particular faculty member from developing a professional identity. However, the fact that the category of community college faculty is less than fully designated implies that it has not been critically examined and may carry ideological assumptions. Community college faculty members may be engaged in ideological struggles of which they are largely unaware (Bourdieu, 1991). Faculty members (like any other professional or social group) use a variety of discourse strategies to position themselves with regard to other groups, such as students, administrators, tax payers, high school teachers, university faculty, and many others. To the extent that their social identity is critically

unexamined, they position themselves ideologically. For example, community college faculty may choose to position themselves as upholders of academic rigor and may assume that high failure or drop-out rates in many courses are signs of academic rigor. On the other hand, faculty may choose to position themselves as “student centered.” If this stance is taken uncritically, it may elicit lower academic standards in order to meet the demands of students. An ongoing critical examination of the professional identity of community college faculty is necessary in order to balance these and other conflicting demands.

Second, the professional identity of community college faculty is a central component in the social status of community colleges in general. The traditional mission of community colleges has been that of open access to higher education and increased educational opportunity. While spreading educational opportunity is a move toward increased equality, if community colleges are defined as lower-status educational institutions, then in many ways they recreate inequitable power relationships within society. While community college faculty are, on average, white, middle-aged, and middle-class, community college students are more likely than university students to be economically disadvantaged, people of color, and first generation college students (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). The professional identity of community college faculty impacts the social status of community colleges in general, which in turn has an impact on the social status of community college students, potentially reinforcing second-class status in spite of an intention to extend educational opportunities.

So, the theoretical approach to this study is underpinned by two primary assumptions: that social identity is a psychological state that comprises more than the aggregate of individual identities within a group; and that language is both referential and constitutive in terms of social identity. Using these two assumptions, it follows that in order to examine the professional

identity of community college faculty, it is necessary to examine the discourse practices that both produce and reproduce that identity.

Data Sources and Collection Methods

Curtis, Gesler, Smith, and Washburn (2000) suggest a six-step checklist for establishing effective samples for qualitative research:

- The sampling strategy should be relevant to the conceptual framework and the research questions addressed by the research.
- The sample should be likely to generate rich information on the type of phenomena which need to be studied.
- The sample should enhance the 'generalizability' of the findings.
- The sample should produce believable descriptions or explanations.
- The sample strategy should be ethical.
- The sampling plan should be feasible (p. 103).

Since this research sought to examine how community college faculty members articulate their professional identity, the most relevant approach was to speak directly with faculty members. Faculty members themselves possess the richest information on the topic, and gathering data directly from the primary source of the discourse on this topic is likely to produce the most believable descriptions of faculty professional identity.

Sampling protocols. Data for this study were collected from community college faculty in Washington and Oregon, through interviews with faculty members. The study focused on colleges in Washington and Oregon in order to provide easier access for the researcher and to make it simpler for other researchers to replicate the study in another region. Sampling followed a method often referred to as “typical case” sampling (Creswell, 2011; Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011).

The purpose of typical case sampling is just as the name suggests—to choose, as much as possible, samples of the phenomenon being studied that are likely to present the most typical examples available. These typical samples are often identified by consulting local informants who are in a position to help identify typical cases (Patton, 2002; Suri, 2011). In this study, two methods were used to help identify typical cases. First, statistical and demographic data about the size and mission areas of community colleges in Washington and Oregon was used to select institutions that were neither atypically large nor atypically small. Program offerings were examined to include schools that have a relatively balanced comprehensive mission, including academic transfer courses, professional/technical programs, and offerings in basic skills or continuing education. Once a potential list of institutions was identified, academic administrators were enlisted as key informants to help recruit a group of typical faculty within the institutions. Using that list of potential subjects, the researcher used an email invitation explaining the scope and focus of the study and inviting subjects to participate in interviews.

The unit of analysis for this study was the community college faculty member. From the perspective of social identity theory, individuals within a social group internalize the norms of the group and reproduce those norms through discourse; social perceptions fall along a continuum, from individual to interpersonal to group to intergroup (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Hogg & Abrams, 1998). So, each subject—each faculty member—reflects both an individual perspective and a group perspective, or social identity. There is no bright line separating the personal perception from the group perception—they are interpenetrating and one produces and reproduces the other. By interviewing individual faculty members with regard to their own perceptions of their professional identity, then coding and comparing the responses against each other, the research was able to identify common “discourse fields” (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips &

Jorgensen, 2002). These discourse fields may take the form of common metaphors or tropes available in social discourse, which are then adapted to fit the current circumstance (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

The participants in this study were full-time, tenured faculty members with primary work assignments in classroom teaching. This excluded librarians, counselors, or faculty members serving in primarily administrative capacities. The rationale for this selection was again to focus on typical case sampling and to exclude, to the extent practical, those participants that might be considered special case examples. Limiting the sampling to tenured faculty assured a minimum level of experience in community college teaching, as the average length of the tenure process for community college faculty is at least three years (National Education Association, 2014). This also excluded part-time or adjunct faculty. While adjunct faculty make up a substantial proportion of community college faculty in general, a majority of community college courses are still taught by full-time faculty, due to their larger course loads (Cohen & Brawer, 2008). This implies that full-time faculty constitute a typical case, both from the perspective of students and the institution. They are also more likely to be fully-vested in processes of shared governance, and to have greater resources for professional development in their field, and so to have more direct influence on the development of the professional identity of community college faculty. However, by headcount, there are more than double the number of adjunct faculty (230,100) compared to full-time faculty members (114,600) according to NSOPF 2004 (U.S. Department of Education, 2013).

Adjunct faculty are certainly worthy of similar research attention. (See, for example, Thirolf, 2012, for a small but interesting application of discourse analysis research to the professional identity of adjunct faculty in the community college.) However, limiting the study

to full-time, tenured faculty made it easier to develop a typical case; it also makes it possible for future researchers to produce a similar study focused on adjunct faculty and to compare the findings.

The study recruited an initial pool of approximately 60 potential subjects to receive an email invitation to participate in the study. Not all potential subjects agreed to participate in interviews. The goal of the recruitment strategy was to complete 12 to 20 interviews out of the initial pool of approximately 60 potential subjects, looking for a saturation of themes within the discourse sample to determine the extent of necessary sampling.

Interviews were conducted in person, preferably in the subject's office or another campus location (one interview was conducted in a conference room next to the participant's office), so that the researcher could observe the context in which the subject functions professionally. In each case, permission to record the interview was obtained from the subject prior to the interview.

Question protocols. Subjects were asked to participate in interviews of approximately 30 to 60 minutes. Participants were given a written consent form (Appendix A), explaining the scope and focus of the research and providing for consent to audio recording of the interview. Consent was recorded as part of the audio-recording process.

Interviews were based on a semi-structured list of potential questions or topics (Merriam, 2009; see below and Appendix B). Since the data in this study represent the discourse generated by the faculty members, the subjects needed some flexibility and openness in their potential responses in order to allow them to shape the discourse. A formal or highly structured list of questions would, in this case, give too much weight to the views of the researcher in guiding the

interviews. On the other hand, a completely open or unstructured interview would likely fail to address the topic of professional identity sufficiently.

The question protocol was guided by several factors. First, social identity theory suggested a number of areas relevant to in-group and inter-group behavior that were used to focus the questions in the interviews. One was group mobility, which refers not only to perceptions of status among groups, but to strategies for entering and leaving groups dependent on the perceived status of one group compared to another (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b). This suggested that questions related to how someone started their career in community college teaching or about formative events in early career would be relevant to the formation of group identity.

Abrams and Hogg (2004b) also consider the roles of motivation and self-esteem in determining social identity, suggesting that discrimination against out-group members may raise self-esteem and cultivate group identity. In the case of this study, this may imply that community college faculty members cultivate group identity by rhetorically ostracizing out-group members, such as administrators, high school teachers, or university faculty. Thirolf (2012) found that adjunct faculty in community colleges identified most strongly with students, and felt less of a common bond with other faculty members. These ideas suggested that questions about perceptions of students, administrators, high school teachers, and university faculty would be appropriate.

In addition, group members have a tendency to depersonalize behaviors within the group and thus perceptions of “ideal” group members are often hypothetical (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Hogg & Abrams, 1998). This suggested that questions about the desired traits of colleagues, or what the subjects admired in other faculty members, would elicit discourse relevant to the

depiction of a professional identity for community college faculty. Such descriptions may depict group norms with regard to the faculty role.

Social identity theory views social identity as a process rather than as a thing. Identities exist on a continuum from the personal to the intergroup (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). This suggested that questions with regard to specific milestones or formative experiences in the careers of community college faculty members would elicit discourse related to the process of becoming a fully invested group member. Those questions might also uncover themes related to common milestones (for example, the granting of tenure). The following table provides a matrix of semi-structured questions for interviews.

Table 2

Matrix of Semi-structured Questions for Interviews

Guiding Questions	Sample Questions	Purpose
What are the key events that mark the beginning of the CC teaching career?	How did you get started in CC teaching? What do you remember about your early years of teaching?	To elicit data related to identity as a process, and to group mobility (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b)
What key events are seen as milestones in the CC teaching career?	Are there certain milestones that mark stages of your career?	To elicit data related to identity as a process (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005)
How does the CC teaching role compare with the role of out-group members, such as CC administrators, high school teachers or university faculty?	How would you say your job compares with that of a community college administrator? How would you say your job at the CC compares with a high school teacher How would you say your job compares with a university faculty member?	To elicit data related to in-group status, role identification, and ostracizing rhetoric (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Thirolf, 2012)

Table 2 (*continued*)

	How does your work as a faculty member compare with the work of other employees of the college?	
What are the key motivators or rewards relative to CC teaching?	<p>What is important to you about teaching?</p> <p>What other aspects of your job are important to you?</p> <p>What motivates you to want to do this job?</p>	To elicit data related to role salience within the professional identity (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995)
What traits are desired in colleagues in a CC teaching environment?	How do you get along with your faculty colleagues?	Elicit data on depersonalizing behaviors within groups (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Hogg & Abrams, 1998)
How does the professional training of CC faculty match the work in a CC teaching career?	<p>What training do you have in your discipline?</p> <p>Have you had specific training for teaching?</p>	To elicit data with regard to career stages and development of competencies (Fugate & Amey, 2000; Hogg, 2001)
What is the perception of the professional identity of CC faculty?	<p>How would you describe your professional identity?</p> <p>Does that description apply to CC faculty in general?</p>	To elicit data related to definitions of identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b)

Data analysis. The interviews were captured by audio recording. Recordings of interview sessions were transcribed using a professional transcription service. The transcriptions were then compared against the original recordings by the researcher, using any notes taken during or after the interviews, in order to capture any additional context from the conversations.

Analysis and coding were conducted using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS). The software used for this study was Dedoose. Transcripts of the interviews were uploaded to the Dedoose web site tool; then each transcript was coded using a

total of 32 codes and 33 sub-codes. The coded excerpts were then compared to identify the most common themes, as well as those themes that received the most elucidation by the participants, in order to identify the richest pieces of the data. In addition, eight descriptor fields were used to categorize the demographics and experience of the participants:

- Gender
- Age
- Years of experience as a community college faculty member
- Years of experience at the current college
- Degrees and credentials held
- Teacher training received
- Other teaching experience (K-12, university, etc.)
- Teaching discipline.

The data for the descriptor fields were obtained during each interview.

Procedures for ensuring trustworthiness. Several procedures were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. An analysis was conducted of the mission mix and enrollment patterns of the 51 community and technical colleges in Oregon and Washington in order to identify typical case colleges. This analysis was intended to reduce anomalies at atypical institutions that might affect the experiences of the participants. Once this list of typical case colleges was identified, a random list of the colleges was generated in order to randomize the selection of research sites from the list. In addition, participants were limited to full-time tenured faculty whose primary work assignment was classroom teaching. This excluded adjunct instructors, faculty counselors, librarians, and faculty serving in administrative positions. These limitations were imposed in order to concentrate the data on the typical case sample and to

conform as much as possible with well-established research procedures (Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004; Suri, 2011).

Participants were individually informed that their responses and identities, as well as the names of the individual colleges, would remain confidential. They were also explicitly asked about their willingness to participate in the interviews and given the ability to opt out of the interview at any time (Shenton, 2004). The question protocol was based on procedures and themes identified in the existing literature on the topic. The question protocol also allowed for overlapping concepts in order to ensure some depth in the responses of the participants (Shenton, 2004).

Member checking was used to confirm the validity of the data (Patton, 2002; Shenton, 2004; Suri, 2011). Once the primary themes were identified from analysis of the data, a list of themes was sent to the participants via email, as a validity check. Participants confirmed that the themes coincided with their understanding of the topics discussed in the interview process.

Coding protocols. The transcripts were coded according to prominent “discourse fields” or ways of using language to give meaning to experiences from a specific perspective (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002), in this case the perspective of community college faculty. These fields may be broadly conceptual or aspirational, such as language describing open access to education as part of a democratic society. They may also be what Fairclough (1995) referred to as “ideological discursive formations” (p. 27). These formations (or IDFs) tend to structure experience into “naturalized” categories—for example, descriptions of how students should behave or react to instruction may be seen as an attempt to structure the reality of the classroom from the instructor’s point of view, to naturalize the instructor’s expectations. While the instructor’s perspective is one logical point of view on classroom interactions, it is also possible to imagine

that the same interaction may have a different meaning from the student's perspective, and a third possible perspective would be to analyze the interaction in terms of learning or learning theory. The goal of critical discourse analysis is to "denaturalize" ideological discourse in order to examine its purpose, functions, and motives (Fairclough, 1995). The first step in denaturalization is to code discourse fragments into the most prominent fields or themes.

Another key to coding via critical discourse analysis is the concept of intertextuality (Fairclough, 1992b). This concept asserts that all utterances occur as part of an ongoing conversation or discourse—that language and the way we use it arises from social interaction and embedded in the use of language are references to other parts of the ongoing discourse or references to accepted social norms. Another way to say this is that every discourse act has a history, a series of events and learned social norms that lead the speaker to this particular discourse event. So, another coding device is to look for references to events or ideas outside of the current conversation—intertextual clues. According to Fairclough, "Intertextuality is the source of much of the ambivalence of texts" (1992b, p. 105). This was significant for this study in that the existing literature suggested that the professional identity of community college faculty was not fully articulated; intertextual references may point to some of the sources of ambivalence or lack of clarity. As an example of how this strategy was used to guide the coding process, one of the general codes used was that of "students," to denote when the participants talked directly about students. This general code was divided into several sub-codes; two of the specific sub-codes under the general code of "students" were "student capacity" and "student deficits." The sub-codes help to position the general utterances about students within more specific discourse fields: discourse about what students lack or what students have to contribute.

Social identity theory also gave guidance for the coding of transcript data. As noted above, in-group identity is often solidified by the exclusion of out-group members or behaviors (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b). Comparisons to out-group members—perhaps administrators, high school teachers or university faculty—are important coding categories. Similarly, references to ideal group behaviors or norms tend to signify strategies for group identity formation (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b) and were significant in coding. References to formative events or professional milestones also signal identity formation strategies (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) and signal an understanding of social identity as a fluid process rather than as a static object.

Analytical strategies. Critical discourse analysis suggested several strategies for analyzing the data once they had been coded. Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) suggest several specific strategies for critical discourse analysis, including comparison, exaggeration of detail, and multivocality. These strategies are methods of denaturalizing the assumptions inherent within any particular utterance (Fairclough, 1992a, 1995), or uncovering the ideological assumptions of the speaker. If we assume, as the existing literature suggests, that the professional identity of community college faculty is less than fully articulated, then one possibility is that the lack of clarity comes from unexamined assumptions on the part of community college faculty—that they have inherited some existing cultural norms with regard to their profession but have not examined them critically.

Comparison is the simplest of analytical strategies suggested by Phillips and Jorgensen (2002). This comparison could take the form of comparison among examples of utterances within the data under study; it might also imply comparison to existing statements of out-group members (i.e. administrators, university faculty, etc.). Comparison among in-group members can identify group norms that help to structure group identity. Comparisons to radically different

points of view can help to identify “the contingent, culturally-relative nature of aspects of the texts under analysis” (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002, p. 149). In some sense, comparison happens during the coding stage. However, while during the coding stage the researcher was looking for broad similarities in the utterances, during the analysis the researcher focused on more subtle differences or contrasts in the use of similar terms or language patterns.

Exaggeration of detail is another strategy for eliciting ambiguities within the text. As Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) point out, “Often interesting features occur at points in the text in which communication breaks down” (p. 151). Breakdowns in communication during the interview may mark positions at which the subject is confronting unexamined assumptions in their own thought patterns. What comes after that breakdown, though perhaps a seemingly small detail, may be significant in that it may mark resolution or avoidance of the perceived conflict.

Finally, multivocality is a form of intertextuality (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002) in which the speaker may distance him or herself from a particular utterance by attributing it to someone else, or perhaps to the apocryphal “they” (as in, They always say that...). All language is a social act and is therefore to some extent intertextual; so, to simply note that an utterance shows signs of being multivocal tells us only that it exhibits typical features of language. However, in order to analyze multivocality further, the researcher must identify the various threads in the multivocality and suggest a logical explanation for how they play off of each other in the speech act of the subject.

In addition to the analytical strategies suggested by Phillips and Jorgensen (2002), the identification of metaphor is an important discourse analysis strategy. According to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), “metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is

fundamentally metaphorical in nature” (p. 3). Our conceptual system is something that we are not normally—or not consistently—aware of. Language constantly mediates between our perceptions of the world and our understanding of those perceptions. And in many ways, this understanding is metaphorical. To the extent that this metaphorical understanding of the world is unexamined, it is uncritical or ideological. A metaphor works by explaining something unfamiliar in terms of something more familiar. If, as the current literature suggests, the professional identity of community college faculty members is less than clearly articulated—which is to say, unfamiliar—then attempts to make it more familiar or clear are likely to be metaphorical: to explain it by comparison to other, more familiar social roles. So, to look for metaphorical language within the data is one way to uncover what is unfamiliar.

Positionality and Limitations

Any research study is inherently limited, as it is rarely possible to examine all aspects of a case. This study was limited in a variety of ways. First, as qualitative research, the findings are not statistically generalizable. And, given that the researcher acts as the primary tool of observation and analysis, the research is not replicable in a traditional sense. A different researcher would interact differently with the subjects and therefore elicit different responses. However, the “social” aspect of social science imply a certain degree of reflexivity that makes the researcher integral to authentic research (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). Discourse is always a social act, and the researcher is always already implicated in the discourse. This implies that the research is valid because of—not in spite of—the presence of the researcher. With this understanding, “the researcher moves from the ‘service’ role of faceless technician” to a more visible and active role (Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001, p. 17).

With the researcher playing a visible role in the research process, the positionality of the researcher becomes a more crucial consideration. This researcher spent 18 years as a community college faculty member, teaching English, before becoming a full-time community college administrator. The implications of this position with regard to this project bear some consideration.

First, it might be assumed that the researcher's status as an experienced faculty member would give him some credibility with the research subjects. To the extent that the subjects view him as an in-group member, they may be willing to engage in authentic discussion about the research topic. However, the fact that the researcher is now an administrator may cause subjects to view the researcher as an out-group member, and so to be more reticent about discussing some topics or to couch responses in what is perceived as more socially acceptable terms. It is difficult for the researcher to clearly identify these effects, as there is no clear basis for comparison. In order to minimize these effects, the researcher only described his own background and current position when asked by the participants.

The other potential side effect of the researcher's positionality is that his personal familiarity with the topic—his own professional identity as a faculty member and his familiarity with a variety of faculty members over a number of years—may lead him to presuppose responses or beliefs on the part of the subjects. The primary way to counteract this effect is the use of the denaturalization techniques of CDA (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). In denaturalization procedures, the researcher attempts to take uncritically "natural" statements and through techniques such as substitution and exaggeration make them seem un-natural or strange. These techniques can be applied to the researcher's own assumptions as well as to those of the subjects.

Protection of Human Participants

The researchers completed CITI training and certification. Documentation for Institutional Research Board (IRB) review was submitted to the IRB of Oregon State University for approval. The data gathered from this research, including field notes, recordings, coded data and related documents are stored in a secure location and will be retained for a minimum of seven years post-study.

Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined the research design, the theoretical approach to the research topic, data collection strategies, analytical techniques, and the limitations of this study. The purpose of the study is to determine how community college faculty articulate their own professional identity and how discourse about their professional identity creates a social identity. The theoretical perspectives are those of social identity theory and critical discourse analysis. Social identity theory posits that social identity—such as the professional identity of community college faculty—is more than the aggregate of individual identities of group members and that group identity is a fluid and dynamic process. It further assumes that language is both referential and constitutive in relation to that social identity (Abrams & Hogg, 2004b; Bucholtz & Hall, 2005; Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Wetherell, Taylor & Yates, 2001).

CDA assumes that power relationships within society are produced and reproduced by discourse practices (Fairclough, 1995; Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002; Wetherell, Taylor, & Yates, 2001). These power relationships are primarily ideological and generally unexamined. These unexamined assumptions can be uncovered by close examination of the discourse acts by which they make their way through society.

This study conducted interviews with 15 full-time, tenured faculty members at three community colleges in Washington and Oregon with regard to their perceptions of their professional identity as faculty members. Data from the interviews was analyzed using the techniques of CDA and interpreted against the assumptions of social identity theory.

Chapter Four: Findings

The purpose of the study was to examine how community college faculty members articulate their professional identity and how the discourse around that professional identity affects the social reality of community college faculty members. The research design used qualitative interviews with community college faculty members in order to address the following research questions:

1. How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?
2. How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?

Overview of Data Collection Process

The unit of analysis for this study was the community college faculty member, and the faculty members recruited for the study were all full-time, tenured faculty members, whose primary work assignment was teaching. Site selection for the study focused on “typical case” community colleges in Washington and Oregon: an analysis was conducted of the enrollment size and mission mix of 34 colleges in Washington and 17 in Oregon. This analysis identified typical colleges as having an annual full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment of between 3,000 and 10,000 FTE. A typical mission mix was determined to be one in which academic transfer students formed the largest percentage of annual enrollments, followed by career and technical education, and then the smallest percentage of annual FTE enrollments in pre-college programs. This analysis identified 16 potential research sites in Washington and Oregon. Then the List Randomizer tool at Random.org was used to rank the colleges in random order.

Once the research sites were identified and ranked, the college presidents were contacted by email in order to obtain consent to conduct research on the campus. At one college, the

president identified a faculty liaison to help recruit participants. At the other two colleges, instructional administrators provided lists of all tenured faculty members. Potential interview subjects were contacted by email with a description of the research project and asked to participate in face-to-face interviews. In all, 15 subjects were interviewed between October 2014 and March 2015. The interviews were conducted on two campuses in Washington and one in Oregon. Each subject was given a consent form describing the purpose of the research and the voluntary nature of the interview process (see Appendix A). Interviews were conducted in the offices of the faculty members being interviewed (or in one case, in a conference room adjacent to the faculty office), and the interviews lasted between 30 and 50 minutes each. The interviews were based on a semi-structured question matrix (as described in Chapter 3 above). The specific list of questions used in the interviews is included as Appendix B, though in some cases additional follow-up questions were added to elicit additional detail from the subjects. Audio recordings of the interviews were taken using a Tascam DR-40 Digital Recorder. The recordings were then transcribed by a professional transcription service and the transcripts were coded using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software: Dedoose. The coded excerpts were compared across all of the interviews in order to identify themes relevant to the two primary research questions.

Of the 15 faculty members who participated in interviews, nine were male and six were female. The age range of participants was between 40 and 65 years old. Their years of experience at community colleges varied between eight and 30 years. Five of the participants had PhD's; one had an EdD. Seven had Master's degrees, and two had Bachelor's degrees plus industry certification. In terms of their teaching experience outside of the community college, about half had some university teaching experience, most often as a graduate teaching assistant.

Two had K-12 experience and a teaching certificate. One had significant teaching experience at both the university level and in K-12 before coming to the community college. Four had experience providing industry-training. The following table summarizes the demographics, experience, and training of the subjects who participated in interviews.

Table 3

Summary Table of Subject Demographics, Experience, and Training

Subject	Age	Gender	Teaching Discipline	Years as CC Faculty	Credentials	Teacher Training	Other Teaching Experience
1	60+	Female	Social Science	26-30	PhD.	Graduate T.A.	University
2	50-59	Female	Composition	16-20	M.A.	Graduate T.A.	University
3	30-39	Male	Basic Skills/ Developmental Ed.	6-10	M.A.	Teaching Certificate	K-12
4	50-59	Male	Social Science	11-15	PhD.	Graduate T. A.	University
5	60+	Female	Math	6-10	PhD.	Teaching Certificate	University & K-12
6	50-59	Male	Business	11-15	M.A.	Professional Development	Industry Training
7	60+	Male	Professional/ Technical	16-20	M.S.	Course Work	Industry Training
8	40-49	Female	Natural Science	16-20	M.S.	Graduate T. A.	University
9	40-49	Male	Math	16-20	M.A.	Teaching Certificate	K-12
10	60+	Male	Natural Science	26-30	PhD.	Graduate T. A.	University
11	40-49	Male	Humanities	16-20	PhD.	Graduate T. A.	University
12	50-59	Male	Professional/ Technical	6-10	M.A.	Graduate T. A.	University
13	50-59	Female	Professional/ Technical	21-25	B.A.	On the job	None
14	50-59	Female	Business	11-15	EdD.	Course Work	Industry Training
15	40-49	Male	Humanities	6-10	B.A.	None	Industry Training

After the primary themes were identified from the coded transcript data, the themes were emailed back to the participants for a validity check. Of the participants who responded to the validity check, all agreed that the themes were valid from their perspective. One participant offered some specific feedback on the wording of one of the themes, resulting in some minor modification to the theme statement.

There were five primary themes that emerged through examination of the coded transcripts:

1. **Almost all participants stated they became a community college faculty member through an accidental or unexpectedly changed career path:** Even those who espoused a lifelong desire to teach did not originally intend to do so at the community college level.
2. **Teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty:** However, most participants said they had little or no formal training for teaching; some who had training as graduate teaching assistants did not view that training as significant.
3. **Being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development:** Tenure was not a particularly salient role feature for community college faculty.
4. **Autonomy, freedom, and flexibility described the most powerful values attached to the professional roles of community college faculty:** Community college faculty felt an ability to reinvent themselves at different points in their career by choosing in which activities to be involved.

5. **Community college faculty articulated a strong sense of mission, which seemed to be linked to job satisfaction; however, that sense of mission tended to vary between three values—a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a social justice/student empowerment paradigm:** Different faculty members tended to espouse some aspect of each paradigm, but in different amounts.

The following section will elaborate on each theme individually.

Themes

Theme 1. Almost all participants stated they became a community college faculty member through an accidental or unexpectedly changed career path: Even those who espoused a lifelong desire to teach did not originally intend to do so at the community college level.

Of the 15 subjects interviewed, 14 stated that they got into community college teaching accidentally or unexpectedly. The other subject stated that it had been a lifelong goal to “become a teacher at some point,” but he spent 17 years working in industry before changing careers to become a teacher. Most expressed a great sense of satisfaction or excitement about the new career opportunity into which they had stumbled:

As soon as I walked on the campus, I really liked that feeling and it reminded me of when I was younger, a high school student taking some classes at a community college, and I just felt at home. Luckily I got the job, so it all came together.[...] Just very collegiate in the sense of personable and *esprit-de-corps* kind of feeling. The campus was small, so I could tell you’d be able to cooperate with people from other disciplines and other buildings. There wasn’t the isolation you have on a big four-year campus where the Science building is two miles from the Humanities building.

This is a form of comparison (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002) that constructs large universities as out-groups in comparison to community colleges. Townsend and LaPaglia (2000) noted perceptions that faculty at four-year colleges viewed community college “faculty as being on the margins of higher education” (p. 43). And while faculty in this study did at times acknowledge that there was a hierarchy of respect in higher education that marginalized community college faculty, they consistently felt that they were lucky to have the career that they did. Some of that satisfaction seemed to emanate from the unanticipated nature of their career path.

Some of the subjects attributed their job satisfaction to a clarity of focus that they perceived as being lacking in other academic jobs:

When I first started teaching, it was just me and the students, and I think for writing instructors especially, that's a really good way to start because I don't think you ever really forget that feeling of how useful you can be when you pay attention to students. It's very important to remember that when other things take your attention away from the students.

A number of the subjects stated that there were other teachers in their family, which caused them to consider teaching as a career. Some who had worked in another industry before getting into teaching had an early interest in teaching but had taken another route. As one faculty member put it, “After a little bit of a diversionary route, I finally got back to what I really enjoy doing.” Some subjects described an initial interest in teaching, but that interest may have been vague or unfocused,

When I was much younger, I thought I was going to become your elementary school or high school teacher and then I changed my mind during my undergraduate years. Even though I've gone through a number of different educational classes, I had never taught.

Even those who had considered a teaching career often had not considered community colleges as a career option:

I'd always thought about teaching. I really had not thought about community colleges at all, partly because when I was growing up in Ohio and Indiana, we didn't have them. We had technical colleges, not community colleges. It just wasn't on my radar screen, but teaching small, diverse groups of students sounded wonderful to me.

While it may be true that community colleges play a more prominent role in some areas of the country than others, it may also be the case that the perceived hierarchy of respect that places community colleges in a more marginalized position than four-year colleges and universities may make them less visible as a career path (Hovekamp, 2005; Townsend & LaPaglia, 2000). But in spite of the fact that there may be some bias against community colleges within some graduate school programs (Hovekamp, 2005), many community college faculty members were led to a teaching career through their experiences as graduate teaching assistants:

I didn't think I'd be good at teaching. I'd never had any experience until I became a grad student, and then it was a lot of fun. We did a lot of labs. Occasionally, I'd get to do lectures in the lecture halls, when the professors were tied up. So I mean, I guess towards the end of my graduate career, I was like, OK, I'm pretty good at this. It's a lot of fun. I didn't see it as, how can I make a living at it, kind of thing. Then, when I graduated, I thought, well, I'll try it, and I really didn't think it would be something that would jazz me quite as much as it does. I really thought it was just a stepping stone, but it turned out, this is where I want to be.

In addition to experience as graduate teaching assistants, several of the subjects had more extensive experience teaching at the university level, and some had taught in K-12 before coming to community colleges:

My original goal was to be a high school math teacher and I was in my last term and was doing my student teaching and we had two experiences. One was junior high and the second one was high school. My first experience with the junior high was just like: Woah! I don't know if this is what I want to do. I like the content, but there was so much...things that weren't content-related that I had to deal with, just as a teacher and I thought, "Eh, I'm not sure about this."

There were several different variations of the accidental career path described by community college faculty: needing a job and hearing about an opening at a community college; finding that

K-12 education was not a sustainable career; finding that a university career was not fulfilling, or that there was more interest in teaching than in doing research; being asked to teach a single class at a community college and then eventually moving into full-time employment. The findings on this theme were very consistent with Fugate and Amey (2000), who found that most community college faculty “did not follow a predetermined path to their present careers.... At no time in their educational preparation were the majority ever advised about or even made aware of the community college as a teaching venue.” Some of the participants had more initial familiarity with community colleges than others: a few had attended community college, even if for only a few classes. One participant stated that his father had worked at a community college. But even in that case where the participant had some close knowledge of community college teaching as a career, he had not set out with community college as a specific career objective.

This sense of having an accidental career path also seemed to impact the subjects’ impression of their professional identity as well. When asked directly to describe their own professional identity, most of the participants hesitated or expressed uncertainty; however, after some brief thought or discussion, all of the participants were able to articulate a professional identity, primarily around their identity as a teacher (as described in theme 2 below). This question about professional identity elicited more uncertainty from the participants than any other question: “It’s a little difficult to verbalize because in that sense it’s almost like it’s an impression you have of a job, and that’s going to vary from person to person, too.” Many of the subjects found this question of professional identity initially difficult to verbalize:

Professional identity? Gosh, I don’t know. How do you answer that one? I’m a scientist. A biologist, zoologist. I don’t know....My identity is a science instructor, you know? I’m a teacher and a passion for science. I don’t know. That’s a tough one. I don’t put myself in that perspective.

Some of the participants directly tied their lack of clarity about professional identity to the accidental nature of their career path: “Have not thought about that...I am an educator. I didn’t set out to be an educator. I was on a research track, enjoyed teaching as a TA and ended up teaching as an adjunct and then a full-time position became available.” There is an implied sense of multivocality here (Philips & Jorgensen, 2004) in the sense that the participants clearly saw teaching as the most salient role feature of their job (as described below) but did not immediately identify with a sense of professional identity as a teacher.

While this lack of clarity around professional identity may be tied to an accidental or unintentional career path, it may also be tied to the value placed on flexibility and autonomy, as discussed in theme 5 below.

Theme 2. Teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty:

However, most participants said they had little or no formal training for teaching; some who had training as graduate teaching assistants did not view that training as significant.

Teaching was clearly the most salient role feature for community college faculty, which was not surprising, since the largest portion of faculty workload is comprised of classroom teaching. However, it was interesting to note that teaching was defined in a variety of different ways by different faculty members, and these distinctions in the definition of the teaching role impacted the description of professional identity. There were several common trends in the ways that faculty defined the nature of teaching: as the delivery of knowledge (often discipline-specific knowledge), as development of skills and expertise, as facilitation of the learning process, and as a relationship with students. Some participants clearly favored one of these

definitions over others, while some participants blended aspects of various definitions as they talked about teaching and students.

At one end of the spectrum of definitions of teaching, one participant noted that teaching was her greatest motivation—“I think it’s because I like teaching; I love teaching”—but described her professional identity as being focused on her discipline: “Well, this is another thing that’s weird, and I think a lot of people here identify themselves as a teacher. I identify myself as an anthropologist.” The specific phrasing used here—“another thing that’s weird”—seems to denote some conflict, either internally or between this participant and what she viewed as the group norm: “a lot of people here identify themselves as a teacher.” When asked whether her colleagues would have a similar definition of professional identity, the response was again focused on the importance of discipline:

Well, I know everybody who has a doctorate thinks the way I do. Because that's where their degree is. That's their focus. And teaching is the way to pass that knowledge on.[...]

But there are people here ... One guy who's since retired ... But he came here ... He'd taught high school. I don't think he had a Master's, but he would say ... let other teachers know, he says, "You know, you give me the textbook, I can teach anything." (Laughs) Yipes!

For this participant, teaching was a highly salient role feature, but the definition of teaching was rooted in disciplinary knowledge: “teaching is the way to pass that knowledge on.” This definition of teaching begins with content-knowledge and expertise, and then describes teaching as the way to share or pass on that expertise. There was also an element of exaggeration here (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002): it is unlikely that everyone who has a doctorate actually thinks the same way; however, that sense of exaggeration creates an in-group for the speaker. This definition of teaching is most aligned with a fairly traditional academic paradigm, and indeed this participant was the only one who noted that there was some difficulty in having both

academic and professional/technical programs in the same institution. However, some other participants shared some aspects of this definition of teaching focused on content-knowledge.

Another participant noted,

Being valued for your knowledge in an area is important.... Sometimes, especially, I see this in Humanities because there's such overlap between disciplines, sometimes you'll have someone who has an expertise that they are already placed in this other department, but they don't get seen as having that expertise.

Another participant noted that her job allowed her to blend her passion about her discipline with her passion for working with students:

It's been the perfect marriage of both of my interests, because what I teach, I do a lot of field-based courses, so I get the students excited about the field work and learning about science that's, you know, experiencing it. So a lot of my courses have very field-component-based curriculum to them. For example, over spring break, we take a class to Death Valley. We traipse kids down for ten days camping in Death Valley, and we just study all things science. It's an integrated class, all different sciences, so things like that. I teach an oceanography class where we go to the Oregon coast for our field trips; that's part of the field work, their labs.

One participant noted that demand was increasing for curriculum that blends traditional academic and professional/technical course content:

I think we're going to see more of that. Like we have a math for allied health, where they actually go and then do the syringes and all. It's very hands on; without like working side by side with the nursing department I don't think I can do that job, but we have somebody who does. That's a math faculty person that...the original course was put together with a math faculty and a nursing faculty and they worked out the curriculum and everything and then they just trained another math faculty to do that when she retired.

This quotation also noted an interesting linguistic feature that may be relevant to the consideration of professional identity as it relates to community college faculty: grammatically, faculty is a collective noun referring to all of the teaching staff, but it is often used colloquially to refer to an individual faculty member, as in the quote above: "a math faculty and a nursing

faculty.” This usage may denote some conflict between individual and group identity; from the view of CDA, it connotes a sense of multivocality—a blurring of the group and the individual.

So, the first definition of teaching exists within a fairly traditional academic paradigm and focuses on the delivery of knowledge, especially discipline-based knowledge.

Another definition that was evident in the way some participants talked about teaching was the development of skills; this might be seen as a traditional approach for career and technical education. This view of teaching focused on specific skill outcomes and in helping students acquire employable skills. One participant spoke specifically about the need to stay in touch with employers:

Another aspect is my connection with the employers. That's another process because in order for me to teach the common things that are going on in today's industry, I have to actually be in touch with the people in the industry. That's something I don't get to do that often, but it's something I try to do as much as possible because of the fact that there are nuances in the job process and what we do in the industry has to be timely. Because I think this is something that when I first came here is that they were about five...anywhere between two to five years behind technology in what was being taught. You're doing our students a disservice by teaching something that is somewhat antiquated and no longer being used.

This same instructor described helping students build skills in a photography class:

I always thought out ways to teach on a larger level to a classroom. I assessed it by seeing how they changed. Because the way I do my assessment, particularly for photography, is that I would have them take pictures beforehand, and that gives me the baseline of who they are at that point. Then from there I can craft a lesson plan, not individualized, but almost a lesson plan that can help them reach another level by giving them exercises that can show them how not to do what they were doing, but enhance what they're doing. I think for me skill-based learning is something that we have to practice.

Several of the participants very consciously focused their teaching strategies on skills that will be applicable in the workplace. For these instructors, teaching has much in common with training in the workplace:

A good solid manager inside a for-profit company is teaching direct reports. And the importance of adapting one's instruction to the learner based on learning styles is akin to...in an education institution is akin to a leader or manager adapting their managerial skills to direct report styles. And so I don't think...so that's a professional identity that a good manager should have as a teacher if you will.

This view of teaching had a very pragmatic aspect to it. And skill-based teaching also requires continuous assessment of skills, as one participant described: "I want to help them take the next step and the next step is different for each one of them." In addition to very specific professional skills, some participants spoke about building broader skill sets, such as critical thinking and problem solving:

One of the things that I've always tried to do in a lot of my classes is to have the ability to let the students go off the reservation if you will. I'll give them a project and it really doesn't have tight bounding to it. In other words, it doesn't have to be done in two weeks, and I'm not looking for this result to come out of it. [...]
They could learn about one type of technique and a different kind of technique. I'm just more interested in that they really think of it on their own. [...] In all the time I've worked, I've never had my boss come up to me and hand me a textbook and say, "Read Chapters 1, 2, and 3. We're going to have a test in two weeks." It just never happened.

For those instructors who emphasized skill-building, there was a very clear connection between the economy, jobs, and education: "From a cultural perspective I think that it helps people move on in the world. The big key for success in American society is education." But this emphasis on jobs and the economy has two different points of emphasis. In addition, the use of the phrase "off the reservation" exhibits a metaphorical understanding of the world of the classroom and the limits of traditional curriculum: "off the reservation" refers to Indian reservations and to a time when those reservations operated as *de facto* prisons. The reservations served as implements of cultural assimilation, in that the phrase "off the reservation" refers not only to physically leaving the reservation but also to rejecting cultural assimilation and striking out on one's own.

As we saw above, some instructors focused on meeting the needs of employers; others focused on how gaining employable skills can empower students:

I've had some students that...one great story is he was digging ditches and injured himself and was on L&I and couldn't work, and so he came back and after going through and working with us for two years, he now has a job at a large company as a lead technician. Even when you talk to him he looks back and you can see that he wouldn't think of himself there. One day he's digging a ditch and four years later now he's working at a large company with a career pathway. That's a real turnaround in somebody's life. On an individual level it's made a big difference, but when you multiply that by thousands of students, you suddenly have a cultural change. You're taking people that are not able to really do well in American society and now they are. That's a win for American culture, really.

This description showed a micro- and macroeconomic understanding of the role of education:

“when you multiply that by thousands of students, you suddenly have a cultural change.” This view of teaching emphasized skill development and was conscious of both the needs of the students to develop employable skills and the needs of employers as well.

A third definition of the nature of teaching involves the teacher as a facilitator in the learning process. In some ways this definition is a reaction to a more traditional academic paradigm: “Very early on, I knew I didn't want to be a lecture-oriented instructor or the ‘sage on the stage,’ I think that's one of the phrases they use.” It was unclear from this quote exactly what was the antecedent of “they”—possibly education reformers—but this teacher was contrasting his view of the nature of teaching with a more traditional view of teaching as the dissemination of content knowledge. Lack of clarity in antecedents denotes a form of multivocality (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2004). The ambiguity sets up a straw man argument. This same participant went on to talk about formative experiences in his teaching career:

There was a series of workshops that were held on campus that were done by, I think somebody in the Department of Education at LSU. [...] I went to those workshops and they were very helpful in realizing it's all right if I try a variety of different approaches in the classroom. That was, it gave me permission, plus

there was another one of our instructors in the department who was also very much inclined towards mixing it up in the classroom. We're a support team for one another. That was helpful.

This definition of the nature of teaching can be described as learning centered. When faculty members talked about this view of teaching, it was often process oriented and aimed at the broad integration of skills: "the most important job is learning. [...] Teaching them so that they can learn and stuff, not just in my field, but how everything relates." One participant described a very holistic view of the role of learning:

The important thing is making sure students learn stuff. And I would love to see a return of curiosity. There's a poem by Lawrence Ferlinghetti. It's called, "I Am Waiting." And every verse ends with "And I am continually waiting for the rebirth of wonder."

In one sense this view of the nature of teaching was very broad: teaching students to be motivated to learn. But it also had much more pragmatic expressions, aspects that might be more traditionally associated with career and technical education:

Modelling. I think modelling is really important. Modelling professional behavior, modelling...my students will beg me for a deadline change, or for being able to turn something in late or they just won't come to class for a couple of days and then are surprised that I won't let them make up the assignments. I'm not...everybody will tell you I'm very easy going and probably too wussy in many things but on those rules, to me, it's modeling behavior of industry. I tell them flat out that they're training here to be in a job and if they were to not show up for a couple of days and then magically still expect to get paid...that might be a little shocking to them.

This view of teaching was sometimes described as being in contrast to a more traditional view of teaching as the delivery of content-specific knowledge:

University faculty members don't necessarily have to know anything about teaching. It's research for a lot of them. There are some excellent teachers at universities and they're not hired for that, I don't believe. We like to think here, we're hired as teachers first and if somebody happens to be a researcher also, that's fine. But when we're doing interviews, we're looking for people who we think can be good teachers. I like to think that I don't have to be an expert in a

particular knowledge area and I can still be an excellent teacher of the information that's there. Somebody who's an expert in it, they may not have any capacity to teach that information.

In this definition of teaching, the expertise was not based on content as much as on the ability to facilitate the learning process. Some participants were emphatic about their dedication to this learning-centered view of teaching, but most allowed for a variety of different approaches as valid:

I would say that partly because I work with adults, but I really feel like my classes are like 100% conversations. I don't feel like I'm.... We have a couple of people in our department who are awesome, who are traditional lecturers. One of them is particularly great and students love his class, but I have never been like that. It's really a discussion. I spend a lot of...I try to create a situation where students get to share their own experiences and try to connect their experiences to what we're talking about and talk about stuff that helps me figure out what they're getting and where they need to get. I would say 90% of my lectures are more like discussions. That's really important to me to have that participation.

This participant not only allowed that other, more traditional approaches to teaching were valid, but even equivocated over the course of four sentences about whether her own teaching was “100% conversations” or 90% “more like discussions.” But in either case, this seemed to imply a contrast with some already-existing norm of what college teaching is traditionally comprised of—standing in front of a large room giving a lecture—with some supposedly more authentic vision of teaching that involves engaging in a learning process with students. In CDA terms, this implies both comparison—conversationalists vs. traditional lecturers—as well as an aspect of exaggeration: probably no actual lecture is also “100% conversation.” There is a sense of equivocation—to claim both traditional authority and a rejection of that authority. At times, this view of learning-centered teaching took on a flavor promoting social justice:

I was talking about just being open to the new...and again, I think it's important for teachers to be really curious about the way we think about information, the way we think about books. I mean I'm an English teacher, I love books, but I

don't require books in my class anymore. They're so expensive, and I can...in English 101 there's a lot of resources, free resources that we may use.

The phrase “being open to the new” implied a contrast between old and new teaching paradigms; something subversive was implied by the assertion, “They’re so expensive.” The sub-text here seemed to point to a contrast between a traditional power paradigm—in which the educated are powerful because the powerful are educated—and the social justice function of community college in providing broad access to education. One participant was most emphatic in advocating for this view of teaching as facilitating learning. When asked about his professional identity, he pointed to a lapel button that he kept in his office that said, “Knowledge Broker.” This phrase makes an implied connection between education and economic class. He went on to elaborate:

My professional identity is a function of guiding and facilitating the learning of others. I have no need to say instructor, professor, faculty member. To create a class of people, advisors, staff, administration heads, has no value to my life to call myself a faculty member. My professional identity is to facilitate and guide learning that others seek [...] I think more folks would call themselves teachers than learning facilitators. I think that’s the problem. I think that’s a risk for the industry. There’s plenty of them who will see themselves as a facilitator of learning but I don’t think enough.

This speaker has a sense of hierarchical distinctions (“a class of people”) within education and implies a more democratic and idealistic vision (“to facilitate and guide learning that others seek”). From this perspective, community college faculty members are engaged in a democratic endeavor that empowers students, and this is the point at which this definition of teaching overlaps with the final definition of teaching as a relationship with students.

Participants who emphasized the importance of a relationship with students identified several salient role features, including student engagement, mentorship, and student empowerment. This relationship factor was expressed clearly by several professional/technical

instructors, who often work with the same students for extended periods of time: “Normally I know all my students by name. Frequently I have them for almost a two-year period, so we know each other; we know what our expectations are to each other.” This sense of a relationship with the students is expressed as reciprocal:

Interaction with the students, but also...at 5:00 in the afternoon, if I'm tired, I can get up and I give a two-hour lecture, and just be dynamic and go and go and go. If it's 5:00 in the afternoon after working an 8-hour day [in another industry], that's not happening to me at work. There's just something that can kind of come out of you where energy just comes from nowhere when you have the opportunity to teach students.

This sense of a relationship with students had aspects of student motivation, as well as empowerment:

This is their success in life. With these skills, they're able to find good jobs, buy houses, have a nice life for themselves. As a result with us here in the community college system, whether it's professional/technical, or four-year pathway, or the high school completion, we're all really trying to give students the opportunities to improve themselves so that they are able to be successful in life. That's really what our success is. Their success is our success. When I look at some of my students and they're doing really well after graduating, a couple years later, that's how I know that I'm doing positive things in the world. Their success is my success.

This sense of empowerment was often described as reciprocal—“Their success is our success.” It was often also very value-laden, imbuing the profession of teaching with values such as honesty and happiness: “Obviously I want my students to get good jobs that they're happy in. So one of the things that's really important to me is being completely honest about the state of the industry, what different jobs involve, those kind of things.” As the participants described this relationship between student and teacher, they often moved back and forth freely between the motivations of the students and the motivation of the teacher:

I was asked...what is it that drives you to be a writing teacher. Is it the writing, or is it the students? At the time, it was the writing. I considered myself a writer. I

thought the writing was most important. That's what I focused on. Now it's different. Now it's definitely the students. The writing, of course, is important, but it's the students and how we can get them to want to write, how we can motivate them, how we can get them to believe that writing is important that motivates me.

The participants who focused on forming a relationship with students seemed to realize that subject-matter expertise was not sufficient to engender student engagement. While knowledge was an important part of the equation, it was not sufficient:

I would have to say that one of the most important qualities to be a good teacher is that combination of being super confident and super humble at the same time. You really have to know what you're doing and you really have to have command of the classroom, but you really have to not be bossing the students around about what's going to happen. You really have to be able to say, "Yeah, there's a lot of stuff that I don't know," or "I don't disagree," or "I disagree with the book on this," or "This is changing," or whatever. I think if teachers just have the humble and they don't have the confidence, it's hard for students to stay with them all quarter. If teachers are super confident and they think, "I'm the king and you guys should learn this," that never works. It's that interesting combination which is probably true with a lot of teamwork and stuff, too.

This view described teaching as participatory and also as involving a sense of audience. It also implied a sense of exaggeration (“super confident and super humble”) as well as multivocality.

The relationship between student and teacher is dynamic and requires acute perception:

[...] you have to kind of almost figure out personalities very quickly. [...] So I'm always trying to hold that craft because it's also cultural. Because since now there's been a larger increase of cultural differences in the classroom, that diversity is wonderful. I love that part. But I have to be able to teach around some cultural norms and cultural barriers that I don't normally see. So I have to kind of adjust that as I go along, which I find is an art form as well.

In its most basic sense, this relationship between teacher and student was simply the acknowledgment of students as fully human: “I know they have lives and I try to, as they're comfortable, learn a little bit more about them and support them if I can.” This acknowledgement

implied a contrast with certain more traditional teacher/student teacher paradigms in which students are simply empty vessels to be filled with knowledge.

In the descriptions of some of the participants, this student/teacher relationship took on a vivid sense of empowerment and social justice:

Again, the students ... I just ... they're awesome. You know, I am so honored to work with some of the students that we get. [...] Students who have come from, you know, living under a bridge. Now one of our students is going to...he's getting a Master's in Psychology [...]. Like many of our students, came, you know, addiction problems, homeless...Humans are capable of amazing things, but that's also a huge responsibility to understand, you know, best practices and how to work with people and not fool around and waste their time.

I went to an interesting event last night. One of our former students, when he came here he started in ABE; he couldn't read or write. He still hasn't graduated. He may never graduate, but he's done well here given where he started. Now he's just volunteering over at a place [...] to help intellectually and developmentally disabled people. Anyway, he has so many struggles himself, and now he's giving of himself to help people in any way that he can. I really feel like humans are capable of incredible things if they're in a safe, nurturing friendly environment.

In this view, faculty at community colleges have a “huge responsibility” to students to “not fool around and waste their time.” This view of the nature of teaching sought to recognize the full human potential of students and to acknowledge the important roles they play in society, rather than to think of students in terms of the knowledge deficits they may have. This required that faculty members examine power differentials implied by the student/teacher relationship:

It was interesting. I heard a conversation in the hallway one day; a student was saying about a colleague of mine, another English teacher, something like they were talking about the way rich people dress, and one student said to the other, "What do you mean rich people?" Then she said, "Well you know, like our English teacher, you know like a rich person." To me, that was like, "Oh wow." I forget that there's such a different perspective sometimes. They don't know that my parents didn't go to college either. Those assumptions I think are different, and it can be hard for the students.

In other words, in order for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds to be successful in college, they need more than access to the subject matter; they need the ability to envision an empowered future for themselves. And the path to that future may begin with a meaningful relationship with their teacher. This was also another example of multivocality in as much as the anecdote conflates the role of teacher and student (“They don’t know that my parents didn’t go to college either.”)

This view of the role of the teacher reflects recent thinking with regard to the dangers of thinking only in terms of student deficits, rather than thinking of their capacities (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005; Walker, 2011; Wiener, 2006). Several of the participants seemed aware of the discourse around this issue and their descriptions of students reflected an effort to enunciate student capacity:

I actually think some of the younger generation of students can do this very well. I think that's a misconception I think a lot of people have still that they're not paying attention and I noticed it with my daughter. She is doing her thing and I can ask her a question. She knows exactly where I'm at. She just is much better at multitasking than maybe I am.

This concept of a relationship with students required a holistic appreciation for student lives and an effort to recognize student capacity.

These four definitions of the nature of teaching—delivering knowledge, building skills, facilitating learning, and cultivating relationships—overlap with each other in a number of places. Many of the participants spoke to more than one of these models in the course of the interviews. And while teaching was the most salient role feature in the professional identity of the community college faculty members who were interviewed, the varied nature of the definitions applied to the teaching role implied a broad and varied sense of the professional identity of the community college teacher.

And while teaching was the most salient role feature identified for the professional identity of community college faculty, most participants said they had little or no formal training for teaching. Some who had training as graduate teaching assistants did not view that training as significant. In fact, several of the participants, in responding to a question about their training for teaching initially responded that they had none; however, they then went on to describe training that they had undergone with respect to teaching, either in graduate school or through other workshops or course work. Overall, the participants ranged from those who had virtually no training for teaching to those who had PhDs in education. This is a typical comment from those who had little or no teacher training: “Specific training for teaching? None. It was really based on my desire to impart knowledge. I mean it's more of an internal thing for me.” Some had teaching assistant appointments in graduate school, but that did not necessarily correspond with adequate training:

No, I haven't been to a teacher's college. I taught in India, which is mostly tutorial, one on one, which I used here when I was teaching GED students. I would talk with them one on one. Or when we used to work in the Learning Resource Center where we have the writing center, work with students one on one, but formal teaching in the classroom, no. I was just given a teaching assistantship and they said, “Go and teach.”

Some had a small amount of training for teaching but considered it largely inadequate:

Well, I had a teaching course in grad school, but I did not learn very much. It was taught by a physiological researcher and it was circa 1986, so I don't think that helped much. When I was hired at my old college there was no new faculty seminar. In the second decade of my teaching that appeared at that college. Of course we had it here so there's been more of an effort I think to expose people to teaching techniques through reading about teaching, observing other people. My first decade of teaching, I don't think I ever saw, well, nobody ever saw me teach, period, never.

This description invoked interesting aspects of multivocality and comparison: it may imply a contrast between professional researchers and professional teachers, but this particular utterance leaves that comparison blurry.

Overall, one third of the participants had explicit training for teaching, in the form of a K-12 teaching certificate or a graduate degree in education. One said he had no training for teaching. Three said they had minimal or “on the job” training. The other six had been graduate teaching assistants, but varied as to whether they thought the training associated with that was helpful or sufficient. As one former TA described it: “In my graduate program I think we had one class. I was a TA and had my own classes also, but yeah I had one class. It's been one class in teaching and learning.” While the formal training for the teaching role for most of the participants was minimal, there was also a form of exaggeration here; a number of participants at first attested that they had had no training for teaching, but then went on to describe actual training—albeit inadequate—that they had received. This contributes to the development of a professional identity that is independent and self-taught.

So, to summarize the findings on this theme, teaching was clearly the most salient role feature for community college faculty, but the definitions applied to that role varied greatly. In addition, while some of the participants had formal training for their teaching role, the majority had a minimal amount of formal training.

Theme 3: Being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development: Tenure was not a particularly salient role feature for community college faculty.

Participants were asked to talk about career milestones or formative events that were significant to them. They gave a variety of examples, including committee or task force work, serving as a department chair, working on projects such as assessment or outreach to high schools. Most of these experiences involved being engaged with other colleagues and having one's knowledge or opinion valued by the group. The events were also described as learning experiences in which the participants broadened their understanding of the college, the education system, or other issues.

While some participants did mention that being granted tenure was important, few of them elaborated on this as a significant formative event; some commented that while the granting of tenure was important in itself, it was also an expected or routine event for most faculty members. One participant commented, "Definitely getting tenured changes the feel of the job." However, this person had little else to say about gaining tenure. Only one other participant described gaining tenure as a significant event:

I was lucky enough to have my first teaching position be tenure track, and now in retrospect, I see that that's actually quite rare, so I count myself as very fortunate. The completion of tenure was a personal accomplishment. In some ways you kind of look at it like when you're in a job, three or four years of employment, you usually don't get something that is a big award or what have you. It's a lot of effort; it's a proof that you're able to do well in the job.

This participant seemed to recognize the granting of tenure as a career milestone and as a recognition of skill or expertise. Other participants were more likely to describe tenure, while important, as being an expected outcome or a baseline-recognition of competence: "We all have tenure, so we all are teachers, but I think to be a good teacher now, we have to be open to this changing world." This quote seemed to identify tenure as a baseline to start from, with

excellence—“to be a good teacher”—as an aspirational state beyond tenure. Other participants made similar comments that seemed to describe tenure as a baseline from which to start:

Our tenure process here is very, I don't want to say it's informal, but it's...basically, you have performance reviews along the way and unless you have a negative evaluation, you're basically on a continuing contract. That was never an issue for me.

Some participants described the tenure process at community colleges as being less onerous than it is at the university level. One participant had been tenured at a university in another state before coming to the community college: “As opposed to...the difference between this and my being at a four-year, the tenure process there was much more a hurdle to overcome. At a university, it's absolutely a hurdle to overcome.” The word “hurdle” here is metaphorical; it implies both an obstacle as well as a sense of competition, a race.

While a few participants saw the granting of tenure as a significant accomplishment in itself, more participants described it as a baseline to start from. Four participants made no mention of tenure during the interviews, even though they were explicitly asked to talk about career milestones. The majority of participants who talked about tenure or tenure committees mentioned it in the context of the committee work for which they were responsible; in other words, they seemed to see other people's tenure process as being more significant than their own: “To me, screening committees and tenure committees are the most important committees on campus. It gets good faculty in and it measures them. To say these are the expectations and this is how we want you.” This seemed to imply that the tenure process was viewed more as an institutional event than a personal accomplishment by many faculty members. In this sense, tenure was just one of the possible manifestations of professional recognition. Various participants described it as a way to shape their institution or their colleagues:

I remember one tenure committee I was on. I took the person out to lunch, and I sat and we were sitting there and ate and relaxed and chatted. I looked at her in the eye. I said, "You know, if I had to vote on your tenure right now, I'd say no. And this is why. These are things that I value in any teacher in any subject and I'm not seeing it. Let's talk about that. Are they things you're interested in learning? This is how you learn them and this is who you go to." As opposed to just at the end, saying, "No."

So, a number of the participants saw the tenure process as a way to influence the institution, but it did not stand out from other types of committee work or special projects. Some saw committee work as an opportunity for collegiality:

We have to be on college committees so that would be a way I would meet other faculty members and we could talk about this or that. That was good and there'd be college functions and I'd meet some faculty members. But I really didn't see or experience a lot of my fellow faculty members practicing their craft in the classroom.

This comment recognized teaching as the most salient role feature for community college faculty and committee work as a way to breach the insularity of that work. This issue seemed to be just under the surface of a number of the comments made by the participants—the sense of being part of a large organization, but also of being somewhat isolated by being “alone” in the classroom with the students. There was a sense of multivocality here, in that the nominal purpose of the committee (the committee work itself) seemed to be subverted by the social function of meeting other faculty members and engaging in community formation. Committee work, special projects, and professional development activities seemed to be the means by which faculty members developed social or group identity:

I like to be included. I'm happy when people think of me and say, "This is a good person to have on a committee." That's awesome. I like to do that and I like to be involved in school-wide work, but I think, at some point, it's like if I'm on this committee that meets every week and has all kinds of responsibilities and then you ask me to be on this committee, which spends 10 hours a month....

This comment was typical in many ways: it balanced enthusiasm for being included and having skill and expertise recognized with the admission that too many of these invitations can be overwhelming: “I’ve recently taken over the chair position, the department head, and that’s become another milestone. It’s great, but it also detracts from teaching, too. It’s kind of double-edged; you’re kind of balancing the two.” Thus while participation in various committees and institutional work can be an effective element in the formation of professional identity (*i.e.* “This is a good person to have on a committee”), there was also an impulse to pull back from this type of work because it might be too time-consuming or might distract attention from teaching, which is seen as the primary role feature.

Taking on different roles outside of the classroom adds markers of professional identity in a variety of ways:

I think getting put into the expert seat or the leader seat really changes your perspective or your feeling of responsibility. If you’re put in charge of a committee or a workshop rather than just attending and participating, that’s quite different. It’s more work, more responsibility, but it gives you a feeling of belonging, a sense of authority as well.

Having responsibility and a sense of belonging appeared as markers of professional identity. They provided a social or group aspect to the more individualized aspects of teaching in the classroom. Some participants were very cognizant of the collaborative nature of the work:

I’m heavily involved in faculty politics. I’ve been faculty president a couple of times. I’m always on committees. I’m always working with administrators. It’s important to keep those relationships functioning smoothly as well. I work to make sure that I’m supporting the administration and my classified staff, and they’re supporting me as much as possible so we can all work together to get the job done, which is the students.

This mention of faculty politics and unions was typical of the way that unionization was talked about by those who mentioned it: as one of the many types of committee work in which faculty

members engaged. One participant noted some animosity toward the faculty union and stated he was not interested in being involved. Most did not mention unionization at all. Those who did described it as just another opportunity to be involved with their colleagues: "I'll meet a lot of faculty members. I'm the faculty association president next year. That'll give me a different type of interaction with a number of different faculty members." This described one opportunity among many to be involved in the campus community and to have one's contributions recognized. It was similar to the way other committee work was described: "I was able to get on our professional development committee. Then I chaired it for a while. That's a really great way to see, again, the best in people but also to figure out well, if they're not doing something, why."

The faculty who were interviewed tended to describe the different phases of their career as a slow progression, rather than being marked by a series of specific milestones. The community colleges where the participants were interviewed did not have faculty rank; faculty members were either tenured, probationary, or adjunct. Tenure was typically granted early in the career (about three years). After the granting of tenure, different career stages tended to be marked by activities in which individual faculty members chose to be involved:

I think the...I've gone through different phases of stuff that I'm working on and the school has done.... Gone through different phases while I've been here, but I wouldn't have a particular way of demarcating those. It's not like at this year mark or that anything magical happened. I think when I worked with all faculty—I am really involved in the campus, campus-wide, macro things, strategic planning, and stuff like that. I have the same experience that other people on campus do, which is people cycle into it. They do it and they throw themselves into it for a couple of years and then they're like, "I'm going to go back to teaching. I'm going to do that." I think I've gone through some of those cycles, but I wouldn't be able to say this thing happened, or I hit the five-year mark, or something like that that really made a difference.

In many ways, aside from gaining tenure, which was viewed as somewhat routine and happens fairly early in the career, the milestones or career stages tended to be somewhat individualized and based on what individual faculty members choose to focus:

There are no dramatic changes. It's been a slow progression the whole time, and as I look at my career and think what that progress has been, it's been mostly in my ability to engage students and keep them engaged in the learning process. I've gotten slowly better and better and better at that as I've gone along, less judgmental, more accepting of students, more willing to see them as just people and not just students, and I can't think of any particular milestones in that progression.

Some studies point to the potential for mid-career burnout for community college faculty (Crawford, 2012; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). Some of the faculty members in this study seemed to address that potential mid-career burnout by changing their activities outside of the classroom, becoming engaged in a new committee or project, or giving up a responsibility that had grown tiresome. For those who did point to specific milestones in their career, they tended to be somewhat individualized. They were invited to participate in an activity and accepted the invitation:

I was asked to help at the time coordinate an annual workshop we do for high school teachers, for [local] public high school teachers. We just were going to start that [...] and we started the Saturday, annual spring workshop on a Saturday where we just invited high school teachers to campus to just talk about writing, not to tell them what they were doing wrong, or tell them how their students were prepared, but just to talk about writing. I ended up taking that on, so that kind of became my thing here [...]. It has since grown into a project we've continued every year. It's been an annual workshop, and we have a core of high school teachers from all the local high schools who have been involved every year.

There was a certain sense of randomness implied here—“that kind of became my thing here”—but it was also quite clearly an important professional role for this participant. That sense of randomness seemed to imply a connection to a sense of autonomy or flexibility that will be examined in Theme 4 below.

Different participants identified various activities that seemed significant to them in describing their career: program and curriculum development, hiring committees, serving as department chair. Many of the participants commented that they did not experience a purposeful arc to their career; rather, they more often described a slow evolution in their own skills and engagement. Many of the activities that faculty members were invited to or chose to be involved in helped to form their professional identity in many ways. As one participant described,

The identity comes in the form of other accomplishments that are adding value to the institution and to our partners. It is an identity that I've enjoyed as a learner and an identity that I think enhances the college's reputation, and that gives me pride.

To summarize the findings for this theme, being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development. These activities seemed to signify recognition of the faculty member's skill or expertise, as well as to be an opportunity to balance the somewhat solitary nature of classroom teaching with a group or social role. Being granted tenure was not a particularly salient role feature for community college faculty; tenure was more likely to be recognized as a routine or baseline recognition of competence. However, serving on someone else's tenure committee was seen as significant and as an opportunity to help shape the institution.

Theme 4. Autonomy, freedom, and flexibility described the most powerful values attached to the professional roles of community college faculty: Community college faculty felt an ability to reinvent themselves at different points in their career by choosing which activities to be involved in.

The participants in this study stressed the importance of autonomy, freedom, and flexibility in describing the nature of their work; these values were regularly touted as reasons why the faculty members found great satisfaction in their jobs. As we saw above in the discussion of Theme 3, most of the participants did not see their careers as having distinct stages. Tenure occurs relatively early in the careers of community college faculty members, and most do not work within systems of faculty rank. However, the faculty members felt that they had the freedom to choose many aspects of their work, and they described an ability to reinvent themselves at different points in their careers by becoming involved in different activities.

Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel (2008) examined the 2004 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) to correlate faculty authority over instructional decision making with job satisfaction. They found a relatively high level of job satisfaction; the definition of autonomy they worked with was limited to making instructional decisions, however. The participants in this study, on the other hand, defined autonomy more broadly. While they did address having the freedom to decide how to teach specific topics or ideas in the classroom, they also spoke of an ability to choose what activities to be involved in outside of the classroom and therefore to shape their professional identity. One of the participants described how this autonomy gets exercised:

In general, I feel like faculty here and faculty at a lot of places have a lot of choice. I think faculty have a lot of committees and a lot of things like that, but, in general, people have a lot of choices about what they do. If you want to get really involved with student government and clubs, you can spend a lot of time doing that. If you want to get really involved in international business, you can do a lot of that. We do have a lot of choice about what we get involved in.

There was often an implication that what one chooses to be involved in tends to shape one's professional identity. There was some concern expressed that this might in some way limit

autonomy, or induce faculty members to take on responsibilities in which they are less interested:

I'm definitely one of the usual suspects. I think I don't really want people to take advantage of that and say, "You're involved in all this stuff, so you'd be the perfect person to do accreditation." It's like...I feel more lately like I have less choice about it.

However, most of the participants seemed inclined to believe that they had the freedom to turn down assignments that they really did not want. As one participant stated, "I think community college allows us to be the kind of professional, I mean it gives us a lot of freedom to be the kind of professional that we want to be." While some participants specifically attributed this sense of autonomy to the community college environment, some viewed it more broadly as a characteristic of teaching as a profession:

I think across the spectrum [...] teachers tend to be very independent sorts in an interesting way because they like people and they like being in a group. That's why they enjoy the classroom, but they tend to want to be their own boss also [...]. It's really a lot more difficult to lead teachers than it is to lead people in a business, a lot more difficult, because they are so independent [...]. It's not like in an office space where you see each other for the entire work time. In an educational setting, you have your meeting and then people disperse for the rest of the week. It's just different.

There may be an element of exaggeration here—some teachers are more independent than others. However, the description of teachers as independent operators creates a sense of professional identity, one that is well aligned with the value of autonomy. Several participants described their autonomy in terms of controlling their teaching schedule and methods:

My position allows me an incredible amount of flexibility. I can teach in any style I want, I can choose, to many extents, my teaching time. I can choose the time when I meet with students. It's incredibly flexible and self-motivated. To me, and to what I've discussed with my Dean, the administration position is a lot more dictated by all the various constituents that that administration person has to be responsible to. I really only have to be responsible to my students. If my students are successful, and they get good jobs or they transfer to a four year program, then

that's my main, those are my main bosses. So as long as I meet their needs the other stuff just kind of happens. I don't have to have that be my major priority.

That sense of self-motivation appealed to many of the participants in the study. Many of them described workloads that kept expanding, but they felt that they had a great deal of flexibility in how they addressed that workload:

It's like being a small business owner. You can never completely let go of your work—it follows you everywhere—but if you like being independent and deciding when and where you're going to do your work, I think that's a good position.

So while for some this sense of autonomy was described in entrepreneurial terms, others attributed to it a sense of creativity:

It's one of those jobs, for me anyway...I don't know. It's just so interesting right now. I get up every day just wanting to, you know, maybe not wanting to come to school, but once I get here it's awesome. It's a great job. I think it's partly because I'm not just teaching my class the same old thing. I have the freedom here to do this high school project, to, you know, do OER. I've had the freedom to be a creative professional.

Many of the participants described their sense of autonomy in terms of a comparison to other professions, for example to the work of high school teachers or other employees of the college who are not faculty members:

I'm starting to see a hayload of high school teachers. I'm working with some of them to create some curriculum and such. I promote a couple labs up here [locally]. High school teachers I think have a lot more structure they have to adhere to. They have X amount of time, they have students they have to manage more closely [...]. I think also that high schools tend to have more standardized checkmarks of what has to be accomplished as they move along, wherein the college level we have a more free-form flow. For example, a class might have six course level outcomes that we have to meet. Then it's really up to the instructor to meet those. Then there's things on top of that. You usually don't just stop there. You go far beyond. As a result, you're able to have a little bit more flexibility.

Another participant made this comparison in talking about college staff:

I think a lot of them, they also have the same love for this place and are very connected and very dedicated, like classified staff, for example, but they have a clock-in/clock-out kind of job. I have more flexibility and longer vacation, but I take a lot of work home. It starts the minute I get up, and I work until midnight doing schoolwork and email and work through the weekends. Then when I finally do get a break, I can take a break.

While some of the participants talked about freedom and autonomy in a broad and general sense of describing the nature of the work, others talked about specific examples of choices they had made, either to participate in something or not to participate:

I've never taught an online course. I don't think that's a medium that serves me. The college has students that it absolutely needs to serve that way and we've got great people in the department that can do that and so that's an example like I said [...]. There's lots of other places where I know my colleagues are doing phenomenal work. It's just my work is a little different in certain regards and I can see that changing as well again.

This quote spoke to variety and specialization within a department, but it also speaks to the ability to make choices, as well as the ability to make different choices in the future (“I can see that changing as well again”). Many of the participants echoed this idea that they had the ability to reinvent themselves at different times in their career, depending on their interests, on life changes, or simply the need for variety. One participant talked about personal reasons for valuing flexibility in her schedule: “I'm a single mom, I have two kids, and when they were younger I could be at home when they needed me to be home.” Another participant made a similar comment about changing her work priorities to fit the needs of private life: “This year, I have pulled back hugely. Part of that's home life. My partner is very ill. Last year, I was heavily involved in faculty governance. Very involved in professional development for faculty. That's kind of where my heart is.” So, the participants felt that they had the freedom to go where their interests led them, but to adapt their workload to meet their life situation.

Some of the participants did acknowledge some potential downsides to the level of freedom and autonomy they perceived for community college faculty:

So I think one of the difficult things about college teaching is because we have so much freedom we can isolate ourselves. We can just sit in our office. Most people don't do that, but just to then, you know, get ticked off about things. But if we're encouraged to work together and find common projects and common interests and we have some sort of a foundation that we're all expected to work with then, again, really good things happen. So I did have a really great relationship with my colleagues, even ones that I may not, you know, want to go have a beer with.

This quote seemed to admit that with a high level of autonomy may come a weak sense of group identity or shared vision; however, for the most part the participants seemed to perceive this as a potential, rather than actual, downfall. Other participants hinted that their sense of autonomy was far from unlimited; and while some of those limitations were contractual and workload issues, the more salient limits may be imposed in terms of group norms. One participant spoke of how his relationship with the colleagues in his department had changed as he took on some controversial public positions: "I rocked the boat a little bit and they don't like me rocking the boat. They don't like it at all." While a sense of professional autonomy was clearly valued, group norms did at times impose limits on that autonomy. Some participants described this as a balancing act between complete autonomy and group consensus:

I don't know that necessarily, again especially with all the flexibility, with all the changes going on right now in that area of this college, I think I find that I have a weird combination of flexibility and stability that other staff positions in the college don't necessarily have.

That combination of "flexibility and stability" may be an important role feature for community college faculty. It was interesting to note that while it would seem logical to attribute at least some of that sense of stability to being tenured, none of the participants made that connection explicitly.

There was a sense on the part of several participants that the value of freedom and autonomy helped to compensate for some other weaknesses: “I think it's partly because we have intellectual stimulation and we have a lot of freedom. I will say I'm a bit disgruntled about salaries because I can't remember when I last got a raise.” But even though a few of the participants had specific complaints about some aspect of their job or their institution, that did not seem to outweigh their overall job satisfaction: “I feel like I have this great little perfect world right here where I get to do what I love to do and I get the flexibility to do it the way I want. I guess that's very important to me.” In many ways, this comment seemed to sum up the sentiments of many of the participants—they had somehow stumbled upon a “great little perfect world” and they had the ability to shape that world to their own liking. In fact, the sense of autonomy seemed to compensate for occasional difficulties in the “great little perfect world,” as one participant described:

I used to really feel like my college level work was super important to me. It really mattered to me that I was part of the college community. It was really important to me that I have friends who teach English and friends who teach economics.

I worked for a while training people to do distance learning, back when that was just getting started and I got to work with teachers all over campus. That has been awesome for me. I think it has made my job better because I can talk to people who work at the college and share that with them, but they're not part of my little we-have-to-get-along-with-each-other-every-day group of people. That has been awesome and that has, historically, been really important to me in my job. From day one, it was.

The last year, not so much just because of some of the stuff that we were talking about, where that's gotten to be a little bit more forced and lots and lots of people are having climate unhappiness. That just changes the tenor of everything that happens on the college level, which makes you think, "I just want to pay attention to my students and my class, which I have some control over and not worry about what you guys are doing," I think. Over the course of my career, I would say that has been important to me.

While the sense of autonomy was a source of creativity and empowerment, it was also a coping mechanism—the ability to pull back from the wider community when necessary. As one participant described it, “Having some flexibility in what we can do I think is valuable. I guess I see that as a significant part of what I've done or what you can do at a community college.”

To summarize the findings for this theme, the faculty members participating in the study placed great value on the sense of autonomy and freedom that they experienced in their professional lives. That autonomy allowed them to choose the salient components of their professional identity, and to reinvent that identity at different stages in their career.

Theme 5. Community college faculty articulated a strong sense of mission, which seemed to be linked to job satisfaction; however, that sense of mission tended to vary between three values—a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a social justice/student empowerment paradigm:

Different faculty members tended to espouse some aspect of each paradigm, but in different amounts.

The community college faculty members in this study had some difficulty in articulating a professional identity when asked about it directly; however, as a group they articulated a strong sense of mission related to their profession. That sense of mission seemed to be linked to a high level of job satisfaction, but the sense of mission manifested itself in several different ways.

When asked directly to talk about their professional identity, more than a third of the participants were initially baffled: “Professional identity? Gosh, I don't know. How do you answer that one? I don't know.” Other participants gave a direct answer but then either

equivocated or noted that the identity had changed over time: “I think, for a long time, I really thought of myself as a community college teacher. That was my identity more than, I am in the business department.” However, all of the participants in one way or another spoke to a strong sense of mission, that often had both personal and professional aspects.

Some described a sense of mission that was somewhat general and tied to the overall mission of community colleges. One participant described it this way:

I think my job is really teaching at its best. I think community college is awesome. I think I can teach, I don't have a lot of push from the state, or from my district, or from parents. I think a good community college teacher is really, it's just teaching, pure teaching. It's beautiful.

This sense of enthusiasm for community colleges and for the professional role was often described as conflating personal and professional identities:

I live across the street from a board member. When we were going for our bond, I had a sign in my yard. It wasn't just because I want to get paid. I really believe in what we do and sort of even when I was on sabbatical I was able to volunteer in my daughter's school and worked with 3rd graders. I have never worked with 3rd graders but I could teach math. It was a learning experience for me when I did that.

In this quote, the speaker seemed to cross several boundaries between personal and professional aspects of life. It was unclear what the narrative connection was between living across the street from a board member and having a sign in the yard to support a bond issue, but the implication seemed to be that the sense of mission was deeply felt—“I really believe in what we do.” In a similar way, the reference to being on sabbatical seemed to denote a fuzzy boundary between the professional status (sabbatical) and a personal action (volunteering at the daughter’s school). It was as if the meaningfulness of the community college mission overflowed its boundaries and invested meaningfulness in personal actions as well. That is a strong sense of mission and

seemed to indicate that being a community college teacher carried a strong sense of identity, even if that identity was at times hard to articulate.

Another participant described an overall satisfaction and enthusiasm for community college teaching:

When I first started, that's what kind of hooked me. I was like, wow, you know, this is fun. I'm making money at it, I'm good at it, and it's just really rewarding. So you go home and you may have a stack of things to grade, but it's like, wow, we had a great time. We learned a lot.

This quote also alluded to something of a permeable boundary between the personal and the professional, but it also conflated the roles of student and teacher—“We learned a lot.” It appeared that the sense of professional identity for community college faculty was often tied to a deep sense of mission and overt job satisfaction. But the ways in which that sense of mission was described by the participants in the study seemed to take three different forms: a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a social justice/student empowerment paradigm.

Traditional academic paradigm. The sense of mission described as the traditional academic paradigm was typically associated with a strong disciplinary identity. There were five participants in the study who exhibited various aspects of this paradigm, three in social science disciplines, one in the natural sciences, and one in the humanities. One participant in particular was the strongest proponent of this paradigm and indicated that she felt her views were a minority position among the faculty: “And I really feel like we're under-valued. And a lot of the faculty vibe is that we are arrogant snots.” For this participant, there seemed to be a clear distinction between faculty members who held doctoral degrees and those who did not. This sense of mission was fairly university-focused; in fact, the one participant who espoused this

position most overtly stated that there were some difficulties arising from having both transfer and professional/technical programs in the same institution. This participant also felt that there was not much support from the college for the traditional academic mission, referring to one administrator who appeared to hold a different sense of mission: “He thought we should tame down academics, and focus on the technical vocational skills.”

The other participants who espoused some aspects of this paradigm were less emphatic or described the ways in which they had shifted their paradigm over time:

Well, at my old college we had faculty rank. We had annual evaluations, and so I was proud to rise up to full professor. I did get three articles published and I did a couple of conference presentations and a poster session. That's not my forte. It's much harder for me than teaching, but I did it partly to prove that I could.

This same participant went on to tie this shifting paradigm directly to a sense of professional identity:

My professional identity has shifted a bit because it used to be as a clinical psychologist and I haven't done clinical work in ages. I never use that term anymore. I say I'm a psychology professor and/or you could say community college professor because I think those are both important identities and different.

For some participants the traditional academic paradigm was associated with what is often described as academic rigor:

And I think just keeping high standards, making sure we're not sort of dumbing down the education, the curriculum, in any way. Just keeping it fresh, keeping it new. That's always hard. You've got to be constantly researching and doing things on your own.

So the traditional academic paradigm was one that was university-focused, associated with rank and rigor. However, some participants seemed to view it as too limited or too exclusive for the open-door mission of the community college. One participant described having come from a

very traditional academic paradigm, but having changed due to her community college experience:

That's part of what's driven me not to go back and get my PhD, because I've often thought about going and getting it. But I couldn't think of something that was just on that broader scope. I'm having so much fun here, doing the things I do, adding new curriculum.

For this participant, that traditional academic paradigm was over-specialized for the community college environment. Some participants went even further, describing this paradigm as being in opposition to the interests of community college students:

My guess is that some...not so much, but there are still a few who see themselves as gate-keeperish, you know, even at the community college level, that still bemoan the fact that their students can't do.... They can't write like they think they should right out of high school or still bemoan the fact that we don't get...you know, our students aren't as strong as they used to be. I don't think that's probably true, but, you know, I think there's always that concern among faculty. I think in this, you know, younger faculty who are just very...I don't know. I think it's...I don't know if I can describe or if I can generalize too much because I think it's a really interesting time to be a teacher. I do think at a community college people who are at a community college are there for the most part because they want to be closer to students than at a university. They want to teach. You know, they don't want to necessarily be a professor or do the research.

This quote had a strong sense of multivocality, ambiguity, reticence. On the one hand, this speaker stood in opposition to the gate-keeper mentality. On the other hand, she is reticent to be too judgmental about that gate-keeper worldview because the gate-keeper mentality is itself a judgmental position: deciding who is inside and who is outside the gate. For some, the traditional academic paradigm was associated with a gatekeeper mentality: that community colleges function to keep unqualified students out of the universities. However, even the most adamant proponent of this traditional academic paradigm spoke passionately about a commitment to teaching and to students, so it was not clear that this traditional paradigm was actually incompatible with student success and access to education.

Workforce development paradigm. The workforce development paradigm is familiar from much of the literature on career and technical education. At times, this paradigm emphasizes the need to develop a more-skilled workforce, but most often the participants described it in terms of the ability of students to gain skills, find employment, and support themselves:

I spend a lot of time thinking about [...] recruiting people because I think that's something that gives back to the college. A lot of times they might just need a job. That's important. Making those connections with some students over the years has been very important to me.

Some participants described this paradigm in terms of acquiring tangible skills: "My preference is that students learn something by doing it and they do it on their own." This paradigm was pragmatic and focused on definable outcomes. This sense of usefulness gave rise to a sense of mission and a sense of accomplishment. One participant, who taught in a business program, described students this way:

They have extrinsic motivation. They're going to get a job. A lot of times their supervisors value it or, on their resume, people value it. Also, a lot of them actually go to class and say, "Hey, what I learned in class today I'm going to go use tomorrow at my job," which makes it a whole different teaching experience.

Another participant spoke of deriving motivation from the ability of students to use their education to become successful:

[W]hen the really great students go out and get a job and they love it. Not that everybody can't get a job and they love it. But every once in a while you have somebody who you go out and say, "I'm so proud they're going out and saying they graduated from here" because they're going to do great things, and surpass us and 'yay'. That's really, really valuable to me.

In this sense, the workforce development paradigm was often a value-added proposition: the student comes to the community college in order to acquire skills, which adds value to that

person in terms of their workforce potential. One participant, in particular, was aware of how the value-added aspects of education had contributed to his career:

Both my college degrees were paid for by the public, as a veteran and as a recipient of Workforce Training dollars. Prior to that, my private sector employment came at a different skill. Hence, my dedication to the organization's reputation and identity is very high because everything I know, the public's paid for. Really, they deserve it because they've paid for it already. I'm happy as an individual, but I work for the people who pay me.

This participant addressed not only how the community college can contribute to the development of skills in current students but also how his career was shaped by the workforce development paradigm.

While this paradigm was most often espoused by faculty in professional/technical programs, it was also addressed by several of the participants in more traditional academic disciplines, who described their efforts to make students aware of what careers were available in their field or to contextualize learning in a way that made it more practical. And while there was some overlap between the workforce development paradigm and the traditional academic paradigm, there was also quite a bit of overlap between the workforce development paradigm and the social justice/student empowerment paradigm that will be discussed below. One participant, in particular, conflated aspects of workforce development and student empowerment:

One of my best students that I had probably fifteen years ago is now my general contractor. We're the same age, but when he was here, and he was a great student and we supported him, not just myself but the entire department, and got him on his feet and he went to engineering school and decided he wanted to become a contractor and then he came back in and said, "Hey do you ..." and I said sure. It was a \$20 job, fixing my sink, and now he builds his entire business. It just started with that. He needed some...I needed.... It was a service that he provided and we've got lot of students like that who their life experience, they have lots of other things to offer.... I definitely feel like part of my responsibility to community is to give back a little bit of that.

In this description, there were aspects of a student empowerment narrative (“we supported him, not just myself but the entire department”), but also a very pragmatic narrative about building skills and applying those skills to the workforce (“fixing my sink”).

Social justice/student empowerment paradigm. Perhaps the sense of mission about which participants spoke most passionately was the social justice/student empowerment paradigm. This perspective focused on the ability of community colleges to positively impact the lives of first-generation, low-income students. This paradigm was aspirational and included aspects such as building self-esteem and confidence, and gaining a voice to use in asserting one’s rights.

One participant described the overall image of the community college at which he worked as being tied to a sense of social justice:

I think there’s some awareness of that in the community [...] that if you teach at [this community college], then you’re a very student-focused instructor and you may also be very concerned with improving students’ economic status and those kinds of issues as well, compared to the image I had a couple decades ago. That was more of an elitist model.

This quote also contrasted this paradigm with a more traditional academic paradigm, which he referred to as “elitist.” Some participants described this paradigm in terms of broad social issues, but many tied it directly to students and interacting with students with a sense of equity and equality:

Giving students their power. It's knowing who the student is and setting high standards and.... Especially because I'm teaching developmental [math], teaching them skills to be successful as I'm teaching them their math, means being able to step back and say, "You know, this problem is really complex. I have to plan out my route and these are the things I'm thinking about and these are the questions I ask myself." When they leave me, I keep telling them that it's really nice if they get good grades in my class, but what my job is, is to help them get good grades in the next class. When you see me on campus, let me know how you're doing. That's my, the things that are important to me, as far as teaching goes. Teaching

them skills, making them realize that they are intelligent, that they just need to re-wire how they look at a math problem.

This paradigm conflated the personal with academic progress. It involved recognizing students as human beings, not just students. Many of the participants were explicitly aware of this social justice element as part of their mission:

There's definitely a social justice component that we're aware of here, and [local] people also sense that, too. If nothing else, every time we send out our college catalog or a flyer or any publicity that comes out of the school would make the community really aware of it. It has a profile of someone who's a first-generation college student, and that image is really out there in the community, which is a good thing, too.

So, working in this paradigm, the participants were aware of the community college as an agent of social change, or at least individual social mobility. This paradigm also recognized the social aspect of education. One participant, who was an immigrant to America, addressed that cultural aspect:

I did teach the course from the point of what I wanted them to learn, but if I got something back from them in addition to that, I was very happy. I like that about the system in America where students just don't regurgitate what you tell them. They try to say something that's original, at least they try, which I found very, very refreshing. I still see that here when I'm teaching at the community college level and I say, "Okay, here's the theme of the piece." American students who are born in the American system don't exactly word the theme as I tell them, they word it in their own way, but the Asian students or the international students tell me exactly what I tell them and I said to myself isn't that interesting, because I understand that system, because I was raised in India and I learned that way. I didn't want any words to slip, because I thought what the professor said was perfect and I couldn't meddle with it. That was a problem, because when I came to the United States and I was writing my thesis, I had to paraphrase or say things in my own words, I would struggle, but I overcame it.

This quote addressed the idea that education involves finding a voice and from that point of view, it was about personal empowerment. This same participant took that idea one step further, talking about explicitly asking students to stand up for their rights:

A lot of them don't know, and that surprises me. In America, they don't know what their rights are? I try to encourage them and their eyes open up. They tell me, "You're the only teacher who tells us this and tell us to go and fight the administration for our rights." I said, "Hello, this is America, you should already know. You should be the one who should tell me. If someone abuses you, if I do something to you physically, you will complain. Why are you letting them get away with this money that you're paying without the service? Do you like to be cheated?" I don't know what has happened. They say they will do it, but who knows.

While the workforce development paradigm showed some sense of student empowerment in terms of allowing students to gain economic power, the social justice paradigm can be explicitly political in addressing civil and human rights. Some of the expressions of this paradigm were less explicit than this. Many of the participants asserted the need to think of students holistically, as people with specific histories and with lives outside of the classroom:

I realized that I can be supportive of students, encouraging them, "Take care of your home life, yes, oh I'm sorry here this or that child is going through that." Just letting them know that, "I know you've got lives; it's not all about you've got to do my homework assignment." Sometimes that gets a little dicey because if I don't know someone well enough and I'm trying to figure, "OK, they fed me a lie here or what's going on?"

I know they have lives and I try to, as they're comfortable, learn a little bit more about them and support them if I can. Other things that are important to me. By my standards I'm well-paid in this job and so I channel a fair amount of added income anonymously back to the college in a form of scholarships. [...] I don't know how these students do it. They're working, they've got families and they're going to school.

I had it so easy when I was an undergrad. My folks paid for it. All I did was study. The balancing act is just amazing. I am just in awe. This is even students who are doing poorly. Grade-wise they're doing poorly. It's just amazing the challenges that they face.

In this quote, the participant acknowledged how messy it can be to think of students holistically, admitting that someone might lie to him or that there may be things that are more important than completing homework assignments. This participant also included himself in the social justice equation, acknowledging that he may have come from a somewhat more privileged background

that many of his students. This comparison conflated the in-group/out-group definition of student and teacher, but contrasted those who are socially privileged with those who are not.

One participant spoke about a personal motivation to engage with a diverse student body:

Yes and also because I was so much, what do you say, not exposed to the other half or the diversity of the learning styles of the people that I wanted to open myself up to how other students or students who are not coming from privileged backgrounds learn. Apart from teaching at the community college, what I also used to do for the last couple of years, [...] I was working as a voluntary teacher of writing and reading in the GED program that we have here. In this quarter, I had one student that I taught in the GED program, who is in my writing class and he's doing quite well, so I feel very happy.

This quote showed a clear personal investment in student success (“so I feel very happy”). In this way, working for social justice by empowering students takes on salience as a professional and personal role.

Another participant who had worked in both K-12 and at the university level before coming to the community college spoke about personal motivations:

Passion for social justice, a belief that everyone deserves a second chance. A love of math. A real belief that, especially because I've been in K-12, that we really have done students an injustice in K-12. It gives us a chance to undo it a little bit.

This participant specifically tied the social justice paradigm to community colleges, as opposed to education in general as a social good:

I think it's more tied to community colleges because most of the students, all of the students I work with, 99% of the students I work with, would not make it into a four-year school. By the time they are finished with us, they're ready for a four-year school. [...]

It's getting them to the point that they realize that they do have—they are smart enough. That if there's something in life that they want, and they are willing to pour heart and soul into it, then they can do it. As opposed to when I was Associate Dean back in [another state], one of my jobs was dismissing students who weren't making the grades. I would have a whole lot of young, black students, coming in and saying, "Well, I want to be a doctor." I'm looking at that 0.5 grade point average and I said, "So what makes you think -" "Well, my

teacher in high school says I can be anything I want to be." I said, "If you're willing to work for it and I'm not seeing any work going on here." [...]

Definitely it was a screening mechanism, but it was also for.... The teachers there didn't have the expectation that they are training students about how to be successful. The people coming in are supposed to know how to be successful.

In this social justice/student empowerment paradigm, community college faculty members not only teach their subject matter, but teach students “how to be successful.” This participant also contrasted the social justice/student empowerment paradigm with the traditional academic paradigm in which she worked at her previous institution. While the student empowerment aspects of this paradigm overlapped with some aspects of the workforce development paradigm, it also went further in addressing explicitly political aspects of social justice.

Chapter Summary

Five primary themes were identified as a result of the collection and analysis of the qualitative data in this study.

1. **Almost all participants stated they became a community college faculty member through an accidental or unexpectedly changed career path:** Even those who espoused a lifelong desire to teach did not originally intend to do so at the community college level.
2. **Teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty:** However, most participants said they had little or no formal training for teaching; some who had training as graduate teaching assistants did not view that training as significant.

3. **Being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development:** Tenure was not a particularly salient role feature for community college faculty.
4. **Autonomy, freedom, and flexibility described the most powerful values attached to the professional roles of community college faculty:** Community college faculty felt an ability to reinvent themselves at different points in their career by choosing which activities to be involved in.
5. **Community college faculty articulated a strong sense of mission, which seemed to be linked to job satisfaction; however, that sense of mission tended to vary between three values—a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a social justice/student empowerment paradigm:** Different faculty members tended to espouse some aspect of each paradigm, but in different amounts.

While a number of the participants stated that they were unclear about how to articulate their own professional identity, for those who did articulate a clear professional identity, teaching was the more salient role feature for the majority of participants. However, many of the participants described having little or no professional training for teaching; this may contribute to some lack of clarity in professional identity. In addition, many of the participants described a somewhat accidental career path that led them to community college teaching; combined with lack of professional preparation for teaching, this factor may inhibit articulation of professional identity. These issues will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development. However, these experiences tended to be very individualized. There were relatively few consistent markers of career progression experienced by the participants within their community college careers. This sense of individualized career progression may contribute to a lack of articulation of the aspects of professional identity. That issue will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Autonomy, flexibility, and freedom were powerful values attached to the professional role by most participants. This flexibility often took the form of recreating salient professional roles at different times during a career. It is possible that this flexibility may contribute to a less than clearly articulated sense of professional identity; this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The community college faculty members who participated in this study articulated a strong sense of mission, which seemed to denote salient role features of their professional identity. However, this sense of mission was described within three separate paradigms—traditional academic, workforce development, and social justice/student empowerment. These three mission paradigms overlapped in certain aspects; for example, some faculty members spoke to aspects of the traditional academic paradigm, but also spoke to some aspects of the workforce development paradigm, such as career development. Some faculty members who spoke to the workforce development paradigm also spoke to significant aspects of the student empowerment paradigm, particularly in terms of economic empowerment. But while the three paradigms did overlap in some aspects, there was also some tension between other aspects of these three paradigms. It is possible that the tensions between these paradigms may contribute to lack of clarity in professional roles; this will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine how community college faculty members articulate their professional identity and how the discourse around that professional identity affects the social reality of community college faculty members. The data were collected through qualitative interviews with 15 faculty members at three community colleges in Washington and Oregon. The data from these interviews generated five primary themes, as discussed in Chapter 4. This chapter will discuss the implications of those findings as they relate to the research questions, and to the review of the literature. In addition, this chapter will discuss implications of the study for community college professionals and suggestions for further research.

Relation of Findings to Research Question 1

The first research question asks, how do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity? The data collected for this study provide answers to that question in several ways.

In order to elicit data with regard to the process of identity formation, participants were asked questions about how they entered their careers as community college faculty members and about significant career milestones or accomplishments. In order to elicit data with regard to the most significant role features of their professional identity, participants were asked to speak about what they valued about the different aspects of their work, including the teaching role as well as other aspects of their professional responsibilities. Participants were also asked specifically to describe their own sense of their professional identity (see Appendix B).

While the teaching role was clearly the most salient role feature for community college faculty, the accidental career path that many community college faculty members follow may

undermine a strong sense of professional identity. This accidental career path may introduce a sense of randomness to the professional identity of community college faculty. Many of the participants spoke of feeling lucky to be in this career:

- “I’ve been very lucky, though, because I got to kind of pick and choose what I want to do.”
- “I’m lucky. I feel really lucky. Mostly I’m really tired, but I’m also lucky.”
- “I was lucky enough to have my first teaching position be a tenure track, and now in retrospect, I see that that’s actually quite rare, so I count myself as very fortunate.”

The psychology of luck attributes good fortune to external factors (Pritchard & Smith, 2004). If the accidental nature of the career path for community college faculty introduces an aspect of luck into their professional identity, it may be that they would be reticent to examine that too closely. Many of the participants in the study emphasized that they appreciated being recognized for their skill and expertise; however, if their current position is largely attributable to luck or accident, that might be motivation to leave things unexamined, thus contributing to a weaker sense of professional identity.

One participant in particular spoke of the “great little perfect world” that she had stumbled onto in the community college. There is an implied sense of hiddenness in this description—since she did not realize how “perfect” the little world was until she came upon it by accident, it seems like a secret hidden in plain sight. The juxtaposition of the words “little” and “perfect” makes for an interesting phrase: perfect denotes a superlative, but the use of little qualifies that superlative, making it somehow less than perfect. If it were indeed perfect, it would be “greatest,” not just great. The phrase “great little perfect world” seemed to sum up the sentiments of many of the participants, but that phrase also comes with some internal

qualifications or contradictions that tend to go unexamined. From the perspective of CDA, there is a sense of both multivocality and exaggeration (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). The phrase “great little perfect world” both aggrandizes and minimizes the significance of the professional role.

Many of the participants expressed reticence or uncertainty when asked to describe their professional identity. As one participant stated, “I don’t put myself in that perspective.” This seems to indicate an ideological avoidance of the concept of professional identity. The formulation seemed to be something like this: I got here accidentally and I feel that my current favorable position is, at least to some extent, attributable to luck, and therefore I would rather not examine this position too carefully.

The conception of a “great little perfect world” is an exaggeration that connotes more about how this world feels, than how it actually operates (Phillips & Jorgensen, 2002). Almost every participant noted something that was less than perfect about their work environment—“I can’t remember when I last got a raise”—but also expressed great enthusiasm and sense of mission. The phrase “great little perfect world” seems to connote a sense of secrecy almost, a sense of incredulity. It may be that, having arrived at their professional position through a somewhat accidental career path and having a strong identification with their roles as teachers even though they had little intentional preparation for the teaching role, the faculty members felt that they had stumbled onto a not-so-well-kept secret. In some sense, little and perfect are in tension with each other: one downplays the significance of this “world” while the other elevates it. Fairclough (1989) might describe this phrase as an act of interpretation. The phrase both describes and creates the “world” to which it refers. It may be that, rather than fight the public perception that community college is “less than” other strata of the higher education universe,

community college faculty circumscribe their world by closing it off and appealing to an insider's understanding of that world. So the accidental career path of many (or most) community college faculty members may introduce a tendency to leave some aspects of professional identity unexamined.

The data indicated that teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty. However, the relative lack of formal training for the teaching role may work against a strongly defined professional identity. A number of the participants initially were quite emphatic in stating that they had had no formal training for teaching, but upon further discussion stated that they had been graduate teaching assistants and had participated in at least a minimal level of training or coursework related to teaching. This is an example of exaggeration, from the perspective of CDA (Philips & Jorgensen, 2002). Whatever training they did receive for teaching, many seemed to find it inadequate: "Well, I had a teaching course in grad school, but I did not learn very much. It was taught by a physiological researcher and it was circa 1986, so I don't think that helped much." Some participants noted the apparent anomaly presented by the fact that the primary professional role is teaching, but the formal requirements take little note of that role:

I've always thought that was kind of interesting with the collegiate system because a high school requires all of these educational requirements in order to figure out what everything is. Then the college is kind of ... "Are you a good teacher? Yes you are."

Community college faculty can see a gap between their most salient professional role and the formal training received for that role. While this might lead to some level of cognitive dissonance or insecurity, it may be that it more often leads faculty members to develop a sense of

independence and autonomy: a sense to be a successful community college faculty member is to pull oneself up by one's own bootstraps, as it were. One participant described what he remembered most from his first years of teaching: "How little I really understood about teaching. I wasn't aware of it at the time. Looking back on it, it was all the mistakes that you make as a rookie educator." The phrase "rookie educator" creates a particular sense of identity, one who has not been indoctrinated into certain mysteries of the profession. And while we might expect that this "rookie educator" phase might equate to probationary or pre-tenured status, that was not necessarily the way that it was consistently described by the participants. The granting of tenure is one of the few formal markers of career progression for most community college faculty; however, it was often described as a baseline status or something that was taken for granted by many of the participants.

Many of the participants described their community college career as a slow progression through which they developed more skill and ability to reach students in the classroom. However, it was not always clear what role learning played in that ability. Almost all of the participants spoke passionately about the value that they place on teaching; only a few made a clear connection between that teaching and the learning of students. This might be related to the relative lack of formal training for teaching—that many community college faculty members have little grounding in learning theory. In recent years, as the national conversation around community colleges has shifted from the traditional mission of broad access to more focus on student success and completion, there has been more opportunity for community college faculty to engage in an examination of the relationship between teaching and learning, but it seems that there is still a lot of work to be done in this area for many current faculty members.

It may also be the case that the relatively solitary aspects of classroom teaching may reinforce a sense of individualism that undermines a strong group identity. One participant described it this way: “Teachers tend to be very independent sorts in an interesting way because they like people and they like being in a group. That’s why they enjoy the classroom, but they tend to want to be their own boss also.” The implication is that the classroom is the epitome of that “great little perfect world” where the teacher has the autonomy to guide what happens in whatever way suits them best. As Adams and Hogg (2004a) have noted, when a role categorization happens at a broad, general level, it often negates the need to define the role at any more specific level. Some participants in the study did qualify their teacher identity, usually with a discipline-specific modifier: a math teacher, a writing teacher, etc. One participant specifically identified as an anthropologist first, and as a teacher second. But for most, teacher was a somewhat broad and generic category.

Another factor in the articulation of the professional identity of community college faculty was the relatively undifferentiated career path of most community college faculty members. Tenure occurs fairly early in the careers of most community college faculty, and the data show that tenure tends to be viewed more as a baseline or introductory level than as a significant career milestone. One participant summed up the idea that tenure is a baseline status, more than a significant accomplishment: “We all have tenure, so we all are teachers, but I think to be a good teacher now, we have to be open to this changing world.” The phrasing of this comment seemed to denote some ambivalence about the value of tenure—since we all have it, it is not special. In order to be a “good teacher,” one must aspire to something beyond it. However, the description of what it means to be a good teacher was very broad and open-ended: “to be open to this changing world.” So, the description of a teacher in a community college

setting included some aspect of being self-taught or learning on the job, as well as a vague sense of being open to change. There was a sense here of what Phillips and Jorgensen (2002) describe as multivocality: while the dualism of being pre- or post-tenure is somewhat static, the speaker's discourse describes an identity for community college faculty that is one of constant change or "being open." While this participant was probably the strongest proponent for "being open" as a role feature for community college faculty, other participants did espouse some aspects of this view as well. One participant conflated his experiences as a student with his experiences as a teacher: "It was like a two-way learning experience for me."

In one sense, this undifferentiated career path may be valued by community college faculty members in as far as it allows for a broad scope of autonomy and flexibility: individual faculty members may choose the projects or activities that mark different stages of their careers. As we have seen in the review of literature, some studies point to the potential for mid-career burnout for community college faculty (Crawford, 2012; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). However, the data suggest that many faculty members alleviate potential burnout by exercising autonomy—by engaging in new projects or professional development activities, by taking responsibility for administrative duties in their departments, or by pulling back from those extra duties to gain more work/life balance or to refocus on the classroom. Many of the participants saw these additional duties or projects as formative experiences: forums in which their expertise or skill was valued. As one faculty member noted: "I'm happy when people think of me and say, 'This is a good person to have on a committee.'" So while they may use these projects and duties to give some differentiation to stages in their careers, it is also the case that this differentiation tends to be fairly individualized. It is not a distinct progression that forms a salient role feature in terms of group identity.

Would faculty members welcome an opportunity for more explicit career stages in their community college experience? It is possible that they would, but only if those stages were structured to recognize expertise and did not undermine autonomy. Faculty in this study showed a strong sense of mission, and faculty in other studies have exhibited a strong sense of intrinsic motivation for both teaching and professional development (Hardré, 2012). Any structure for developing more explicit career stages for community college faculty would likely have to incorporate flexibility or a voluntary aspect in order to appeal to an intrinsic sense of motivation. This likely means that faculty members would need to have a significant voice in designing any system for career promotion, and that system would have to account for a wide variety of possible interests. Any system that might differentiate career stages for community college faculty and thus strengthen group identity would have to be relevant and valued by the faculty members themselves (Hardré, 2012), as their motivations are largely intrinsic.

To sum up the discussion of findings for the first research question, community college faculty members articulated their professional identity primarily as teachers and expressed a strong sense of mission about their work. However, a number of factors may work against the development of a strong sense of professional identity. First, a sense of luck or randomness in the career path may cause some aversion toward self-examination of professional identity. Second, the lack of explicit and significant training for the teaching role may serve to inhibit a strong sense of professional identity, since there was some disjuncture between the most salient role feature of that professional identity and the professional training received. Third, the relatively undifferentiated career path for community college faculty members may inhibit development of a strong sense of group identity, since tenure occurs relatively early in the career path of community college faculty members and tenure tended to be viewed more as a baseline

or introductory qualification than a career pinnacle. Formative experiences were more likely to include special projects, significant committee assignments, administrative responsibilities, or significant professional development opportunities. These experiences were fairly individualized, since faculty placed great value on their professional autonomy and are largely able to choose activities in which to be involved.

It is possible that faculty members might be interested in more explicit career stages or in more explicit training or professional development for the teaching role. However, those opportunities would need to be structured in a way that recognizes the expertise of faculty members and does not undermine the professional autonomy that they value. Any structure for developing more explicit career stages for community college faculty would likely have to incorporate flexibility or a voluntary aspect in order to appeal to an intrinsic sense of motivation.

Relation of Findings to Research Question 2

The second research question asks, how does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty? The data collected for this study provided several answers to that question.

Social identity theory suggests that social identity is highly dynamic and that beliefs about in-group and out-group members are often ideological (Hogg & Abrams, 1998; Hogg, Terry, & White, 1995). The prestige of social identity is often a result of comparisons (overt or implicit) between the in-group and relevant out-groups (Turner & Brown, 1978). Faculty members (like any other professional or social group) use a variety of discourse strategies to position themselves with regard to other groups. Worchel and Coutant (2004) suggested a four component model of individual identity, consisting of *personal identity*, *group membership*, *intragroup identity*, and *group identity*. They contended that these four identity components

function within a developmental model of group identity—that group members may seek varying levels of cooperation and competition with in-group members depending on whether the group is newly established or long-standing. In early stages of group development, members seek more equality and uniformity. At later stages in the life of the group, members emphasize more intragroup competition in order to accentuate individual status within the group.

In order to examine beliefs with regard to in-group and out-group identification, participants were asked questions about relationships with colleagues, as well as how their work compares with the work of community college administrators, other employees of the college, university faculty members, and K-12 teachers. The responses to these questions suggested a number of possible conclusions with regard to in-group and out-group status for community college faculty members.

For the community college faculty members in this study, in-group identification seemed somewhat weak or vague; out-group identification seemed somewhat more emphatic, but also more individualized. Most of the faculty members in this study seemed to identify strongly with their students, but there seemed to be some lack of clarity as to whether students and faculty were in-group members or whether they had some other relationship. While participants were asked a number of questions with regard to potential in-group and out-group members, no strong theme emerged from the responses.

Most participants spoke favorably about their colleagues, but many indicated that their interactions with them were somewhat fleeting. A couple of participants seemed to indicate strong identification with their department or their division, but others had more idiosyncratic definitions of colleagues—some definition that seemed to apply to those they saw as like-minded. One participant clearly identified most with other faculty members who had PhD's.

But while the sample included five PhD's and one EdD., none of the other holders of doctoral degrees described that credential as an indicator of in-group identity. Several participants mentioned that they valued having interactions with colleagues from outside of their department or division; this might indicate some sense of group identity development for community college faculty, but these interactions were often described as somewhat transitory, often based on whose office was nearby. A number of participants mentioned that committee work was a good opportunity to interact with other faculty members, but their comments often denoted a sense of novelty in these interactions rather than group solidarity.

Worchel and Coutant (2004) suggested that group members may seek varying levels of cooperation and competition with in-group members. While the participants in this study clearly described varying levels of cooperation, there was little sense of competition. As one participant described it, "There's nothing to compete over." This sense that there is relatively little competition among community college faculty members seems consistent with the notion that faculty members follow a largely undifferentiated career path after tenure and have a large degree of professional autonomy. It may be that a much keener sense of competition among faculty members would be experienced by adjunct faculty members, who may compete for teaching assignments, office space, full-time jobs, and the attention of full-time faculty members or administrators.

While identification of in-group members was somewhat vague or undefined, identification of out-group members drew more impassioned responses, those identifications were fairly individualized. There was little consensus among the participants as to which were the most relevant out-groups. A few participants clearly identified college administrators as out-group members:

Well, I don't know exactly what administrators do. But considering this is completely confidential, yes? I would say that teaching is much harder, because if you're a diligent teacher, you have to keep up on the literature. You have to be revising what you do in class.

This speaker identifies administrators as out-group members in several ways: professing lack of knowledge, confirming confidentiality, and contrasting the nature of the work (even though, logically, it is hard to make a comparison to something of which one has no knowledge). This in-group favoritism—the idea that faculty work is harder than administrative work, even in the admitted absence of knowledge of the administrative work—is consistent with descriptions in the literature (Bar-tal, 1998; Tajfel, 1978; Turner, 1978; Worchel & Coutant, 2004). Some other participants also described administrators as out-group members, but had more insight into administrative work:

I've had some problems with administrators where, for example, if a student complains, I find that the college administrator, in order to be impartial, has to listen to the student's side and my side, and the students who complain are the ones I found who have either not done the work or want an easy grade or there's some kind of misunderstanding which should be solved very quickly.

Other participants were less clear as to whether they considered college administrators to be out-group members. Some spoke of good collaboration between faculty and administrators, or of a reasonable division of labor between the groups:

I have always felt that administrators are just as dedicated as faculty are, but they've got a different set of alligators in their swamp. You've got to understand their alligators just like you've got to make sure they understand your alligators in

order to get along. I've always had a great relationship with the administrators at this college over the years.

It was unclear from this comment whether having “different alligators” was a factor in out-group identification, but there was clearly more focus on collaboration here than on in-group favoritism.

When asked to make comparisons between the work of community college faculty, and that of university faculty or high school teachers, there was not a lot of consistency to the responses. Some respondents had more knowledge of university work than others; some had worked in a K-12 environment; and others professed very limited knowledge. Some expressed a great deal of sympathy for the challenges that high school teachers face, while others were less sympathetic. There was certainly some evidence of in-group favoritism for community college faculty expressed. This comment was not untypical of how participants responded when asked to compare their jobs to those of high school teachers: “A lot better. Well, okay. The pay is bad. Here as compared to high school.... The students are different. We change lives here. I mean, you help form lives in K-12, but here, we change lives.” In spite of perceived pay differential, this participant clearly expresses in-group favoritism. But as was the case with comparisons to community college administrators, the out-group identification was inconsistent and somewhat individualized.

The participants seemed to continually renegotiate the power dynamics between themselves and their colleagues, themselves and their students, as well as themselves and administrators at their colleges. This was most evident among those faculty members who defined the nature of teaching as being about relationships with students. They tended to describe the relationship as reciprocal: “...we're all really trying to give students the

opportunities to improve themselves so that they are able to be successful in life. That's really what our success is. Their success is our success.” So from this perspective, professional identity was enhanced not by publication or rank, but by successful students. In one sense this could be described as a mutually beneficial arrangement—students get an education and trade on that to become economically and personally successful. In that sense, the student appears as a satisfied customer (Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006) in an economic transaction. On the other hand, it is possible to see the student not as a customer, but as a product: a qualified and productive worker. In this view, the economy or local businesses are the customers; education is thus a value-added proposition, in which knowledge and skills are applied to the raw material of incoming students. The tension between these two—often unspoken—versions of the teacher/student relationship may contribute to the lack of clarity in the professional identity of community college faculty. As Fairclough describes it, “Institutional practices which people draw upon without thinking often embody assumptions which directly or indirectly legitimize existing power relations” (1989, p. 33). Lack of clarity in the professional identity of community college faculty members may represent an unwillingness to explicitly examine the power dynamic between teacher and student.

One participant described a conversation among students that she had overheard in the hallway:

It was interesting. I heard a conversation in the hallway one day; a student was saying about a colleague of mine, another English teacher, something like they were talking about the way rich people dress, and one student said to the other, "What do you mean rich people?" Then she said, "Well you know, like our English teacher, you know like a rich person." To me, that was like, "Oh wow." I forget that there's such a different

perspective sometimes. They don't know that my parents didn't go to college either.

Those assumptions I think are different, and it can be hard for the students.

While it is true that it can be hard for students to navigate the socioeconomic distinctions with which they are confronted in college, it is also true that it may be difficult for faculty members to navigate the subtleties of these distinctions as well. While the speaker here accurately identified herself as a first-generation college student, it was also the case that she was college educated and firmly middle class. And while it is appealing—in fact probably desirable—to describe the teacher/student relationship as reciprocal, it is always the case that the teacher holds more power in that relationship. Power used responsibly is still power. The fact that this power dynamic is mostly unexamined may contribute to the lack of clarity in the professional identity of community college faculty.

Another factor that may contribute to lack of clarity in the professional identity of community college faculty members is the fact that while faculty members expressed a strong sense of mission related to their work, there were several different ways of defining that mission. Those different definitions of mission seemed to be in ideological conflict with each other.

The community college faculty members in this study typically exhibited what can be described as a strong sense of mission: a conviction that their work was meaningful, a dedication to the general mission of community colleges in terms of broad access to higher education. In Chapter 4 we saw that this sense of mission was fairly individuated, and fell into three broad categories: a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a student empowerment/social justice paradigm. Viewed through the lens of social identity theory, it may be that these various paradigms dilute the precision of the group identity of community college faculty by defining those group beliefs in different but also overlapping ways (Bar-Tal, 1998;

Tajfel, 1982). Faculty is a group noun and therefore intentionally denotes an element of social categorization. However, as Tajfel (1982) pointed out, group membership has two components: “a cognitive one, in the sense of awareness of membership; and an evaluative one, in the sense that this awareness is related to some value connotations” (p. 2). The cognitive sense of “faculty” is clearly denoted; it is a condition of employment (*i.e.* joining the faculty). But the evaluative sense is much less clear. The faculty members in this study seemed aware that there were clear value differences among various members of the faculty. The participant who seemed most clearly identified with the traditional academic paradigm expressed antipathy toward the notion of community college faculty as competent generalists:

But there are people here ... One guy who's since retired ... But he came here ... He'd taught high school. I don't think he had a Master's, but he would say ... let other teachers know, he says, "You know, you give me the textbook, I can teach anything." (Laughs) Yipes!

This notion that community colleges are best served by a faculty composed of competent generalists has been identified in the literature (Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Twombly, 2004). But while the research may have examined this notion to some degree, most community college faculty members probably have not. Some identified with the notion of being a competent generalist, while others more closely associated with a traditional academic paradigm based on specialized expertise. The same participant quoted above also noted the following: “Well, I know everybody who has a doctorate thinks the way I do. Because that's where their degree is. That's their focus. And teaching is the way to pass that knowledge on.” This quote implies a divide among the faculty: those who think like I do and those who do not think like I do.

Other faculty participants who were philosophically on a different side of this divide were also aware of its existence:

[...] but there are still a few who see themselves as gate-keeperish, you know, even at the community college level, that still bemoan the fact that their students can't do.... They can't write like they think they should right out of high school or still bemoan the fact that we don't get...you know, our students aren't as strong as they used to be. I don't think that's probably true, but, you know, I think there's always that concern among faculty.

This participant identified strongly with the student empowerment/social justice paradigm. So while faculty members on both sides of this philosophical debate seemed aware that some divide existed, there did not seem to be an appetite for confronting the issue directly.

One of the key themes identified in the findings was that autonomy, freedom, and flexibility described the most powerful values associated with the professional roles of community college faculty members. If autonomy is a commonly held value among community college faculty, then it might be seen as one component of a social identity. While this may be true to some extent, it is also the case that the type of autonomy and flexibility described by community college faculty tends to contribute to individuation as much or more than they contribute to social identity.

Kim, Twombly, and Wolf-Wendel (2008) examined professional autonomy for community college faculty members in light of their perceived ability to exercise authority over instructional decision making. Participants in the current study spoke to similar definitions of autonomy: “I can teach in any style I want; I can choose, to many extents, my teaching time. I can choose the time when I meet with students. It's incredibly flexible and self-motivated.”

However, when participants in this study spoke of the value they place on flexibility and autonomy, their definition was much more broad than simply deciding how to teach a particular subject or lesson. They spoke to the ability to reinvent themselves at different stages of their career, to participate broadly in campus committees, projects, and politics, or to draw back and focus more narrowly on teaching, or on maintaining work/life balance. As one of the participants said, “This year, I have pulled back hugely.” This was done in order to maintain a different home/life balance and address some personal issues. However, the participants made it clear that they have the freedom to be more or less involved in a variety of activities, and that they see the ability to do so at different times in their career. This fluctuating engagement level may inhibit a stronger sense of social identity among faculty members.

In addition to that sense of autonomy, there is also a notion that teaching is a somewhat solitary profession—that a teacher goes into a classroom, closes the door, and they are out of view of colleagues. As one of the quotes above notes, “I really didn't see or experience a lot of my fellow faculty members practicing their craft in the classroom.” If the most salient role feature for community college faculty is that of teacher, and if the implicit and unexamined assumption about teaching is that it is a solitary occupation practiced by one teacher, one classroom at a time, then the solitary nature of that “craft” may inhibit formation of a strong group identity. For university faculty, there may be a sense of social visibility among their colleagues as they continue to publish, present at conferences, and move up in faculty rank. For community college faculty, many of those public markers are absent.

So, while the participants in this study seemed aware of a philosophical divide among some members of the faculty—*i.e.* those committed to a traditional academic paradigm and those committed to a social justice paradigm—the inclination seemed to be to avoid

confrontation rather than to pursue it. From the point of view of social identity theory, this might point toward a weak sense of group identity: in Tajfel's terms (1982), a cognitive group identity exists by virtue of being a member of the faculty, but the evaluative element is weak, in that participants are unwilling or uninterested in examining the values that underlie that group membership.

To see this divide from the point of view of critical discourse analysis, we might expect that the group identity is not just weak, but actually in conflict with itself. This is because some of the assumptions that form the group values of community college faculty are unexamined, and therefore ideological (Fairclough, 2001; Philips & Jorgensen, 2002). The traditional academic paradigm is associated in many important ways with cultural power: this is the university as a repository of knowledge and expertise. To admit students to this cultural stronghold is to assimilate them into an array of cultural assumptions. But a social justice paradigm presumably seeks to undermine this traditional cultural power—not to select the exceptions to the rule who may be worthy of admission to an elite world, but to break down the distinctions that make that world unique. While a number of the participants in this study spoke to a belief that the primary mission of the community college was about social justice, the assumptions behind that assertion seemed often unexamined. While the participants strongly identified with students and many espoused a desire to empower students, many seemed also to identify with the participant who described the “great little perfect world” of community college faculty. That sense of job satisfaction and personal autonomy might militate against any desire for social change on behalf of students.

In addition, since most community college faculty receive little or no formal training for teaching, they may never confront the master narratives of educational philosophy (Alsup, 2005;

Grubb, et al., 1999). It seems likely, given the nature of their professional preparation and their often accidental career paths, that community college faculty have not engaged critically with some of the power dynamics implicit in the hierarchy of respect in education. While most seemed aware of this hierarchy, there was virtually no sense of immediacy about correcting or improving their place in the hierarchy. It seemed to be a consideration that was largely outside of or apart from their “great little perfect world.” In some ways, the group norms that make up the social identity of community college faculty seemed to be implicit rather than explicit, and to go largely unexamined. That may allow those group norms to remain vague or to be at odds with each other, yet unchallenged.

The second research question for this study asks, how does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty? The findings from this study indicate that the social identity constructed by the discourse of community college faculty members may be weakly defined from the perspective of social identity theory—that the group values may be disparate and unexamined. The in-group identification of faculty members was somewhat weak and undefined. Out-group identification was expressed more passionately in many cases, but it was still fairly individuated. There seemed to be some lack of clarity as to the role of students in in-group and out-group identifications. Some of this lack of clarity may be attributable to varying expressions of mission: traditional academic values, workforce development values, and social justice/student empowerment values. From the perspective of critical discourse analysis, those disparate value statements might be actually in conflict with each other, but since the conflict is largely unexamined, it does not serve to foment discussion or change among faculty. A strong sense of professional autonomy allows faculty members to avoid conflict around these issues.

Implications for Community College Professionals

The findings from this study pointed to several important implications for the work of community college professionals, both faculty members and administrators. The findings indicated that community college faculty members tended to articulate a professional identity for themselves in which teaching was the most salient role feature. However, several factors tended to make that role identification broad and general, including the accidental nature of the career path followed by most community college faculty members, the lack of explicit training and preparation for the teaching role, and the great sense of autonomy experienced by community college faculty. In addition, the sense of social identity may be weak or conflicted. This may be a result of the lack of examination of the evaluative aspect of the group norms (Tajfel, 1982) associated with community college faculty.

These findings point to five specific implications for community college professionals:

1. Community college administrators may want to promote the development of more intentional career paths for community college faculty members.
2. Community college administrators may want to examine the development of more directed training for the teaching role for community college faculty members.
3. Community college faculty and administrators may want to examine the possible benefits of more explicit markers of career progression for community college faculty members.
4. Community college administrators may want to consider how they can create a campus environment that is welcoming and productive for faculty with varying views as to the sense of mission of the community college.

5. Community college faculty members might benefit from engaging in critical reflection with respect to potential conflicts between the traditional academic paradigm that some faculty members espouse and the student empowerment/social justice paradigm espoused by other faculty members.

Each of the implications will be discussed briefly below.

First, community college administrators may want to promote the development of more intentional career paths for community college faculty members. Several recent studies indicated the likelihood of increased demand for community college faculty members as current faculty members reach retirement (Lyons & Akroyd, 2014; Sprouse, Ebbers, & King, 2008; Winter, Petrosko, & Rodriguez, 2007). This study and others (Keim, 1989; Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2008; Rosser & Townsend, 2006) pointed to relatively high levels of job satisfaction among community college faculty members. Cultivating more intentional career pathways would make it easier to recruit faculty members and might help more qualified applicants to see a career in community college teaching as a viable opportunity. This more intentional career path would likely require collaboration with some of the universities where many community college faculty members are currently receiving their professional education. Colleges of education may be likely partners to help cultivate a more intentional career path for community college faculty. In order to chart a more intentional career path, community colleges will have to become a visible career choice earlier in the academic careers of potential community college faculty members. Choice of academic discipline is typically made during the latter stages of undergraduate study; the choice to pursue an academic career is often influenced by a significant experience with a particular professor either as an undergraduate or in graduate school (Lindholm, 2004). Community colleges need to be more visible at those critical decision

points. In addition, community colleges may want to pursue more effective ways of reaching out to a variety of key industries in order to develop recruitment strategies for professional/technical faculty.

Second, community college administrators may want to examine the development of more directed training for the teaching role for community college faculty members. Again, colleges of education seem like likely partners to engage in these efforts. Most of the participants who received training for their teaching role in graduate school did so as a result of being a graduate teaching assistant. However, many of those participants did not recognize the training that they received as graduate teaching assistants as substantial or even adequate. Community colleges could work with colleges of education in order to develop a more intentional career path for community college faculty and to enhance the teacher training received by those interested in that career pathway. Another option would be for community colleges to enhance their internal training strategies. For example, community colleges might develop master teacher programs that would allow new faculty members to benefit more directly from the knowledge and expertise acquired by senior faculty members over the course of their careers. Or they might develop more training opportunities focused on pedagogy and learning theory in order to help faculty members work together to develop specific teaching skills. While a number of community colleges engage in some of these activities, it would be hard to argue that these practices are the industry standard for community colleges.

Third, community college faculty and administrators may want to examine the possible benefits of more explicit markers of career progression for community college faculty members. It is possible the community college faculty might welcome opportunities for markers of career progression; however, these opportunities, in order to be effective and to be accepted by faculty

members, would need to recognize the expertise of faculty members and would need to be structured in a way that does not undermine faculty autonomy. A master teacher program might not only allow for a chance to implement more explicit teacher training for community college faculty but might also become the basis for a system of explicit markers of career progression. This type of system would allow for official recognition as faculty members move from the ranks of “rookie educator” to journeyman teacher to master teacher. If developed properly, such a system might help to develop a more coherent group identity for community college faculty.

Fourth, community college administrators may want to consider how they can create a campus environment that is welcoming and productive for faculty with varying views as to the sense of mission of the community college. As we have seen, the community college faculty members who participated in this study seemed to have a strong sense of purpose or mission associated with their work at the community college. However, that sense of mission was somewhat individuated; it took on several different aspects as described by the various participants: a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a student empowerment/social justice paradigm. While there was some overlap between these different definitions of mission, there was also some tension between them as well. Faculty members who espouse a traditional academic paradigm may feel at odds with the workforce mission, if they perceive that workforce programs receive more attention or resources. Faculty members who espouse a social justice paradigm may feel at odds with the traditional academic paradigm if they perceive it as playing a “gatekeeper” function that serves to screen out underprepared students. Can these different worldviews exist productively together? It may require some explicit examination in order to make that happen. For example, some community colleges are actively involved with organizations such the Council on Undergraduate Research (CUR). It is possible

that this type of activity might be used to bridge the gap between the traditional academic paradigm and a paradigm focused on student empowerment. However, this is probably more likely to occur if the issues are addressed directly by community college faculty and administrators.

Fifth, community college faculty members might benefit from engaging in critical reflection with respect to potential conflicts between the traditional academic paradigm that some faculty members espouse and the student empowerment/social justice paradigm espoused by other faculty members. All of the participants in this study spoke to their engagement with and commitment to students. But the assumptions that underlie those relationships with students seemed often to be unexamined. There was some implied tension between those faculty members who worried about the gatekeeper function of the traditional academic paradigm and those who worried that community college faculty members who seek to empower students might not keep an appropriate sense of academic rigor. A number of the participants spoke to the fact that their sense of autonomy made it easy for them to avoid faculty members whose views did not agree with theirs. In order to build a stronger sense of social identity for community college faculty members, it may be necessary for faculty members to address these potential conflicts directly, rather than avoiding them. This might also necessitate some examination of the power dynamic between students and faculty. While most of the participants attested to their admiration for their students and their ability to navigate their education in spite of many obstacles in their personal lives, it is also the case that students see a divide between themselves and their teachers in terms of relative social power, and this may require more critical reflection of the part of faculty members.

Implications for Further Study

While this study has implications in a number of areas for community college professionals, there are also implications for further study on several topics.

First, further study should be done on teacher training for community college faculty. There are any number of indications in the literature that community colleges currently need to recruit new faculty to replace retirees and that training opportunities for the teaching role of community college faculty are limited (Charlier & Williams, 2011; Cohen & Brawer, 2008; Cowan, Traver, & Riddle, 2001; Lyons & Akroyd, 2014; Waiwaiole & Noonan-Terry, 2008). Most graduate programs with a focus on community college professionals are aimed at preparing administrative leaders (Cowan, Traver, & Riddle, 2001; Waiwaiole & Noonan-Terry, 2008).

In this study, about half of the participants had served as teaching assistants in their graduate school program. Most had received some level of training for teaching in that capacity, but the general consensus seemed to be that the training was minimal or inadequate. Three of the participants in the study had teaching certificates and had received teacher training; however, that training was geared toward a K-12 environment, rather than focusing on community college. Future research might examine the number of community college faculty who receive teacher training as part of their graduate school experience, the nature and effectiveness of that training, and ways to integrate community college career pathways into that training. In addition, future research could ask how many community college faculty hold K-12 teaching credentials and how well those faculty are able to apply the teacher training they received to the community college environment. Future research might also focus on what types of teacher preparation would be most effective and accessible for community college faculty.

In recent years, a number of colleges have instituted faculty training programs specifically aimed at current and potential community college faculty (for example, California State University Dominguez Hills, Gonzaga University, Guilford Technical Community College, San Diego State University, South Seattle College, and others). Many of these programs are relatively new and more research is needed into the structure of the programs, their enrollments, and their effectiveness.

Secondly, more research is needed into the career progression of community college faculty. This study and others have pointed to the relatively undifferentiated career path of many community college faculty members (Crawford, 2012; Fugate & Amey, 2000; Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2008). Tenure occurs relatively early in the faculty career and many community college faculty members do not work within a system of faculty rank. The faculty members in this study indicated that they used their professional autonomy to shape different stages in their career, by taking on additional projects, committee assignments or campus-wide duties. Future studies might examine how common this practice is, how aware community college faculty are of this strategy, and how effectively they are able to employ it to further their own professional development. It is unclear whether a more structured career progression would be beneficial for community college faculty members, but it seems likely that any such system would need to recognize the existing expertise of community college faculty and not undermine their professional autonomy.

Additionally, almost 70% of community college faculty hold adjunct appointments (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2015). Some of those adjunct faculty members will transition to full-time faculty appointments, but many will not. Many but not all of the faculty members in this study had worked as adjuncts prior to attaining a full-time appointment. For those who had worked as

adjuncts, a few indicated that making the transition to a full-time faculty job was more significant than gaining tenure. One participant commented as follows when asked about the most important milestones in her career:

I'd say, definitely when you get the full time job, because then you get to stay at one school, focus all of your curriculum excitement and development into one place. I'd have to say, even when I was an adjunct, there were a couple of years where I had very supportive department chairs.

This study focused only on full-time, tenured faculty members whose primary work assignment was classroom teaching. Future studies might examine how adjunct faculty members perceive some of the themes identified in this study. Adjunct faculty members make up a large percentage of the community college faculty workforce and they may have different perceptions of autonomy, mission, and their role as teachers (Charlier & Williams, 2011; Lee, 2002; McLaughlin, 2005; Thirolf, 2012; Wallin, 2004). Further study is required to determine whether the descriptions of professional identity espoused by the participants in this study would be likely to apply to adjunct faculty as well. More research could be done into the career progression of adjunct faculty, the transition to a full-time appointment, the granting of tenure, and how service as an adjunct faculty member shapes the professional identity of community college faculty members. Additionally, research might focus on differences in professional identity between faculty members who worked as adjuncts before attaining a full-time appointment, as compared to those who had no adjunct experience.

A third area that might be appropriate for additional research would be the apparent tensions among differing definitions of the community college mission. Currently, community colleges are experiencing a shift in focus, moving from the traditional open access mission of

community colleges and responding to national calls for increased measures of student success and completion. Some studies have indicated tensions arising from these changes (Levin, 2005; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2006). The findings of this study imply that there may be some tensions inherent in three different versions of the sense of mission for community college faculty: the traditional academic mission, the workforce development mission, and the student empowerment/social justice mission. Faculty who espouse a traditional academic paradigm may perceive that those who espouse a workforce development or social justice paradigm may undermine traditional academic standards. Those who espouse a social justice paradigm may see the traditional academic paradigm as serving a gatekeeper function that is at odds with the goals of social justice. Some studies have addressed the role of social justice within the community college mission (Levin, 2007; Prentice, 2007). However, more study is needed to examine how these differing definitions of mission may impact faculty members' perceptions of their professional identity, their career progression, and their job satisfaction.

Finally, the methods of this study could be extended to additional colleges in other regions of the country. Future studies might investigate whether factors such as faculty age, teaching discipline, or the type of community college at which the faculty member is employed have substantial impact on the perception of professional identity. Larger studies on the same topic might be able to add quantitative data that may shed light on the influence of credentials, years of experience, or other demographic factors on perceptions of professional identity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the professional identity of community college faculty as it relates to two primary research questions:

1. How do community college faculty members articulate their professional identity?
2. How does the collective discourse of community college faculty members construct a social identity for community college faculty?

The data collected from interviews with community college faculty members indicated five primary themes related to those questions:

1. **Almost all participants stated they became a community college faculty member through an accidental or unexpectedly changed career path:** Even those who espoused a lifelong desire to teach did not originally intend to do so at the community college level.
2. **Teaching was the most salient role feature for community college faculty:** However, most participants said they had little or no formal training for teaching; some who had training as graduate teaching assistants did not view that training as significant.
3. **Being involved in a significant committee, professional development project, or other work group was often cited as a marker of professional identity development:** Tenure was not a particularly salient role feature for community college faculty.
4. **Autonomy, freedom, and flexibility described the most powerful values attached to the professional roles of community college faculty:** Community college faculty felt an ability to reinvent themselves at different points in their career by choosing in which activities to be involved.

5. Community college faculty articulated a strong sense of mission, which seemed to be linked to job satisfaction; however, that sense of mission tended to vary between three values—a traditional academic paradigm, a workforce development paradigm, and a social justice/student empowerment paradigm:

Different faculty members tended to espouse some aspect of each paradigm, but in different amounts.

By applying the data collected relative to each theme to the two primary research questions, several conclusions can be reached.

- The accidental career path of many community college faculty members may introduce an element of luck or randomness that leads to a tendency to leave some aspects of professional identity unexamined.
- The relative lack of formal training for the teaching role may work against a strongly defined professional identity, since they likely have not confronted some important aspects of that role, such as learning theory.
- While community college faculty members tend to follow a relatively undifferentiated career path after tenure, it is possible that they might welcome additional career stages if those stages recognized faculty expertise and did not undermine autonomy.
- In-group and out-group identification for community college faculty members was somewhat weak, which seems consistent with a less than clearly articulated sense of professional identity from the viewpoint of social identity theory.
- While the faculty members in this study spoke to a fairly strong sense of mission and purpose in their work, there were apparent contrasts in the ways that different faculty

members expressed that sense of mission; those differing definitions of mission appear ideologically unexamined and may be in conflict with one another.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Participant Consent Form

This consent form outlines your rights as a participant in the study of The Professional Identity of Community College Faculty, conducted by Bob Mohrbacher, a doctoral student at Oregon State University. The interview will record your thoughts and observations about your professional identity and the professional identity of community college faculty in general. It is expected that the interview will last approximately an hour, based largely on the length of your responses.

You should understand that:

- Participation is voluntary.
- You can refuse to answer any question.
- You can stop the interview at any time.
- Your name will remain confidential in any publications or discussions.

If you have any questions with regard to this study, you may ask them of the interviewer at any time. You may also contact the Principal Investigator with any additional questions:

Sam Stern, EdD.

Oregon State University

(541) 737 6392

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In addition, if you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

Appendix B

Professional Identity of Community College Faculty: Question Protocol

Have you received the consent form and do you agree to participate in an interview?

How long have you been a community college faculty member?

How long at this college?

May I ask your age?

How did you get started in community college teaching?

What do you remember about your early years of teaching?

Are there certain accomplishments or milestones that mark stages of your career?

How would you say that your job compares with that of a community college administrator?

How would you say that your job compares with that of a university faculty member?

How does your work compare with the work of other employees of the college? (Student services, business office, etc.)

What is important to you about teaching?

What other aspects of your job are important to you?

What motivates you to want to do this job?

How do you get along with your faculty colleagues?

What training do you have in your discipline?

Have you had specific training for teaching?

How would you describe your professional identity?

Do you think that description would apply to community college faculty in general?

Is there anything else you would like to add to our conversation?

